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# Imperial inventories, “illegal mosques” and institutionalized Islam: Coloniality and the Islamic Community of Bosnia and Herzegovina

Piro Rexhepi

## ABSTRACT

Looking at the architectures of governance that have characterized the Islamic Community of Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH), this essay explores the ways in which imperial inventories of colonial institutions come to influence and arbitrate contemporary debates over what constitutes legitimate practices of Islam in Bosnia–Herzegovina and Austria. Examining the larger political context in which these debates emerge, including the criminalization of Muslim communities that refuse to submit to the authority of state-sanctioned Islamic religious institutions, I detail the ways in which colonial histories are recruited to curate a homogenized, continuous representational mandate for Muslim communities and practices in Austria and BiH. Attending to nostalgic invocations of the late Habsburg governance of Islam and Muslims, I argue that these discourses serve to legitimate specific Muslim institutions and actors in Austria and BiH that privilege the Habsburg legacy through the exclusion of outlawed/illegal Muslim communities and practices in both countries.

## KEYWORDS

Coloniality; Balkans; Islam; Bosnia; Austria

## Introduction

On 28–29 September 2016, the Austrian Ministry for European Integration, the Austrian Embassy and the Austrian Cultural Association, together with the Islamic Community of Bosnia and Herzegovina, organized a conference in Sarajevo titled ‘State and Religion in Bosnia and Herzegovina and Austria: A Legal Framework for Islam in a European Context.’ The conference was one of the many activities organized by Austria in Sarajevo as part of the ‘Cultural Year Austria – Bosnia and Herzegovina’ (Federal Ministry for Europe, Integration and Foreign Affairs 2016). Conference discussions focused on the challenges facing the official Islamic institutions in both countries vis-à-vis what were termed ‘illegal’ mosques and imams. The participants agreed that this was not only a shared dilemma for both Bosnia–Herzegovina and Austria, but a problem that has come to plague ‘Europe’ as a whole. Austrian and Bosnian participants believe that their centralized, state-sanctioned Islamic Communities, which all Muslim communities are legally obliged to join, and, thus, submit to representation by a single institution, could be a

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solution to what has become a ubiquitous problem of Muslim 'integration' and 'representation' in Europe (see also Rexhepi 2017). Thus, strengthening these institutions was deemed key in the face of communities and individuals who resist their authority.

The conference was organized several months after ratified amendments to the already-controversial Islam Law in Austria to 'prevent parallel societies' had come into force on 1 March 2016 (Vytiska 2016). Among other provisions, the law prevents Muslim communities in Austria from practicing or providing religious services outside the state-sanctioned Islamic Religious Community in Austria (*Islamische Glaubensgemeinschaft in Österreich*, IGGÖ) (Öktem 2015, 51–52). Austrian appeals to and approbation of the model of the Islamic Community of Bosnia and Herzegovina have been frequent in recent years. Since its establishment by the Austro-Hungarian colonial administration in 1882, the Islamic Community of Bosnia and Herzegovina has exerted comprehensive governance over all questions regarding Muslim life in the country. Commenting on the conference for the Sarajevo daily *Avaz*, the Austrian Foreign Minister Sebastian Kurz contended that the 'Official Islam of Bosnia and Herzegovina can be a model for Europe' (Dučić 2016). Kurz, a member of Austrian People's Party who has since ascended to the position of Chancellor of Austria,<sup>1</sup> also pointed out that

unlike the other Islamic directions, the Islamic Community of BiH represents the values and stands for the positions that are chiefly compatible with those of other major religions of Europe, among other things, the separation of church and state and the superiority of the state in judicial affairs. (Ibid., my translation)

At around the same time, the government of Bosnia and Herzegovina had expressed similar concerns over the problem of parallel *džemats* (Muslim communities), appropriating the Austrian term for parallel societies to describe independent Muslim mosques that refuse the authority of the Islamic Community of Bosnia and Herzegovina and function as autonomous religious communities. In April, the Minister of Security of Bosnia–Herzegovina had warned that should 'illegal mosques' refuse to submit to the authority of the Islamic Community of Bosnia and Herzegovina, 'they will be dealt with for sure by the security organs of the state' (Toe 2016). Thus, the concerns of the authorities in Austria and Bosnia–Herzegovina seem to have converged in the strengthening of central Islamic institutions in the face of dissent on the part of various Muslim communities and individuals, who have come to perceive these institutions as increasingly authoritarian.

