



**GLOBAL
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AGAINST TRANSNATIONAL
ORGANIZED CRIME

DANGEROUS GAMES

FOOTBALL HOOLIGANISM, POLITICS AND
ORGANIZED CRIME IN THE WESTERN BALKANS

Saša Đorđević | Ruggero Scaturro

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Saša Đorđević is a field coordinator at the GI-TOC, conducting research on organized crime and supporting civil society in Serbia and Montenegro. Previously, Saša assessed the impact of the strategy against violence in sports in Serbia and advocated a regional cooperation framework against hooliganism in the Western Balkans. He is currently a PhD candidate at the Faculty of Criminal Justice and Security in Slovenia.

Ruggero Scaturro is an analyst at the GI-TOC, conducting research on the Western Balkans and on Italian mafia-related issues. His main areas of interest and expertise are organized crime in south and south-eastern Europe, with a specific focus on the history of Cosa Nostra and its ties with other criminal networks across the Mediterranean.

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Cover photo: A FC Partizan fan lights a torch during the Serbian Super League play-off match against FC Red Star, April 2018. © *Srdjan Stevanovic via Getty Images*

Please direct inquiries to:
The Global Initiative Against Transnational Organized Crime
Avenue de France 23
Geneva, CH-1202
Switzerland
www.globalinitiative.net

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Legendary Italian coach Arrigo Sacchi called football 'the most important of the unimportant things in life'.¹ This is certainly true in the six countries known as the Western Balkan 6 (WB6) – Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo, Montenegro, North Macedonia and Serbia. Teams in the region have a loyal following, national teams are proudly supported, while star footballers who play abroad are feted at home and in the major European football leagues.²

However, the WB6 also have a reputation for football hooliganism, as when fans chant racist and nationalist slogans, and fight with the followers of rival teams. This problem is by no means unique to the WB6; football hooliganism was labelled the 'English disease' in the 1980s, long before it became a problem in the Western Balkans. However, football hooliganism in the WB6 is a potentially explosive cocktail because of its links to politics, ethnic and religious extremism, and organized crime.

Football hooliganism has received considerable attention from sociologists and anthropologists, who analyze its cultural aspects,³ and the police, who look at how to prevent and control it.⁴ However, few studies have considered the relationship between football hooliganism and organized crime. Unlike studies that focus on football hooliganism in particular countries like Croatia or Serbia, where there is extensive research into the links between football and violence,⁵ this report fills a gap by analyzing the issue from a broader, regional perspective.

The report begins by mapping the major football supporters' clubs in each of the Western Balkan countries. It provides a brief overview of fan groups, including their organizational structure, communication modes and use of national, ethnic and religious symbols. It then identifies which of these groups can be considered 'ultras' (i.e. a type of football fan association, see definition box below). Further analysis singles out which of these ultras groups demonstrate attributes of football hooliganism, and how this hooliganism is linked to organized crime and politics. Sorting ultras groups in this way helps to differentiate between those that simply support their clubs, albeit in a fanatical way, and others that engage in organized crime and violence. This report is careful to make a distinction between ultras and football hooligans. Ultras are understood to be groups of hard core football fans affiliated to a particular team; football hooligans engage in violence within the football milieu and some of these hooligans are involved in organized crime.



FC Partizan fans light fireworks during a match in Belgrade, March 2020. © Nikola Krstic/MB Media via Getty Images

The research shows that of 122 fan groups in the WB6, 78 were identified as ultras and 21 engage in violent acts of hooliganism, and also have links to politics and/or organized crime. From the quantity and range of incidents, groups in Serbia are of most concern followed by those in Bosnia and Herzegovina. In establishing links between the ultras and organized crime in the WB6, the report examines why young people – predominantly men – join such groups. It also examines the ultras' levels of violence, and then considers the extent of their links to politics and organized crime.

The report recommends paying greater attention to the social conditions that motivate vulnerable youth to become involved in football hooliganism, which can serve as an entry point for organized crime. It also suggests ways to identify and sever the links between hooligan groups and organized crime.

Football hooliganism in the WB6 is a potentially explosive cocktail because of its links to politics, ethnic and religious extremism, and organized crime.



METHODOLOGY

Information for this report was gathered from secondary sources covering violence in sports; crime and extremism; strategies, laws, regulations and other official documents addressing the problem; news and investigative reports; a football fan web portal;⁶ and a forum that provides the latest news and reports from football supporters worldwide.⁷ The researchers also conducted semi-structured interviews with journalists and experts on football and sport, violence and organized crime. Interviewees also included fans from clubs with a reputation for hooliganism in Banja Luka (Bosnia and Herzegovina), Belgrade (Serbia), Podgorica (Montenegro) and Skopje (North Macedonia). Most of them agreed to talk on condition of anonymity.

The authors analyzed 122 fan groups in the WB6 to determine which of these groups qualify as noteworthy ultras groups. For all these fan groups, two macro-questions were asked, one aimed at establishing the size of the football club they support, and the other at estimating the relevance and reach of the group at local and national levels. Based on the chosen definition of ultras and these criteria, 78 ultras groups were identified in the WB6 (for more on the methodology see Annexure 1).

Defining the ultras

Football 'ultras' as a phenomenon and an expression originated in Italy in the late 1960s and spread to south-eastern Europe in the 1980s. United by an extreme and passionate support of their football club, ultras are well-organized associations of football fans, often with a strong attachment to a particular urban district, political ideology or ethnic affiliation. Initially, in Italy ultras would display political-party banners and flags in the stadiums, and chant political slogans. Political and football

passions, combined with a kind of tribal attachment to a particular neighbourhood or city, might trigger violence, particularly directed against other ultras. Since the 1980s, however, such political and local ties have waned, giving way to acts of hooliganism against rival groups and the police (see definition in the following info-box).⁸ That said, not all members of ultras groups are violent hooligans.⁹ In fact, the violence perpetrated by some ultras is often the reason why devoted fans leave their groups.¹⁰ ■

A closer examination of the 78 ultras groups ascertained which of them also fitted the criteria of hooligan groups, and shed light on the existence of any link to organized crime.

Football hooligans

The *Oxford Dictionary* refers to hooliganism as 'violent or rowdy behaviour by young troublemakers, typically in a gang'.¹¹ The word 'hooliganism' is often preceded by the word 'football'. Extremism, good levels of organization and political identity are typical characteristics of both ultras and hooligan groups. But whereas ultras are defined by their members' fanatical devotion to their team, hooligans are simply bent on violence, motivated by extremism or engaged in criminal activity

under the guise of being football supporters. In short, hooliganism refers to a 'cover-all sense meant to represent a rather violent section of ultras, organized in groups which manifest an extremist ethnic, religious, or political identity through the use of verbal and/or physical violence, and through activities causing "harm" of different kinds and extents to society including the committing of crimes (both petty and organized).'¹² ■

To do so, we analyzed each group based on three main questions:

1. Do members of this group engage in particularly violent behaviour?
2. Do members of this group display an extremist political view?
3. Do members of this group commit crime as part of the group activity?¹³

To answer these questions, we employed two qualitative research activities. Firstly, we undertook desk research of available media and other reports, including case law, of clashes between ultras or between ultras and law enforcement authorities. Secondly, we conducted semi-structured interviews with stakeholders, such as members (or former members) of ultras groups, journalists, academics, experts on violence and urban security, and law enforcement authorities.

We then analyzed this information further using short-answer questions with a yes/no response applicable to each of the three questions listed above. This research phase aimed to trace and assess the threat posed by the ultras, focusing on the modalities and (when possible) the frequency of clashes and incidents.

Research question 1: Do members of this ultras group engage in particularly violent behaviour?

- 1.1 Are members of this group involved in fights and clashes?
- 1.2 Do members of this group conduct attacks on the public/society (e.g., vandalism)?
- 1.3 Do members of this group fight with the police?
- 1.4 Are members of this group convicted/investigated after fights?
- 1.5 Have members of this group caused death or serious injury in their use of violence?

Research question 2: Do members of this group manifest/display an extremist political view?

- 2.1 Does this group have an extremist political identity (including ethnic and religious)?
- 2.2 Is there any connection between this group and a political party?
- 2.3 Is politics a reason for clashes for members of this group?
- 2.4 Is this group connected (directly or indirectly) to any paramilitary group/militia?

Research question 3: Do members of this group commit any crime in relation to the group activity?

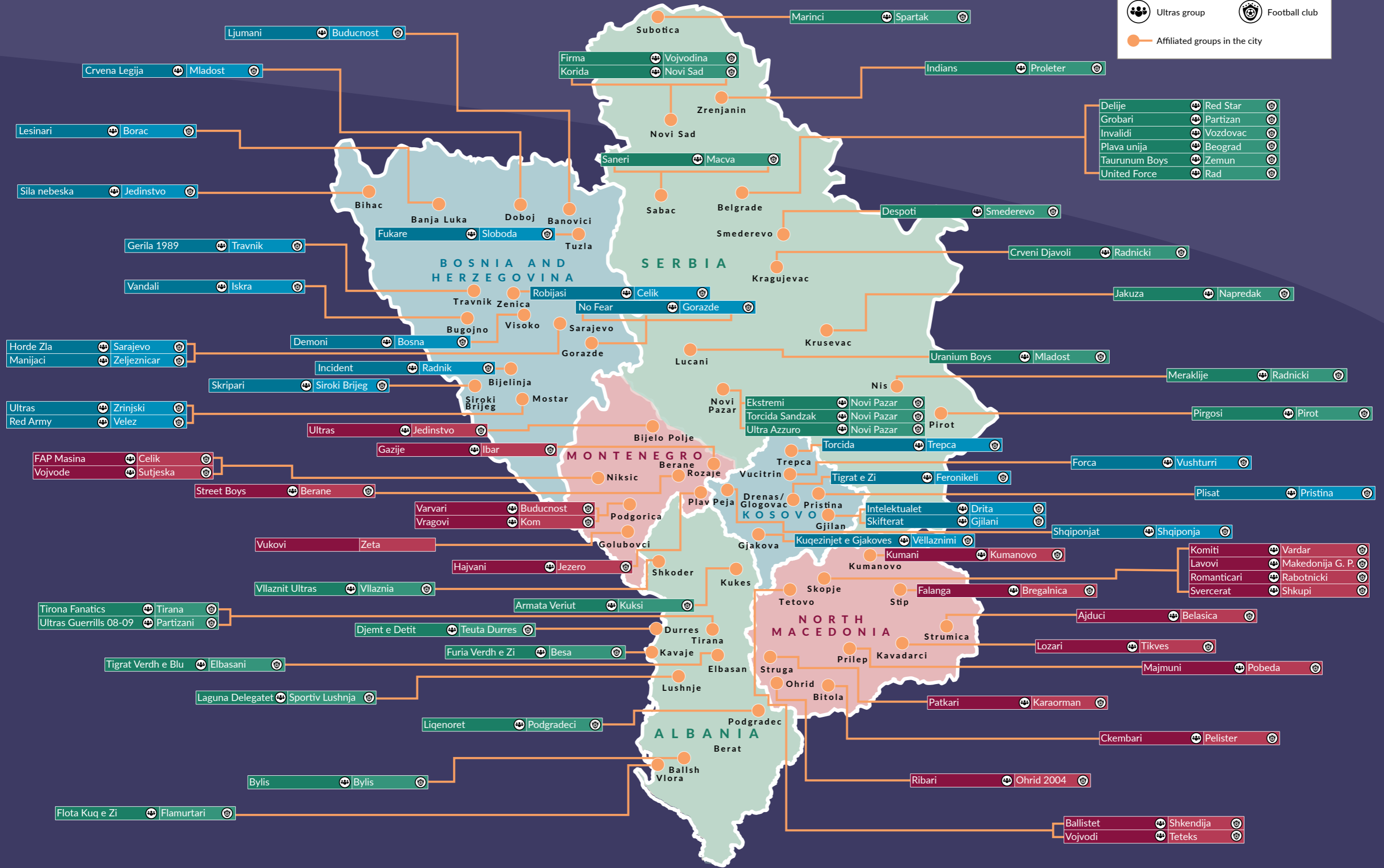
- 3.1 Are members of this group involved in any crime (drug dealing, robberies)?
- 3.2 Do members of this group involved in serious/organized crime (arms trafficking, drug trafficking, extortion, kidnapping)?
- 3.3 Do leaders of this group use their position to recruit youngsters to commit crimes?

