MAINSTREAMING ISLAMOPHOBIA: 
THE POLITICS OF EUROPEN ENLARGEMENT 
AND THE BALKAN CRIME-TERROR NEXUS

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Abstract
This article examines Islamophobia not as an exclusive feature of far-right politics in Europe but as a constitutive part of mainstream European Union enlargement processes. Looking at EU commission and parliament reports, as well as enlargement strategies, I examine security practices and policies that stem from recent policy debates on the “crime-terror nexus.” Specifically, I look at how EU taxonomies of Islamophobia come to influence broader securitization and bordering practices that mark and produce Muslim populations in the Western Balkans as suspect communities in need of disciplinary violence under the promise of EU integration. As the EU instrumentalizes the fight against organized crime and terrorist networks to demarcate its geopolitical frontiers in the Western Balkans, it also labors in the enactment of physical and political borders that divide Muslims in the Balkans from the larger Muslim world.

Keywords: crime-terror nexus, EU enlargement, Islamophobia, Balkans

Introduction
In 2012, the European Parliament’s Directorate-General for Internal Policies issued the report “Europe’s Crime-Terror Nexus: Links between Terrorist and Organized Crime Groups in the European Union,” outlining the “crime-terror nexus” concept as an overarching framework addressing existing or potential alliances between organized crime and terrorist networks inside the EU and its peripheries (European Union Parliament 2012, p.10). The crime-terror nexus conjectures gained credence in the larger context of European Union securitization politics of the last decade, particularly in the context of EU...
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enlargement in the Western Balkans. Converging multiple security issues—such as the inflow of migrants and refugees, trans-border organized crime, and terrorist threats—with “the spread of radical Islam in the [Balkan] region” (European Union Parliament 2012, p. 49), the crime-terror nexus exemplifies the heightened concerns over the integration of Muslim majority countries of the Western Balkans into the EU. The geopolitical coordinates of the crime-terror nexus operate through a securitization logic that seeks to shield the European Union from security threats that can emerge from its borderlands and soon-to-be members. In a similar report in 2006, the Council of the EU, for instance, warned that “With Bulgaria and Romania joining the EU, the Western Balkan region will be entirely surrounded by EU Member States. Fighting organized crime, corruption, illegal immigration and terrorism in the region will therefore become even more important, also with a view to further developing the area of justice, freedom and security within the EU” (Council of the European Union 2006, p. 3). In other words, the potential integration of countries from the Western Balkans into the EU, particularly Muslim-majority Balkan countries, has increasingly been projected as a potential security threat to the overall safety and stability of the EU.

This article examines how concerns over the convergence of organized crime with terrorist networks have come to encompass and represent a shift in the EU enlargement politics in Eastern Europe: the enlargement strategy has shifted from the primary concerns over (post)socialist democratization and Europeanization in the first decade after the fall of the Berlin Wall to securitization and bordering strategies in the last decade of integration involving the rest of the (post)socialist and post-conflict countries in the Western Balkans. Specifically, the article looks at how the crime-terror nexus discourse has come to assemble multiple EU anxieties over security, borders and multiculturalism in the process of integrating Muslim majority countries into the EU whose very integration, according to this logic, makes the EU vulnerable from the potential convergence of organized crime and terrorism. I argue that the nearing integration of Muslim majority countries of the Western Balkans into the EU, and their subsequent projection as a threat to EU security, relies on multiple Islamophobic premises that produce Muslims in the Western Balkans as suspect communities.

This concern has proliferated through various EU bodies involved in enlargement and security strategies beyond the EU Parliament’s Directorate-General for Internal Policies. Europol, the EU’s law enforcement agency, has warned the EU in its Organized Crime Threat Assessments (OCTA) that “[the] Balkan axis, comprising the Western Balkans and South East Europe, will
assume an even more prominent role in the trafficking of illicit commodities to E.U. markets” (Europol 2011, p. 49), whereas the Terrorism and Situation and Trend Report (TE-SAT) notes that “religiously-inspired elements have attempted to establish connections with Eastern European OCGs [organized crime groups] involved in the trafficking of human beings” and that “religiously-inspired terrorists have sought to enter the EU through this region, often by claiming refugee status” (Europol 2012, p. 18). Moreover, frequent remarks made by EU representatives and elected officials—coupled with media and academic discourses on the converging threats from refugees, migrants, organized crime, human trafficking, and now terrorism along the “Balkan Route”—have continued to cast the Western Balkans more generally, and Muslim-majority Balkan countries in particular, as a threat to EU security. The Charlie Hebdo and Paris terrorist attacks of November 2015, coupled with the rise of far-right Islamophobic movements that project Islam as the biggest threat to the EU (De Genova 2015), have all come to constitute an assemblage of Islamophobia that is not exclusive to isolated and marginal far-right movements but also part of mainstream public discourse.

While the steady rise of far-right parties across Europe in the last decade has been examined as a part of a larger neoliberal de-politicization of social problems, the securitization politics influenced by these parties, which now constitute a major part of the European Union enlargement politics, have been overlooked. Moreover, in the process of linking Muslim populations inside the EU with terrorism and fundamentalism, counter-terrorism securitization measures have woven anti-Muslim politics into the EU enlargement process in Muslim-majority countries in the periphery, particularly Albania, Bosnia-Herzegovina and Kosovo (Fekete 2004, pp. 3–29; Bernhard 2010, pp. 175–192; Tufyal & Fenwick 2011; Bonefeld 2012, p. 51; Wodak 2013; Liang 2013).