The underlining arguments for all Muslim communities to be governed by a single institutional umbrella, the Islamic Religious Community in Austria (IGGÖ) and the Islamic Community of Bosnia and Herzegovina (*Islamska zajednica Bosne i Hercegovine*, IZBiH), respectively, are rooted in legal and institutional configurations bequeathed to both Austria and Bosnia–Herzegovina by the Habsburg Empire (Walton and Rexhepi forthcoming). Indeed, both countries have argued that Habsburg foresight in establishing an independent institution governing Muslim communities after the empire's occupation of Bosnia in 1878 and the subsequent promulgation of '*Islamgesetz*,' the Islam Law in 1912, not only offer a unique precedent for the integration of all Muslim communities in a single representational body but might also constitute a model for addressing the challenges of Muslim integration in Europe today and the promotion of an institutionalized 'European Islam.'

This essay examines the ways in which the resurgence and reconceptualization of the Habsburg Empire as a 'successful' multicultural empire (Judson 2016) converges with Austria's newfound post-Cold War role in promoting EU multiculturalism and integration in Bosnia–Herzegovina. Critical interventions in Islamic Studies have recently questioned the ostensibly secular European policies that aim to establish religious institutions governing Muslim communities, pointing to the problems of the universality of secular (neo)liberal governmentality in Europe (Asad 2006; Mahmood 2006, 2015; Amir-Moazami 2011; El-Tayeb 2011, 2016; Gouda et al. 2012; Walton 2017). A striking feature in these debates is the erasure of the colonial legacies that contribute to the contemporary governance of Muslim representational institutions, such as the Islamic Community of Bosnia and Herzegovina. In the spirit of the concept of 'textured historicity,' which Jeremy F. Walton outlines in the Introduction, I seek to counteract this erasure of colonial legacies.

In addition to the contributions in this volume, recent studies on Habsburg nostalgia, chief among them Cole's seminal 'Der Habsburger Mythos' (2004; see also Kelley 2009), have questioned the culturalization of imperial memory and its display through exhibitions of noted personalities of the empire as a depoliticization of imperial protractions. In this regard, post-imperial Austrian nation-state discourse has disavowed the mixed, ambivalent effects of the empire by turning Habsburg imperial legacies into an enterprise and repository for supposedly innocent memories (Schlipphacke 2014). Other studies have sought to trace the institutional legacies of the Habsburg empire in post-imperial nation-states. For instance, Becker et al. (2016, 69–71) point out how

nearly a century after its demise, the Habsburg Empire persists in the attitudes towards and interactions with local state institutions of the people living within its former borders ... (which) shows that past formal institutions can leave a legacy through cultural norms even after generations of common statehood.

Tracing the Habsburg colonial entailments in contemporary laws and institutions, in the first part of the essay I examine the historical emergence of these institutions in Bosnia–Herzegovina and the ways in which they have been recuperated. In the second part, I examine how the deployment of colonial-era legal measures and institutions by the Islamic Religious Community of Bosnia–Herzegovina today are applied both to legitimize the monopolization of interpretations of Islam by the IZBiH and to promote a 'European' model of Islam through the criminalization of Muslim religious communities who refuse its authority.

