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TERRORIST THREATS BY BALKANS RADICAL ISLAMIST TO INTERNATIONAL SECURITY

Abstract

The decade-long armed conflict in the Balkans from 1991 to 2001, greatly misrepresented in the Western public, were the biggest defeat for the peoples of the former Yugoslavia, a great defeat for Europe - but a victory for global jihad. Radical Islamists used the wars to recruit a large number of Sunni Muslims in the Balkans (Bosnian and Herzegovina and Albanian) for the cause of political Islam and militant Jihad. Converts to Wahhabi Islam not only provide recruits for the so-called "White Al-Qaeda," but also exhibit growing territorial claims and seek the establishment of a "Balkan Caliphate." Powers outside the Balkans regard this with indifference or even tacit approval. Radical Islamist activity is endangering the security of not only Serbia, Macedonia, Montenegro and Bosnia-Herzegovina, but also Europe and the world.

Key Words: Balkans, Wahhabi, Salafi, radical Islamist, terrorism, Al-Qaeda

Introduction

In order to understand correctly the ongoing processes in the Islamic circles in the Balkans, it is necessary to understand all processes that occurred and occur in the Middle East and its circles of Islamic fundamentalists. Balkans' groups of Islamic fundamentalists are inextricably connected with organizations of Islamic fundamentalists originating from the Middle East. Early as 1989, Prof. dr Miroljub Jevtić, one of the most eminent political scientists of religion, had been warning on danger and connection of the Middle East Islamic fundamentalists with the ones on the Balkans sharing the same ideas³. Apart from Arabic Sunni organizations and states, the significant influence on the Balkan Islamic circles has Turkey, having in mind historical and traditional components, but also

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3 Miroljub Jevtic, *Savremeni Dzhihad kao rat*, Nova knjiga, Beograd, 1989.

geographical position and demographic impact.

At the beginning of civil wars on the area of the former SFRJ, other Islamic countries, besides Turkey, had been involved in the battle for dominance over Muslims on the Balkans, including both Sunni and Shia countries. The complexity of the situation on the Balkans is reflected not only through the civil war that had started in the nineties of the last century, but also through some earlier historical facts, such as the process of islamization of the former Balkan inhabitants after Ottoman invasion in the 14th century⁴. Besides the Balkans, the Turkish Empire had controlled the great part of the Middle East as well. The rule of the Ottoman was founded on the sovereign who had two functions at the same time: religious and secular one. In the religious sense, the Ottoman sovereign (Sultan) served as the protector of the saint cities and was entitled as the Protector of the two holy places, which enlarged both his political role as the sovereign of the Empire and its religious role as the protector of the Islamic religion⁵.

The religious role of the ruler during the Ottoman time, but also during all Muslim conquests from the 7th century until the collapse of the Ottoman Empire, is very obvious and highlighted. Jihad (the Holy War) was in the hands of the state⁶. The extinguishing of the Caliphate, by the decision of the Turkish Parliament dating from 1924, political turns occurred in Turkey, and at least declarative disclamation of its pan-Islamist ambitions. Both Turkish Islamic organizations and circles and organizations that spread their influence from the countries of so called Arabic world in the Middle East, had the same messages directed to Balkan Islamists, including the following terms: Jihad, Ummah, political Islam and Caliphate.

Conceptually, the term Jihad originated from the word "*jihād*" (struggle or resisting), which denotes the state of continuous struggle in creating Ummah, State and Allah. There are four different ways in which the Muslims can fulfill the duty of Jihad: by heart, by words, by hands and by sword. Jihad by heart is the inner struggle against the sinful tendencies. Jihad by words calls all Muslims to speak in the name of straight goals and against the evil. Jihad by hands implies the use of pen, i.e. the writing against the evil. The Jihad by sword calls for defending of Islam and its propagation. At the same time, a distinction between the great (the inner struggle) and small Jihad (Holly war) has been made⁷. By extinguishing the Caliphate, there was no country that could declare Jihad as Holy war. Therefore, from the circles of the Shia Islamic fundamentalists appeared the individuals who took the leading role, i.e., became self-proclaimed leaders of

4 Anton Minkov, *Conversion to Islam in the Balkans: Kısve Bahas petitions and Ottoman Social life 1670-1730*, Brill, Netherlands, 2004, pp. 28-55

5 Natana J. Delong-Bas, *Wahhabi Islam: From Revival and Reform to Global Jihad*, Center for Muslim-Christian Understanding Georgetown University, Oxford University Press, New York, 2004.p.246

6 Vise o konceptu Dzihada videti: Miroljub Jevtic, *Savremeni Dzihad kao rat*, Nikola Pasic, Beograd, 2001.

7 Jimmy Gurulé, *Unfunding Terror: The Legal Response to the Financing of Global Terrorism*, Edward Elgar Publishing, Cheltenham, UK, 2008, p. 124

the Holy war. Osama bin Laden, the former leader of transnational terrorist organization Al Kaida used the parts of Kur'an as an excuse, as well as the parts of speeches of Islamic fundamentalists and the leaders who were his predecessors. Abdallah Azzam, who is considered as the father of global Jihad, in his writing dating from 1986, emphasizes that 140 statements from Kur'an indicate the clear Kur'an definition of Jihad to everyone⁸. Islam gives a religious excuse to Muslims worldwide to try to convert every existing community or society to the Islamic one, led by the main goal to impose Islam as the main and dominant religion, i.e. ideology. On the other hand there is number of Muslim authors such as profesor Bouzerzour Zoubir from Yala Islamic University – Thailand who stated: "Islamic terror" is an erroneous concept that contradicts the very message of Islam. The religion of Islam can by no means tolerate terror. On the contrary, terror (i.e. murders committed against innocent people) in Islam is a great sin and Muslims are responsible for preventing these acts and for bringing peace and justice to the world⁹. Contrary to moderate Muslim, radical Islamists, such as late Osama bin Laden and the members of different terrorist organizations worldwide, including the ones from the Balkans, find their ideals, models, motivation and excuses for violence in numerous books, writings and speeches of the radical Islamic theologians, such as: Sayyid Jamal al-Din al Afghani, Mawlana Abu al Ala Mawdudi, Hasan al Banna, Sayyid Qutb, Hassan al Turabi, Rashid al Ghannoushi, and many others.¹⁰

One Islamic fundamentalist is considered as the first Selaphist and one of the greatest Islamic authorities. His name is Taqi ad-Din Ahmad ibn Taymiyyah, who lived between the 13th and 14th century. He was publicly criticizing Muslim leaders who were not supporting Islam and seriate state. If the events connected to so called "Arabic spring" are observed more carefully, it may be concluded that the attitudes and tendencies of Taqi ad Din Ahmada ibn Taymiyyah are still actual. All secular leaders of the Arabic world were thrown down in "revolutions". On the other side, and all monarchies of the Muslim Arabic world, which base their governments on the close ties between a monarchist family and Islam, were remained untouched.

Is this a contemporary attempt of reviving the Caliphate and what are the consequences of these processes to the Muslims on the Balkans? What is the role of the Islamic fundamentalists' network, terrorists and the members of Balkan branch of Al Kaida, Wahabites, Selaphists, Islamic religious communities and other actors of the Islamic life in these processes? Is Turkey the victim of the overturn of

8 Jason Burke, *Al-Qaeda: The True Story of Radical Islam*, I.B.Tauris, New York, US, 2003, p. 32.

9 Bouzerzour Zoubir, Jihad as a source of terrorism a reality or propaganda, *Politics and Religion Journal*, Vol. 8, No. 1, 2014, Belgrade, pp. 94-95.

10 See more in: Caroline Cox, John Marks, *Islam, Islamism and the West: The Divide Between Ideological Islam and Liberal Democracy*, American Foreign Policy Council, Washington D.C. US, 2005, pp 51-56; Mirosljub Jevtic, *Savremeni Dzihad kao rat*, Nikola Pasic, Beograd, 2001.

the Islamic fundamentalists? Is there a form of “Arabic spring” that has happened in Turkey as well? Is this great country declined its secular heritage of Atatürk?

How the processes and relations within Turkey will influence the great population of Muslims in the Balkans? The answers on these questions are the key for understanding the relations within Turkey that define its international role and appearance as well.

Turkey

By July 29, 2011, Turkey's ruling *Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi* (Justice and Development Party: AKP), led by Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan and Pres. Abdullah Gül had comprehensively destroyed the Turkish General Staff as a political force. The AKP rightly saw it as a victory for the party and leadership. But the political victory of the AKP, which was perhaps the most profound structural change in Turkey since the accession of Mustafa Kemal Atatürk as the first President of Turkey on October 29, 1923, also exposed Turkey to some real areas of strategic weakness. These weaknesses will affect Turkey's fortunes and the way in which the country prosecutes its regional activities in the coming months and years. It was on July 29, 2011 that the Chief of the General Staff and three Service commanders used the only shot left in their arsenal and ultimately resigned¹¹. In so doing, with this antithesis of a coup, they acknowledged that the AKP had ended the decades of constitutional dominance by the Armed Forces, even though the AKP had not yet been able to actually amend the Turkish Constitution. Indeed, what the AKP achieved over a few years — absent its ability thus far to change the Constitution of Turkey — was to stage its own coup. It was potentially a *coup de grace* for the Armed Forces in their present iteration, and, as such, limits the capability or willingness of the Armed Forces to effectively support Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan's ambitious and aggressive regional political agenda with any measure of effective military force. The AKP intends to re-shape the Armed Forces of Turkey, but, to do so, it must accept that Turkish military capabilities will be limited for the next few years. The Prime Minister had confidently been building his campaign to undermine and destroy the power of the Turkish General Staff (*Genelkurmay Başkanları*: GB) by increasing the coercive and threatening nature of his statements to his domestic audiences and to the international arena. As a result, however, the current Turkish Armed Forces are unready to tackle any significant military confrontation, and even “police action” against Kurdish dissidents being met with little success, given the low morale of the military, and what's left of its divided leadership. On July 29, 2011, the Erdoğan Government appointed the *Gendarmerie* Forces Commander, Gen. Necdet Özel as the Land Forces (Army) Commander, as a necessary preliminary to naming him Chief of the General Staff,

11 Britannica Book of the Year 2012, “Turkey”, *Encyclopedia Britannica*, Inc., p. 474.

after the Chief of General Staff, Gen. Koşaner, and the commanders of the Land Forces, Navy, and Air Force resigned, *en masse*, ostensibly to protest the continued detention — mostly without trial or charges — of some 177 serving and 77 retired senior and junior officers who were allegedly engaged in contemplating a coup. Despite around 700 total arrests by the Government, no-one has yet been convicted of charges arising from either Operation *Sledgehammer* or *Ergenekon*, two separate alleged coup conspiracies. Despite the lack of any legal convictions, the Government has (a) overturned the existing Constitution of Turkey, and (b) destroyed the power base of the military which had existed since the removal of the Ottoman Caliphate by the Young Turks Revolution of 1908. Now, until the AKP's task of building an Islamist military to match the Islamist Government is completed, Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan will be forced to rely on the *Gendarmerie* and Police for any steel which may be required to back his rule. This may be enough for now, given that the major threat to his Government — and to Turkey — comes from the threat of (or demand for) autonomy or equality by the Kurdish population of Turkey, which has substantial safe-haven areas from which to operate in Iraq, Syria, and Iran, and which has strong international support. The Kurds, however, still lack sufficient power to seriously threaten the cohesion of the Turkish State, which is why the AKP felt that it could act against the military so decisively. Indeed, it needed to act at this time, because, without such action, the military still had at least the theoretical power to stage another coup against the civilian Government. But the military's power and will was on an eroding path for some time¹². The enduring concerns of the Turkish military over the erosion of the Armed Forces' capabilities to sustain the values of Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, and the secular concepts of Atatürkism, are now, once again, coming to a head, and the ruling AKP of Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan is aware of this, and seems in many respects to be precipitating a confrontation with the Armed Forces. The Armed Forces, however, have not yet shown that they are ready to respond as they did in the past, when they seized power from the elected Government as was the case, for example, in 1980, 1971, and 1960. Is Prime Minister Erdoğan comfortable that he can call the bluff of the GB at this point? Or does he feel that he has no other option? Meanwhile, the AKP began putting in a slate of new military leaders, although ultimately the party must see that even these officers are loyal to the *ancien regime*. So the process of gutting and purging must continue. The Turkish Fleet Commander, Adm. Murat Bilgel, became, as expected, the new Naval Forces Commander, and Gen. Mehmet Erten was promoted to become the new Air Force Commander. Gen. Hayri Kıvrıkoğlu, the First Army Commander, was named as the new Land Forces Commander. There were no surprises in these promotions. Clearly, the new slate of leaders means that a range of new appointments must follow to fill the slots the new appointees vacated in the three servic-