In the first section I examine the mobilization of the crime-terror nexus in enlargement politics that not only frames EU’s incorporation of Muslim-majority countries as a preventative measure against a potential security threat to Europe but also exposes a dramatic shift in the enlargement discourse from “return” and “re-unification” with Europe, in the case of (post)socialist Bulgaria, Romania and Croatia, to expectations of hostility and preventative securitization, in the case of Albania, Bosnia-Herzegovina and Kosovo. I look at how in the last decade, the concern about the Balkans has gone from a focus on ethnic conflict and (post)socialist transition to concerns over organized crime and terrorism; the new focus coinciding with the integration of Muslim-majority countries into the EU. I question the existence and significance of a “crime-terror nexus” by examining the premises and validity of the sources
utilized in articulating these security threats, arguing that the allusion to organized crime, terrorism and radical Islam in Muslim-majority countries does not oppose or confront the proclivities of the far-right but is in fact premised in them.

In the second part, I explore the academic and policy knowledge assemblages that the crime-terror nexus policies rely on. Here, I look at how academic and policy work on security in the Balkans have frequently linked Muslim populations, explicitly and implicitly, with organized crime and terrorism. Tracing the shift in representation of Muslims in the Balkans in the process of EU integration, I examine how after 9/11, political activities of Muslims in the Balkans have been frequently registered in the grammar of Islamist fundamentalism, organized crime and terrorism. Here, I examine the impact these discourses have had on the identity and practices of Muslim communities in the Western Balkans. Specifically, I examine the emergence of “Balkan Islam” as a representational mandate that seeks to distance Muslim communities in the Balkans from terrorism and fundamentalism by defining Islam in the Balkans as a European and secular against the allegedly more religious and unsecularized Islam coming from the Middle East. I argue that the categorization of Muslims in the Western Balkans under a broader representation of Balkan Islam seeks to establish a depoliticized and compliant Balkan Islam, defined against the un-European and unsecularized Middle Eastern Islam, a discourse that overlaps with EU geopolitical borders that divides Muslims in the Balkans from those in the Middle East both spatially and politically.

Finally, in the last part, I examine how EU securitization measures employed in the enlargement process, through various conditionality mechanisms, are appropriated by local governments in Bosnia, Albania and Kosovo in their attempt to meet the EU integration criteria. Examining recent wholesale arrests of suspected Islamic terrorists and extremists, I look at how these measures have resulted in, and legitimized, the increased surveillance and discrimination of Muslim communities in the Balkans.

**European enlargement fatigue and the crime-terror nexus**

The EU positions itself geo-politically by designating borders, particularly according to the identification of who and what it considers to be rightly European (for more, see Kostadinova 2008, pp. 235–255). The identification of EU borders is closely tied to securitization in the form of measures that must be institutionalized before applicant countries can join. These requirements seek to pre-emptively address any potential security threats that may result
from removing national borders. As national borders merge with the EU, a division of “inside” from “outside” materializes in terms of the designation of new borders on the periphery—an act that at once hierarchizes suspect populations and seeks to allay anxieties about ideological threats and the construction of an EU-wide identity. These processes of identification and bordering, as Doty notes, are grounded in the “desire to overcome ambivalence and unpredictability, to make the numerous and diverse points of order, e.g., geographic, ethnic, moral, economic, and so on resonate to affect a coherent whole” (Doty 1999, p. 593–594). EU border securitization is thus closely linked to European integration and enlargement, while the call for the protection of current EU borders works to produce a more coherent EU identity. Additionally, the policing and possible inclusion of EU borderlands into the EU, operate through enlargement measures being utilized as extraterritorial management of security beyond the EU borders. The recent establishment of refugee and migrant receiving camps in the Western Balkans, along with earlier similar EU external refugee and migrant control centers outside the EU, serve as examples of what has come to be known as the European Neighborhood Policy (Lavenex 2015; Menz 2015; for more on the characteristics of the European Neighborhood Policy, see van Houtum & Boedeltje 2011). Indeed, D’Appollonia notes that the EU, like the United States, now operates through “[a] zero-tolerance approach to immigration offenses, tougher controls on borders, and even extraterritorial controls beyond borders” (D’Appollonia 2012, p. 77).