### **Coloniality and the contemporary politics of the Islamic Community of Bosnia and Herzegovina**

Formally established by the Habsburgs in 1882, the Islamic Community of Bosnia and Herzegovina has proven to be one of the most enduring of all the Habsburg colonial legacies. Its foundational role in promoting a specific Muslim identity for Bosniaks is significant, particularly as prior to the Habsburg invasion, Islam was not so much attached to an ethnic Bosniak identity (see Karić 2006, 176–178). Rather, the ethnic identity of Muslims was either presumed to be 'Turkish' or claimed by Serb and Croat nationalists as converted 'br/others' in their territorial aspirations in Bosnia (Hajdarpasic 2015). After the occupation of Bosnia, the Habsburgs sought to disrupt any existing relations between Sarajevo and

Istanbul, given that the Ottoman Sultan was still considered the *Khalif* (spiritual head of all Muslims worldwide). Accordingly, the colonial administrator of Bosnia–Herzegovina, Benjamin von Kállay, proposed that Emperor Franz Joseph appoint a *reis-ul-ulema* (head of the Muslim community) (Amzi-Erdoğdular 2013). The Habsburg imperial decree of 17 October 1882 appointed Hilmi Efendi Omerović as the first *reis-ul-ulema* of Bosnia–Herzegovina, creating with it an administrative structure and a *majlis* (governing body) that would govern its own *waqfs* (pious endowments) and *madrasas* (theological schools) independent of the Ottoman religious hierarchy (Islamska Zajednica u Bosni i Hercegovini 2006). Despite protests against the partition from Istanbul and the Ottoman religious administration by the local Bosnian *ulama* (Amzi-Erdoğdular 2013), the *Rijaset*, as the executive institution of the Islamic Community would come to be known, became the governing structure of the Islamic Community of BiH (ICBH). Eventually, it was to become the longest continuously operating Habsburg institution in BiH.

With the full annexation of Bosnia in 1907, the Habsburgs sought to establish a more stable regulation of Muslim life by issuing the Islam Law, known as *Islamgesetz*. Drafted in 1911 and promulgated in 1912, the law was never fully implemented due to the beginning of World War I. The act of issuing the law was a strategic move on behalf of the Habsburg Empire in the face of the Balkan Wars, as it sought to capitalize on the demise of the Ottoman Empire in the Balkans by incorporating more Muslim-populated lands into the Dual Monarchy. This required strengthening the loyalty of Muslims in Bosnia and Herzegovina, whose good treatment would serve to persuade the Muslims of Kosovo, Macedonia and Albania to align themselves to the empire. The law, however, never had any direct implications beyond its symbolic enactment.

It wasn't until 1979 that the law would be revisited again in Austria, this time to govern *gastarbeiter* (guest worker) communities from Socialist Yugoslavia and Turkey. Equally, the re-enactment of the law was part of a larger Cold War manoeuvring with freedom of religion that became a trademark of the 'free world.' Indeed, the chief interlocutors in the revival of the law were members of the non-aligned, disgruntled Muslim diaspora in Vienna. Smail Balić and Teufik Velagić from Bosnia, Ahmed Elkadi and Yussuf Nada from the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood, and Ghaleb Himmat and Anas Schakfeh of the Syrian Brotherhood in Austria founded the Muslim Social Services (MSS) in Vienna in 1964, together with a publication called 'the Straight Path' (*Der gerade weg*) a German translation meant to refer to Shariah (literally, 'the Straight Path'). This early institutionalization would eventually lead to the establishment of the Islamic Religious Community of Austria in 1979 (Hunter 2002; Kroissenbrunner 2003).

What is interesting in the contemporary institutional configurations in both Austria and BiH is the selective ways in which Habsburg governance of Muslim communities is articulated and enforced. Erasing the historical power relations between the Habsburgs and Bosnia as a colonial entity, the Islam Law was celebrated as evidence of Austria's commitment to acknowledging and respecting Islam and open dialogue with its Muslim citizens. While the Austrian government has come to claim its Habsburg colonial legislative measures as a means to regulate contemporary post-colonial subjects, most of whom arrived during the Cold War as guest-workers from Yugoslavia and Turkey, the Islamic Community of Bosnia and Herzegovina uses an Islamic institution created by the Habsburgs as an example of an 'indigenous' European Islamic institution.