¹² Gregory R. Copley, The Ramifications of Turkey's "Anti-Coup" and the Emergence of the New "Neo-Ottoman Caliphate", *Defense & Foreign Affairs*, ISSA, Volume XXIX, No. 34, Alexandria, V.A., 2011.

es at the *Gendarmerie*, and the AKP will take a direct interest in these promotions, to emplace officers who recognize that their future depends on the party, not the military system. The military vacuum in Turkey comes at a significant time for Greece and Cyprus, in particular, given their current political and economic weaknesses. For now, Prime Minister Erdoğan can — and will — posture with extreme aggressiveness about Turkish demands over the Aegean Sea, and about Cyprus. But he dare not threaten too much which would require military back-up. And military and political leaders in Pakistan and Egypt, who had admired “the Turkish model”, will be re- thinking — positively and negatively — whether Turkey remains a model for them. European Union (EU) politicians, who at first saw the AKP actions as a triumph of elected government over the military, will need to re-evaluate the legality and constitutionality of the AKP moves. This was a coup, make no mistake. The Turkish Republic has effectively begun reshaping as a new “Neo-Ottoman Caliphate”, as a religious state, perhaps even able to be described as a theocratic state¹³.

Turkey and creation of so called “Green corridor” in the Balkans

The Ottoman conquest and occupation left an indelible mark on the region. It started in 1354, when Ottoman Turks crossed the Dardanelles from Asia Minor and established a foothold on the northern shore. The subsequent spread of Islam in the Balkans was “by the sword”: it was contingent upon the extent of Ottoman rule and the establishment of political and social institutions based on the teaching of Kur’an and the Islamic legal and political practice. The line of the attack went from Thrace via Macedonia to Kosovo; through the Sandzak into Bosnia all the way to the Una River, was finally stopped at the Habsburgs’ Military Frontier created in the 16th century. It is noteworthy that *the geographic thrust of the Ottoman attack and later colonization of Muslims from other parts of the Empire in the Balkans coincided exactly with the “Green Corridor.”* From earliest days the Green Corridor has had a geopolitical logic that influences political and military decision-making. Furthermore, Ottoman efforts at Islamization of the local population were more determined, and more successful, along the “Corridor” axis (Thrace-Macedonia-Kosovo-Sanjak-Bosnia) than in other conquered Christian lands (e.g. in mainland Greece, central Serbia, northern Bulgaria, or Wallachia). The Modern Turkey Kemalist dream had never penetrated beyond the military and a narrow stratum of the urban elite. For decades described as the key to U.S. strategy in eastern Mediterranean, in the Middle East, and—more recently—in the oil-rich Caspian region and the sensitive ex-Soviet Central Asia, the country is ruled by the ever more openly Islamist *Justice and Development Party* (AKP) of Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan. The AKP “espouses an ideol-

¹³ Ibid.

ogy of cultural divide, tension, and conflict, despite all of the pro-Europe rhetoric in which Islamists in Turkey engage in their pursuit to exploit the European Union for their agenda of Islamization¹⁴. That agenda is no longer confined to the borders of the Turkish state. There is a rekindled sense of kinship among the growing ranks of Turkish Islamists with their Balkan co-religionists and with the old Ottoman domains further west. The re-Islamization and assertiveness of Turkey under Erdogan is essential to the revival of Islam and ethnic self-assertiveness all along the Green Corridor. There is a rekindled sense of kinship among the growing ranks of Turkish Islamists with their Balkan co-religionists and with the old Ottoman domains further West. The re-Islamization and assertiveness of Turkey under Erdogan is essential to the revival of Islam and ethnic self-assertiveness all along the Green Corridor¹⁵.

Balkans radical Islamist presence and activities on “Green Corridor”

The current operational ability of Balkan radical Islamists to endanger the security of countries in the region through terrorism was made possible by an organized and orchestrated effort that has taken almost two decades. It is a complex, dynamic process that has not yet been a topic of much serious investigation, though quality studies have been published about certain of its aspects and factors. Chronologically, the process of establishing the operational radical Islamic presence in the Balkans can be divided into five distinct phases¹⁶:

- 1. Invasion and infiltration,**
- 2. Stabilization and Consolidation,**
- 3. Expansion**
- 4. Total confrontation**
- 5. New strategi of Islamic fundamentalist – Political Islam**

1. Invasion and infiltration

In order to reach a proper understanding of the initial, invasion phase of the Wahhabi *jihad* in the Balkans two things need to be kept in mind. First is the

14 See more: Bassam Tibi, *Turkey's Islamist Danger*, *Middle East Quarterly*, Winter 2009.

15 Srdja Trifkovic, “U.S. Policy and Geopolitics of Jihad: The Green Corridor in the Balkans”, <http://gatesofvienna.blogspot.com/2009/05/green-corridor-in-balkans.html> (accessed July 18th 2014)

16 One alternate analysis divides the invasion in four phases, chronologically: up until 1992, then 1992-1995, 1996-2002, and 2002-present (cf. Oliver Potežica, *Wahabbi between the truth and i prejudice*, Filip Višnjić, Belgrade, 2007, pp. 170–191). Another analysis also sees four stages, outlining them functionally according to the “Islamic Declaration” by Bosnian Muslim leader Alija Izetbegović: Indoctrination with radical Islam, Active hatred of Other and organisation into communities, Operational capability to undertake terrorist activities, and Operational and strategic planning of terrorist activities (cf. Dževad Galijašević, *A Era of terrorism in Bosnia and Herzegovina*, Filip Višnjić, Belgrade, 2007, pp. 6–17).

Muslim population in the peninsula, which appeared during the several centuries of Ottoman rule. There have always been Salafi followers among the nearly eight million Hanafi Muslims, belonging to the Slavic, Albanian, Turkic and Roma ethnic groups, but few and far between. Second, the violent break-up of the multi-ethnic and multi-religious Yugoslav federation, which began in 1991, among other things created the impression among the Balkans and global radical Islamists that the opportunity was ripe for creation of a Balkans Caliphate as part of Muslim Caliphate worldwide. Such ambitions were nurtured by three external factors: Al-Qaeda, Saudi Arabia, and recently Turkey. Although the radical Islamic invasion was directed at all Balkans Muslims, their particular focus was on Muslim populations in today's turbulent zone: some five million "heretical" Muslims, who made up 43.7% of the population in Bosnia-Herzegovina, 20, 7% of Montenegro, approximately 29% of Macedonia and around 20% of Serbia, mostly in the province of Kosovo & Metohija. The Republic of Serbia is the largest and most populous state in the turbulent zone of the Balkans.¹⁷ It faces a number of challenges, including the unprecedented problem of its territorial integrity (according to UNSCR 1244, the province of Kosovo is under Serbian sovereignty; yet some 80 states have violated this resolution by recognizing the 2008 land grab by ethnic Albanian separatists). The current constitutional order in Bosnia-Herzegovina¹⁸ (BH) was established on 21 November 1995, by the Dayton Peace Accords. It consists of two entities, the Serb Republic (RS) and the Muslim-Croat Federation (FBiH). Radical Islamists are aggressively attempting to revise this arrangement. The Republic of Macedonia¹⁹ declared independence in 1991, but faces continuing problems of name recognition (challenged by Greece) and a restive and separatist Albanian population, strongly influenced by Albanian radical Islamists.

The Republic of Montenegro became independent in 2006, but the number of people declaring themselves Montenegrins is less than 60% of the total population²⁰. As mentioned previously, there have always been radical Islamic elements among the Balkans Muslims. Alija Izetbegović, the first president of the pre-Dayton Bosnia, was the foremost Balkans radical Islamist prior to the destruction of multi-ethnic Yugoslavia. His orientation was systematically proven by both words and deeds. Illustrative are just two examples from 1990. Izetbegović began his speech at the first convention of his Party of Democratic Action (SDA), in

17 Not counting Kosovo, Serbia has 7,498,000 inhabitants, of which 82.9% are Serbs, 3.9% Hungarians, 1.8% Muslims, 1.4% Roma, 0.9% Croats, 0.8% Albanians and others. Kosovo has approximately 2 million inhabitants, estimated at 77% Albanian, 13.3% Serb, 1.7% Montenegrins and others (*Atlas States of the World*, Mladinska Knjiga, Belgrade, 2005, p. 166).

18 Population estimated at 3,720,000, of which 43.7% are Bosnian Muslims ("Bosniaks"), 31.4% Serbs, 17.3% Croats and 7.6% others (*Ibid*, p. 24).

19 Population 2,056,000, of which 62.4% Macedonians, 25.2% Albanians, 3.9% Turks, 2.7% Roma, 1.8% Serbs, 0.5% Wallachs and others (*Ibid*, p. 105).

20 Population 620,145, of which 40.6% Montenegrins, 30% Serbs, 13.7% Muslims, 7% Albanians and others (*Ibid*, p. 32).

Sarajevo on May 26, 1990 with the Arabic phrase “Bismillah-il-Rahman-ir-Rahim” (In the name of Allah, the all-Gracious, all- Compassionate). In the speech, he said that “the time has come to destroy the Godless system”, a phrase upsetting many secular Muslims²¹. His followers publicly demonstrated readiness to fight for just such a goal, at the first mass promotion of the idea of Balkans Caliphate. In mid-September 1990, Izetbegović held the first election rally of the SDA in Velika Kladuša, northwestern Bosnia. The atmosphere at the rally was openly of fundamental nature. Light green Islamic banners flew over the 300,000 people in attendance, Iranian flags and pictures of Ayatollah Khomeini were in evidence as well as people armed with curved swords and wearing turbans. Pro-Iranian songs mixed with the chants of “Long lives Saddam Hussein.”²² For those familiar with Izetbegović’s lengthy radical Islamist biography²³, such public pronouncements and symbolism came as no surprise. He staked out a leadership position in the coming jihad for the establishment of the Balkans Caliphate in accordance to his seminal work, the “Islamic Declaration”: the creation of the “unified Islamic community from Morocco to Indonesia” for which a “Muslim can die only in the name of Allah and the glory of Islam”. This was underpinned by the conviction that Islam is everything – faith, politics and state: “History knows no Islamic movement that was not at the same time a political movement.” Led by these beliefs, Izetbegović used the SDA to create fertile conditions for violent jihad in Bosnia-Herzegovina. His model was subsequently applied by Albanian radical Islamists against Serbia in Kosovo, and against Macedonia. The opportunity, bolstered by propaganda about Muslims being the innocent victims of aggression and genocide in Bosnia, was seized by Wahhabi leaders and the exhausted Al-Qaeda in Afghanistan, revitalizing their movements through an invasion of the Balkans. For example, the influential Wahhabi Ahmad ibn Nafi of Mecca called for Islamic countries to help the Muslims of Bosnia as the war began in 1992, saying: “Before us is the establishment of the Caliphate in the Balkans, for the Balkans is the path to conquest of Europe, know, therefore, brothers, that time works in our favor. The Caliphate is at the door.”²⁴ Driven by that notion, in 1991-

21 *Slobodna Bosna*, Sarajevo, January 27, 2000

22 John R. Schindler, *Unholy Terror: Bosnia, Al-Qaeda, and the Rise of Global Jihad*, 2007 (Serbian translation published by JP Sluzbeni Glasnik, Belgrade, 2009, pp. 13-14).