This analysis identified 21 ultras groups that can be characterized as comprising hooligans who commit violent acts and are linked to extreme political movements and/or organized crime. For more on the methodology, see Annexure 2.

ULTRAS GROUPS IDENTIFIED IN THE WESTERN BALKANS

Key:

- Ultras group
- Football club
- Affiliated groups in the city





BALKAN ULTRAS: A REVIEW OF THE MOST RELEVANT GROUPS

Many local and national football clubs in the WB6 have a long, proud history with die-hard followers, whose loyalty is based on ethnic identity or civic pride in a particular city or neighbourhood. National teams also have loyal and sometimes violent supporters. This section lists the major football clubs in the Western Balkans, along with their fan groups.

Albania

Albania's football supporter groups are active mainly in the major cities. The capital, Tirana, is home to two main groups: the left-leaning Ultras Guerrills 08-09, which supports FC Partizani, and rivals Tirana Fanatics, supporters of FC Tirana. In addition to significant support in Tirana, Ultras Guerrills is popular among Albanians living in North Macedonia and Kosovo, as well as among the Albanian diaspora in Norway and Sweden. The red of the Guerrills banner and of members' shirts and scarves makes them easily recognizable in the stands. Tirana Fanatics are a right-wing supporter group that has friendly relations with Shvercerat, the FC Shkupi supporters from Skopje, North Macedonia. This popularity is based on the web of family, linguistic and ethnic ties binding Albanian communities in Albania and North Macedonia.¹⁴

The main opponents of the Tirana-based group are Vllaznit Ultras (FC Vllaznia) from Shkoder, in north-west Albania, and Djemt e Detit, supporting FC Teuta Durrës.

NAME OF THE GROUP	MEANING OF NAME	FOOTBALL CLUB	CITY
Armata Veriut	Army of the North	FC Kukesi	Kukes
Bylis	–	FC Bylis	Ballsh
Djemt e Detit	Boys of the Sea	FC Teuta Durres	Durres
Flota Kuq e Zi	Red and Black Fleet	FC Flamurtari	Vlora
Furia Verdh e Zi	Black and Yellow Fury	FC Besa	Kavaje
Laguna Delegatet	Delegates of the Lagoon	FC Sportiv Lushnja	Lushnje
Liqenoret	The Lakes	FC Podgradeci	Podgradec
Tigrat Verdh e Blu	Blue and Yellow Tigers	FC Elbasani	Elbasan
Tirona Fanatics	–	FC Tirana	Tirana
Ultras Guerrills 08-09	–	FC Partizani	Tirana
Vllaznit Ultras	–	FC Vllaznia	Shkodra

FIGURE 1 Main ultras in Albania.

Bosnia and Herzegovina

In major cities, like Sarajevo, fan clubs are based around specific neighbourhoods. In Sarajevo – which has 27 football teams – the two biggest are FC Zeljeznicar, supported by the ultras group Manijaci 1987, and FC Sarajevo, supported by Horde Zla. The big rival of the two Sarajevo ultras groups is Robijasi, which supports FC Celik from the city of Zenica.

In Banja Luka in the Republika Srpska (the second-largest city in the country), the biggest group is Lesinari, supporting FC Borac. In the south-western part of the country, where Croats are the majority, the biggest group is Skripari, which supports FC Siroki Brijeg as well as the Croatian national team. In Mostar, a city where Croats and Bosniaks are almost equally present, ethnic and football rivalries overlap. A fan group known as Ultras supports FC Zrinjski, which is popular among the city's Croat population. Red Army, meanwhile, has Bosniak affiliations and backs FC Velez.

Derbies between these teams often end in violence. Those involved usually go unpunished or are given a minimal sentence. The most common sanction is a fine for the club because of poor security management, which does not affect violent ultras.¹⁵

NAME OF GROUP	MEANING OF NAME	FOOTBALL CLUB	CITY
Crvena Legija	Red Legion	FC Mladost	Doboj
Demoni	Demons	FC Bosna	Visoko
Fukare	The Wretches	FC Sloboda	Tuzla
Gerila 1989	Guerrilla 1989	FC Travnik	Travnik
Ultras	–	FC Zrinjski	Mostar
Horde Zla	Hordes of Evil	FC Sarajevo	Sarajevo
Incident	–	FC Radnik	Bijeljina
Lesinari	Vultures	FC Borac	Banja Luka
Ljumani	Humans	FC Buducnost	Banovici
Manijaci	Maniacs	FC Zeljeznicar	Sarajevo
No Fear	–	FC Gorazde	Gorazde
Red Army	–	FC Velez	Mostar
Robijasi	Prisoners	FC Celik	Zenica
Sila Nebeska	Heavenly Power	FC Jedinstvo	Bihac
Skripari	Crusaders	FC Siroki Brijeg	Siroki Brijeg
Vandali	Vandals	FC Iskra	Bugojno

FIGURE 2 Main ultras in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Kosovo

Although Kosovo is a small country with few football clubs, supporters' groups enjoy considerable popularity. Most of these fan clubs are based in the capital, Pristina, and in Mitrovica in the north of the country. Plisat, supporters of FC Pristina, is one of the most prominent ethnic Albanian groups in the WB6, popular not only in its home city, Pristina, but everywhere in the Western Balkans where sizeable ethnic-Albanian communities are found.

NAME OF THE GROUP	MEANING OF NAME	FOOTBALL CLUB	CITY
Forca	Force	FC Vushtrri	Vushtrri
Skifterat	Falcon	FC Gjilani	Gjilan
Intelektualet	Intellectuals	FC Drita	Gjilan
Kuqezinjet e Gjakoves	Red and Blacks of Gjakova	FC Vëllaznimi	Gjakova
Tigrat e Zi	The Black Tigers	FC Feronikeli	Drenas
Plisat	The Clods	FC Pristina	Pristina
Shqiponjat	Eagles	FC Shqiponja	Peja
Torcida 1984	Twisted/Crooked	FC Trepca	Mitrovica

FIGURE 3 Main ultras in Kosovo.

Montenegro

In Montenegro, as elsewhere in the WB6, ethnicity is the deciding factor for club affiliation. Montenegrins support local teams, while Serbian clubs such as FC Red Star and FC Partizan enjoy the support of ethnic Serbs. In the Bosniak-dominated cities of Rozaje and Plav, the ultras groups Gazije and Hajvani support local clubs, while in Ulcinj, where Albanians are the majority, FC Otrant-Olympic is popular.

NAME OF THE GROUP	MEANING OF NAME	FOOTBALL CLUB	CITY
FAP Masina	Strong Machine	FC Celik	Niksic
Gazije	Warriors	FC Ibar	Rozaje
Hajvani	Rampages	FC Jezero	Plav
Ultras	—	FC Jedinstvo	Bijelo Polje
Street Boys	—	FC Berane	Berane
Varvari	Barbarians	FC Buducnost	Podgorica
Vojvode	Dukes	FC Sutjeska	Niksic
Vragovi	Devils	FC Kom	Podgorica
Vukovi	Wolves	FC Zeta	Golubovci

FIGURE 4 Main ultras in Montenegro.



Members of the Varvari ultras group show their support for the local Montenegrin team FC Buducnost before a match in Podgorica. © Filip Filipovic/MB Media via Getty Images

North Macedonia

The most influential ultras groups are in the capital, Skopje, where Macedonians form the majority. Komiti supports FC Vardar and is the country's dominant fan group, both in numbers and power. Another important group in Skopje is Shvercerat, which supports FC Shkupi – a club popular with the city's ethnic Albanian community. In Tetovo, a city in the north-western part of the country where Albanians are the majority, Ballistet supports FC Shkendija, while Vojvodi are supporters of FC Teteks. In the south of the country, there are several groups: Ckembari from Bitola supports FC Pelister; while fans of FC Pobeda from Prilep are Majmuni. FC Ohrid 2004 fans are Ribari, and Ajduci supports FC Belasica in Strumica. The most influential group in the north part of the country is Kumani, which supports FC Kumanovo.

NAME OF THE GROUP	MEANING	FOOTBALL CLUB	CITY
Ajduci	Outlaws	FC Belasica	Strumica
Ballistet	Nationalistic Front	FC Shkendija	Tetovo
Ckembari	Fatsos	FC Pelister	Bitola
Falanga	Phalanx	FC Bregalnica	Shtip
Komiti	Committees	FC Vardar	Skopje
Kumani	From Kumanovo	FC Kumanovo	Kumanovo
Lavovi	Lions	FC Makedonija GP	Skopje
Lozari	Winegrowers	FC Tikvesh	Kavadarci
Majmuni	Monkeys	FC Pobeda	Prilep
Patkari	Duck Hunters	FC Karaorman	Struga
Ribari	Fishermen	FC Ohrid 2004	Ohrid
Romanticari	Romantics	FC Rabotnicki	Skopje
Svercerat	Smugglers	FC Shkupi	Skopje
Vojvodi	Dukes	FC Teteks	Tetovo

FIGURE 5 Main ultras in North Macedonia.

Serbia

Serbia is home to the most well-established network of football supporters in the region, mostly concentrated in the capital, Belgrade, and other major cities. Belgrade has six major ultras groups, including Delije (which support FC Red Star) and Grobari (which support rivals FC Partizan). In addition, numerous subgroups compete for control over stands in the stadium, even though they may support the same club.¹⁶

The city of Novi Sad is another major ultras stronghold, with four dominant groups. Two of these support local teams, Firma for FC Vojvodina and Korida for FC Novi Sad. The other two groups form part of the Belgrade-based groups Delije and Grobari.



Ultras culture in the Western Balkans is steeped in national, ethnic, religious and football-related symbolism that proudly expresses the affiliations of the fans. © Srdjan Stevanovic via Getty Images

NAME OF THE GROUP	MEANING OF NAME	FOOTBALL CLUB	CITY
Crveni Djavoli	Red Devils	FC Radnicki	Kragujevac
Delije	Braves	FC Red Star	Belgrade
Ekstremi	Extremes	FC Novi Pazar	Novi Pazar
Firma	Firm/Company	FC Vojvodina	Novi Sad
Grobari	Gravediggers	FC Partizan	Belgrade
Indians	—	FC Proleter	Zrenjanin
Invalidi	Invalids	FC Vozdovac	Belgrade
Jakuza	Yakuza	FC Napredak	Krusevac
Korida	Bullfighters	FC Novi Sad	Novi Sad
Marinci	Marines	FC Spartak	Subotica
Meraklije	Living Life to the Fullest	FC Radnicki	Nis
Pirgosi	Defenders	FC Pirot	Pirot
Plava Unija	Blue Union	FC Beograd	Belgrade
Saneri	Fence (criminal)	FC Macva	Sabac
Despoti	Despots	Smederevo	Smederevo
Taurunum Boys	Boys from Zemun	FC Zemun	Belgrade
Torcida Sandzak	—	FC Novi Pazar	Novi Pazar
Ultra Azzuro	—	FC Novi Pazar	Novi Pazar
United Force	—	FC Rad	Belgrade
Uranium Boys	—	FC Mladost	Lucani

FIGURE 6 Main ultras in Serbia.