The geographic imaginaries through which the EU seeks to build these borders are primarily informed by securitization strategies. Ensuring security and tackling organized crime have been key issues in the politics of EU enlargement in Albania, Bosnia-Herzegovina and Kosovo. The EU has almost always linked its warnings of the potential danger of organized crime and terrorism associated with bringing these countries into its fold to the fear that because of their Muslim majority, these three countries either are, or have the potential to become, part of a transnational Islamic network that cooperates with organized crime (European Commission 2011. p. 17). This has been particularly visible after 9/11. Frequently, the factual basis of these security threats rely on anecdotal and unsubstantiated evidence solicited in various online news-portals of far-right and nationalist media outlets. For instance, the EU Parliament’s Directorate-General for Internal Policies report “Europe’s Crime-Terror Nexus: Links between Terrorist and Organized Crime Groups in the European Union” relies on the ultranationalist web-portal serbianna to support its claim of the convergence of organized crime and terrorism in Kosovo and Macedonia (European Union Parliament 2012, p. 49). Statements regarding the
The reports are also characterized by vague language that produce the Balkans as providing “natural synergies for cooperation” between organized crime and terrorism, leaving open questions of what may constitute such “natural synergies” (European Union Parliament 2012, p. 25)? It is important to note here that these reports are produced by, and inform, EU decisions on enlargement mechanism as well as securitization policies. When lack of evidence is addressed, is frequently justified through various orientalist tropes of the inaccessibility of information due to the traditional nature of these societies. For instance, in a report by the Council of Europe, Rapporteur Dick Marty who led the EU Special Investigative Task Force (SITF) in Kosovo and Albania to investigate claims of organ trafficking, in failing to confirm most of the allegations, Marty reported that “The structure of Kosovar Albanian society, still very much clan-orientated, and the absence of a true civil society have made it extremely difficult to set up contacts with local sources. This is compounded by fear, often to the point of genuine terror, which we have observed in some of our informants immediately upon broaching the subject of our inquiry” (Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe 2010). Marty further concludes that the prime minister of Kosovo, Thaci, “reportedly operated with support . . . from the formidable Albanian mafia” (Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe 2010). The deployment of various tropes includes, but is by no means limited to, Albanians being clannish, backwards, and therefore prone to organized crime—thus reinforcing the notion of what Marty has come to see as a “formidable” mafia. This expedient narrative of an Albanian mafia has recently been supplanted by Islamic extremism and fundamentalism as a readymade Islamophobic ideological formation that locates the crime-terror nexus in the Balkans. The new policies with which EU enlargement politics are approaching Muslim communities in the Balkans betrays a stark similarity to the broader Islamophobic discourse, operating, as Sheehi notes “by a culture that deploys particular tropes, analyses and beliefs, as facts upon which governmental policies and social practices are framed” (Sheehi 2011, p. 131).

In Muslim-majority countries in the Balkans, the EU control beyond its borders has been an accompanying feature that precedes their integration process. Since the end of the conflicts in Bosnia-Herzegovina and Kosovo for instance, the EU has engaged both countries in the Stabilization and Association Pact.
(SAP); a process through which various post-conflict, state-building mechanisms, and direct EU interventions, have been conceived under the “rule of law” and “security” mission (Council Joint Action 2008/124; EUFOR 2015). The direct involvement of the EU in the construction of state infrastructures in these countries seems to have been guided by fear based assumptions of their incompetence or indisposition to meet the security dimensions of the EU integration process. A relevant fear rooted in this objective can be found in research funded by the European Training and Research Centre for Human Rights and Democracy, where Mincheva and Gurr warn:

Trans-state Islamic advocacy networks have used Bosnia-Herzegovina as a “gateway” for militants moving between Europe and the Middle East. The political-criminal linkages among Bosnian Islamists are characterized as exclusively ideologically driven, while in the Albanian/Kosovo case it is characterized as “political-criminal hybrids.” (Mincheva & Gurr 2010, p.5)

Although organized crime and political-criminal hybrids are not exclusively Bosnian or Kosovar problems, the tacit employment of them that occurs in the EU enlargement discourse appears to appease both populist and mainstream Islamophobic discourse at home as well as overall EU enlargement fatigue while justifying direct EU involvement in Bosnia-Herzegovina and Kosovo as post-conflict security and justice missions.

The rise of anti-EU and anti-immigration far-right political parties into mainstream politics (the proclamation of Merkel and Cameron on the failure of multiculturalism is one example) has contributed to the process of containing perceived Muslim threats from the Balkans and policing Muslim populations living within the EU (Jura 2012, pp. 107–16). As anti-immigration rhetoric has become deeply intertwined with broader EU securitization, enlargement and bordering politics, references to fighting organized crime and terrorist networks have taken a central role in stimulating support of EU enlargement as a securitization and bordering measure.¹ Beare and Naylor, among other researchers, have noted that the “mention of the words ‘organized crime’ has the power to draw the press, win votes, acquire law enforcement resources,

¹ On this subject, see for example, the statement of the Polish Minister (in waiting) of European Affairs, Konrad Szymański, after the terrorist attacks in Paris in November 2015: “Wobec tragicznych wydarzeń w Paryżu Polska nie widzi politycznych możliwości wykonania decyzji o relokacji uchodźców [In view of the tragic events in Paris, Poland sees no political possibility of reaching a decision regarding the relocation of the refugees]” [Szymański 2014].
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gain public support for various legislative or enforcement crackdowns” (Beare & Naylor 1999, p.1).