23 “Young Muslims” was established in 1939 in the Kingdom of Yugoslavia, and modeled after Egypt’s “Muslim Brotherhood”. Their goal was “preservation of Muslim identity” and practice of “Islam as a way of life.” During WW2, the organization collaborated with Nazi Germany. As a member of YM, Alija Izetbegović was arrested in 1946 and convicted in 1949 for “plotting terrorist attacks”. Upon release, he continued radical Islamic activities; in March 1983, he was again arrested and charged with terrorism. Izetbegović had established ties with Iran, and sent to the authorities there a copy of his 1971 “Islamic Declaration”, his call to Muslims of the world to “political revolution”. Some of the quotes from the Declaration: “Our goal is Islamization of Muslims. . . our motto is Faith and Struggle. . . There can be no peace or coexistence between Islam and non-Muslim social and political institutions”, according to: Alija Izetbegović, *Islamska Deklaracija*, Behar, Sarajevo, 1990 (reprint), pp. 20-26.

24 Quoted by Dr. Nikola Poplašen of the Banja Luka School of Law, concerning the programme of the Right Waz Party (PPP), established in Bosnia in 2010 with the intent to “reaffirm the values of Islam” (*Politika*, Belgrade, May 22, 2010).

92, many Wahhabi and Al-Qaeda members began arriving to the region, armed with ideas as well as rifles.²⁵ To them, the Balkans was just one of the “theaters of struggle for support of Muslims throughout the Islamic world” where “they mixed their blood with the Bosnians”²⁶ No precise data exists about the extent of Al-Qaeda penetration of Bosnia. Estimates indicate anywhere between 10.000 and 12.000 *mujahideen* organized in special units or regular units of the so-called Army of Bosnia-Herzegovina (ARBiH), taking part in both terrorist and military operations²⁷. Some credible sources estimate much more. In his book author Gus Martin quoted senior CIA officials: “(A former) senior CIA official...claims that number is close to 17 000 foreign mujahideen²⁸”, while the highly respected British publication Jane’s Intelligence Review suggest a figure of than 14.000 (including some 5000 Saudis, 3000 Yemenis, 2000 Egyptians, 2800 Algerians, 400 Tunisians, 370 Iraqis, 200 Libyans, and scores of Jordanians)²⁹.

Their first wave came to the Balkans with the goal of “re-Islamizing” the Bosnian Muslims, who were “entirely ignorant of Islam”. First of the mujahideen leaders in Bosnia, Abu Abd-al-Aziz, came from Kabul with four veterans of the Afghan jihad to teach “true Islam to the straying Muslims of Bosnia”³⁰, later saying that such work was more challenging than actual combat, and that “the worst outcome would have been a mixed state, or a mixed parliament, or a mixed government of Muslims and Christians”. Iran also took part in the radical Islamist invasion of the Balkans³¹. Iran’s special envoy for Bosnian affairs Ali Ahmad Jannati blamed Europe for the war in Bosnia, because “they could not tolerate the existence of an Islamic republic in Europe”³². Thanks to support from Izetbegović and the SDA, the Iranian intelligence (VEVAK- *Vezart-E-Etalaat Va Amniyat-E Kesvar*) made Bosnia into the nexus of its intelligence operations in southern Europe. Around 2.000 Pasdaran (Iranian Revolutionary Guard) instructors were active in Bosnia between 1992 and 1995, with great success. Several high-ranking officers of the Muslim military went to Tehran to „study Iranian

25 Mustafa Kamal Suleyman, a radical Islamist from Egypt, told the Zagreb daily *Večernji List* (October 15, 2001): “In mid-1992 we got orders to go from Afghanistan to Saudi Arabia, which set up and funded the Al-Haramayn humanitarian organization and the High Saudi Committee for Refugees. We were met at the Zagreb airport by a Bosnian military delegation. After we were issued papers identifying us as humanitarian workers... we were taken to Sarajevo...”

26 Excerpts from a letter by Osama Bin Laden about the status of the Bosnian jihad, dated July 26, 2002, and published by the Pentagon citing U.S. intelligence sources. Translated and published in Bosnia (“*Al Qaeda fought in Bosnia and Herzegovina*” by Esad Hećimović, *Dani*, Sarajevo, BiH, March 17, 2006).

27 “In determining how many foreign mujahideen were in Bosnia, surely it is relevant that the last commander of Al-Mujahid, Abu Al-Ma’ali said there were five to six thousand,” according to: Ivica Mlivočić, *Al Qaeda perfected in Bosnia and Herzegovina*, Naša ognjišta, Tomislavgrad, BiH, 2007, p. 127.

28 Gus Martin, *Understanding Terrorism: Challenges, Perspectives, and Issues*, Sage, London, UK, 2010, p. 289.

29 Reeve Simin, *The new Jackals- Ramzi Yousef, Osama Bin Laden and the Future of Terrorism*, Northeastern University Press, Boston, US, 1999, p. 3.

30 John R. Schindler “*Unholy Terror*,” *Službeni Glasnik*, Belgrade, 2009, p. 118.

31 Ibid, pp. 122-132.

32 *The Tehran Times*, June 16, 1993.

methods of special warfare"³³, while Iranian instructors in Bosnia aggressively tried to make Bosnian Muslims into fanatical fighters for Islam, to the point where some Bosnian Muslim officers questioned the wisdom of hosting Iranian-sponsored terrorists in Bosnia. Iranian involvement with Albanians in the Balkans was somewhat more subtle during this period. Presence of Iranian intelligence services, more exactly Ministry of Intelligence Affairs and Security (MOIS) and "Revolutionary Guard" in the area of former SFRY goes back to late seventies and early eighties, following the victory of Islamic revolution in Iran. Stronger penetration of this service into BIH was registered in the early nineties, especially after the war had started in 1992. With introduction of an arms embargo, many wealthy Arabic and Asian countries have started to send humanitarian and military aid to the Muslims in BIH, and to found humanitarian organizations, first in Republic of Croatia and then in BIH, used for the distribution. A certain number of these humanitarian organizations and later private firms owned by persons originating from Afro/Asian countries, in addition to the main activity, were used as intelligence services sites, in a way that chiefs of these humanitarian organizations, firms and news agencies were actually intelligence agents whose primary task was to establish and manage intelligence network in the area of BIH. While many Arabic countries that were political and religious opponents of Shi'i Iran, were engaged through humanitarian organizations and arms smuggling, Iran went straight ahead, occupying positions within the Government and secret services. So, Iranian Intelligence Service managed to access a group of officials of Republic of BIH Government and Security Service, who were inclined to Iran, and who were receiving money for personal accumulation of wealth from Iran, along with instructions for intelligence work. This group's work was facilitated by introduction of arms embargo, when Western countries consciously enabled Iran to arm Army of BIH, which was cunningly exploited by Iranian intelligence services that had installed their intelligence sites and strongly penetrated into BIH, together with consignments of weapons and equipment. When Sunni Arabic countries (Saudi Arabia, Sudan, Jordan, Egypt etc.) realized that Iranians are on their way to "take over Bosnia" as a political point, some kind of cooperation was created between Arabic intelligence services and Iranian Intelligence Service, in order to enhance the influence of Islamic countries in BIH, disregarding whether it was Sunni or Shi'i Islam. In that period, in BIH has been recorded larger arrival of mujahideens who were more actively engaged in humanitarian and other organizations and units of Army of BIH. Later on, mujahideens used these humanitarian organizations for money laundering, money they used for funding various terrorist organizations, mainly Al Qaeda and its leader Usama Bin Laden. Both Arabic and Iranian intelligence services that operated in BIH had

33 At the third anniversary celebration of the 7th Muslim Brigade (December 10, 1995), the *Washington Post* reporter asked Brigadier Džemal Merdan, Bosnian Army training superintendent, about the large Iranian flag in his office. Merdan replied it was a gift from Iran (*Dnevni Avaz*, Sarajevo, December 11, 1995.)

stronghold in the former executive authority of BiH, which can be seen in legalization of both services and through granting citizenships to great number of individuals arrived to BiH from these countries. The invasion phase of the Balkan jihad ended in 1995, when the civil war in Bosnia was halted by the Dayton Accords. Numerous sources³⁴ have examined this initial phase of radical Islamist infiltration, made possible by inattention or even deliberate assistance of some Western governments.³⁵ As a consequence of this invasion, a substantial number of Balkan Muslims have been persuaded by radical Islamists to accept the Wahhabi interpretation of Islam, forming the reliable pool for recruitment of the so-called "White Al-Qaeda"³⁶. The beliefs and practices of these "New Muslims" represent a permanent security threat in the multi-ethnic Balkans. Any doubts to that should be dispelled by the statement of Adnan Pezo, the first president of the most numerous Wahhabi organizations in Bosnia: "There can be no coexistence with the Catholics and the Orthodox or with the unbelieving Muslims"³⁷.

Iran, Wahabbi, Bosnian radical Islamists

Iran, with its strong ties to emerging Izetbegović's ruling clique and being among the largest sponsors of military aid (weapons, instructors) during the Bosnian war, was feared by many for its infiltration into Bosnia. However, Shiite Islam in Bosnia almost did/does not exist, which limited Iran's influence in the area. It was in fact the Sunni Islamists that were successful in Bosnia, and it is from them that the most conservative form of Islam in BiH – Wahhabi Islam – came from. One could say that Saudi Arabia won the ground battle against Iran in Bosnia and Herzegovina.³⁸ It was during the war time, that the Sunni Islamic charities (mainly Saudi) increasingly spread its influence, and under humanitar-

34 See references at the end of the article.

35 See: Christopher Deliso, *"The Coming Balkan Caliphate"*, Praeger Security International, London, 2007; John R. Schindler, *"Unholy Terror"*, tr. Službeni Glasnik, Belgrade, 2009; Jürgen Elsässer, *"Wie der Dschihad nach Europa kam"*, tr. Jasen, Belgrade, 2005.

36 French expert Claude Moniquet agrees that the risk of "white al Qaeda" members, even females, recruited from the Balkan Muslim communities is a very real one. "Such people could be used in terrorism in Italy, France, Germany or other countries with important 'Yugoslav' communities," he maintains, pointing out the December 2006 Italian police operation that resulted in the arrest of several Bosnian and Macedonian émigré s. In the Balkans, says Moniquet, "Bosnia is the most dangerous place and then Macedonia. See Christopher Deliso, *"The Coming Balkan Caliphate"*, Praeger Security International, London, 2007, p. 173.