Graffiti on a Belgrade wall celebrates Serbian poet and FC Partizan fan Dusko Radovic, with the message 'Today is Sunday (match day)'. © Oliver Bunic via Getty Images



LINKS TO ORGANIZED CRIME: JOINING AND MOBILIZING THE ULTRAS

This section looks at why young people join ultras groups, and how such groups are also an entry point for organized crime. It also examines the ultras group hierarchy and the communication methods used to mobilize members.

Why join an ultras group?

People join ultras groups because they love the sport and their team; becoming part of a group enhances that emotional connection. Membership also provides a sense of belonging, a shared identity and a stake in events that are full of drama, ritual and pageantry.¹⁷ Ultras are also usually well-organized, and this gives youngsters something that they may lack elsewhere – a structure, rules for promotion and a sense of community, identity and belonging.¹⁸

Family ties and connection to one's childhood neighbourhood exert a strong influence over which ultra to join.¹⁹ From an early age, children learn to cheer for their parents' favoured team, while adolescents may follow their friends and other role models.²⁰ Ultras membership also brings tangible benefits, such as access to team memorabilia, opportunities to travel to away games, free match tickets and socializing with like-minded people.



Young North Macedonia national team fans taunt their rivals. © Mike Egerton/EMPICS via Getty Images

Small steps towards criminality

Participant behaviour within ultras groups often resembles that of criminal groups, where youngsters imitate the behaviour of older members to win the acceptance of their peers. They may attack the police or rival fans and carry out other criminal deeds.²¹ These activities then serve as the entry point for further criminal acts. In an interview, one FC Partizan fan explained that some youngsters join ultras groups in the belief that membership is an opportunity to earn easy money selling drugs.²² They might be given a scooter to help distribute the drugs, which the courier then keeps as a reward.²³ For criminals embedded in ultras groups, teenagers are useful because they can sell drugs in cooperation with friends, they are eager to prove themselves and they are easy to manipulate. Furthermore, as minors, they are treated more leniently by the legal justice system when they are caught.²⁴

Young people who demonstrate loyalty and prowess can progress through the ranks into other activities, like selling harder drugs; providing security at team events, political rallies or night clubs;²⁵ couriering messages; and racketeering. They can then make more money, possibly start their own business and even earn protection from prosecution.²⁶ The family of a loyal foot soldier may receive financial help from the ultras group if they get into trouble with the law.²⁷

Moving up the ranks

Young ultras in the Western Balkans must demonstrate bravery, courage and readiness to do anything for the group, including acts of violence. These same traits make them attractive to criminal groups. It starts with small things, like not paying for a bus ticket to the stadium or stealing alcohol. The next step may be to light a flare in front of surveillance cameras or provoke the police in some way.

Youngsters become further enmeshed in crime by using violence to intimidate and injure their rivals, while also participating in other acts of petty criminality. In this way, young ultras gain a reputation for thuggery, which then attracts the attention of football hooligans with links to figures in the criminal world.

In some cases, carrying out an act of violence is part of the initiation into the ultras group. To become a member of the notorious United Force ultra, in Belgrade, it is customary to stab someone with a knife.²⁸ Meanwhile to move up the ranks of the Principi ultra, one of the most ruthless criminal hooligan groups in Serbia, a member must 'bleed' another group member by inflicting grievous bodily harm, on the understanding that this 'vow' builds trust within the group. In such cases, ultras cross a line and become hooligans. From these acts of violence and criminality, which can include destruction of property, grievous bodily harm or even murder, it is an easy transition to enter an organized criminal group.²⁹



Serbian riot police officers clash with Red Star fans during the final match of the Serbian Cup between FC Partizan and FC Red Star, May 2017. © Srdjan Stevanovic via Getty Images

Organized crime, politics and the case of Veljko Belivuk

One of the most notorious criminal hooligans in the Western Balkans is Veljko Belivuk, who has been in custody awaiting trial since February 2021. In the early years of the 2000s, Belivuk gained a reputation for violence as a member of the United Force ultra. He worked his way up through the ranks by selling drugs and providing 'protection' and enforcement, and was later rewarded for his loyalty with a job in a private security business.

He then moved to the lower structures of another ultra, Alcatraz, which supports FC Partizan. In 2013, and with the help of convicted drug dealer Aleksandar Stankovic, he took over the leadership of FC Partizan stands with the Janjicari group. This gave the pair control of drug trafficking and also power over the stands inside the stadium, meaning they could direct chanting at the games for political purposes. Stankovic was murdered in 2016 in a hit that is thought to be linked to organized crime.³⁰ After the murder,

FC Partizan players wore t-shirts to games emblazoned with Stankovic's face.³¹ Belivuk then changed the group name to Principi.

In 2021, police arrested Belivuk and 29 other Principi members for homicides, rape and drug-related criminal offences.³² However, the prosecution and police did not investigate possible links between Belivuk, the security sector and political parties, in spite of public speculation and media reports that Belivuk enjoyed political protection.³³ A former Serbian prosecutor and supreme court judge has suggested that Belivuk ran an 'army' of hooligans and could easily recruit others. It is also alleged that Belivuk has collaborators in the police, as Principi members allegedly used police badges and hideout houses to carry out their criminal activities.³⁴ The Belivuk case provides a snapshot of the links between football hooliganism, violence, politics and organized crime. ■

Organizational structure

Loyalty is the bedrock for ultras' organizational structure in the Western Balkans; loyalty to the football team and the ultra, but also (particularly in criminal hooligan groups) to group leaders.³⁵ Ultras are organized into five- or six-member cells that control parts of city districts. Graffiti marking the walls in these areas is a good indicator of territorial boundaries.³⁶ Each cell leader coordinates group activities and, in contact with the leaders of other cells, mobilizes the fan base through announcements about gatherings and meetings. The leader of the ultras group is usually chosen on the basis of experience, years spent in the stands and commitment to the group, as well as his charisma and authority.³⁷ However, in some cases, an outsider with a criminal background may take control of a group and use football as a cover for their illegal activities.³⁸



In a display of ownership and strength, members of the Manijaci ultras group have 'tagged' this area of Sarajevo in Bosnia and Herzegovina with graffiti.

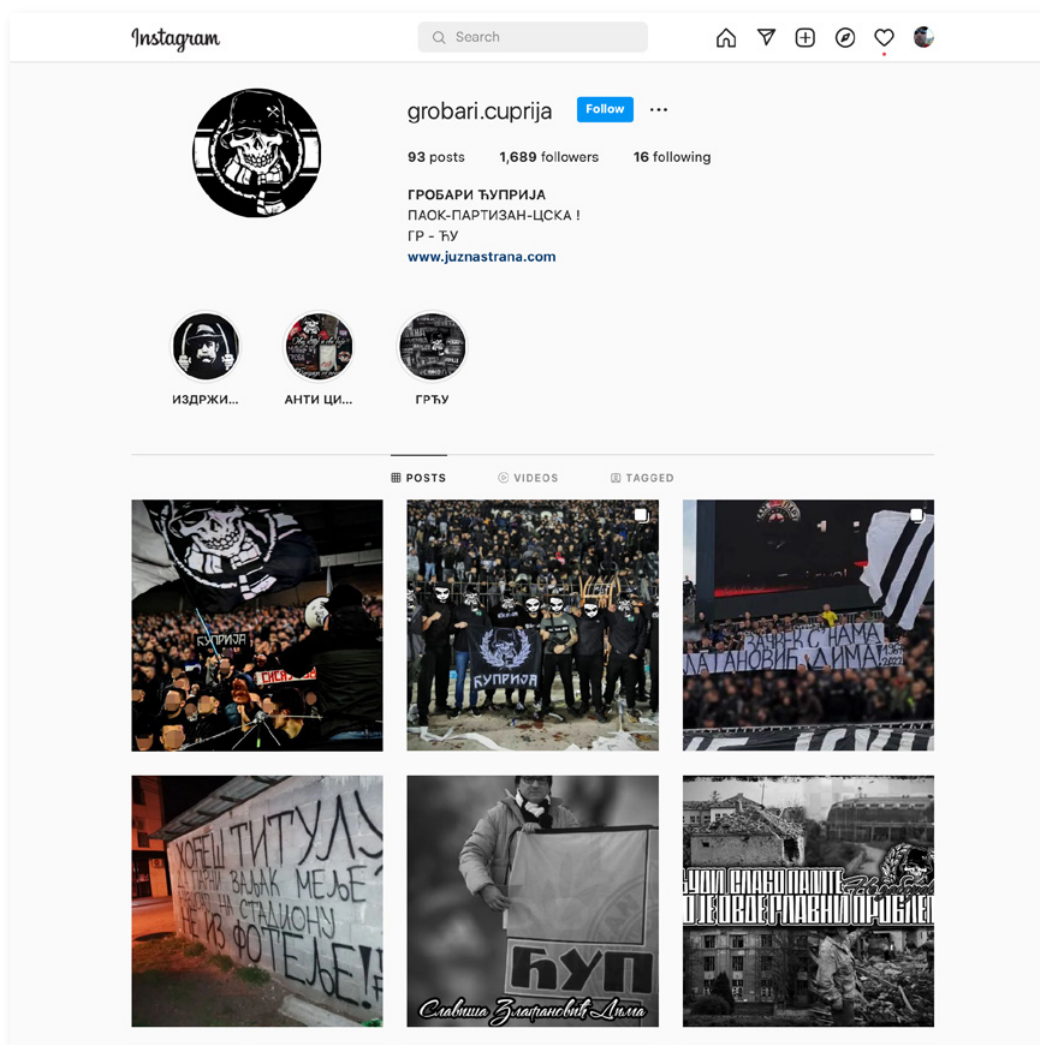
© Nedim Grabovica/Klix.ba

Communication

Ultras use a number of messaging apps, including Facebook, Viber, WhatsApp and, increasingly, Instagram, to promote activities, recruit new members, make announcements, and plan action against rival groups and the police.³⁹

Official ultras groups social media accounts broadcast news of events, offer merchandise and promote the fan group and team, while unofficial and closed-for-public pages are used for messaging.⁴⁰ Some criminal groups with football hooligans as members also use more sophisticated communication tools that come with added security features. For example, Belivuk's group used the subscription-based, end-to-end encrypted messaging application Sky ECC to plan activities.⁴¹ However, the US Department of Justice put an end to this in early 2021.⁴²

In the same way that the group dynamics in stadiums give fans a sense of belonging, social media networks provide a platform for ultras members to reinforce values and share group experiences by posting about the groups' activities. The pictures and videos tend to show a limited range of subjects: food, tattoos, fight poses, club merchandise, fashion, videos of chants, pictures of banners and graffiti, and pictures and videos of riots and fights with rival groups and the police. These posts reinforce the ultras' reputation, both among members and the broader public of fans and football supporters.



Grobari's Instagram page shows their support for FC Partizan.