Central to the EU’s fears is the presence of second- and third-generation Balkan Muslims already inside its borders who have ties to those Balkan Muslims seeking to merge with the EU. Based on the European Parliament’s 2012 report, a direct correlation has been drawn between the crime-terror-nexus threat and Balkan Muslims living inside the EU:

The region raises another concern in relation to the crime-terror nexus. This relates to a current trend—more specifically witnessed in Germany, Austria and Switzerland—of third generation Balkan diaspora youth becoming involved in radical Islamism. Given that the previous generation were involved in criminality, law enforcement officers in some European states have expressed their concerns over the potential for natural ties to develop between family/community members with both criminal connections and those who have adopted a militant Islamist agenda. (European Union Parliament 2012, p. 25)

A triangulated link is hereby made among third-generation Balkan Muslims living inside the EU, their family and community ties with Balkan Muslims, and the perceived threat of the ties between their Balkan connections and the rest of the Muslim world. This essentialist reading of Muslim communities both inside the EU and in the Balkans and the ties between them constitutes an institutionalized Islamophobia within EU enlargement channels. Indeed, El-Tayeb points out how the ongoing reading suggesting that second- and third-generation Muslims in the EU are migrants despite being citizens of these countries—shown in the continuous questioning of their loyalty to Europe by virtue of their religion and origins—continues to render Muslims as suspects and a threat to the EU (2011, pp. XXXII–XXXIII). As such tactical interpretations suggest, anti-Islamic expression cannot be dismissed as a far-right populist discourse but must instead be recognized as part and parcel of institutional EU politics that conflate Muslim communities—at both the center and periphery of Europe—with the crime-terror nexus. Although EU enlargement is widely seen as a technocratic process that does not take into consideration the national politics of its core countries, the presence of EU policies that are enforced by security strategies such as the crime-terror nexus, wherein a connection is drawn between Muslim-majority communities in the Balkans and terrorism and criminality, exposes the presence of Islamophobia in the EU enlargement processes.
The links between European Union security and Islamophobia are not an entirely recent phenomenon, nor an exclusive feature of the EU. While its contemporary origins can be traced in the post-Cold War “clash of civilizations” debates, academic research and media, particularly studies on terrorism and counter-terrorism after 9/11, have played a considerable role in connecting Muslims and migrants to organized crime and terrorism.² It is in this larger context that we can observe a shift in academic, policy and mediated representations of Muslims in the Balkans from being projected as threatened Europeans in the 1990s, to a representation of Muslims posing a threat to Europe in the 2000s. The following section examines the establishment of the representational praxis of Muslims in the Balkans constituting a threat to the European Union in the post-9/11 securitization discourses that were characterized by the larger “Islamic threat.”

The Balkan Route, Balkan Islam and the crime-terror nexus
In 2005, following the terrorist attacks in Madrid (2004) and London (2005), the Council of the European Union adopted the European Union Strategy for Combating Radicalization and Recruitment to Terrorism (Council of the European Union 2005). During the Slovenian Presidency of the EU in 2008, the EU Strategy for Combating Radicalization and Recruitment to Terrorism was expanded to the Western Balkans with the objective to “facilitate the development of the counter-terrorism arrangements in the Western Balkans” (Council of Europe, Committee of Experts on Terrorism 2008, p. 6). A counter-terrorist team with experts from Europol conducted visits in Albania, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Serbia, Montenegro, Croatia and Macedonia (Council of the European Union 2010, p. 3). The EU enlargement strategy was increasingly shifting from concerns over good governance and democratization to securitization and counter-terrorist measures. The establishment of the “International Law Enforcement Coordination-Units” a trans-border police project undertaken between 2008-2012 in the Western Balkans is an example of EU efforts to establish “new instruments in the fight against cross-border crime … in particular against the drug-related crimes and economic crime and the related financing of terrorism,” the objective of the project being the establishment of “structures which allow the law enforcement authorities and the judicial authorities to cooperate more closely and more swiftly in the fight against terrorism and organized crime” (Criminal Intelligence Service of Austria 2012).

² For more on the relationship between academic research on terrorism and Islamophobia, see Kundnani 2014; 2015.
This general shift towards securitization in the EU enlargement processes in the Western Balkans, and particular concerns articulated around the crime-terror nexus, need to be examined from the perspective of the broader EU politics of the last decade. EU attempts to bolster the enlargement process in the Western Balkans at the Berlin Conference in August 2014 were shaped primarily around the necessity of security measure against the spread of radical Islam and the possible security threats that may emerge from the convergence of radical Islamic networks with migrants and refugees moving through the Balkans on their way to the EU. Addressing EU enlargement fatigue and security fears, the Albanian Prime Minister Rama warned that “Europe needs the Balkans today as much as the Balkans need Europe ... because enlargement into the Balkans is, first and foremost, an issue of security for Europe” and that if “the EU is not able to show up in the way that is expected, there will be a huge space for radical Islam” (Barber 2015). Whereas the Kosovar Prime Minister Thaci reassured the EU to undertake the “necessary structural reforms, especially in the field of rule of law, fight against corruption and organised crime and the fight against all forms of extremism and terrorism” in the path towards EU integration (Embassy of Republic of Kosovo in Germany 2014, n.p.). The reassurances offered by the Albanian and Kosovar prime ministers to the EU here, seeking to address Islamophobic discourses inside the EU, illustrate the impact that far-right populist formations have had in both EU mainstream politics and in framing EU enlargement politics along security issues.