37 Croatian newspaper *Novi List*, Rijeka, December 30, 2002, p. 3.

38 An interesting point to this view is the testimony of US Ambassadors Charles Redman (ambassador of US in Germany, and adviser on Balkans at the time) and Peter Galbraith (Ambassador of US in Croatia) regarding the Iranian arms shipment to BiH through Croatia under the blind eye or even silent approval of US, despite Iran being its biggest enemy at the time (in May 1996). According to Galbraith testimony, the influence of Iranians was strong at the beginning of the war until about 1994, but considerably diminished after the Dayton Accords. A number of Iranian army instructors left Bosnia at the time and only a small group remained after Dayton. Galbraith also emphasized the difference of Shiite and Sunni Islam as one of the causes for Iran's failure. In addition, Clinton's program "Equip and train" that started in 1996 in order to strengthen the Bosnian army, was primarily focused on expelling Iranian army instructors and further prevented Iranian influence.

ian pretenses started to proliferate their Wahhabi dawa and slowly, but surely, took ground where Iran failed. Following the case study of the Sandzak group, it is clear that the Wahhabi base played a decisive role in producing radicalized elements, which at the end culminated in a terrorist cell. The process (focusing on the ideological aspect) can be described as following: the Wahhabi groups with their puritanical views and extremely conservative lifestyle, incompatible with modern society (and in particular with Bosnian Muslims' traditional Islamic culture), become exclusive and set apart from the rest of believers, perceiving themselves as the "elite" of "correct Islam" → the Wahhabi groups are increasingly involved in the quarrels with official religious dignitaries³⁹ about the proper conduct of religious affairs → the verbal quarrels intensify and Wahhabies' behavior becomes aggressive (throwing the tespihs from the mosques, disrupting concerts) → further isolation and turning against the Muslim official institutions (IZ-Islamic community) → confrontations with Islamic official representatives and traditional Islamic community that can escalate in physical violence (Arap mosque, Jusuf Barčić's group) → complete disregard for official Muslims structures; setting up their own institutions → further isolation of some of the Wahhabi members and their radicalization toward global jihadi ideologies → terrorist cell. The ideological base which builds a radicalized individual is, in the case of Bosnia and Sandzak, Wahhabi Islam. It is from this base that individuals turn to global jihadi groups. Two such cases are noted in Bosnia and Sandzak so far: Kelimetulhaqq group (connected to Ismail Prentić's cell) and Bosnian branch of Abu Hamza al-Misri's Supporters of Shariah. The first is made up of youths in Sandzak, with its main support coming from Vienna (Ebu Muhammed), the second has connections to town Bugojno and possibly to former muajhedeen. It seems the groups are connected at least on the ideological level; however the details concerning their modus operandi are beyond the scope of this article.

Having assessed the importance of Wahhabi base's contribution to radicalizing process, we move on to the main initiators and founders of this base, which, in the case of Bosnia and Herzegovina, are the Islamic charities. As shown in many examples, the material help of charities goes hand in hand with their ideological influence be that through building mosques, that do not fit the Islamic environment of Bosnia, indirectly through supporting mujahedeen, local Wahhabi organizations or education and support of Wahhabi oriented local dais, or through a direct systematic way of religious indoctrination through lectures, summer camps, reading material and even direct payment in exchange for the acceptance of their Islamic doctrine (the case of paid widows by High Saudi Commission). Both, their financial support as well as their educative role, had profound impact on the revival of Islamic identity among Bosnian Muslims. Their undisputed role in the proliferation of Wahhabi dawa and their disregard for the of-

39 The official Bosnian Islamic institutions profess Hanafi School.

ficial Bosnian Islamic structures is confirmed by IZ's officials themselves. Blinded by their enormous financial donations, the official structures of Bosnian IZ were most servile in allowing foreign Islamic organizations freely do their affairs, even if that sometimes meant contradicting IZ's basic principle of the sole Islamic authority among Bosnian Muslims. In an interview in January 2007 Husein Smajic, the Mufti of Sarajevo, denied IZ's responsibility for the proliferation of Wahhabi dawa organizations and their actions, which lately caused considerable upset among traditional Muslims. He admitted that during the war the registering of these organizations as humanitarian or citizens' associations at the court specifically allowed them also to deal with religious affairs, such as lectures, schooling in maktabas and publishing. The latest act of IZ, trying to limit Wahhabi and other rouge organizations, is to set the law, which will ban the usage of prefix "Islamic" for the organizations that are outside IZ. When this process will be completed IZ will be able to act officially against these organizations, which now have the legal support of the state, says Smajic. Although the majority of Bosnians are still loyal to their traditional Islam and IZ the fact remains the number of Wahhabi adherents is constantly growing since the war. Financially strong Wahhabi lobby of Bosnian dais in Vienna, the city which was the seat of many Islamic charities involved in Bosnia during and after the war, is openly challenging the authority of IZ and setting up their own organizations, which are systematically targeting Muslims in BiH and in Sandzak. Taking into account the radicalization model and intensive activities of Bosnian Wahhabi dais in European countries, the spread and support of Wahhabi dawa could represent serious security repercussions.

2. Stabilization and Consolidation

Radical Islamists from the Balkans and the outside had judged the end of the Bosnian War as merely a truce, to be used for securing and expanding the gains achieved. The second, stabilization phase of their activity lasted from November 1995 and September 11, 2001. From the very beginning, the continued presence in Bosnia of several hundred radical Islamists was a violation of the Dayton Accords.⁴⁰ "We did not come to Bosnia to leave when American soldiers came. We live in a time of the triumph of Islam, and our presence in Bosnia should secure that... We will not attack the American soldiers, unless they try to turn Bosnia into an American colony," an Algerian mujahideen leader in Zenica, going by the

40 The Dayton Accords, signed December 15, 1995, mandated that mujahideen leave Bosnia by January 15, 1996. However, Muslim authorities in Sarajevo made many of the mujahideen Bosnian citizens to circumvent this provision. This was facilitated by the fact that the Bosnian secret police "was infested by Al-Qaeda... so it practically became a cell of that organization" (references in Bosnian weekly *Slobodna Bosna*, Sarajevo, on September 25, 1999, September 20, 2001, May 29, 2003 and January 8 2004; also *Jutarnji List*, Zagreb, January 3, 2003). Investigations have established that 741 are known to have been given citizenship by early 1996, of which 594 are wanted internationally. In early 2006 it was estimated that some 1200 naturalized mujahideen lived in Bosnia (Schindler, *Unholy Terror*, p. 221, 294, 295).

name (nom-de-guerre) of Abu Salim, told the London paper "The European" in mid-January 1996. Though many of the radical Islamists have committed horrifying atrocities during the war, none were ever indicted by the Bosnian courts or the ICTY. Many left Bosnia to fight in the jihad in Kosovo, Albania and Macedonia, with great success. In Bosnia, the combined and coordinated indoctrination and terrorist efforts fortified the radical Islamist gains and made strides in "*re-Islamizing*" the Bosnian Muslims. Estimates indicate that the number of converts to Wahhabist teachings in Bosnia could be anywhere from ten to twenty percent of the Muslim population, i.e. from 200.000 to 400.000 men⁴¹. It is estimated that some 200.000 Albanians turned to Wahhabism in Serbia (Kosovo-Metohija⁴²) and Macedonia, along with several hundred Slavic Muslims ("Bosniaks") in Serbia and Montenegro⁴³. Thus the radical Islamists established the requisite conditions for the next phase of Al-Qaeda's plan⁴⁴ concerning the Balkans Caliphate. The confidence of local radical Islamists was grounded in their conviction that the resources at their command – spiritual, financial, personal, educational, material and terrorist – would suffice to prevent the stabilization of political, economic and security situations in Balkans states. They validated these assumptions through the attacks on Serbia in Kosovo (1998-1999) and the counties of Presevo and Bujanovac (2000-2001), as well as against Macedonia (2001), getting more aggressive with each success. Their firm belief is that the establishment of the Balkans Caliphate, a "*Balkanistan*", would be the launching pad for their conquest of Europe and the creation of a pan-Islamic state from the Atlantic to Central Asia. The stabilization and consolidation phase of the radical Islamist incursion is characterized by the spread of infrastructure (construction and takeover of mosques and schools, printing of propaganda materials, establishment of *jamaat* communities, etc.), securing the steady sources of funding, aggressive propaganda, terrorist and rebellious activity. Considerable terrorist capacities of the radical Islamists in Bosnia⁴⁵

41 According to a poll by "Prism Research", around 3.3% of Muslims in Bosnia consider themselves active and literal followers of Wahhabi teachings, while 12.9% are willing to accept such teachings. However, given that only 67% of Muslims in Bosnia say they are willing to oppose Wahhabism in any way, obviously the movement has more sympathy than officially admitted. This poll was the basis of the claim by *Boston Globe* that Wahhabis make up 20% of Bosnia's Muslims (Oliver Potežica, *Wahabbi between the truth and i prejudice*... p. 183.).

42 Estimates have put the number of Wahhabis in Kosovo at around 80,000 and in Macedonia at anywhere between 5,000 and 10,000. However, since these are based on the number of men attending mosques, and they have large families, it is more likely that the Albanian Wahhabis number up to 200, 000, which is about 10% of the overall number of Albanians in the area (report "*Kosovo a barrel of gun powder*", published on December 29, 2008 at www.necenzurirano.com)

43 *Serbia's Sandžak – Still Forgotten*, International Crisis Group, Europe Report #162, Brussels, April 8, 2005 indicates the presence of 300-350 Wahhabi in the area, of which only 50 are considered "active."

44 Western intelligence services managed to obtain a secret Al-Qaeda report "Al Qaeda 2020" from sources in Afghanistan, Iraq and Bosnia, which outlines a plan to "re-Islamize" the Balkans Muslims and make inroads into Europe. Documents amounting to over 10,000 pages of plans, divided into seven phases, chart the course for jihad to the year 2020.

45 A report by the Task Force for Terrorism and Unconventional Warfare submitted to the U.S. Congress in mid-April 1996, mentions that there are 4000-6000 Islamic extremists in Bosnia as part of the "Bosnian Army," detailing their

have been continually confirmed through the staging of terrorist attacks ("In 1997 alone, there were 172 terrorist attacks in Bosnia"⁴⁶) and the expansion of jihad to Kosovo and Macedonia. Namely, following the armistice in Bosnia, radical Islamists from the Balkans and elsewhere moved the focus of their activities to the Serbian province of Kosovo. There, ethnic Albanian separatists had set up a strong terrorist organization known as the "Kosovo Liberation Army" (KLA). Al-Qaeda⁴⁷ had a strong role in supporting the KLA and other Islamic terrorist organizations in the Balkans, while Albania gave wholehearted support and aid to terrorists fighting against Serbia and later Macedonia. Between 1991 and 1997, KLA's terrorist bands perpetrated 134 attacks in Kosovo and 243 attacks along the border with Albania⁴⁸. In late 1997 and early 1998, the KLA escalated its terrorist activities, which by the summer of 1998 turned into a full-blown armed rebellion against Serbia. In July 1998, the KLA numbered around 25,000 terrorists, perpetrating 2,278 attacks by the end of the year, killing 173 civilians, 115 law enforcement officers and 37 military personnel, while injuring and abducting around 900 persons⁴⁹. Radical Islamists from Bosnia gave significant support to the KLA. The SDA party played an important role in organizing the aid in men and weapons. "Sarajevo Islamists were proud to have helped their Albanian coreligionists"⁵⁰. That fact was confirmed in May 1998, when Serbian security forces neutralized several terrorist cells in Kosovo; Bosnian identifications were found among the dead terrorists, and there were mujahideen from Albania, Pakistan and other countries. Iranian involvement in KLA terrorism was confirmed as well.⁵¹ One mujahideen unit, known as "Abu Baqr Siddiq", which numbered around 110 men, was made up of foreign radical Islamists in addition to Albanians from Kosovo, Macedonia and Albania. The Albanian rebellion continued into 1999, when NATO intervened on behalf of the terrorist KLA and attacked FR Yugoslavia without UN approval. At the end of the conflict, the UN Security Council passed Resolution 1244, authorizing an international military and civilian mission in Kosovo, which

organization into the following units: Al-Mujahid; Ansar Mujahideen battalion; Suicide squad made up of Iranians, Pakistanis and Afghans, Saudi Faithful unit; "Handschar" division made up of Albanians from Serbia (Kosovo) and Macedonia; and several hundred instructors from Iran, Turkey, Pakistan, Egypt, Malaysia and other countries. See: Milan Mijalkovski, "Unruly Muslim Terrorists", *Vojska*, Belgrade, May 23, 1996).