Fans pose with a T-55 tank before the match between FC Red Star and FC Young Boys, August 2019, Belgrade.
© Srdjan Stevanovic/Getty Images

Unlike violent extremist or terrorist groups, ultras are neither illegal nor do they try to actively shape opinion. There is little need for online recruitment, since young people join fan groups of their own accord. Indoctrination into extreme nationalism or recruitment into criminal groups usually takes place offline, either in stadiums or through personal contacts with hooligan or ultras groups.

Using social media for criminal ends

Hooligans involved in organized crime use social media to send threatening messages.⁴³ For example, it appears that the Belivuk criminal group used YouTube to post videos announcing a killing. A video posted on 22 March 2020 on the South Side (a sub-group of the Grobari) YouTube profile⁴⁴ shows two men dressed as police officers discussing reasons for murdering someone before the start of a COVID-19-related curfew. One of the characters in the video explains: 'I know where his house is. He wouldn't make it.' Then he pulls the trigger of a gun. In what appears to have been a warning or a threat, the video was posted after a Belivuk group member, Goran Velickovic Gogsi, was released from prison. The prosecution accused the Belivuk group of murdering Velickovic in early August 2020, allegedly in response to the theft of drugs worth €200 000.⁴⁵

Social media posts also indicate that some ultras members are involved in paramilitary activities. Firma's unofficial

Instagram profile announced that one of its supporters had died fighting near Palmyra in Syria. Later, they shared details of a ceremony to be held in his honour in Novi Sad.⁴⁶ In other posts, photographs taken in Belgrade and Moscow airports depict young men as they leave to fight in Ukrainian or Syrian battlefields. Comments such as 'Brothers, you are on the right track' and 'Keep us safe' below the photos offer these men support and reassurance.

Social media is also used to coordinate group movements, arrange gatherings and even keep track of police movements.⁴⁷ In one such post on Instagram, football hooligans shared information about police equipment on the street. One comment warned: '2 hammers, 4 police vans, 4-5 riot police, 4-5 patrol cars, guns, special forces'. In response to this comment, someone said: 'You should have shot them in the tires [sic], just in case'. ■



An Albania fan shows off his body art with a double-headed eagle prior to a game between the national team and France in Marseille, June 2016. © Laurence Griffiths via Getty Images

National teams and nationalist symbols

Ultras culture in the Western Balkans has used chants and songs, as well as various nationalist, religious and football-related symbols and insignia since the late 1980s in Yugoslavia and in Albania a decade later.⁴⁸

For Albanian-speaking groups in the Western Balkans, a double-headed eagle is the symbol of Albanian nationality. It is a component of every fan group, regardless of group name and logo.⁴⁹ In Bosnia and Herzegovina, North Macedonia and Serbia, many symbols are associated with the Orthodox Church. For example, in Serbia and the Republic of Srpska, ultras culture reveres Saint Sava, who became the first Serbian Orthodox archbishop in the 13th century.⁵⁰ Before games, Serbia's two most prominent ultras groups, Delije (FC Red Star) and Grobari (FC Partizan), often gather in front of the Temple of Saint Sava. The Orthodox religion has the power to forge strong bonds between like-minded ultras in the WB6 and those in other Orthodox countries as well, such as Grobari's relationships with FC PAOK (Thessaloniki, Greece) and FC CSKA (Moscow, Russia).

Nationalism and nationalist narratives are deeply rooted in the ultras culture in many parts of the WB6.⁵¹ And, in a region with a recent history of ethnic tensions and war, such narratives cause offence with other groups. A banner displayed at a game saying 'Serbian Sparta' implies that Montenegro is a Serbian state and a shrine of the Serbian Orthodox Church.⁵² Predictably, this raises hackles in Montenegro. Banners and chants glorifying war criminals and army generals from the war in former Yugoslavia, like Ratko Mladic and Radovan Karadzic, whip up nationalist and ethnic sentiments, particularly in local matches in multi-ethnic Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Games between national teams can stoke nationalist tensions. During a match between Switzerland and Serbia during the 2018 World Cup, two Kosovo-born Swiss players flashed a double-headed eagle gesture after scoring. This was a provocation to the Serbians, because of the contested history of Kosovo.⁵³ In another incident from 2014 at the qualifying match for the Union of European Football Associations (UEFA) Euro 2016 in Belgrade, Serbian fans chanted hate slogans and pelted a bus carrying players from the Albanian football team.⁵⁴ During the match, flares and other objects were thrown on to the pitch. At one point, a drone carrying a map of Greater Albania and the faces of its modern founding fathers flew into the stadium. After a brief scuffle between players, the game was abandoned. After the match, ethnic Albanian communities in Albania, Kosovo and North Macedonia celebrated the incident while Serbian politicians claimed that the drone incident was a political provocation.⁵⁵

The Albanian ultras scene is closely tied to Kosovo's football fans, mainly through Tifozat Kuq e Zi, especially in Kosovo (by the ultras groups Kuqezinjet e Gjakoves, Plisat, Torcida and Shqiponjat) and North Macedonia (by the ultras groups Ballistet, Iliret and Shvercerat). Tifozat Kuq e Zi confirmed strong ties with Kosovo fans when it gave an enormous Albanian flag to the family of Adem Jashari, who is a symbol of Kosovo's independence.⁵⁶

As with right-wing ultras in Europe, some WB6 ultras use fascist symbols in their social media and in stadiums, including the Fascist salute and swastika, the Celtic cross and the eagle symbol of the Third Reich.⁵⁷ Anti-leftist slogans, such as 'Better dead than red' and 'Good night left side' are also popular in stadiums and on Facebook accounts.



Fascism finds support among football fans belonging to the Bosnia and Herzegovina-based Skripari ultras group.
© Mirsad Behram/Radio Free Europe (RFE/RL)



THE NEXUS BETWEEN VIOLENCE, POLITICS AND ORGANIZED CRIME

Casual acts of violence are a common feature of ultras culture in the WB6. There are times, however, when the violence has little to do with football-related rivalries and more to do with politics, organized crime and even paramilitary activity. This section looks at the connections between violence, politics and organized crime, and moves away from the world of ultras and into the realm of football hooligans and their links to organized crime.

Football hooliganism, politics and organized crime in the WB6 have links that can be traced to the late 1980s, when fans started organizing themselves into groups and associations. Prominent ultras groups such as Manijaci in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Komiti in North Macedonia and Delije in Serbia formalized their activities between 1987 and 1989. Members of these groups used violence to show their support for their clubs, and to intimidate teams and supporters from other ethnicities.⁵⁸ Hooligans began carrying placards bearing political messages, national coats of arms and flags, or portraits of national and saints.⁵⁹ Initially, the link between fandom and politics was weak, but as tensions grew in Yugoslavia in the early 1990s, nationalist leaders began to exploit the power of the crowd and the atmosphere in the stadiums mirrored the wider context.

Support for the team morphed into support for the tribe. Football supporters' enthusiasm for their teams was whipped up into nationalistic hatred that marched in step with Yugoslavia's economic and political crisis, as the currency plunged and inter-ethnic tensions increased.⁶⁰ Football stadiums became an arena for ultra-nationalistic displays: political extremism, folklore nationalism and chauvinistic outbursts seeped into football chants and provided the motivation for acts of hooliganism.⁶¹ At the same time in the capital cities, state-sponsored football teams became propaganda tools to build national identity.⁶²

Fights in the stands foreshadowed more deadly clashes to come. Conflict in 1990 between supporters of fierce rivals FC Dinamo Zagreb and FC Red Star came to symbolize the start of the violent dissolution of Yugoslavia.⁶³ And for many young men, it was a short step from waving flags and fighting in the stands to joining ultra-nationalist militias. It is rumoured that when he was recruiting for the Serb Volunteer Guard, Zeljko Raznatovic Arkan looked in the FC Red Star stadium (where Delije rules) and among the members of his kickboxing club.⁶⁴



Leader of the Serbian-based Principi ultras group, Veljko Belivuk, is led away by police after his arrest in 2021. It is alleged that he has ties to the criminal underworld, but that he is also being protected by corrupt politicians and members of the police. © Stefan Tomasevic/ATAImages

After the Yugoslav wars, the links between football hooliganism, politics and organized crime continued. Politicians in newly independent states often used local or national football teams to rally support. Then, when Western Balkan teams began playing in European football leagues, the game became big business and a milieu in which commercial, political and criminal elites could rub shoulders. The higher financial turnover, meanwhile, created opportunities for laundering money through club infrastructure development and player deals, among other things. Furthermore, hooligans in some WB6 countries, particularly in Serbia, became a convenient 'rent-a-mob' for some politicians and also served as foot soldiers for drug dealing and extortion.⁶⁵

Violence

Hooligan groups in the Western Balkans are renowned for the level of their violence, and in Bosnia and Herzegovina, North Macedonia and Serbia the situation is particularly acute. This football-related violence often has strong nationalistic undertones that is evident when fans sing their national anthem, display fascist symbols and glorify their war heroes.⁶⁶

In an incident in April 2021, some 50 members of Bosnia and Herzegovina's most violent ultras, with links to FC Zrinjski,⁶⁷ clashed violently in Mostar with their rivals Red Army during the Muslim holy month of Ramadan. Police arrested 10 people after cars and buildings were damaged and one person was seriously injured in the predominantly Bosniak area of the city.⁶⁸ For the people of Mostar, the incident brought back memories of the wars in the 1990s.⁶⁹

Meanwhile, a match in Montenegro in October 2020 between Podgorica-based FC Buducnost and Plav-based FC Jezero, where Bosniaks are the majority, was moved to Serb-dominated Berane. During the match, several Street Boys Park members (who support local club FC Berane) entered the stadium, hurling religious and ethnic insults at the people of Plav, even though their team was not playing, in protest against FC Jezero, which was playing in 'their' stadium. After the match, shots were fired and cars with Plav club colours were attacked.⁷⁰ Violence between hooligans and the police frequently occurs,⁷¹ particularly involving members of Varvari from Podgorica and Vojvode from Niksic.⁷²

Serbia is notorious for hooligan violence. In 2010, around 6 000 hooligans fought almost as many police during a Pride parade, vandalizing areas of Belgrade as they went. In October 2009, a Serbian public prosecutor filed a motion with the Constitutional Court to ban the violent and criminal activities of 14 extremist groups, supporters of Belgrade FC Partizan, FC Red Star and FC Rad, but the judges rejected the motion due to the lack of constitutional prerequisites for conducting such proceedings before the Constitutional Court.⁷³

Research conducted in 2012 found that 279 criminal charges had been filed against 30 hooligan group leaders in Serbia. Three of these men had committed murders, another was killed,⁷⁴ while 12 were involved in drug-related crimes and 22 were charged with property-related crimes. Meanwhile, eight people died in 182 football hooligan-related incidents between 2013 and 2018.⁷⁵ Most of these incidents occurred in outside sports facilities in the capital, Belgrade. Many of those convicted of violent crimes at sporting events have previous convictions for inflicting bodily harm, killing and abusing animals, illicit production, possession and trafficking of weapons and drugs, and theft.⁷⁶

The most influential ultras groups in Serbia are Delije and Grobari. Delije has a highly disciplined hierarchical organizational structure (resembling an army), whereas Grobari is more decentralized. One interviewee explained: 'The feeling of respect for the leader is entirely different for Delije and Grobari. For example, kids admire Marko Vuckovic [the head of Delije] when they call him commander, while for Grobari, love for the club is always at the forefront.'⁷⁷



FC Zrinjski fans shortly after an attack on anti-fascist activists at the Partisan Memorial Cemetery in Mostar, Bosnia and Herzegovina. © Štefica Galić/via Detektor.ba



Police arrest hooligans at a match marred by violence at a derby between FC Partizan and FC Red Star in Belgrade, December 2017. © Pedja Milosavljevic via Getty Images

While there is well-known rivalry between FC Partizan and FC Red Star, conflicts also occur between subdivisions of the same supporters' groups that have very little to do with football. As explained in relation to so-called 'fans' of FC Partizan, divisions within the Grobari group in the last decade are 'exclusively driven by political and mafa reasons'.⁷⁸ Clashes in the stadium arise out of a desire to control certain stands, because this dominance brings financial and other personal benefits, such as international travel, control of businesses and providing protection for nightclubs and lucrative drug sales.⁷⁹ Power over the stands also means control of the streets.