The case of Austria and its former colony, Bosnia–Herzegovina, are telling not only because they illustrate the continuation of colonial governing assemblages, but also because of the specific ways in which secularism (re)appears as a colonial vestige. I want to argue that we cannot understand European secular governance of Muslim communities today outside the context of coloniality and its attachments to colonial institutions that, despite the claim to contrary, continue to dominate their configurations of power vis-à-vis Muslim communities in post-colonial Europe. Indeed, Mahmood argues that ‘Prejudice against Muslims in Europe today (and European and non-European Jews of the past) is constitutive of, and emanates from, this self-understanding of Europe as essentially Christian and simultaneously secular in its cultural and political ethos’ (2015, 8). Concomitantly, scholars of Islam must examine the histories of power according to which ‘secular concepts and institutions were inserted’ (Ibid., 9) into (post)colonial nation-states. In this sense, the Habsburg colonial Islam Law, along with the Islamic Religious Community of Bosnia–Herzegovina, prove interesting cases in exploring the relationship between the coloniality of Islamic institutions and the (post)colonial nationalization of Islam.

French imperial strategies for governing colonial and postcolonial Muslim communities offer a productive point of comparison here. Edmund Burke III (2014) has persuasively shown that the legitimization of French colonial power in Morocco was facilitated by the production of a ‘Moroccan Islam.’ Burke argues that ‘Moroccan Islam’ was an invented tradition engendered by French scholars and colonial officials alike, whose imprints in contemporary articulations of post-colonial, nationalized forms of Moroccan Islam are historicized, read and narrated as ‘indigenous’ practices. Working along similar conceptual wavelengths, Stoler’s (2013, 2016) recent work has looked at imperial durability, duress, resilience and the renewal of certain colonial pasts in postcolonial presents, paying particular attention to ‘the more protracted imperial processes that saturate the subsoil of people’s lives and persist, sometimes subadjacently, over a *long durée*.’ (Stoler 2013, 5). I want to suggest that the reworking and revitalization of the Islamic Community of BiH and the Austrian Islam Law continue to shape the institutional politics of Islam in BiH specifically and its utilization in the development of a ‘European Islam’ more generally. Moreover, the resuscitation and refashioning of invented colonial traditions and institutions in the post-socialist context suggests a post-Cold War EU enlargement attempt to deploy colonial legacies towards EU enlargement (see also Rexhepi 2018b).<sup>2</sup>

I should note that I am not suggesting that the Habsburg colonial legacies are the sole institutional features of the institutionalized Islam in Bosnia today. The unifying of sharia court systems in in Bosnia and Macedonia during the Kingdom of Yugoslavia (Bećirović 2008) and late socialist institutional models refashioned and repurposed Habsburg era precedents to fit both regimes’ relations to religious communities. Moreover, the EU has deployed Ottoman myths and memories in the construction of a ‘tolerant’ Bosnian Islam. Despite these other key historical currents, however, specifically *Habsburg* legacies dominate the discourse about Islam in Austria and BiH today.

Indeed, the centennial celebrations of the *Islamischen Glaubensgemeinschaft in Österreich*, the Islam Law of Austria, attended by the President of Austria Heinz Fischer, government ministers, religious authorities and various other representatives of civil society, were accompanied by metaphors and allegories ranging from the commemoration of the Austro-Hungarian Empire as a predecessor to the European Union to the foresight of

the Habsburgs in drafting a law recognizing Islam as a religion way back in 1912.<sup>3</sup> The head of the Bosnian Islamic Community of BiH, Efendi Mustafa Cerić, who attended the ceremony, proclaimed that ‘as a Bosnian Muslim, a descendant of grandfathers who contributed to the freedom of Austria, I feel very humbled by what they have done for us,’ and called on Austria to help Bosnia ‘grow up.’ (Ceric 2012, my translation). In his official speech, Cerić urged Muslims living in Austria today to look up to Bosnian Muslims as an example, as well as to recognize institutions developed by Muslims under the Austro-Hungarian Empire as models for good citizenry. Similarly, when addressing their concerns over radicalization and Islamic influences from the Arab world, Austrian government ministers Michael Spindelegger, Sebastian Kurz and Minister of Culture Claudia Schmied brought up BiH as a paragon for the institutionalization of Islam in Austria and Europe.