While the fatigue over EU enlargement and integration manifested in the abandonment of the EU Constitution in 2007 after the Netherlands and France voted against it in 2005, the Eurozone economic crisis of 2009 produced a rise in far-right political parties across the EU that have come to influence mainstream politics. The case of Denmark is perhaps the earliest and most evident example of this phenomenon, where the liberal Venstre Party formed a coalition with the far-right Islamophobic Danish People’s Party from 2001 to 2011 (Roemer & Straeten 2006). Similar coalitions between far-right and conservative right parties and liberal ones have characterized the last decade in most of the EU countries.3 Moreover, the recent surfacing of far-right populism, such as the English Defense League in the UK and the Patriotic Europeans against the Islamization of the West (PEGIDA) in Germany, while considered marginal, nonetheless continue to influence mainstream European

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3 See, for example, the September 2015 coalition between SYRIZA and the nationalist Independent Greeks Party. For more on this, see “Syriza's Tsipras regains Greek leadership, confirms coalition with nationalist party” 2014.
This trend cannot be considered separate from larger neoliberal reforms inside the EU and the subsequent influence they have in prioritizing security, immigration and enlargement debates in the broader shift from government to governmentality. Doyle has observed how the shift from government to neoliberal governance has “designated a presumably hostile ‘Other’ through which the collective could re-assert itself” (Doyle 2013, p. 278). In the European context, the construction of Muslims as the ultimate Other has been employed: (1) as a counterpoint by which to construct a cohesive EU identity and thereby overcome enlargement fatigue; and (2) to ease enlargement anxieties by assigning Muslim-majority countries to the periphery for EU integration, a preventative measure to secure broader EU geopolitical bordering and securitization politics.

The projection of Muslims in Balkans as the hostile Other and as a potential threat to Europe does not comprise a single discursive space; rather, it operates through multiple Islamophobic modalities and assemblages that converge in academic research, official EU polices, think-tanks, media reporting, and civil society. (See, for example, Tziampiris 2009; Erjavec & Volčič 2007; Bardos 2002; Kohlmann 2004.) While Islamophobia has been studied extensively in the United States, in the EU it has been limited to immigration debates and the internal EU secular-religious divide. Analyzing its presence in the United States, Sheehi, for instance notes:

Islamophobia does not originate in one particular administration, thinker, philosopher, activist, media outlet, special interest group, think tank, or even economic sector or industry though indeed, these actors are collectively responsible for the virulent dissemination of anti-Muslim and anti-Arab stereotypes and beliefs, circulated in order to naturalize and justify US global, economic and political hegemony. (2011, pp. 31–32)

If in the case of the United States Islamophobia is employed to naturalize and justify US global hegemony, in the EU it is employed to normalize and justify the union’s regional hegemony in the enlargement process as well as its geopolitical bordering and security strategies in the Western Balkans.

Whereas academic research projecting the Balkans as a geography of violence is rooted in Orientalist discourse—the Balkans featuring as Europe’s internal Other—the crime-terror nexus is based in Islamophobic discourse that sees...
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Muslims in the Balkans as responsible for both organized crime and terrorism. Building on the academic research on the crime-terror nexus in the Balkans, Rom, for instance, notes how “the Balkans are an ideal location for terrorism as well as organised crime black market activities. Both of these illegal activities thrive on an ability to find a market (people who are willing to engage buying/selling of goods or ideas) and an ability to evade detection by the law” (Rom 2010, p.105). Similarly, in a report published by Clingendael, the Netherlands Institute of International Relations, van Ham suggests that

A simple glance at the map indicates that the Western Balkans are uniquely positioned as a gateway between Europe on the one hand, and Asia and the Middle East on the other. Weak regional governance (from law enforcement to the judiciary) makes it easy for organised criminal networks to engage in the heroin (as well as cocaine) trade, human trafficking, counterfeiting and contraband, as well as weapons smuggling. (2014, pp. 10–11)

The convergence of all these sources, as Sheehi points out, allow for Islamophobia to act concurrently on two levels: the level of “thought, speech and perception” and “the material level of policies, violence and action” (2011, p. 32). Various security measures in the Balkans, particularly in Bosnia-Herzegovina and Kosovo, appropriate the crime-terror-nexus discourse related to the Balkans and materialize the threat suggested therein in the policing of Muslim communities. The crime-terror nexus and the production of the Balkans as a threat to European integration allows for what Ahmad has already observed to be a counter-terrorist measure inside the EU: “a rise in general discrimination against Muslims and a requirement on Muslims to distance their connection of Islamic practices and traditions” (Ahmad 2011, p. 437). Moreover, when specific communities are linked to organized crime and terrorism, their representation comes to rely on binary opposites that create good and bad subjects. In a comparative study that examines this pattern in Irish and Muslim communities in Britain, the authors argue that:

The frequent juxtaposition in the press, in political debate and policy documents of ‘the innocent Irish’ and ‘moderate Muslim’ with ‘terrorist’ and ‘extremist’ effectively leads Irish and Muslim communities to be constructed as a two-faced Janus, with the ‘law-abiding’ always defined in relation to the ‘extremist.’ Irish and Muslim communities are simultaneously and ambiguously depicted in public discourse as victims, allies and suspects, and the boundaries between the three are seen as shifting and permeable.” (Hickman et al. 2007 [1974], p. 24)