46 Potežica, p. 176; Galijašević, p. 108.

47 Through its channels in Turkish-occupied Northern Cyprus, Al-Qaeda channeled some \$700 million to Balkans Muslims between 1991 and 1998 (*La Repubblica*, Rome, November 14, 2001).

48 Milan Mijalkovski, *Crimes and Misconceptions about Albanian separatists*, NIC Vojska, Belgrade, 1999, pp. 75-98

49 Milan Mijalkovski, Petar Damjanov, *Terrorism of Albanian Secessionists*, NIC Vojska, Belgrade, 2002, p. 133.

50 *Slobodna Bosna*, Bosnian weekly, Sarajevo, May 2, 2002.

51 According to, "Defense Foreign Affairs Strategic Policy" (April-May 1998), the Iranians began to send select members of the KLA to Revolutionary Guard training camps in Iran in 1997, while Iranian intelligence operatives made the first delivery of weapons to Albanian terrorist in Kosovo in December 1997, from the "looted" Albanian stocks. In the feature titled "Ayatollahs' road to Europe through Pristina and Sarajevo," the Bulgarian paper *Monitor* (April 16, 2000) concluded that the "escalation of Albanian violence in 1997 and 1998 showed that the Albanians changed their tactics to the 'Arab formula', which indicated the start of the 'second phase of the Iranian offensive' in Europe." (quoted in Serbian daily, *Politika*, Belgrade, 17 April 2000)

was confirmed as Serbian territory. However, on February 17, 2008, the provisional government of Kosovo declared the occupied Serbian province an independent state, thus violating UNSCR 1244. As the UN have not annulled the declaration, and the self-proclaimed state was recognized by 74 governments (as of mid-January 2011), Balkans and international radical Islamists consider this a major victory – carving out a state in the area envisioned for the Balkans Caliphate. Though jihad was the foundation for the conspiracy and initiation of the Albanian rebellion against Serbia in Kosovo, the international public was deceived into believing it was a response to the alleged repression of Albanians by the Serbian authorities. They could not use that pretext in Macedonia, as the 1991 Macedonian Constitution guaranteed full ethnic, cultural, linguistic and religious identity rights to all communities. The Constitution's preamble defined Macedonia as a "State of the Macedonian people and the Albanians, Turks, Wallachs, Roma and other ethnic communities". Even so, the Albanian radical Islamists established a "National Liberation Army" (which shared the KLA's Albanian acronym, UCK, so they didn't even need to make new insignia) in 1999, with the aim of "liberating Albanian territory" in Macedonia. This was in line with the Balkans Caliphate project. The radical Islamist NLA began its terrorist activities against Macedonian authorities in the spring of 2001. The seven-month conflict ended on August 13, 2001, when the Framework Agreement was signed in Ohrid⁵², giving special privileges to the Albanians (approx. 20% of the population) and practically federalizing Macedonia. Entire KLA units, as well as foreign radical Islamists, took part in the Macedonian conflict. Albanian radical Islamists were rewarded by the Ohrid agreement, and continue to threaten violence if their demands are not met⁵³. Once again, global jihad scored a major victory in the Balkans, progressing on the path to the projected Caliphate. Between 1991 and 2001, Balkans radical Islamists and their international supporters – including Al-Qaeda – managed to establish a permanent presence in the Balkans and acquire the capability to destabilize the region and endanger European and global security. Within that decade, significant financial donations from the Arabian Peninsula contributed to the growing number, organization and belligerence of the Wahhabists in the Balkans. In Bosnia, their focus was on "continuing the Islamic Awakening begun during the war..."⁵⁴, while in Kosovo and Macedonia in organizing and executing the jihad of 1998-99 and 2001.

⁵² Framework Agreement, Ohrid, August 13 2001

⁵³ *Koha Ditore*, Kosovo Albanian daily, published an interview with Gafur Adili, spokesman for the radical Islamist Albanian National Army (UCK) in Macedonia, who said that the ANA does not recognize the Ohrid agreement and that there can be no treaties with the "occupiers of Albanian land." (Pristina, January 7, 2003). Lazar Kitanovski, security advisor to the Macedonian PM, told *Utrinski Vesnik* that "forces calling themselves the Albanian National Army" operate in the territory of Tetovo, Kicevo and Gostivar (April 15, 2003)

⁵⁴ The program statement of "Active Islamic Youth" (AIO) says: "Our goal is the establishment of an Islamic state in Bosnia and Herzegovina, based on the Sharia, and our example is Saudi Arabia. To achieve our goal, we must change the educational system in Bosnia-Herzegovina" (Potežica, p. 174)

3. Expansion

The significant expansion of radical Islam in the world brings with it serious threats. Everywhere Muslim populations grow there are demands that local cultures change to accommodate fundamental Islamic doctrines. Fundamental Islam neither adapts to nor tolerates diversity⁵⁵. Radical Islam demands that those with differing beliefs conform, be silenced, or that the holders of these diverse values and beliefs ("infidels") be eliminated. Radical Islamic jihad has targeted not only the United States, Israel, India, China but also, East European nation such as Serbia, FYR Macedonia, Montenegro and Bosnia and Herzegovina.

For instance, the soft power approach of the so-called "Neo Ottomanism" in Albania from Turkey's radical circles is increasing in pace and is directed heavily in the educational sector, aiming at a long-range and long-term establishment of structures within the Albanian society that would become followers of the grandiose scheme as directed by Ankara. The Sema Turkish educational organization has already established six madrasas, which are Islamic religious schools in the country that operate in parallel and in cooperation with the already well-established Gulen movement. The directions and curriculum are being provided directly from Istanbul, while the Hëna e Plotë -Beder- University College in Tirana, which was inaugurated in 2011 is in complete control of Turkish Islamic circles which influence heavily the local Muslim Community of Albania. This private institution receives students that attended religious classes in the aforementioned madrasas. Moreover the majority of the faculties are Turkish citizens, mostly educated in Islamic law and theology and actively pursuing the recruitment of students to be sent with scholarships for further Islamic studies in Turkey, so as to create a broad base of a new generation of Imams. There is certainly as it can be understood a strong encouragement for the proficient learning of the Turkish language and history and not Arabic, thus making it a typical case of Neo-Ottoman soft power approach. Alos Beder University is collaborating with the Epoka University, a larger institution that was established in 2007 and is an offshoot of the Gulen movement. The Turgut Özal Education Company from Turkey is the main link between those two and is funded by the Turkish state, as well as, from Islamist circles related to the AKP party. Epoka exerts a higher role in the local educational life, since it actively pursues the recruitment of Albanian students from neighboring regions such as Kosovo, FYROM and Montenegro and is also inexorably linked with the whole of the Gulen movement in the Balkans and most notably in Bosnia Herzegovina. The ALSAR Foundation is another Neo-Ottoman linked religious foundation from Turkey, which is especially active in Albania and has performed mass and public circumcisions of Albanian children. Moreover it directs its actions into providing welfare for orphan children, a noble aim which

55 Daniel Pipes, "Threat Of Radical Islamic Expansion", <http://www.danielpipes.org/comments/163613> 12.07.2014 (accessed July 18th 2014)

is coupled with doctrinarian of Pro-Turkish, Pro-Islamic and Pro-Ottoman beliefs. The foundation maintains collaboration in a multilevel form with the Gulen movement, as well as, with the IHH organization, the Institute of Islamic Thought and Civilization, the Islamic Relief Foundation and other which are all coincidentally related with the Pan-European and Turkish Muslim Brotherhood network. It is of interest to over the years, the number of Turkish citizens in Albania is increasing, settling as professionals and educators or for business, with estimations for around 5,000 persons. Further the Turgut Ozal schools and colleges, are actively sending Albanian students to Turkish military academies which are then recruited in the Albanian armed forces, even at the expense of the local Albanian officers academy that often are not employed in their own Army⁵⁶.

The Turkish Muslim Brotherhood is just a wing of larger Muslim Brotherhood organization which promotes also, militant Islam⁵⁷. Militant Islam becomes important tool in expansion of radical Islamist World Wide. In the same time radical Islam has been increasingly manifested by an expansion of the use of political violence or terrorism, especially against non military targets as means to undermine state order. Even today almost all radical Islamic organizations, particularly those promoting militant Islam have far reaching political-military goals of eliminating Israel, toppling pro Western Arab regime, and spreading radical Islam worldwide in order to re establish the Caliphate. That is exactly what is going on now in Iraq with Abu Bakr al Baghdadi, the leader of the terror group ISIS that is in control of much of Iraq and Syria. He issued a first video appearance since the group named him "caliph" of what they call an "Islamic State"⁵⁸.

4. Total confrontation

The goal of Islamic fundamentalist through its strategy is very clear that is to return to true Islam by the creation of *Daulah Islammiyah* and *Khilafah Islamiyyah* through Jihad and total confrontation with all others by all means including violence and terrorism. Due to this the senior think-tanks in Islamic fundamentalist circles studied the various movements that were in existence in the last two centuries. Starting from Sheikh Muhammad bin Abdul Wahhab in Najd and Hijaz, Sanusiyyah in Libya, Mahdiyyah in Sudan up to the modern Islamic jihad battling Western Imperialists. Not only that, but the various *harokah* like Ikhwanul Muslimin, Hizbut Tahrir, Jama'ah Islamiyyah in India and Pakistan, Jamaluddin Afghani together with his student Muhammad Abduh were also studied by them. The analysis was not only done theoretically but was also formulated to be

56 Ioannis Michaletos, "Neo-Ottoman expansion in Albania", Radical Islam Monitor in Southeast Europe, <http://www.rimse.gr/2013/06/neo-ottoman-expansion-in-albania-by.html> (accessed July 21st 2014)

57 Anders Strindberg, Mats Wärn, *Islamism*, Polity Press, Malden, MA, US, 2011, p. 68.

58 "ISIS-declared 'caliph' al-Baghdadi makes video appearance", *Deutsche Welle*, <http://www.dw.de/isis-declared-caliph-al-baghdadi-makes-video-appearance/a-17761390> (accessed August 23rd 2014)

applied directly and their failure and success, weakness and strength were compared. This is in line with the background of Islamic fundamentalist which consisted of various races, tribes, countries, *harokah*, and *jama'ah*. And this has become its biggest asset. The all out confrontation between the two sides. The side of the Believers (*Mukminin*) and the side of the disbelievers and falsehood (*Kafir wa Bathilin*). Total confrontation between *Haq* (Truth) and *Batil*(falsehood). War from all angles and will spread to all corners -expected to take place now. Oposit from the Islamic Fundamentalist, moderat Muslim view on terrorism condemn terrorism. Both the Qur'ān and prophetic traditions condemn terrorism. The term used is *rahab* (to frighten) and its derivatives. This term appears eight times, indicating how Islam renounces terrorism. The western media's claim that Islam encourages, if not actually mandates, terrorism distorts the religion's image, abuses Muslims, misleads and controls global public opinion, and undermines Muslim countries' security and stability⁵⁹. It remains huge dilemma how moderat Muslim position or opinion will prevail within Muslim community?