Similar appreciations of Bosnian Islam elsewhere in Europe are common. The *Deutsche Islam Konferenz* (German Islamic Conference) for instance, in its effort to create a representational mandate for Muslims in Germany, has also incorporated Bosnian Islam as a model, pointing to its history of coexistence with Christians, and transparent organizational structure. In particular, the Conference emphasizes that the spiritual leader of the Bosnians, Mustafa Efendi Cerić, is a ‘European’ who ‘promotes the integration of Muslims in European society and peaceful dialogue between religions’ (Ghamin 2010).

### Imperial inventories as European borders and Islamic institutions

In December 2016, the Islamic Community of Bosnia–Herzegovina established an EU Representative Office in Brussels. Marking this occasion, its newly appointed head, Senaid Kobilica, pointed out that ‘Bosnian Muslims, as indigenous Europeans, are committed to cooperation,’ and insisted that his office would ‘like Muslims who live in Europe to understand and accept that they should be more concerned about their responsibilities than their freedoms.’ In this way, Kobilica argued that ‘Muslims who live in Europe will *earn* their freedom’ (Representative Office of the Islamic Community of Bosnia and Herzegovina to the European Union 2016, 22–24, my emphasis). There are two striking features in the call by the representative of the Islamic Community of Bosnia for Bosnian Muslims to act as models for and overseers of European Islam, one having to do with the corroboration of their Europeanness and the other with the origins of the institution of the Islamic Community of Bosnia itself. In the first case, the continuous reiteration that Muslims of Bosnia are actually European—unlike, say, the Muslims of the Middle East or North Africa—suggests that they are not necessarily perceived as such. In the second instance, the credibility of the institution of the Islamic Community, and its modernity, stems from its colonial roots.

Seeking to position the Islamic Community of Bosnia both as a model of and an overseer for the development of European Islam, Grand Mufti Kavazović, who headed the delegation, insisted that this claim ‘is based on the religious, institutional, and historical credibility of the Islamic Community of Bosnia and Herzegovina’ and that its institutional framework represents the Islamic traditions of ‘an indigenous European Muslim people’ (Ibid.). The Grand Mufti enumerated the multiple reasons why the Bosnian Islam is an ideal type for the development of European Islam – the absence of polygamous marriage, or marriage between relatives, its flexibility, etc. – and reminded his EU audience that the Muslims of Bosnia ‘are neither Asians nor Africans, just like they are neither Turks nor Arabs’ (Ibid.).



Indeed, the recognition of Muslims in the Balkans as European after the Cold War and their demarcation for inclusion into the EU has been contiguous with the exclusion of migrant/Muslim/Middle Eastern others from the European border imaginary (Rexhepi 2016, 2017). The troubling presence of the Arab/Islamist/Middle Eastern in the Balkans has been a constant conundrum in EU expansion in the Balkans. Balkan Muslims are projected as threatened subjects who must be saved from Arab missionaries by inclusion into the EU. This discourse overlaps with the post-Cold War remaking of EU geopolitical borders. As Jones points out,

EU borders were not removed in the 1990s, but simply moved to different locations. As internal border restrictions were loosened in the Schengen Area, more focus was placed on the external boundaries of the European Union at the Mediterranean and on its eastern edges. (2016, 29–31)

The establishment of EU Fortex<sup>4</sup> and its focus on the Western Mediterranean, Spain and Morocco as the ‘Gate of Africa’ shifted the migrant route to the Eastern Mediterranean and resulted in the opening of the Balkan Route. As the EU has moved to seal the borders on its Southeast frontiers and intensify the integration process of the Western Balkans as a solution to the Balkan Route, the so-called Arab presence in the Balkans is increasingly perceived a security problem.