Similarly, in the Balkans, Muslim communities have come to distance themselves from certain Islamic practices in a distinctive manner by articulating
the belief that Balkan Islam is an exceptional type of Islam, that is secular, European and compatible with EU integration, unlike non-European, radical and fundamentalist Islam that may be found in the Middle East or Africa. Seeking to ease European proclivities over Muslims in the Balkans interacting or identifying with Muslims in the Middle East or Muslim migrants traveling through the Balkans, Bosnian Islamic scholar Karčić for instance argues that “the traditional Islam in the Balkans is an autochthonous Islam . . . an Islam of the local cultural roots” (Karčić 2014, n.p.). Whereas the head of the Albanian Muslim community suggests that Balkan Islam is “very acceptable to Europe and the West because it is civil” (Merdjanova 2013, p. 121). Additionally, the visibility of radicalism in Muslim communities in the Balkans is generally externalized and denounced as attempts by foreign Middle Eastern extremist groups attempting to radicalize local Balkan Muslims. The deputy minister for European integration of Kosovo for instance, addressing the influence of foreign extremist groups on local Kosovar Muslims points out that “their first purpose is to take over the Muslim community of Kosovo” (Ramadan Ilazi, quoted in Landay 2015). The externalization of radicalism to the Middle East allows for the differentiation of Balkan Islam from other Islams while simultaneously calling for the policing of the interaction of Muslims from the Balkans with those of the Middle East. Addressing the spread of Islamic extremism in the Balkans for instance, a recent report suggests that, “most of the Albanian imams from Albania, Macedonia, and Kosovo, who have studied together in the Middle East, began their ideological division” (Kosovar Center for Security Studies 2015, p. 89). These discourses not only essentialize Islam in the Balkans as monolithic and unchanging but also contribute to the institutionalization of political borders of the EU that divide Muslims in the Balkans from those in the Middle East. Indeed, during a televised interview on the danger that Islamic extremism poses to Europe, the Kosovar President Jahjaga explained how the country’s surveillance and arrest of extremists now operate as “steel doors,” preventing these people from using Kosovo “as a corridor moving toward the East or West” (Atifete Jahjaga, quoted in Snyder 2014).

The crime-terror-nexus language is also appropriated locally in Bosnia-Herzegovina, Kosovo and Albania to define and designate which Islamic practices and traditions are acceptable and which can be considered threatening to security and European integration. As Muslims in the Balkans are interpolated and hail the call to belong to Europe, the designations of “suspect,” “terrorist” and “fundamentalist” are shifted from them to their fellow Muslims in the Middle East. The concession that Muslims in the Balkans are prompted to make in appropriating the ideological exclusion of other
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Muslims not only divides them from the rest of the *Ummah* but also leads them to condone the surveillance, incarceration and policing of those Muslims who are considered to be operating outside the boundaries of Balkan Islam.

As EU-oriented elites reiterate the notion of Balkan Islam as a depoliticized and secular religion, they reinforce the idea that the EU representational mandate for Balkan Islam will serve as a defense measure against the Balkans operating as the gateway of the crime-terror nexus to Europe. This defensive iteration of the difference between Islamic communities also functions as a normalizing tool for policing Muslim communities in the larger civilizational debates that continue to project Islam in opposition to the West. Referring to the recent wholesale arrests of purported Islamic extremists, for instance, the president of Kosovo, Jahjaga, released a statement arguing that, “the government of Kosovo is determined to protect the Euro-Atlantic civilizing values” in the face of radical extremism (Vani 2014). The governments of Bosnia, Kosovo, Albania and Macedonia have all engaged in materializing this discourse by engaging in sweeping-arrest campaigns and legislative measures that seek to accommodate EU pressure to strengthen the surveillance of religious extremism and the control of their borders. The following section examines how EU external governance and bordering mechanism impose the appropriation of the crime-terror nexus in Western Balkans applying for EU membership.

Local appropriations of the crime-terror nexus

*Countries in the Middle East, North Africa and the Western Balkans are particularly concerned by the threat of foreign fighters and the radicalisation of their young population. However, such phenomena do not respect borders and the international community therefore [the EU] needs to support these countries in their efforts to stem the flow of foreign fighters and counter radicalisation. The EU has allocated €10 million for a new programme providing such support.* (European Commission 2015 [Brussels])

In March 2015, the Council of the European Union and Western Balkans applicant countries organized “Fighting Jihad Together” conference in Vienna to address “possible connections between illegal migration and terrorism” where the “Western Balkan Partners [would] commit themselves to the full implementation of the existing operational and strategic agreements with Europol” (Council of the European Union [Brussels] 2015). By April 2015 the European Commission promoted the European Agenda on Security, its three key elements being the fight against organized crime, terrorism and cyber-attacks (European Commission 2015 [Strasbourg]). In addition, that same day,
the EU Commissioner for Neighborhood and Enlargement Negotiations declared a €10 million for counter terrorist measures in the Middle East, North Africa and the Western Balkans (European Commission 2015 [Brussels]). In August 2015, gathered in Vienna, representatives of the Western Balkans “convinced that the threat posed by radicalisation, terrorism and violent extremism and in particular by foreign terrorist fighters travelling via or from Western Balkan countries to Syria and Iraq,” had to once again reiterate their commitment to “strengthened cooperation and increased exchange of information and best practices in the areas of shaping common values, preventing radicalisation, facilitating de-radicalisation and responding to terrorist activities” (Vienna Western Balkans Summit 2015 [Vienna]).

The 2014-2015 refugee and migrant crisis have intensified EU engagement of the Western Balkans in the securitization of its borders. While the primary concerns have been guided by the desire to seal and strengthen EU borders from further inflow of migrants, these initiatives have relied on the conditionalities mechanisms that the EU has used in instituting various security measures on non-EU member states. In the Western Balkans, the measures are generally undertaken under an overall framework of future EU membership.