59 Labeed Ahmed Bsoul, *Classical and contemporary Muslim juridical views of terrorism*, Politicology of Religion, Volume VIII (No. 1) - Spring 2014, pp.33-34

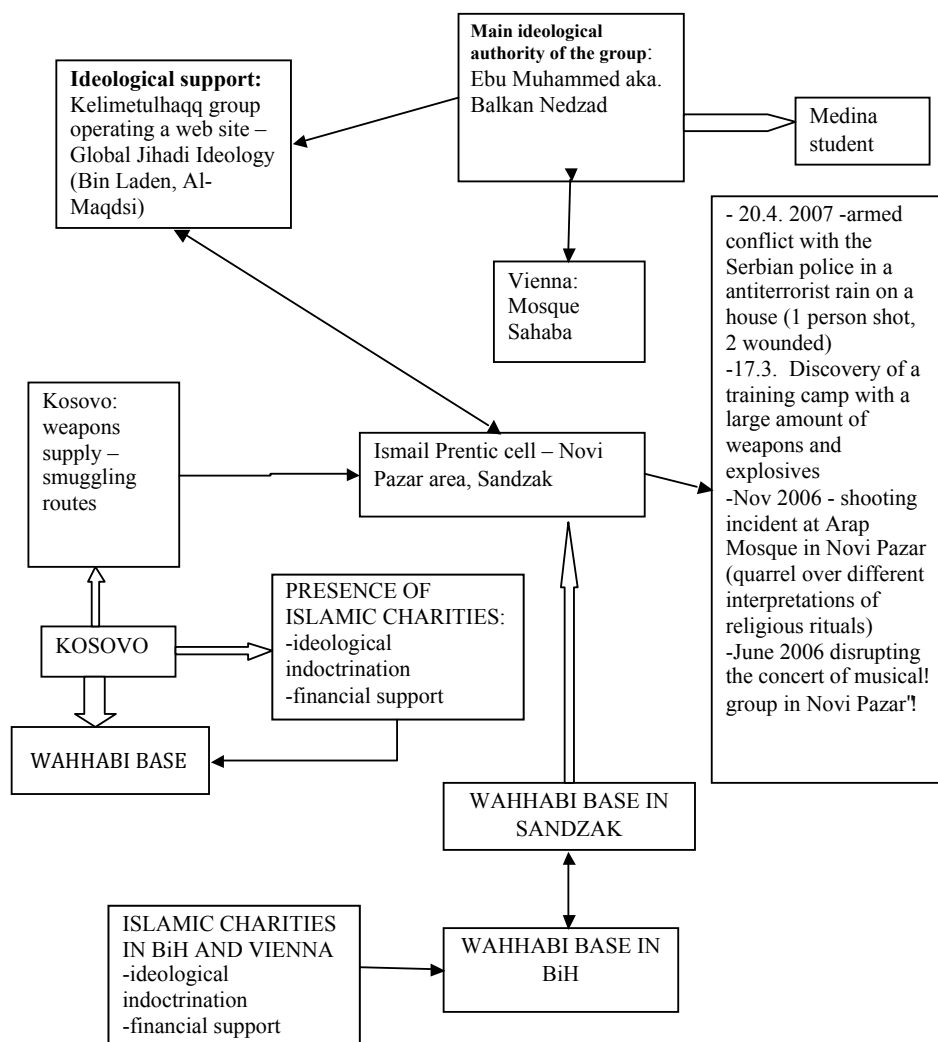


Illustration 1. Balkans radical islamcih Network-1⁶⁰

Illustration 1 explanation:

Based on the case study of a potential terrorist cell in the area of Sandzak (Serbia), this research tries to determine the decisive factors that contributed to and the circumstances under which the development of such a group took place. This will be done by following the radicalization process of the group through the analyses of various stages from which the last one was a terrorist activity.

⁶⁰ Source – Authors.

Ismail Prentić's cell

1. Summarized facts:

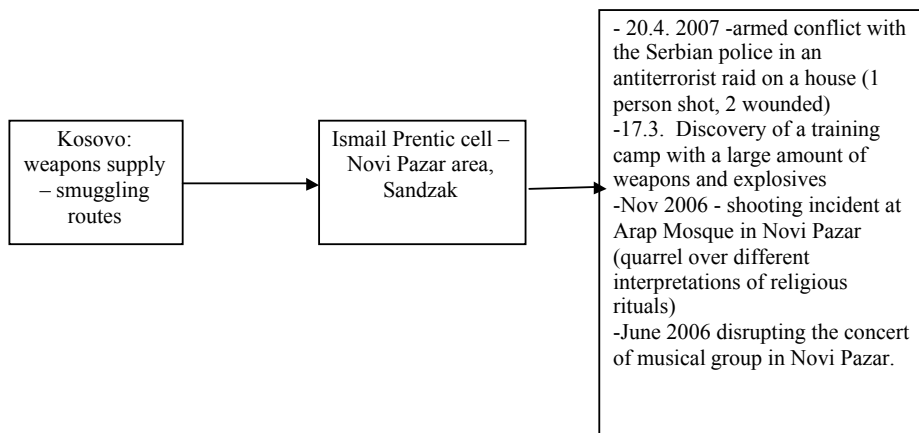


Illustration 2. Balkans radical islamcih Network-2⁶¹

In March 2007 Serbian police discovered a training camp, which belonged to a group of the so-called Wahhabis⁶² from Sandzak (Serbia). The camp was located in the village Žabren, on the hill Ninaja, about 30 km west of Novi Pazar (Sandzak). The police found large quantities of plastic explosives with clock mechanisms, arms of various types and ammunition, face masks, military uniforms, few tents, cleaning tools for arms, and food and sanitary material and other equipment in a mountain cave, which the police believes served as a training ground for Wahhabies⁶³. Five people were arrested at the time. About a month later on 20th of April the police raided a house in Donja Trnava near Novi Pazar, acting on a tip that the house serves as a hideout for some of the members of the Wahhabi group connected to the training camp⁶⁴. A shootout ensued between Serbian police and Wahhabi members in which the alleged leader of the cell,

⁶¹ Source – Authors.

⁶² The term “Wahhabi” as used in former Yugoslavian republics denotes local Muslims that adhere to a very conservative type of Islam. This conservative, Saudi-like interpretation of Islam differs from the traditional Islam practiced among former Yugoslav Muslim population. Wahhabis adopted some of the doctrines, preached by Al-Wahhab (therefore the name), however it would have been too simplistic to connect them exclusively to the 18th century Wahhabi movement. For more precise definition the wider term Salafiyya could be used, a name which was adopted also by some of the members of the concerned group (none of them uses the term “Wahhabi”), however due to the spread usage of the “Wahhabi” term and its common understanding among the population of Former Yugoslavian territories, we shall stick to its usage.

⁶³ Izetog Prezelj, *The Fight Against Terrorism and Crisis Management in the Western Balkans*, IOS Press, Ljubljana, Slovenia, 2008, p. 97.

⁶⁴ Sharyl Cross, Savo Kentera, Radovan Vukadinovic, R. Craig Nation, *Shaping South East Europe's Security Community for the Twenty-First Century*, Palgrave Macmillan, New York, NY.2013, p. 99.

28 year old Ismail Pretnic, was shot dead while two other people were wounded (Wahhabi member Senad Ramovic and a policeman). According to the police report, the policemen were first attacked by the dogs and afterwards the Wahhabis shot and threw hand grenades at them. Following the additional arrests of other members of the Wahhabi group in June 2007, the police acting on the latest confessions of the group members, discovered other large amounts of ammunition and explosives hidden in the Sandzak area.

2. Weapons trail: According to several sources the weapon trail leads to Kosovo. Suad Bulic, former head of Novi Pazar police voiced this claim as well as the Kosovo media, which say that, although the exact origin of weapons and explosives is not known, they were brought to Sandzak from Kosovo. Most of the weapons found were of Chinese production and it might be the weapons that were stolen from the military offices in Albania in 1997 in order to pass it to Kosovo Liberation Army⁶⁵. The group bought arms through illegal channels. Only three weeks before the shooting incident in Donja Trnava, the Kosovo Police Service had issued a warrant for Ismail Prentić, for illegal firearms possession and for smuggling weapons across the administrative boundary between Kosovo and Serbia. Prentic was wanted on arms charges also by Serbian police. He and a number of followers are said to have infiltrated the northern, mainly Serb-populated part of the province, bringing weapons with them. The connection of the Sandzak Wahhabi group with Kosovo Islamists, has been confirmed by a Slovenian intelligence source which stated that the Wahhabis arrested at a training camp near Novi Pazar, had connections with Kosovo militants, the final status process there (separation process) and potential violence against Serbs in the North Mitrovica enclaves.⁶⁶ Dragan Jovic, minister of Interior Affairs of Serbia, confirmed these statements, saying that ammunition and explosives were transported during a certain amount of time from Kosovo to Serbia, to area of Novi Pazar, Tutin and Sjenica, and that the ammunition was purchased in Vucitrn and Pec in Kosovo.

3. Group's goals: The first reports after the arrests of the group members allege that the leader of the group was Senad Ramovic who worked on the organization of the group since the beginning of 2006 till the arrests in March 2007. At the camp the police found also a large amount of food and water which indicates that the group members were planning to stay there for a longer period. The group is suspected of planning diversions in Novi Pazar such as planting explosives in water tanks, hospitals etc. To this aim the members photographed several objects, photographs of which were found in the computer of one of the group members. One of the group's tasks was to establish close contacts with

65 *Turning the page: Small arms and light weapons in Albania*, Center for Peace and Disarmament Education and Saferworld, London, UK, 2005.

66 "Slovenian Intelligence Confirms Kosovo Link to Sandzak Arrests", *Balkananalysis*, <http://www.balkananalysis.com/2007/04/19/slovenian-intelligence-confirms-kosovo-link-to-sandzak-arrests/> (accesses August 23rd 2014)

sympathizers in neighbouring and other countries, which was done by phone or email. The group possessed propaganda material (apparently from abroad) which glorified terrorist acts worldwide. According to Serbian side the group's goal was to destabilize of Serbia and instill fear among its citizens. According to officials of Sandzak's branch of *Islamic community* (IZ) of BiH, the main official institution for Muslims in Serbia (especially in Sandzak area), the group's acts were intended to disrupt the authority of IZ. A representative of international police in Kosovo Tomas Lee, said that an under –suspicion Prentic was wanted for firearms offenses and potential suicide attack. A UN official in Kosovo said Serb police "believed that he, along with another person, was planning possible suicide bomb attacks on mosques in Novi Pazar".

4. Group members' involvement in other incidents

According to Suad Bulic, former head of Novi Pazar police, the members of the group were behind a number of incidents among the Muslim community in Novi Pazar that occurred during the past year and a half. He also stated that some of the involved individuals were considered dangerous criminals. In addition to the criminal record on weapon smuggling and illegal possession of arms of deceased Ismail Prentic, the group members were involved in the following known incidents:

- Three of the members were arrested for disrupting the concert of musical group in Novi Pazar in June 2006.⁶⁷

- Two of the group members were involved in the shooting incident at the Arap mosque in November 2006 in Novi Pazar.⁶⁸

67 In June 2006 in the center of Novi Pazar a group of Wahhabis disrupted the concert of group Balkanika. According to the reports, a group of 10 youths with beard and short pants came on the stage and throw down part of the instruments, causing a considerable damage. One of them took the microphone and asked the brothers to go home, "because the band works against Islam". The responsible for the incident claim that they first asked politely the musicians to lower the volume during the prayer call but they refused, so they took actions. Arrested were Hodzic Fuad, Prentic Ismail, and Ramovic Senad.

68 In November 2006 in Novi Pazar, a supporter of a local mufti fired gun shots into a Wahhabi group of Muslims outside the Arap mosque. Three Wahhabis were injured by the gunfire. Police arrested Izet Fijuljanin for attempt on the lives of 3 people and possession of unlicensed weapon. According to the police report, Fijuljanin came to the mosque with a car when 3 people from the group outside the mosque (Ismail Gicic, Jasmin and Erhan Smailovic) approached the car and started to hit it with wooden bars. The driver stepped out of the car and shot into the three. The violent confrontation was connected to an earlier incident on the same day, which occurred due to a dispute over religious rituals. A group of Wahhabis verbally and physically attacked imam Haris Hadzic and two other religious workers. While half of the people fled the mosque some stayed to protect the religious workers. Among them was Habib Fijuljanin, the brother of Izet, who fired 2 shots into the platform of the mosque in order to calm the situation. Another incident on the same day occurred after the last shooting, when Wahhabies entered the mosque with violence, stayed there until the last prayer and left the mosque at around 7 p.m., after the arrival of the police. Police arrested 5 Wahhabis, who participated in the incident and detained another 13 from the group.