As for the impact of COVID-19, the pandemic did nothing to reduce acts of hooliganism, even though games were played in empty stadiums. On 7 April 2021, the high risk of hooliganism at a FC Red Star and FC Partizan match caused the US Overseas Security Advisory Council to raise Belgrade's security alert level.⁸⁰ The warning came after football hooligans, some of them using guns, clashed violently over several months in 2020.⁸¹

In Albania, some of the violence has been directed at referees, who threatened to boycott football league matches because of concerns about job safety, after a day of violent incidents in 2019 in which the Albanian football association suspended and fined three club officials.⁸² Meanwhile, games between rivals FC Partizani and FC Tirana are always tense; a match in January 2021, for example, ended in a brawl between Ultra Guerrills 08-09 and Fanatic groups.⁸³

Another dimension of violence is that, in some cases, it appears that hooligans are joining paramilitary groups. For example, members of the Serbian United Force ultras group (supporting FC Rad) and Ultras, based in Mostar, fought during conflict in Ukraine.⁸⁴



FC Pristina fans and members of the ultras group Plisat hold up a banner stating 'Kosovo is Albania' before a match between France and Albania, Marseille, June 2016. © Ultras Kosova/Facebook

Politics

The deployment of football hooligans for political ends is evident in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo, North Macedonia and Serbia. Political parties use hooligan groups to promote party goals and stoke ethnic tensions before elections. In Bosnia and Herzegovina, for example, the Croatian Democratic Union party is alleged to have links with the Ultras.⁸⁵ In Serbia, it was alleged that the Democratic Party and the League of Social Democrats of Vojvodina had close ties to Firma, whose members are also in accord with the party's desire for regional autonomy.⁸⁶

More generally, politicians, particularly those with right-wing, nationalist leanings, can gain street credibility from their associations with an ultras group. Such associations also provide access to what can amount to a private army drawn from the ranks of the ultras.⁸⁷ However, controlling such groups is not always easy. Slobodan Milosevic used football hooligans to fill the ranks of militias and whip up extreme nationalism, but in 1996 these same men formed part of the protest movement to unseat him. And in October 2000, extremists from Delije, Grobari and United Force were among the first to break into the Serbian parliament, disarming the police, and thus contributing to the overthrow of Milosevic.⁸⁸

After the fall of the Milosevic regime, Vuckovic, the head of Delije, was commended for his part in the overthrow. Vuckovic has since steered his way through the shifting political tides and has forged a successful career in the construction, catering and hotels businesses, thanks to his contacts in government.⁸⁹ His company, known as Ultra Cop, started out as a subcontractor, but is now expanding its business to catering and hotels.⁹⁰ Meanwhile, Dragan Vasic Gaga, leader of Delije subgroup Ultras, opened an IT company with clients that include the National Bank of Serbia and an airport company.⁹¹

As one observer noted about Delije, 'They don't sing against the government, while individuals at the top of fan groups become successful businessmen.'⁹² In return for the ultras' support, politicians send lucrative business opportunities their way and also ensure that ultras' leaders receive political protection against prosecution. Such cases illustrate the mutually beneficial relationships that exist between football-related hooliganism and politics. These arrangements often withstand political changes, leading one crime reporter to remark that even though political power is changing, the system is not.⁹³

Football hooligans are also called upon for other tasks, such as providing 'muscle' at political rallies. In 2015, for example, Plisat and Shqiponjat members were out in force in Pristina at a rally organized by three political parties against the formation of an autonomous Association of Serbian Municipalities in Kosovo and a border demarcation deal with Montenegro.⁹⁴

In another example of hooligans acting as a mob for hire, Russian-Greek businessman and former Russian MP Ivan Savvidi allegedly paid Komiti members to instigate riots in Skopje, North Macedonia, against a proposed change in the country's name.⁹⁵

In April 2020, during protests against the state of emergency and curfew imposed because of the COVID-19 pandemic, supporters of the ruling Serbian Progressive Party responded to the unrest⁹⁶ in a similar way to how they might behave in a football stadium, lighting flares and chanting pro-government slogans.⁹⁷ It is alleged that the ruling party called upon Delije to organize this show of support.

In Serbia, some politicians have made no secret of their efforts to gain support through associations with ultras groups.⁹⁸ Professional basketball coach and Partizan member Dusko Vujosevic accused Serbia's president, Aleksandar Vucic, of turning football fans and hooligans into his own private army.⁹⁹ Supporting this claim, members of the Janicari reportedly provided security at Vucic's inauguration, while media have published photographs apparently showing his son with leading members of the group.¹⁰⁰ One of the founders of the Democratic Party went so far as to claim an instance in which municipal election results were changed under pressure from the Principi ultra.¹⁰¹



A mural at Rajko Matić Stadium in Belgrade, home of FK Red Star, pays tribute to the movement 'Kosovo is Serbia'.

© Bahrudin Bandić

The links between politics and football are also visible in the membership of football club boards, which include judges, police officers, prosecutors and fan representatives.¹⁰² One Dragan Milosevic, for example, served for years on the FC Red Star board while he was also a judge of the Higher Court Special Department for Organized Crime and Corruption.¹⁰³

Ultras as humanitarians

Tempering their violent reputation to some degree, some Western Balkans ultras have also become involved in humanitarian work. Both Delije and Grobari in Serbia have their own charitable foundations and make donations to their communities and sometimes even to the state. Joining the COVID-19 relief effort, Delije donated beds and medical equipment to hospitals, and gave money to vulnerable communities.¹⁰⁴ Meanwhile former football player and Grobari member Gordan Petric donated over €50 000 to the state to fight COVID-19.¹⁰⁵

In North Macedonia, Komiti donated personal protective equipment and other medical supplies to a health clinic in

Skopje in 2020.¹⁰⁶ Meanwhile, Komiti's ethnic-Albanian rivals Svercerat donated €10 000 to families in towns in north-western Albania after an earthquake in 2019.¹⁰⁷

In Albania, some ultras groups use social media to raise money for people in need.¹⁰⁸ Varvari in Montenegro donated money to the National Coordination Body for Infectious Diseases to help fight COVID-19.¹⁰⁹ Meanwhile, the biggest supporters club in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Horde Zla, donated money and medical equipment during the pandemic, while its members joined a blood-donation drive.¹¹⁰ ■

Crime

Football hooligans may commit crimes of public disturbance, destruction of property, assault, possession of drugs or weapons, but these are not examples of organized crime. However, links between hooliganism and organized crime have been recorded in various parts of the world.¹¹¹ For example, in Argentina, the fanatical Barras Bravas supporters' club is allegedly involved in drug trafficking and money laundering in football-related activities.¹¹² In Italy, the Camorra, Cosa Nostra and the 'Ndrangheta criminal syndicates are all involved in ultras' neo-fascist political activities inside stadiums, while also engaged in money laundering in football-mad neighbourhoods.¹¹³

In Bosnia and Herzegovina, and North Macedonia, hooligans carry out petty crimes and also sell drugs and engage in arms trafficking.¹¹⁴ Skopje-based hooligan groups Komiti and Svercerat, for example, are known to sell drugs and smuggle arms, and these activities help finance their other activities.¹¹⁵ In Bosnia and Herzegovina, according to police data, some Ultras, Lesinari, Horde Zla and Skripari members are part of organized crime groups that are involved in drug trafficking and arms smuggling.¹¹⁶

In Serbia, there is a more concerning risk. Thugs associated with football hooligan groups are engaged in serious organized crime, yet they appear to enjoy a degree of political protection. The Janjicari, supporters of FC Partizan, have built close ties with state officials (especially in the police) and with the Kavac clan, an organized crime group from Montenegro that specializes in trafficking cocaine from Latin America to Europe.¹¹⁷



A mural by Belgrade FC Partizan fans to remember ultras leader Aleksandar Stankovic, who died in a hail of bullets, allegedly in the aftermath of a drug deal with the Montenegrin mafia. © Bahrudin Bandić

In 2016, Janicari leader Aleksandar Stankovic was killed in a hail of machine-gun fire, allegedly because he took 40 kilograms of cocaine from the Montenegrin mafia, without giving them the money for its sale.¹¹⁸ The Serbian government then declared war against the mafia and corrupt police and, over the next four years, the streets became a battlefield in which more than 60 people were murdered in killings that the media has connected to organized crime. Journalists also uncovered links between Janicari and employees in the Ministry of the Interior¹¹⁹ while the Serbian Army Union claimed that military officials gave criminal members of a football fan group access to an army firing range.¹²⁰

In May 2021, police arrested more than 100 FC Red Star supporters after violent clashes in Belgrade.¹²¹ During the violence, two restaurants managed by Principi ultra Aleksandar Kajmakovic were destroyed. Kajmakovic was arrested in February 2021, together with 20 other Principi members, after allegations that Kajmakovic was laundering money for Principi and using his restaurants as a cover for racketeering.¹²² Surveillance cameras also recorded Kajmakovic coming to a restaurant at the FC Partizan stadium (referred to in local media as the 'Principi bunker'),¹²³ used by Principi for celebrations and, allegedly, to store drugs and weapons. The destruction of the two restaurants could be understood as a warning to keep silent, since Principi members stood accused of murder, kidnapping, torture, racketeering and drug dealing.¹²⁴

In February 2021, Serbian police arrested Principi's leader, Veljko Belivuk, upon his return from Montenegro after meeting with the Kavac clan. Police also arrested over 20 Principi members in the first quarter of 2021 and charged them with committing crimes of association to commit criminal offences; unauthorized production and distribution of narcotics; illicit production, possession, carrying and trafficking of weapons and explosives; and three cases of aggravated murder.¹²⁵

As Serbian hooligan groups develop more sophisticated links with organized crime, they are also becoming more involved in gambling and moving into other legitimate businesses, such as private security and construction. As a police officer explained, 'When big money is made, it's normal to invest in construction.'¹²⁶ And as football becomes more lucrative in the region, an increase in the number of cases of money laundering related to player transfers and football-related infrastructure building can also be expected.