The EU security apparatus is not the only locus through which these anxieties are articulated. They come from multiple sources, ranging from academic to media accounts, frequently interlocked in cyclical and reciprocal referencing. For example, in *The Revival of Islam in the Balkans: from Identity to Religiosity*, Elbasani argues that ‘rich Arab associations have targeted Muslim populations in the Balkans as crucial “interlocutors” to diffuse the message of Islam in Europe’ (2015, 12). Elbasani further states that a substantial amount of research highlights the alarming influence of fundamentalist networks on indigenous practices. The ‘substantial amount’ of research that she refers to amounts to a single book, Deliso’s questionable *The Coming Balkan Caliphate: The Threat of Radical Islam to Europe and the West* (2007). Deliso argues that links between Muslims in the Balkans and those in the Middle East pose demographic and security threats to Europe, claiming that Arab Islamist terrorist networks are recruiting ‘white’ Balkan Muslims to take jihad to Europe (Ibid., 162–173). None of these arguments are based on substantive evidence (for more on this, see Hoare 2008). Such binary images of the Balkans and the Middle East obscure longstanding historical ties as well, as Henig (2016) has demonstrated.

Western media reporting on Muslims in the Balkans shares similar geopolitical imageries. In a 2015 Voice of America report on the Balkans, for instance, Frank Weisner, the former US Special Representative to the final status talks on Kosovo, notes how ‘large Muslim populations make the Balkans susceptible to radical Islam,’ arguing that

the Balkans needs to be shielded ... so that it is not infected from the troubles of the Middle East ... Europe, the US, and the Balkans need to make certain and track carefully subversive elements flowing to and from countries in the Middle East. (V of A News 2015)

Similarly, since the mid 2000s, European media has produced countless reports on the danger of the Arab presence in the Balkans, warning against ‘charitable Islamic organizations that spread their beliefs with money’ (Flottau 2007) and the threat created when ‘Arabs Marry Bosnian Women to Establish Parallel Families’ (Sorguc 2016). The irony of



these claims is of course that there have been more radical Islamists going from the Balkans to the Middle East than the other way around (Bogdanovski 2014).

In these academic, policy and media accounts on 'Balkan Islam,' there is a tendency to separate the shared histories of Muslims in the Balkans from other Muslim and post-colonial experiences (Blumi 2011; Henig 2016). Such accounts also tend to ignore the recent memories of dispossession, violence, displacement and death suffered by Muslims in the Balkans over the last two decades, events that were not a product of Arab or Islamic ideologies, but part of larger European colonial and racist histories. They also ignore the possibility that the radicalization of some Muslims in the Balkans may be rooted in aggressive post-socialist neoliberal reforms, which cannot be considered outside of the larger EU expansion in the region. The dominant narrative also elides the material and political disempowerment caused by the post-conflict peacekeeping missions, later transformed into various EU enlargement assemblages, employed in Bosnia-Herzegovina and Kosovo as neo-colonial administrations (Amato 2005), not to mention the continued violence against Muslims worldwide, to which a generation of Muslims in the Balkans raised in wars and refugee camps are not strangers.

By itself, then, the notion of a vulnerable and potentially threatening Balkan Islam at the border of Europe explains very little about the outlook of the diverse communities in question. Nonetheless, it has become the determining frame for thinking about the Western Balkans as a deeply problematic politico-theological space. This framing has had major ramifications at the state level in the region itself, particularly following the Berlin Western Balkans Summit in 2014, now commonly referred to as the 'Berlin Process.' Under the broader premise of re-starting the stalled EU integration of candidate countries Serbia, Montenegro, Albania, and Macedonia, and potential candidate countries Bosnia-Herzegovina and Kosovo, the Berlin Process has sought to establish an interconnected web of security information gathering and sharing among Western Balkans states and the EU (Lilyanova 2016).