Wahhabi base in Sandzak

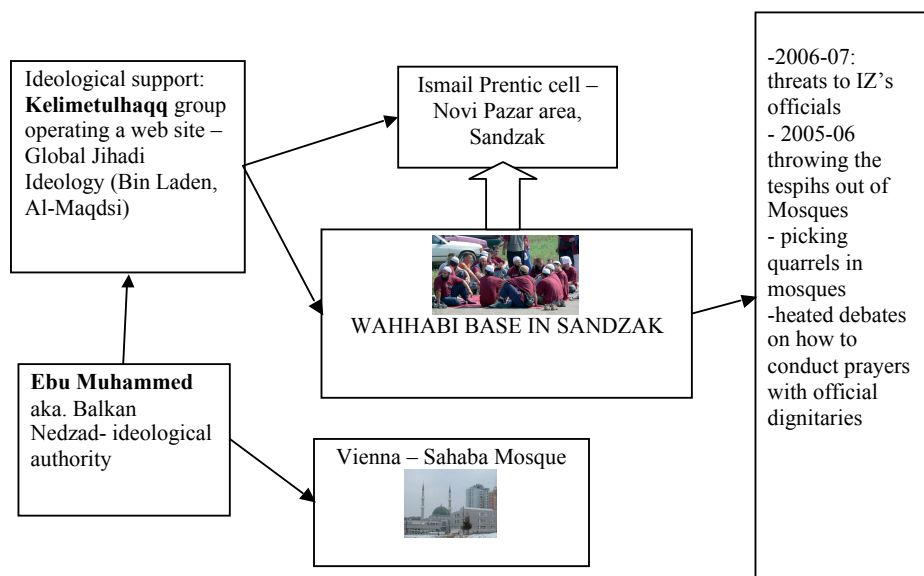


Illustration 3. Balkans radical islamcih Network-3⁶⁹

Members of the Ismail Prentic cell sprung out from a much wider base of adherents to conservative Islam, called “Wahhabies”. This group, the numbers of which is unclear (according to some sources, there are currently about some 1000 Wahhabis in Sandzak⁷⁰) is known for its aggressive methods in trying to implement their version of Islam among local Muslims and especially toward official representatives of IZ, as it was shown in the incident of the Arap Mosque. Such incidents concerning disputes in religious matters were noted already in June 2005, when Wahhabis in Novi Pazar threw tespihs (Muslim prayer beads) from the Arap mosque into a near by river. Often the Wahhabis interrupted religious services and provoked worshippers. They would pick quarrels and start heated debates with religious dignitaries about the way they conduct the prayers. Apart from Arap Mosque, such incidents happened also in Ahmedvojvodinja Mosque and Kuricesme Mosque. Apparently, a group of about 70 people that were responsible for problems in mosques in Novi Pazar disagreed with religious rituals as dictated by IZ asked for a meeting with Sandzak Mufti Zukorlic. Zukorlic refused to receive them and sent instead another official to deal with the Wahhabi group. This provoked further resentment among Wahhabis toward Zukorlic, es-

⁶⁹ Source – Authors.

⁷⁰ “Ko su vehabije – Odgovara beogradki imam Muhamed Jusufspahic”; *Blic*, <http://vesti.krstarica.com/vesti-dana/ko-su-vehabije-odgovara-beogradski-imam-muhamed-jusufspahic-raste-broj/> (August 23rd 2014)

pecially as the IZ's imams continued to follow dictates of IZ in mosques. These tensions culminated in the shooting incident at the Arap mosque. The situation demanded a response from IZ, which answered with an addendum to the March resolution on 8 November 2006. In the addendum it was concluded that despite the first resolution on interpretation of Islam (in March 2006), the improper aggressive behavior of individuals and groups still continues, referring to the incident in Sandzak. Both resolutions of IZ were intended against the growing Wahhabi movement and its increasing challenge of IZ's authority in Sandzak, as well as in Bosnia. It is likely that the Wahhabi base in Sandzak was responsible also for the threats to Zukorlic, which followed the shooting incident at the Arap mosque. The mosque was closed down for few days and on the reopening day (8.11.2006) flyers were distributed on the streets of Novi Pazar, which blamed Mufti of Sandzak, Muamer Zukorlic and his cooperatives for the shooting at the Arap Mosque. In March 2007 an Islamic newspaper reported that the group of Wahhabis directly involved in the shooting incident, continue to hold prayers in their own club. It was further reported that this group, allegedly split in two: to those with more radical views (and with hostile feelings against Sandzak mufti Zukorlic- about 10 people) and to more moderate ones. Due to the split the radical part of the group left the club, which was then shut down, and allegedly headed, to the hills. According to Mufti Zukorlic, there are about 150 Wahhabis in Sandzak, among which 15-30 of them are problematic. He stressed that the influence on Sandzak Wahhabis comes from Vienna and Bosnia and that the people arrested in connection to the terror camp, were mainly poor people which means that somebody has to stand behind them. In his opinion the group's main target was IZ. The Wahhabi base in Sandzak continued to behave aggressively also after the discovery of the Wahhabi camp. In April 2007 Mustafa Ceric (Rais ul-Ulama of IZ) received SMS threats a day before his visit to Novi Pazar for council of IZ in Serbia. Allegedly SMS message were sent because of his support to Zukorlic. Zukorlic also stated that he received threats via SMS. The threats said that Ceric will be eliminated if he supports Zukorlic.

Ideological support: Some of the Wahhabis in Sandzak are linked to a group that operates the web site Kelimetulhaqq, which professes a global jihadi ideology, and bases its views on writings of Al-Wahhab, Al-Maqdisi, bin Laden etc. Their main ideologue and leader is Ebu Muhammed, a.k.a. Nedžad Balkan, a 30 year old Serbian Muslim from Sandzak, who currently lives in Vienna. His lectures often take *takfiri* interpretation and are so radical that were condemned even by some of Bosnian Wahhabi dais. Ebu Muhammed was proclaimed to be the main authority to the group of Wahhabis that took part in the incident at the Arap Mosque. The web site published a whole book concerning this incident, in which IZ and its officials are portrayed as corrupt, hypocritical and responsible for all that occurred. The publishers of the web site are openly leading a

war against the IZ officials, with the latest call to collect all the statements and promises made by IZ in order to disclose the lies behind it. In addition, after the death of Ismail Prentić, the web site published his shahid-like picture on the site, expressing regrets over the death of “our brother shahid in the hands of kufr”. As for Nedžad Balkan, he used to study in Medina and left the University after 2 years, claiming that even Medina is full of kufrs and that whatever true knowledge he gained he did not gain it at the Medina faculty. Like Bin Laden and other global jihadi ideologists he considers Saudi royal family to be full of kufrs. He also accused many of today’s religious authorities of not being true believers. He considers jihad an obligation to every true Muslim. In the summer of 2006, Balkan, along with six other Wahhabis, three of them Austrian citizens, was involved in the beating of Bosnian Serb Mihajlo Kisić in Bosnian city of Brčko. After a short trial, the seven were given symbolic sentences on parole and some of them returned to Vienna. Balkan preaches in the Sahaba mosque in Vienna, which is said to attract a number of Wahhabis from Sandžak. Austrian authorities characterized Balkan as a radical Muslim extremist Imam.

Connection to Wahhabi base in BiH

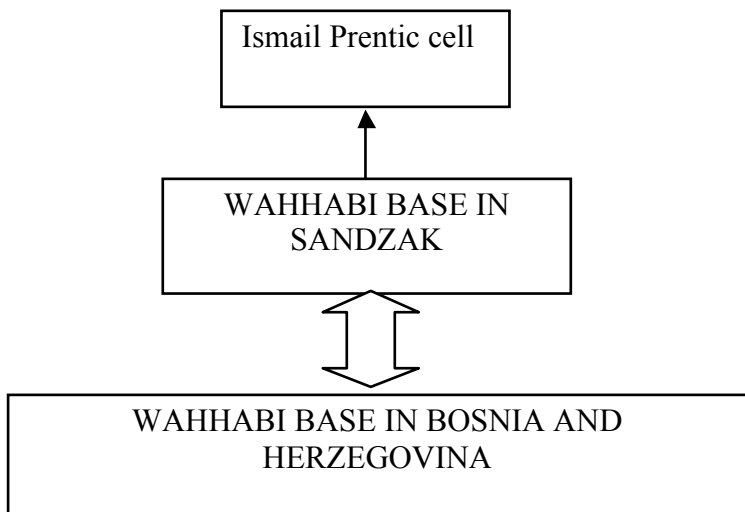


Illustration 4. Balkans radical islamcih Network-4⁷¹

In one of his interviews Sandžak Mufti Zukorlić confirmed the connection between Wahhabis of Sandžak and BiH. According to him, the Wahhabi base in Sandžak was built up by the individuals from BiH, who arrived to Sandžak and

⁷¹ Source – Authors.

held lectures to local Muslim youth. These individuals are considered as leaders among Sandzak Wahhabis. But even some of these leaders, according to Zukorlic, started to distance themselves from certain group of Sandzak Wahhabis. One of the Bosnian Wahhabi group that exerted influence in Sandzak, was probably Active Muslim Youth (AIO), whose leaders were influenced by Wahhabi Islam during the war, when coming in contact with foreign mujahedeen. After the war they made efforts to proliferate their dawa and were considered one of the main Wahhabi group in BiH till recently (in Nov. 2006 the president of AIO, Adnan Pezo announced that AIO is in the process of shutting down due to financial considerations). A flyer, distributed by a Wahhabi oriented group⁷² in winter 2006, condemned the leadership of AIO and its group connected to the Islamist newspaper Saff for turning their backs on their Wahhabi brothers in BiH and Sandzak: "However, in the recent days they (AIO) tried very hard to show the public that they are not anymore what they were once....they call their brothers, with whom they were once together in saff with names such as extremists and tekfir....we ask them...did you not teach us all these ideas in summer courses around BiH... do you remember when you spoke on your lectures how we should love jihad and muhadzire, and today you call the leaders of jihad bandits. You taught us to discard the "innovations" from Islam and today you laugh at us when we try to clean our mosques from these innovations...how come was Ebu Muhammed once liked by Saff and nowadays he is a leader of a negative, extreme sect of Muslims?... Why do you condemn the youth group in Sandzak in your newspaper when once they were its main distributors in Sandzak?"⁷³

The connection was also confirmed by Jusuf Barcic, the late Wahhabi leader⁷⁴, who by trying to take over the mosques with his group of fellow Wahhabis caused considerable distress to the officials of IZ. Barcic, in a discussion on the Bosnian television BHT in February 2007, said that although there is no special organization of "people who interpret true Islam" such individuals are connected through groups, including with the ones in Sandzak. Barcic further explained that these groups used to be subsidized by humanitarian organizations while nowadays are supported by Muslims and various islamic funds world wide, who adhere to their interpretation. On Barcic's funeral a numbers of buses and cars with plates from Sandzak were present. The connection between the two Wahhabi basis is reflected also in the role of Wahhabi group from Vienna made up by the Bosniak diapsora (by Bosniaks who came there to work or as refugees) which has an important role in supporting, ideologically and financially, the Wahhabis in BiH and Sandzak.

72 The writers called themselves "true believers and the only ones who are following the right path of Islam", which is a typical claim made by Wahhabi groups in BiH and Sandzak.

73 "Kravatama na vehabije!", *www.Preporod.com*, 13.2. 2007 .