The two main mechanisms that have facilitated the securitization process in the Balkans are the EU Stabilisation and Association Process (SAP) and the European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP). Whereas the SAP only includes countries that have been identified as potential candidates for joining the EU, the ENP designates neighboring countries that, as part of a security buffer zone, cannot become members of the EU. Van Houtum and Boedeltje have noted how the “perceived occurrence of potential terrorists, drugs smuggling, human trafficking and illegal immigration . . . all imply for the EU that the ENP partner states need to adopt the European values as soon as possible” (van Houtum & Boedeltje 2011, p. 123). The dramatic distinction between countries in the Balkans that might be integrated into the EU and those countries that are excluded is a symmetrical process that, by extension, designates which countries the EU considers acceptable for membership. According to such strategization, Albahari, for instance, notes how the EU border “becomes the iconic and spatialised container of sacredness and of national and EU ‘democratic citizenry’ to be safeguarded, and as such it needs to be continuously constructed, maintained, and related to certain popular perceptions and experiences” (2006, p. 28). Institutional and popular discourse that imbricates illicit crime and fundamentalist Islam within the Balkans acts as part of a concerted effort to produce and present EU space as supposedly safe, democratic and contained. The notion that the “democratic citizenry” of the EU must be safeguarded from extreme fundamentalist Muslims and criminals
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also justifies the continued presence of EU and NATO missions in both Bosnia-Herzegovina and Kosovo on the pretext that their governments lack the ability or willingness to tackle this threat.

These missions include various police and security mandates in Bosnia-Herzegovina and Kosovo with executive powers to establish or train local law-enforcement and security forces. In Kosovo, the police counter-terrorism units of the European Rule of Law Mission (EULEX) have trained and advised the Kosovo Police Force in its counter-terrorism efforts since 2009 (United States Department of State 2010). Similarly, in Bosnia-Herzegovina, the EU Force Althea and NATO forces have been employed with the responsibility of providing overall security and “undertak[ing] certain operational supporting tasks, such as counter-terrorism” (Kim 2006, p.4). Moreover, SFOR (Stabilization Force) and KFOR (Kosovo Force), the respective NATO military presences in Bosnia-Herzegovina and Kosovo, have been set up to enable the EU and the United States to engage directly in contra-terrorist measures. In addition, the governments of Albania, Kosovo and Bosnia-Herzegovina have recently engaged in campaigns to fight Islamic extremism. In a statement for the media, after a wide-net arrest of alleged extremists, Dusanka Majkic, chairman of the Joint Committee on Defense and Security of Bosnia, notes that the “pressure from the EU on BiH [Bosnia-Herzegovina] to solve this issue urgently is obvious. Domestic authorities and agencies must work on the repression of radical Islam. This operation is just the beginning of that process and it should be hailed” (Remikovic 2014, n.p.). These campaigns against Islamic extremism have escalated, particularly as pressure from both the EU and the United States has increased in the continued “war on terror.”

Several recent actions exemplify such campaigns. On 4 September 2014, Bosnian authorities arrested 16 citizens suspected of “having recruited, organised and financed the departure of Bosnian nationals to Syria or Iraq, or of taking part in the conflicts in Syria and Iraq alongside foreign radical terrorist organisations and groups” (Smajilhodzic 2014, n.p.). Three weeks earlier, on 11 August, the Kosovo Police Force arrested 43 alleged Islamic radicals and placed two imams under house arrest (Jihad “made in Kosovo” 2014). Before guilt was proven for any of the arrested individuals, the action was saluted by a joint declaration of the French, German, Italian, UK and US embassies in Kosovo, stating that the

fight against the spread of extremist ideologies requires the engagement of all segments of Kosovo society, as well as strong international cooperation. We are committed to working with Kosovo authorities as they exercise their
responsibilities for ensuring public safety and security within the rule of law. We call on all relevant Kosovo institutions to enhance the legal tools available to fight such security challenges. (GazetaExpress 2014)

In a further effort to respond to the call to subdue extremism, on 17 September 2014, the Kosovo government arrested another 15 persons for charges of “terrorism, threatening the constitutional order, [and] incitement of religious hate speech” (Bytyci 2014, n.p.). Among the arrested individuals were nine imams of the grand mosques of Prishtina, Peja and Mitrovica, including Fuad Muriqi, the leader of the political party LISBA (Islamic Movement to Unite). Similar to the previous incident, before any of the arrested individuals were proven guilty, the US ambassador to Kosovo, Tracey Jacobson, tweeted, “Once again, I commend Kosovo on its proactive approach against foreign fighters and extremism” (Bytyci 2014, n.p.). While the Kosovo Court of Appeals rejected the basic court’s request to keep the majority of the arrested men in custody due to lack of evidence (Kursani 2015), the European Union Commission, in the Kosovo Progress Report 2014, makes no reference to the violation of these citizens’ human rights. Rather, the commission notes, in the subsection on religious freedom, “there has been sustained progress in the field of freedom of thought, conscience and religion” (European Union Commission 2014 p. 18).