Research for this report found little evidence that ultras and hooligan groups in Albania, Kosovo and Montenegro are linked to organized crime. As noted earlier, violence at football games is a problem, but fan groups have not formed connections with criminal groups, as has happened in other countries in the region. According to one journalist in Montenegro: 'Hooligan groups act like vandals; they are not so organized to deal with protection or organized crime.'¹²⁷ That is not to say that there is no organized crime in these countries. Rather recruitment to criminal groups in Albania, Kosovo and Montenegro takes place through other channels, such as in prisons, disadvantaged neighbourhoods and within families or 'clans'.¹²⁸

Measuring the problem

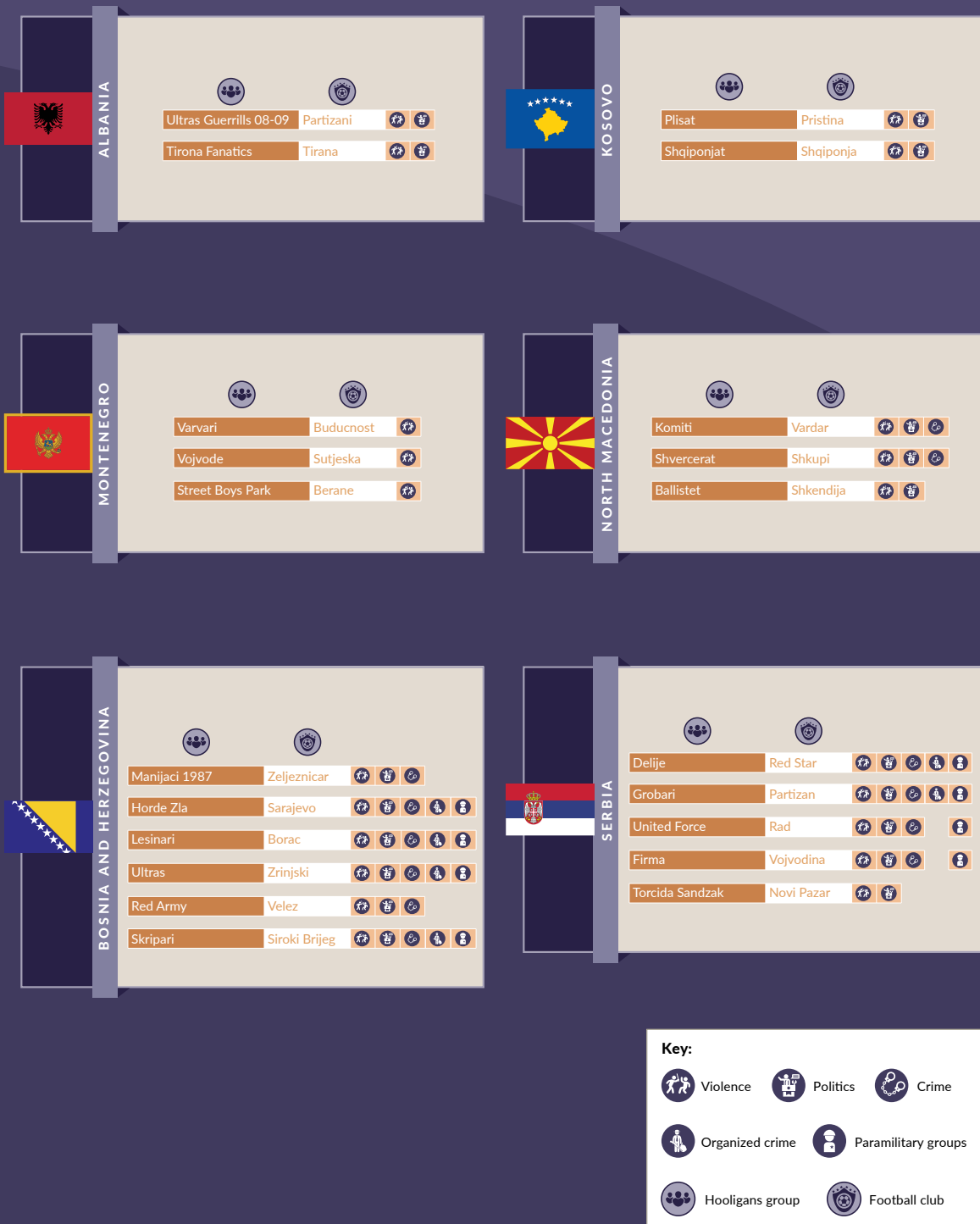
After considering whether the 78 ultras groups making up this study have committed crimes and violence in carrying out their group activities, it was found that, based on their levels of violence or links to politics and/or organized crime, 21 pose a risk. These groups, and their links to crime, politics, violence and paramilitaries, are shown in the infographic below.

Looking at the problem on a national level and after aggregating the scores for links to violence, politics and crime of the individual clubs, it is evident that the level of risk and links between football hooligans, extremist politics and crime are not uniform across the region. As shown in Figure 7, the combination of a medium to high or even very high risk for all three categories is limited to Serbia and parts of Bosnia and Herzegovina. This was confirmed by means of interviews, media analysis and a review of secondary data, particularly in relation to violent incidents. It should be noted that in Figure 7, 'crime' covers petty crime – such as vandalism, theft, property crime or drug dealing – as well as serious organized crime, such as arms and drug trafficking, extortion and kidnapping.

COUNTRY	RISK		
	VIOLENCE	POLITICAL LINKS	CRIME
Albania	Medium	Low	Absent
Bosnia and Herzegovina	Very high	High	Medium
Kosovo	Medium	Medium	Low
North Macedonia	High	High	Low
Montenegro	High	Low	Low
Serbia	Very high	High	High

FIGURE 7 Level of risk due to strength of links between hooliganism, politics, violence and crime.

HOOLIGANS GROUPS IN THE WESTERN BALKANS SIX AND THEIR LINKS WITH VIOLENCE, POLITICS, CRIME AND PARAMILITARY GROUPS





CONCLUSIONS

Football's popularity in the WB6 is nowhere more evident than in its 122 fan groups. It is clear that violence associated with football hooliganism is a problem in some parts of the region, but this is hardly a 'Balkan disease'. After all, hooliganism was 'imported' from other countries (like Italy and the UK) and is not endemic to the region. That said, the link between football, nationalism and violence is evident at games at both local and national level. There is also the troubling tendency among some political parties to deploy hooligans at football matches and elsewhere to stir up ethnic tensions. These same politicians use football hooligans as security services and to threaten their opponents into submission.

As for the nexus between football hooligans, politics and organized crime, the phenomenon is relatively limited in the WB6. It is most prevalent in Serbia, and to a lesser extent in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Nonetheless, it is a problem that deserves closer attention.

Recommendations

For regional actors

- A long-term integrated approach that includes state representatives, the judiciary, sport associations, political party representatives, media, academia and civil society is crucial if football hooliganism is to be reduced. The Regional Cooperation Council should put a greater focus on analyzing and preventing football hooliganism at the regional level in the WB6. The Southeast European Law Enforcement Centre, the South East Police Chiefs Associations and Europol should hold meetings at the national and regional levels to propose and discuss possible ways to tackle hooliganism and links between football hooligans and organized criminal groups.
- The United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime Programme on Safeguarding Sport from Corruption and Crime should focus more on the links between organized crime and sport, building on its existing focus on corruption.

For law enforcement authorities

- The competent public prosecutor's offices should examine all the media allegations about the involvement of hooligan groups and their leaders in violent and criminal activities. This office should also examine the legality of the business operations of private companies owned by those ultras leaders who have criminal records.

- To aid the identification of the drivers of radicalization, law enforcement authorities (specifically cyber units) need to broaden their set of investigation tools by focusing more on online and social media platforms, where both the display of illegal content and communication between hooligans take place.
- National police services should receive ongoing training and state-of-the-art equipment to better prevent clashes between hooligan groups and also to be better prepared to deal with new forms of hooligan violence as they emerge.
- Plea bargains with members of hooligan groups should only be considered in cases where there is a low risk of the perpetrator repeating the same or a different criminal offence.

For national governments

- National authorities should strengthen educational, social and cultural measures to prevent hooliganism. Strategies to prevent violence and improve safety at sports events should be complemented by preventive measures within society in combination with an increased focus on violence prevention in education. Particular attention should be paid to the participation of minors in hooliganism.
- Greater attention should be paid to identifying and counteracting manifestations of extremism (particularly the display of discriminatory signs, symbols and chants)¹²⁹ in WB6 football team culture.
- Western Balkan governments should strengthen cooperation with countries outside the region (like the United Kingdom, Italy and the Netherlands) that have dealt with similar phenomena in the past. This could involve high-level discussions between criminal justice and security representatives, as well as legislators (so that football-related hooliganism is made a criminal offence, or an aggravating factor). Operational contact should also be established between the police and stadium security personnel.

For football clubs and their sponsors

- Racist and nationalist speech in stadiums must not be tolerated. Particular attention should be paid to the UEFA's 10-point plan on combating racism in football. Football clubs in the WB6 should see that it is in their own interests to minimize the risk of being penalized by international sports federations for racism, misconduct and poor organization of sporting events.
- Football clubs should promote fair competition and ethics in sport. This could be encouraged by getting rival clubs and ultras together for social events, with the aim of establishing communication channels and promoting a culture of sport that goes beyond rivalry.
- Private companies sponsoring football club apparel, merchandise etc. should promote fairness and tolerance in sport and distance themselves from clubs with supporters who are involved in hooliganism. This could mean including specific clauses relating to hooliganism in sponsorship contracts.

For civil society and the media

- Civil society organizations should work with vulnerable youth to warn them of the dangers of football hooliganism and organized crime, and provide them with counternarratives, skills and opportunities to strengthen their resilience.
- Civil society organizations should work more closely with football clubs and fan groups to showcase the positive aspects of sport and fan clubs, while emphasizing the need for respect, tolerance and fair play.
- The media should pay greater attention to differentiating between ordinary fans/ultras and hooligans and should avoid sensationalist narratives that glamorize hooliganism and violence.

ANNEXURE 1:

METHODOLOGICAL NOTE – ULTRAS GROUPS

As noted in the section on methodology, the 122 fan groups were selected according to four criteria:

- Which are the most important football clubs of the country?

1) the estimated fan base in thousands/size of the stadium

CRITERION 1		
Up to 10 000 seats	10 to 20 000 seats	30 000 + seats
Small	medium	large

2) the number of titles (both national and international) won by the football club:

CRITERION 2		
No titles	Up to 5 titles	6+ titles
small	medium	large

- Are these ultras groups' activities reported in media?

To answer this, two criteria were looked at: Are pictures or videos available of their fan activities in the stadium? And are the media talking about the group's activities?

CRITERION 3		CRITERION 4	
Pictures and videos available		Media talking about the group activities	
yes	no	yes	no

Clubs were excluded from the classification of ultras groups in case of:

- two 'small' (exception in case of two small but a 'yes' in criterion 3);
- two 'no';
- one 'small' and one 'no' in criterion 3.