This racialized differentiation has gripped Sarajevo since the war,<sup>5</sup> while EU integration has demanded heightened surveillance of Arabs in Bosnia. Both European and local media produced accounts that resembled those of the migrant panic along the Balkan Route. Emela Burdzović, a local journalist whose article in *Balkan Insight* was particularly representative of these fears, explained her own anxiety as manifold: 'I worry because of the religious influence they are bringing here, the land they are buying and the fact that the more influence they gain here the more difficult it will be for us to enter the EU.' In addition, she pointed that 'we are worried that the city will look totally Muslim' (Emela Burdzović, personal interview).

In light of the immensely fraught politics of 'Balkan Islam,' the activation of the Islamic Community of BiH in the service of the European Union is especially complex. The Islamic Community's readiness to become a 'representative participant in the process of developing European forms of credible representation for Muslims' (Kavazović 2016, 6) is both prompted by the EU and the ambition of the Islamic Community to increase their political leverage in the EU integration bargaining processes. The selling point of the Islamic Community of BiH as a model for the institutionalization of Islam in Europe is frequently its 'modern structural form known to this day' (Ibid., 10), which of course dates back to its establishment during the colonial occupation of the Habsburgs. The institutional appropriateness of the Islamic Community of Bosnia for the development of European Islam here

seems to be based on the premise of its Austro-Hungarian (and therefore European) pedigree, but also on the semi-authoritarian nature with which the Islamic Community of BiH has installed its authority over unruly imams and mosques (see also Walton and Rexhepi forthcoming).

The question of illegal mosques, or '*paradžemats*' as they are called in Sarajevo, has gained visibility since 2015, especially in early 2016 as BiH authorities prepared their application for EU membership. Meanwhile, the federal authorities had already tried to tackle the illegal mosques through various fines related to the use of buildings for public gatherings without license and similar minor indiscretions, given that the Law on Religious Freedoms does not oblige Muslim religious communities to become members of the Islamic Community of BiH. In January 2016, Bakir Izetbegović, the Bosniak member of the tripartite Presidency of BiH, warned that the illegal *džemats* can 'bring about chaos and trouble for Muslims in BiH and the European Union,' directing the ICBiH to close down all illegal mosques by April 2016. Accordingly, between January and March 2016, the ICBiH undertook a series of meetings with all the '*paradžemats*.' In its annual report in April 2016, the ICBiH announced the establishment of a working group that would seek to discipline the various illegal mosques, whose interpretations and practice of Islam were imported from imams who had studied in the Middle East, questioning the legitimacy and image of traditional domestic Islam (Islamska Zajednica u Bosni i Hercegovini, 23 April, 2016).<sup>6</sup>

Contrary to contemporary interpretations of a hermetically closed traditional Islam of Bosnia, now increasingly situated in the institutional history of the Islamic Community of BiH, Muslims in Bosnia played active role in shaping and being shaped by Islamic thought and practice during the socialist period (Henig 2016). Moreover, the Islamic Community of Bosnia–Herzegovina was frequently deployed to service Yugoslav ambitions in building non-aligned socialism in the Middle East and North Africa, in particular (Babuna 2012; Mekic 2016). These were not clear cut processes of solidarity, as they were often fraught with shifting power struggles within the non-aligned world, as Subotic and Vucetic (2017) have recently illustrated. Nevertheless, the claim that the Islamic tradition of Bosnia does not change or is isolated and highly institutionalized are exceptionally problematic because they erase the myriad histories of specific Muslims communities within Bosnia, who, for various reasons, have frequently opted out of being governed by the institutional framework of the ICBiH. In socialist Yugoslavia, such a choice by imams or *džemats* was neither considered a crime nor a parallel structure. Many times, the Islamic Community would grant this independence to communities when it failed to meet their needs (see, for instance, Palameta 1988).