Arrests of prominent members, imams, and leaders of the Muslim communities in Kosovo and Bosnia-Herzegovina act to discredit leaders and communities that have been identified as a threat to the EU, while promoting a homogenized hierarchical leadership of Islam in Kosovo that speaks on behalf of the Muslim community as whole. More demonstrably, whether intended or not, these arrests act to secure and institutionalize the separation of Muslims in the Balkans from the rest of the Muslim world. In this context, it might be considered that the EU assigns the political leverage of conditional membership by imposing and enforcing expectations on the governments of Bosnia-Herzegovina and Kosovo. These countries must thus prove their EU political orientation by policing the EU borders in the periphery and separating Balkan Muslims from the rest of the Muslim world.

Seeking to address the proclivities of EU fears of a constellation of the crime-terror nexus in the Balkans, the governments of Albania, Bosnia-Herzegovina and Kosovo, in addition to making sweeping arrests of purported Islamic fundamentalists, have institutionalized various legal frameworks that explicitly make reference to and target Muslim communities. The Republic of Kosovo National Strategy against Terrorism, for instance, explicitly states:
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The geostrategic position of Kosovo creates the possibility to make our country as a target transit country for illegal activities and various trafficking, this position also poses a risk for spreading the terrorist syndrome particularly the one based on the religious fundamentalism. In this light, the religious composition of our population with Muslim majority can be used as an alibi to change the focus from other elements that are present in Kosovo and in region for various political purposes. (Republic of Kosovo 2012, p. 7)

Similarly, the Strategy for Combating Terrorism in Bosnia and Herzegovina, submitted by the BiH Delegation to the European Council, notes that the geostrategic position of Bosnia-Herzegovina makes it susceptible to international terrorism by virtue of being placed on the intersection of routes that originate in areas whose instability may reflect on B&H. This is especially true for the South Mediterranean and Northern Africa, the Middle East and the Caucasus region. In these regions, destabilized by crises, conflicts and high demographic growth, and by decreasing energy resources, crises are transferred more and more toward the European continent and its weakest links. (Committee of Experts on Terrorism 2006, p.3)

Similarly, the Albanian National Strategy for the War on Organised Crime, Trafficking and Terrorism designates the National Security Services to focus on those objectives which are considered a priority of the state in the European integration process of Albania, specifically in dealing with potential terrorist threats, characterised primarily by Islamic fundamentalism, or organised crime, drug trafficking. (Republic of Albania, Ministry of Finance, 2008, n.p.)

Existing fears of “home-grown terrorism” are being extended from the euro zone to the Eastern frontier as part of implementing the ideals and enforcement of EU enlargement. This happens by way of expanding to the periphery the security strategies and structures used to police Muslims in the center; on the periphery, however, they are assembled under the broader framework of EU enlargement processes.

Conclusion
This article has challenged the EU securitization and enlargement policies in the Western Balkans as unproblematic processes of combating cross-border organized crime and terrorist networks. Examining EU’s explicit and implicit linkage of Muslims in the Balkans with organized crime and terrorism, I have attempted to demonstrate how Islamophobia is not just limited to far-right movements, but constitutes an extension of mainstream EU enlargement
policies. I suggest that this is particularly visible in the shift of EU enlargement debates from the 1990s, which were predominantly framed around post-conflict and (post)socialist instability, toward increased concerns over organized crime and terrorism that has accompanied the integration of Muslim-majority countries. This shift is not just relevant in exposing EU Islamophobia but more importantly revealing how the securitization policies that the EU has pressed on Muslim majority countries in the larger enlargement processes have contributed to the surveillance and violence on Muslim communities and in the case of Bosnia-Herzegovina and Kosovo has suspended sovereignty through the continued presence of EU police and justice missions in the name of EU integration and security.

Moreover, when appropriated locally, EU securitization measures influence the local policing of what are acceptable Islamic practices, which frequently results in the establishment of suspect communities and the depoliticization of Muslim communities by relegating Islam only to the private sphere. The defensive articulation of Balkan Islam as secular, peaceful and European against the “newer” radical strains of Islam allegedly coming from the Middle East is one such example discussed in this article. This tacit externalization of radicalism and its interpellation as un-European allows for the partition of Muslims in the Balkans from the larger Muslim world in the name of EU integration while simultaneously producing the EU as a space free of radicalism, violence and extremism. Last but not least, Islamophobia prevents the emergence of common narratives of oppression and resistance among peripheries, particularly of those communities with common historical pasts. As the crime-terror nexus report suggests, the spatial and temporal configurations of the political borders of the EU seek to limit the connections among Muslims inside the EU with those outside its borders, particularly the Western Balkans, the Middle East and Africa.

It is important to note that since the focus of this article is primarily Islamophobia located in the EU enlargement security strategies and their impact on Muslim communities in the Balkans, its scope is too limited to make broader generalizations about Islamophobia in the larger EU enlargement processes. New research that examines non-self-evident manifestations of Islamophobia imbricated not just in enlargement politics but also in internal EU policies is needed. Particularly critical interrogation of EUs claim to not see religion at the expense of silencing Muslims while positioning its secular standards on Muslims as the invisible universal norm, against which particular Muslim others are constructed. This research would complicate the understanding of secularism as a universal and neutral norm by questioning its
unproblematic employment by the EU which allows for an assimilationist discourse that renders those Muslims who resist the secularist notions of EU citizenship, as problematic, threatening, extremists, suspects, etc. There is also need for field based research that will systematically examine the impact of EU counter-terrorist and external migrant control measures on Muslim majority countries, not just in the Western Balkans but also in the Middle East and North Africa where the EU continues to fund various counter-terrorist and migrant control projects.

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