COUNTRY	FOOTBALL CLUB	ULTRAS GROUP	CRITERIA			
			1	2	3	4
Albania	Bylis	Bylis	small	medium	yes	no
Albania	Flamurtari	Flota Kuq e Zi	small	medium	yes	yes
Albania	Kukësi	Armata Veriut	small	medium	yes	no
Albania	Laçi	Divas 540	small	small	yes	no
Albania	Luftëriari	–	small	small	no	no
Albania	Partizani	Ultras Guerrills	small	large	yes	yes
Albania	Skënderbeu	Ujçerit e Debores	medium	large	no	no
Albania	Teuta	Djemt e Detit	medium	large	yes	yes
Albania	Tirana	Tirana Fanatics	small	large	yes	yes
Albania	Vllzania	Vllaznit Ultras	medium	large	yes	yes
Albania	Apolonia Fier	Green Boys	medium	small	no	no
Albania	Elbasani	Tigrat Verdh e Blu	medium	–	yes	no
Albania	Tomori	Mistrecet	medium	small	no	no
Albania	Besa Kavajë	Furia Verdh e Zi	small	medium	yes	no
Albania	Lushnja	Laguna Delegetet	small	small	yes	no
Albania	Podgradeci	Liqenoret	small	small	yes	no
Bosnia and Herzegovina	Mladost	Crvena Legija	small	small	yes	yes
Bosnia and Herzegovina	Bosna	Demoni	small	small	yes	yes
Bosnia and Herzegovina	Sloboda	Fukare	small	medium	yes	yes
Bosnia and Herzegovina	Travnik	Gerila 1989	small	small	yes	yes
Bosnia and Herzegovina	Zrinjski	Ultras	small	medium	yes	yes
Bosnia and Herzegovina	Sarajevo	Horde Zla	large	large	yes	yes
Bosnia and Herzegovina	Tuzla City	–	small	small	no	no
Bosnia and Herzegovina	Radnik	Incident	small	large	yes	no
Bosnia and Herzegovina	Borac	Lesinari	medium	large	yes	yes
Bosnia and Herzegovina	Zvijezda	–	small	small	no	no

COUNTRY	FOOTBALL CLUB	ULTRAS GROUP	CRITERIA			
			1	2	3	4
Bosnia and Herzegovina	Buducnost	Ljumani	small	medium	yes	no
Bosnia and Herzegovina	Zeljeznicar	Manijaci	medium	large	yes	yes
Bosnia and Herzegovina	Gorazde	No Fear	small	medium	yes	no
Bosnia and Herzegovina	Rudar Prijedor	Alcohol Boys	small	small	no	yes
Bosnia and Herzegovina	Leotar	–	small	medium	no	no
Bosnia and Herzegovina	Velez	Red Army	small	large	yes	yes
Bosnia and Herzegovina	Celik	Robijasi	medium	large	yes	yes
Bosnia and Herzegovina	Jedinstvo	Sila nebeska	medium	medium	yes	yes
Bosnia and Herzegovina	Posusje	–	small	medium	no	no
Bosnia and Herzegovina	Siroki Brijeg	Skripari	small	large	yes	yes
Bosnia and Herzegovina	Iskra	Vandali	medium	medium	yes	no
Kosovo	Arberia	–	small	small	no	no
Kosovo	Ballkani	–	small	small	no	no
Kosovo	Besa Peje	–	small	medium	no	no
Kosovo	Drenica	Ebamba	small	small	no	no
Kosovo	Vushtrria	Forca	small	large	yes	no
Kosovo	Vëllaznimi	Kuqezinjet e Gjakoves	small	large	yes	no
Kosovo	Drita	Intelektualet	small	medium	yes	yes
Kosovo	Feronikeli	Tigrat e Zi	small	medium	yes	no
Kosovo	Shqiponja	Shqiponjat	medium	small	yes	yes
Kosovo	Gjilani	Skifterat	medium	small	yes	yes
Kosovo	Llapi	–	small	small	no	no
Kosovo	Pristina	Plisat	medium	large	yes	yes
Kosovo	Trepca 89	Torcida	small	small	yes	yes
Montenegro	Celik	FAP Masina	small	large	yes	yes
Montenegro	Ibar	Gazije	small	small	yes	no
Montenegro	Lovcen	–	small	large	no	yew
Montenegro	Jezero	Hajvani	small	medium	yes	no

COUNTRY	FOOTBALL CLUB	ULTRAS GROUP	CRITERIA			
			1	2	3	4
Montenegro	Jedinstvo	Ultras	small	large	yes	no
Montenegro	Mogren	–	small	medium	no	no
Montenegro	Brskovo	Serdari	small	medium	no	no
Montenegro	Berane	Street Boys	medium	medium	yes	no
Montenegro	OFK Titograd	–	small	large	no	no
Montenegro	Buducnost	Varvari	medium	yes	yes	yes
Montenegro	Sutjeska	Vojvode	small	large	yes	no
Montenegro	Rudar	–	small	medium	no	no
Montenegro	Kom	Vragovi	small	medium	yes	no
Montenegro	Zeta	Vukovi	small	medium	yes	no
North Macedonia	Belasica	Ajduci	small	small	yes	no
North Macedonia	Shkendija	Ballistet	medium	medium	yes	yes
North Macedonia	Pelister	Ckembari	small	large	yes	yes
North Macedonia	Bregalnica	Falanga	small	medium	yes	yes
North Macedonia	Sileks	–	small	medium	no	no
North Macedonia	Vardar	Komiti	large	large	yes	yes
North Macedonia	Kumanovo	Kumani	small	small	yes	no
North Macedonia	Makedonija	Lavovi	small	medium	yes	no
North Macedonia	Tikves	Lozari	small	large	yes	no
North Macedonia	Pobeda	Majmuni	medium	large	yes	no
North Macedonia	Karaorman	Patkari	small	small	yes	no
North Macedonia	Skopje	Pirati	small	small	no	no
North Macedonia	Ohrid 2004	Ribari	small	small	yes	no
North Macedonia	Rabotnicki	Romanticari	large	large	yes	no
North Macedonia	Struga	–	small	small	no	no
North Macedonia	Shkupi	Svercerat	small	medium	yes	yes
North Macedonia	Borec	Vampiri	small	small	no	no
North Macedonia	Teteks	Vojvodi	medium	medium	yes	yes
Serbia	Red Star	Delije	large	large	yes	yes
Serbia	Partizan	Grobari	large	large	yes	yes
Serbia	Vojvodina	Firma	medium	large	yes	yes
Serbia	Cukaricki	–	small	small	no	no
Serbia	Spartak	Marinci	medium	medium	yes	no
Serbia	Rad	United Force	small	small	yes	yes

COUNTRY	FOOTBALL CLUB	ULTRAS GROUP	CRITERIA			
			1	2	3	4
Serbia	Radnicki	Meraklije	medium	medium	yes	no
Serbia	Javor	–	small	small	no	no
Serbia	Napredak	Jakuza	medium	large	yes	no
Serbia	OFK Beograd	Plava unija	medium	large	yes	yes
Serbia	Mladost	Uranium boys	small	medium	yes	no
Serbia	Borac 1926	–	small	small	no	no
Serbia	Jagodina	Brigada	medium	medium	no	no
Serbia	Radnik	–	small	small	no	no
Serbia	Novi Pazar	Ekstremi	medium	medium	yes	yes
Serbia	Novi Pazar	Torcida Sandzak	medium	medium	yes	yes
Serbia	Novi Pazar	Ultra Azzuro	medium	medium	yes	no
Serbia	Hajduk	Zulu iz Kulu	small	small	no	no
Serbia	Metalac	–	small	small	no	no
Serbia	Smederevo	Despoti	medium	small	yes	no
Serbia	Sloboda	Borci za slobodu	medium	small	no	no
Serbia	Radnicki Kragujevac	Cervine Djavoli	medium	small	yes	yes
Serbia	BSK Borca	Kompanija Borca	small	small	no	no
Serbia	Proleter	Indians	medium	small	yes	no
Serbia	Backa	–	small	small	no	no
Serbia	Macva	Saneri	small	small	yes	no
Serbia	TSC Backa	–	small	small	no	no
Serbia	Banat	–	medium	small	no	no
Serbia	Vozdovac	Invalidi	small	small	yes	yes
Serbia	Donji Srem	–	small	small	no	no
Serbia	Novi Sad	Korida	small	small	yes	no
Serbia	Indjija	Zelena Armija	small	small	no	no
Serbia	Zemun	Taurunum Boys	small	medium	yes	yes
Serbia	Bezanija	–	small	small	no	no
Serbia	Pirot	Pirgosi	medium	medium	yes	no
Serbia	Sloga	Kasapi	small	small	no	no
Serbia	Dinamo	–	small	small	no	no
Serbia	Zlatibor	–	small	small	no	no
Serbia	Mladi radnik	–	small	small	no	no
Serbia	Kolubara	–	small	small	no	no

FIGURE 8 78 ultras groups identified in the Western Balkans 6, shown with shading.



ANNEXURE 2:

METHODOLOGICAL NOTE – FOOTBALL HOOLIGANS

The 78 ultras groups identified above were then run through a further filter to look at which had links to violence, politics and crime. To qualify as hooligans, ultras groups need a minimum of six 'yes' entries out of 12. To be fully transparent, we have also indicated where sufficient information was or was not available.

The defining factors of violence, politics and crime were identified as:

Violence

- 1.1 Are members of this ultras group involved in fights and clashes?
- 1.2 Do members of this group conduct attacks against the public/society (vandalism)?
- 1.3 Do members of this group fight against the police?
- 1.4 Are members of this group convicted/investigated after fights?
- 1.5 Have members of this group caused death or serious injury in their use of violence?

Politics

- 2.1 Does this group have an extremist political identity (including ethnic and religious)?
- 2.2 Is there any connection between this group and a political party?
- 2.3 Is politics a reason for clashes for members of this ultras group?
- 2.4 Is this group connected (directly or indirectly) to any paramilitary group/militia?

Crime

- 3.1 Are members of this group involved in any crime (drug dealing, robberies)?
- 3.2 Are members of this group involved in serious/organized crime (arms trafficking, drug trafficking, extortion, kidnapping)?
- 3.3 Do leaders of this group use their position to recruit youngsters for the commission of crimes?

✓ sufficient information gathered via desk research and/or interview	✗ information supporting a negative answer to the question	Blank cell not available— not enough information
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COUNTRY	GROUP NAME	VIOLENCE					POLITICS				CRIME			TOTAL (✓)
		1.1.	1.2.	1.3.	1.4.	1.5.	2.1.	2.2.	2.3.	2.4.	3.1.	3.2.	3.3.	
Albania	Bylis	✓	✓							✗	✗	✗	✗	2
Albania	Flota Kuq e Zi	✓	✓				✓		✓	✗	✗	✗	✗	4
Albania	Armata Veriut	✓	✓							✗	✗	✗	✗	2
Albania	Ultras Guerrills	✓	✓	✓			✓	✓	✓	✗	✗	✗	✗	6
Albania	Djemt e Detit	✓	✓							✗	✗	✗	✗	2
Albania	Tirona Fanatics	✓	✓	✓			✓	✓	✓	✗	✗	✗	✗	6
Albania	Vllaznit Ultras	✓	✓							✗	✗	✗	✗	2
Albania	Tigrat Verdh e Blu	✓	✓							✗	✗	✗	✗	2
Albania	Furia Verdh e Zi	✓	✓							✗	✗	✗	✗	2
Albania	Laguna Delegetet	✓	✓							✗	✗	✗	✗	2
Albania	Liqenoret	✓	✓							✗	✗	✗	✗	2
Albania	Crvena Legija	✓	✓								✓			3
Albania	Demoni	✓	✓								✓			3
Albania	Fukare	✓	✓								✓			3
Bosnia and Herzegovina	Gerila 1989	✓	✓								✓			3
Bosnia and Herzegovina	Ultras	✓	✓	✓			✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		9
Bosnia and Herzegovina	Horde Zla	✓	✓	✓			✓	✓	✓		✓	✓		8
Bosnia and Herzegovina	Incident	✓	✓								✓			3
Bosnia and Herzegovina	Lesinari	✓	✓	✓			✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		9
Bosnia and Herzegovina	Ljumani	✓	✓								✓			3
Bosnia and Herzegovina	Manijaci	✓	✓	✓			✓	✓	✓	✓	✓			8
Bosnia and Herzegovina	No Fear	✓	✓								✓			3
Bosnia and Herzegovina	Red Army	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓		✓			8
Bosnia and Herzegovina	Robijasi	✓	✓								✓			3