In the context of my argument here, the extent to which there is a viable possibility for the Islamic Community of BiH to become a template for the institutionalization of Islam in the European Union is less significant than the deployment of Bosnian Muslims from the periphery to police migrant Muslims in the metropole. One of the most unsettling features of this strategy is the zeal with which the Islamic Community of BiH has attempted to prove their qualifications. Their representative to the EU, Kobilica (2016, 23, quoted in Kavazović 2016), points out that their fellow migrant Muslims in Europe should be more concerned with their responsibilities than their freedoms and that 'thanks to centuries of European experience, understanding, and open-mindedness, our Bosnian imams' can guide them towards dialogue and cooperation. Though this seems to be one of the more attractive features of the Islamic Community of BiH for Austria (and arguably the

European Union as well), the ability of the Islamic Community of BiH to monopolize the interpretation and practice of Islam remains questionable at best. The pressure by the EU to clamp down on informal and insubordinate congregations by grouping them together with radical groups in the broader fight against terrorism (Dragojlović 2016) suggests that the need for indigenous 'European' Muslims who can serve as a model for the migrants may be far more complicated.

## Conclusion

Postcolonial and post-socialist societies, Tlostanova argues, 'are offered certain sanctioned forms of constructed collective memory which does not conserve but rather erases the past still full of restless ghosts' (2017, 157). The connectivities of the governmental logic of the colonial institutions and their contemporary afterlives and reinstallments, as Stoler (2013, 2016) argues, are not always straightforward. Colonial sites and institutions leave tenacious marks in postcolonial national histories, even as they also silence questions about the narratives they reactivate, and the hardened knowledge practices they sustain. This silencing effect can only be counteracted by examining the textured, multiple histories and modes of historicity that constitute these institutions, as Walton insists in the Introduction.

The Islamic Community of BiH has become a site at which the tensions of postcolonial and (post)socialist histories are continuously contested by various movements but also emboldened by increased recognition and support by both Austria and the EU in the project of developing a 'European Islam.' In examining how both US and EU religious freedom programmes construe and create "'religious" groups as both political actors and faith communities' Hurd (2015, 7) points out the arbitrary nature of these projects in 'privileging whatever and whomever the authorities define as moderate religion and tolerant religious leaders,' in the process, determining what counts as religion as well as 'distinguish[ing] between moderate and immoderate, legal and illegal, and tolerable and intolerable forms of it' (Ibid.). The case of Bosnia is particularly important as it illustrates how the politics of privileging 'moderate' Islam converge with European colonial entailments and EU racialized bordering regimes.

## Notes

1. The Austrian People's Party (*Österreichische Volkspartei*; ÖVP) is conservative centre-right political party in Austria currently (as of December 2017) in a coalition government with the right-wing populist and nationalist-conservative Freedom Party of Austria (*Freiheitliche Partei Österreichs*, FPÖ), with Kurz serving as Chancellor.
2. Dzenovska (2013) provides a brilliant account of these processes in the Latvian context.
3. While the Austro-Hungarian Empire was not the only European empire that sought to engineer representation mandates for its colonized Muslim subjects – the British, French (Burke 2014) and Dutch empires explicitly recognized sharia law from the late Eighteenth century onwards – the reanimation of Habsburg colonial regulation of Islam has taken on unique features in both Austria and BiH. For more on this subject, see Maussen, Bader, and Moors (2011).
4. FRONTEX is the European Union's Border and Coast Guard Agency. For more, see Neal (2009).
5. For a perspective on how post-war reconstruction in Sarajevo has accentuated both intercommunal relations in the present and images of the city's past, see Gruia Bădescu's contribution to this volume.

6. Strikingly, this premium on monopolizing Islam is evident throughout the region. Religious authorities in Turkey (Walton 2017, 53 ff.), Macedonia (Rexhepi 2018), Greece (Demetriou 2013) and Bulgaria (Nikolova 2016) also use their monopoly power to discourage most non-Sunni forms and practices of Islam.

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