COUNTRY	GROUP NAME	VIOLENCE					POLITICS				CRIME			TOTAL (✓)
		1.1.	1.2.	1.3.	1.4.	1.5.	2.1.	2.2.	2.3.	2.4.	3.1.	3.2.	3.3.	
Bosnia and Herzegovina	Sila nebeska	✓	✓								✓			3
Bosnia and Herzegovina	Skripari	✓	✓	✓			✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		9
Bosnia and Herzegovina	Vandali	✓	✓								✓			3
Kosovo	Forca	✓	✓				✓			×		×	×	3
Kosovo	Kuqezinjet e Gjakoves	✓	✓				✓			×		×	×	3
Kosovo	Intelektualet	✓	✓				✓			×		×	×	3
Kosovo	Tigrat e Zi	✓	✓				✓			×		×	×	3
Kosovo	Shqiponjat	✓	✓	✓			✓	✓	✓	×		×	×	6
Kosovo	Skifterat	✓	✓							×		×	×	2
Kosovo	Plisat	✓	✓	✓			✓	✓	✓	×		×	×	6
Kosovo	Torcida	✓	✓							×		×	×	2
Montenegro	FAP Masina	✓	✓							×		×	×	2
Montenegro	Gazije	✓	✓							×		×	×	2
Montenegro	Hajvani	✓	✓							×		×	×	2
Montenegro	Ultras	✓	✓							×		×	×	2
Montenegro	Street Boys	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓		✓	×		×	×	6
Montenegro	Varvari	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓		✓	×		×	×	6
Montenegro	Vojvode	✓	✓	✓			✓	✓	✓	×		×	×	6
Montenegro	Vragovi	✓	✓							×	✓	×	×	3
Montenegro	Vukovi	✓	✓								✓	×	×	3
North Macedonia	Ajduci	✓	✓				✓			✓	✓	×	×	4
North Macedonia	Ballistet	✓	✓	✓			✓		✓	×	✓	×	×	6
North Macedonia	Ckembari	✓	✓				✓			×	✓	×	×	3
North Macedonia	Falanga	✓	✓				✓			×		×	×	3
North Macedonia	Komiti	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	×	✓	×	×	8
North Macedonia	Kumani	✓	✓	✓			✓			×	✓	×	×	5
North Macedonia	Lavovi	✓	✓	✓			✓			×	✓	×	×	5

COUNTRY	GROUP NAME	VIOLENCE					POLITICS				CRIME			TOTAL (✓)
		1.1.	1.2.	1.3.	1.4.	1.5.	2.1.	2.2.	2.3.	2.4.	3.1.	3.2.	3.3.	
North Macedonia	Lozari	✓	✓	✓			✓			×	✓	×	×	5
North Macedonia	Majmuni	✓	✓	✓			✓			×	✓	×	×	5
North Macedonia	Patkari	✓	✓	✓			✓			×	✓	×	×	5
North Macedonia	Ribari	✓	✓	✓			✓			×	✓	×	×	5
North Macedonia	Romanticari	✓	✓	✓			✓			×	✓	×	×	5
North Macedonia	Svercerat	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	×	✓	×	×	8
North Macedonia	Vojvodi	✓	✓				✓			×	✓	×	×	4
Serbia	Delije	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	12
Serbia	Grobari	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	12
Serbia	Firma	✓	✓	✓			✓	✓	✓	×	✓		✓	8
Serbia	Marinci	✓	✓	✓					✓		✓			5
Serbia	United Force	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	10
Serbia	Meraklije	✓	✓	✓			✓				✓			5
Serbia	Jakuza	✓	✓	✓							✓			4
Serbia	Plava unija	✓	✓	✓							✓			4
Serbia	Uranium Boys	✓	✓	✓				✓	✓		✓			6
Serbia	Ekstremi	✓	✓	✓							✓			4
Serbia	Torcida Sandzak	✓	✓	✓			✓		✓		✓		✓	7
Serbia	Ultra Azzuro	✓	✓	✓			✓				✓			5
Serbia	Despoti	✓	✓	✓							✓			4
Serbia	Crveni Djavoli	✓	✓	✓				✓	✓					5
Serbia	Indians	✓	✓	✓			✓				✓			5
Serbia	Saneri	✓	✓	✓							✓			4
Serbia	Invalidi	✓	✓	✓							✓			4
Serbia	Korida	✓	✓	✓			✓				✓			5
Serbia	Taurunum Boys	✓	✓	✓				✓	✓					5
Serbia	Pirgosi	✓	✓	✓							✓			4

FIGURE 9 Ultras groups in the Western Balkans 6 and their links with violence, politics and crime.

The analysis of ultras groups has led to the following results at the national level (aggregated level), as illustrated in Figure 10.

COUNTRY	TOTAL GROUPS
Albania	11
Bosnia and Herzegovina	16
Kosovo	8
Montenegro	9
North Macedonia	14
Serbia	20
Total	78

FIGURE 10 Number of ultras groups at the national level in the Western Balkans 6.

To come up with an understanding of national results per issue (violence, politics and crime), we developed a formula to find X , which is the relation between the total of 'yes' present in Figure 8 and the total number of groups ' t ' under analysis, divided by the total number of indicators ' I ' (per issue):

Formula: $X = \frac{Y}{I}$

Example: violence in Albania: $X = \frac{24}{55} = 0.43$

COUNTRY	VIOLENCE (5 INDICATORS)		POLITICS (4 INDICATORS)		CRIME (3 INDICATORS)	
	Total	Weighted	Total	Weighted	Total	Weighted
Albania	24	0.43	8	0.18	0	0
Bosnia and Herzegovina	39	0.48	22	0.34	19	0.39
Kosovo	16	0.40	9	0.30	0	0
Montenegro	23	0.46	7	0.16	2	0.07
North Macedonia	40	0.57	20	0.34	13	0.30
Serbia	65	0.65	27	0.34	26	0.45

FIGURE 11 Ultras groups at the national level in the Western Balkans 6.

The classification of the country, based on the indicators listed above, is defined as follows:

Violence:

- Value of X from 0 to 0.3: absent
- Value of X from 0.31 to 0.39: low
- Value of X from 0.4 to 0.45: medium
- Value of X from 0.46 to 0.60: high
- Value of X from 0.61 to 0.99: very high

Politics:

- Value of *X* from 0 to 0.15: absent
- Value of *X* from 0.16 to 0.25: low
- Value of *X* from 0.26 to 0.31: medium
- Value of *X* from 0.32 to 0.45: high
- Value of *X* from 0.46 and more: very high

Crime:

- Value of *X* from 0 to 0.20: absent
- Value of *X* from 0.21 to 0.30: low
- Value of *X* from 0.31 to 0.40: medium
- Value of *X* from 0.41 to 0.50: high
- Value of *X* from 0.51 and more: very high

Based on this classification, it is possible to develop the following heat table.

COUNTRY	RISK		
	VIOLENCE	POLITICS	CRIME
Albania	Medium	Low	Absent
Bosnia and Herzegovina	Very high	High	Medium
Kosovo	Medium	Medium	Low
North Macedonia	High	High	Low
Montenegro	High	Low	Low
Serbia	Very high	High	High

FIGURE 12 Hooliganism risk assessment at the national level in the Western Balkans 6.

The analysis led to the following results at the individual (disaggregated) level. Figure 13 lists all the ultras groups that scored at least six ‘yes’ and thus qualify as hooligan groups.

COUNTRY	GROUP NAME	VIOLENCE					POLITICS				CRIME		
		1.1.	1.2.	1.3.	1.4.	1.5.	2.1.	2.2.	2.3.	2.4.	3.1.	3.2.	3.3.
Albania	Ultras Guerrills	✓	✓	✓			✓	✓	✓	×	×	×	×
Albania	Tirona Fanatics	✓	✓	✓			✓	✓	✓	×	×	×	×
Bosnia and Herzegovina	Ultras	✓	✓	✓			✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	×
Bosnia and Herzegovina	Horde Zla	✓	✓	✓			✓	✓	✓	×	✓	✓	
Bosnia and Herzegovina	Lesinari	✓	✓	✓			✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	

COUNTRY	GROUP NAME	VIOLENCE					POLITICS				CRIME		
		1.1.	1.2.	1.3.	1.4.	1.5.	2.1.	2.2.	2.3.	2.4.	3.1.	3.2.	3.3.
Bosnia and Herzegovina	Manijaci	✓	✓	✓			✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		
Bosnia and Herzegovina	Red Army	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	×	✓			
Bosnia and Herzegovina	Skripari	✓	✓	✓			✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
Kosovo	Shqiponjat	✓	✓	✓			✓	✓	✓	×		×	×
Kosovo	Plisat	✓	✓	✓			✓	✓	✓	×		×	×
Montenegro	Street Boys	✓	✓	✓			✓	×	✓	×		×	×
Montenegro	Varvari	✓	✓	✓			✓		✓	×		×	×
Montenegro	Vojvode	✓	✓	✓			✓		✓	×		×	×
North Macedonia	Ballistet	✓	✓	✓			✓	✓	✓	×	✓	×	×
North Macedonia	Komiti	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	×	✓	×	×
North Macedonia	Svercerat	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	×	✓	×	×
Serbia	Delije	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Serbia	Grobari	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Serbia	Firma	✓	✓	✓			✓	✓	✓	×	✓		✓
Serbia	United Force	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓
Serbia	Torcida Sandzak	✓	✓	✓			✓		✓		✓		✓

FIGURE 13 Ultras groups in the Western Balkans 6 and links with violence, politics and crime.

At the micro-level, the following criteria were applied to assess the nature of the hooligan groups:

- To qualify as violent hooligans, groups need to score at least three out of the five indicators in research question 1.
- To qualify as hooligans with extremist political views, groups need to score at least three out of the four indicators of research question 2.
- To qualify as hooligans with connections to militias and paramilitaries, groups need to score a 'yes' in indicator 2.4.
- To qualify as hooligans with connection to crime (petty), groups need to score a 'yes' in indicator 3.1.
- To qualify as hooligans with connection to more serious and organized crime, groups need to score a 'yes' in 3.2. and/or 3.3.

Applying these criteria makes it possible to develop Figure 14, which summarizes the information in Figure 13, based on the criteria listed previously.

✓ sufficient information gathered via desk research and/or interview		✗ information supporting a negative answer to the question				
COUNTRY	GROUP NAME	VIOLENCE	POLITICS	PETTY CRIME	ORGANIZED CRIME	PARAMILITARY
Albania	Ultras Guerrills	✓	✓	✗	✗	✗
Albania	Tirona Fanatics	✓	✓	✗	✗	✗
Bosnia and Herzegovina	Ultras	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Bosnia and Herzegovina	Horde Zla	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Bosnia and Herzegovina	Lesinari	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Bosnia and Herzegovina	Manijaci	✓	✓	✓	✗	✗
Bosnia and Herzegovina	Red Army	✓	✓	✓	✗	✗
Bosnia and Herzegovina	Skripari	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Kosovo	Shqiponjat	✓	✓	✗	✗	✗
Kosovo	Plisat	✓	✓	✗	✗	✗
Montenegro	Street Boys	✓	✗	✗	✗	✗
Montenegro	Varvari	✓	✗	✗	✗	✗
Montenegro	Vojvode	✓	✗	✗	✗	✗
North Macedonia	Ballistet	✓	✓	✓	✗	✗
North Macedonia	Komiti	✓	✓	✓	✗	✗
North Macedonia	Svercerat	✓	✓	✓	✗	✗
Serbia	Delije	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Serbia	Grobari	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Serbia	Firma	✓	✓	✓	✗	✗
Serbia	United Force	✓	✓	✓	✗	✗
Serbia	Torcida Sandzak	✓	✓	✗	✗	✗

FIGURE 14 Summary of ultras groups in the Western Balkans 6 and their links with violence, politics and crime.

NOTES

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