74 Jusuf Barcic was killed in a car accident at end of March 2007.

Wahhabi base in BiH

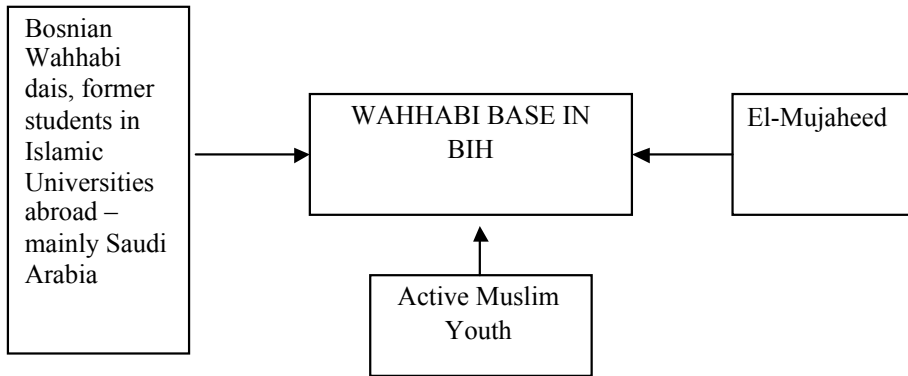


Illustration 5. Balkans radical islamcih Network-5

Three groups were/are dominant in spreading Wahhabi dawa in BiH:

1. The El-Mujaheed unit: the unit was composed of foreign mujahedeen as well as member of terrorist organization Al Qaeda, who came to fight to Bosnia during the 90s war, and local Bosniaks⁷⁵. Many of the foreigners were coming from the Gulf states, especially Saudi Arabia. In 1996 the El-Mujaheed was officially disbanded, but a great number of mujahedeen stayed in Bosnia after the war, obtaining citizenship through marrying Bosnian women. A number of El-Mujaheed members belonged to illegal organizations such as Egyptian Gammat al Islamiyya and Algerian GIA and engaged in criminal and terrorist activities during their stay in Bosnia. Due to this and requests from abroad the Bosnian government made extraditions of former mujahedeen, which were protested by the emerging Wahhabi Bosniaks⁷⁶. The mujahedeen started their Wahhabi dawa through the so-called shariah courses between 1992-1995. More than 2000 Bosnian Muslim went through a 40-day religious training led by Egyptian Imad Al-Misri, which was a precondition to be accepted in the El-Mujaheed brigade. El-Misri supervised 19 training sessions during the war, and six after the war. He was a member of radical Egyptian group al-Gama'a al-Islamiyya. He was arrested in July 2001, upon an Egyptian warrant and extradited to Egypt in October 2001 (Egypt has earlier sentenced Al-Misri to death in absentia for criticizing the re-

⁷⁵ See more in: Evan F. Kohlmann, *Al-Qaeda's Jihad in Europe- The Afghan-Bosnian Network*, Berg Publications, Oxford-UK, 2004.

⁷⁶ Sharyl Cross, Savo Kentera, Radovan Vukadinovic, R. Craig Nation, *Shaping South East Europe's Security Community for the Twenty-First Century*... p. 90.

gime). In 1996 when the Dayton peace agreement was brokered El-Misri wrote about conspiracy of bringing down Islam which destroys Muslims. His lectures at the shariah courses were attended by the founders of the Active Muslim Youth.

Many of the Bosniaks from the El-Mujaheed unit accepted the conservative form of Islam and are until nowadays considered to be part of Wahhabi group. Together with naturalized muajhedeem they formed small communities (most famous examples being Bocinja, Gornja Maoca, etc.) in which they refuse to comply with Bosnian laws and follow the shariah. Such communities were often in conflicts with local Muslims, especially due to the Wahhabies' aggressive insistence on others to accept their rules. Some of the members of these communities were involved in attacking and mining houses of Croats in the vicinity of Bugojno and Travnik in 1997-98 and connected to the foiled terrorist attack at the time of the Pope's funeral in 2005 (the cell from Gornja Maoca). In 2006, the IZ's committee, headed by the Sarajevo Mufti Smajic, was set to gather information on Wahhabi communities in Bosnia. Till today it has noted the existence of five such communities: one in the village of Maoca near Travnik, two in villages near Zenica, one in the vicinity of Kakanj and another in the village of Bocinja.

2. Active Muslim Youth (AIO): The core of AIO started in the section of El-Mujaheed under the religious indoctrination of foreign mujahideem. The founders of AIO (Adnan Pezo, Ismet Fazlic, Almin Foco, etc.) were members of El-Mujaheed unit and had partook in shariah courses under the supervision of Imad El-Misri. El-Misri also held numerous lectures on behalf of AIO after the war. According to the founders of AIO, the organization was formed because they wanted to continue spreading the Islamic *dawa*, which they learn from mujahideem. To this purpose AIO itself started to organize in shariah based courses⁷⁷. In addition, actions such as organizing Wahhabi camps, distribution of anti-Christian leaflets, demonstrations against deportations of former mujahideem, organizing public gatherings for support to "brothers in Chechnya", disrupting Islamic conferences, vandalism against Christian objects and violence against Christians, black listing people for being "the enemies of Islam", etc., were done by AIO members. AIO was also connected to the murder of three ethnic Croats by Muamer Topalovic in December 2002, when it was discovered that Topalovic visited few of their courses where he got religious motivation for the killings⁷⁸. A number of AIO activists are connected to the group that manages the Islamic newspaper Saff, however their strength and radicalism declined in the past 2 years, which can be also seen in groups efforts to consolidate with IZ. In November 2006, the president of AIO, Adnan Pezo announced that AIO is in the process of shutting down due to financial considera-

77 There is nothing wrong with Sharia Law, but it is very problematic and disputable interpretation of the Sharia by radical Islamists.

78 "Background Papers UN-CTED Delegation to Bosnia", ICT-Institute for Counter Terrorism, Herzliya, Israel, October 2007. http://www.google.rs/url?sa=t&rc=j&q=&esrc=s&source=books&cd=1&ved=0CB4QFjAA&url=http%3A%2F%2Fdomagojmargetic.cro.net%2Fizvjesce_antiterorizam_bih_un.pdf&ei=qA_BU5vDNKKa0QW7moGgBg&usg=AFQjCNFV6hwJXEnCt3nuNGjD8_MyVOXOWw&bvm=bv.70810081,d.d2k (accessed August 23rd 2014)

tions. Although now in decline, AIO's contribution to development of Wahhabi base in BiH as well as their influence in Sandzak is undeniable.

3. Bosnian Wahhabi dais: this groups consists of Bosnian Muslims, usually former students at the Islamic universities in Arab countries (mainly in Saudi Arabia, also Egypt and Jordan), who after returning to Bosnia from their education abroad started to preach conservative Islam, which differs from Bosnian traditional Islamic practices. Currently this group represents the main power behind the Wahhabi movement in BiH and in Sandzak. Some of the most known Wahhabi dais in this group are: Muhammed Porca, Safet Kudozovic, Semir Imamovic, Dzevad Golos, Jusuf Barcic(deceased), Senad Podojak, Adnan Buzar, Nedzad Balkan⁷⁹.

5. New strategies of Islamic fundamentalist – Political Islam

Political Islam is considering as new strategy in some radical Islamic circles⁸⁰. Rather than bombing or shooting their way to power, Islamists in many lands are trying to infiltrate the rest of society; to impose curbs on what people can read, see on television or in the movies, what clothes they (especially women) can wear, how they can amuse or entertain themselves. In certain places, such as Egypt, they are succeeding. Whether Islamists win or lose in turbulent, changing societies like that of Iran will reflect the final impact of the Afghanistan wars, both holy and unholy, on the rest of the world⁸¹. Dr Assad Homayoun noted: *If nothing dramatic happens — by which I mean major war (and that possibility is very high) — political Islam will definitely advance, and, in the mid-21st Century, Islam could be in control of Europe. This would lead inevitably to clashes with non-Islamic states and communities. We are living in the most unstable period of human history, with ever-increasing cancerous problems, seemingly without solutions. It is interesting to remember the medicine which Hippocrates, the Greek physician, recommended against the cancer: "What medicine cannot heal, steel heals, what steel does not heal, fire does". Political Islam, resorting to asymmetrical warfare and terrorism, has already intimidated a tired and perplexed Europe and has frightened the US. Even Queen Elizabeth II, during her visit to Turkey, through which she was wearing a headscarf, listened to a recitation of the Quran in the Green Mosque in Istanbul. It seems that the US and the democratic West do not have a sound strategy to deal with political Islam. The West appears to have no strategy or will to prevent a shifting of power, or to guard Western culture, civilization, and democracy. On the other hand,*

79 Interview by Ioannis Michaletos for SRNA (Serbian Republic of Bosnia news agency) with journalist Danijela Dzeletovic, in June 2010, Radical Islam Monitor in Southeast Europe, <http://www.rimse.gr/2011/02/interview-by-ioannis-michaletos-for.html> (accessed August 23rd 2014)

80 See more: Barry M. Rubin, *Political Islam: Strategies and tactics: Islamism among Arabs*, Routledge, Kentucky, 2007.

81 John K. Cooley, *Unholy Wars Afghanistan, America and International Terrorism*, Pluto Press, Sterling, VA, US, 2000. p. 262

there are many in the Muslim world who believe that Islam needs to be adjusted to new realities of life in a modern world, and, indeed, to be liberated from literalist ayatollahs and imams. Much of the Muslim world is intimidated by the ferocity of the Islamists and does not speak. Indeed, Islam has been hijacked by radical Muslims who are ready to be killed for their ideology. I am of the opinion that going against a religion — especially a popular one — is the height of folly, but criticizing and fighting with extremism is necessary for the cause of peace. For classical Muslim thinkers and philosophers who have studied Aristotle and Plato it is not difficult to interpret Islam and adjust it to modern times and a new life. But the present interpretation of Islam by dogmatic and even fanatical ayatollahs and imams has given a new and macabre face to Islam. I should like to emphasize that this engine of political Islam and jihad against infidels was first ignited by "Ayatollah" Ruhollah Khomeini in 1979, and continues at an ever-faster pace. On January 14, 1980, more than 120 Pakistani Army officers on a pilgrimage to religious city of Qom met with Khomeini who said to them: "We are at war against infidels. Take this message with you. I ask all Islamic nations, all Islamic armies to join us. There are many enemies to be killed. Jihad must triumph". After the Iranian revolution and the establishment of the Shia system of Velayat-e-Faqih, the Wahhabi/salafi religious leaders — in order to not be left behind — introduced a Sunni version of radical Islam, re-stressing the export of the Quran, financing for madrasas, and building of new mosques worldwide. That race between Shia and Wahhabist/salafist proselytization continues, faster and faster. This competition led to the rise of al-Qaida, which attacked two centers of economic and military power of the United States on September 11, 2001, and created the present incarnation of international terrorism. Currently, the two important branches of Islam — Sunni and Shi'a — despite of their differences, effectively undermine the democratic West. The West, instead of using the differences between Shi'ism and Sunnism, has lost its nerve and has been unable to devise a sound strategy to face political Islam. In the Seventh Century, a small Muslim army defeated two superpowers of the time, the Persian and Roman Empires. History repeats itself, since it is made by humans, and human nature has not changed in the past several thousand years. It will not change. It would take a hero with sense of history to change the equation. I see no sign of such a hero. As Niccolò Machiavelli said: "if you wish to see what is to be, you must consider what has been: all things of this world in every era have their counterparts an ancient times."⁸²

Conclusion

Four Balkans states – Serbia, Montenegro, Bosnia-Herzegovina and Macedonia – represent a turbulent flashpoint in the region. This is in part because

82 Dr Assad Homayoun, The Northern Tier Powers of Iran and Turkey, and the Rapid Rise of Political Islam, Expose a Lack of Western Understanding and Strategies, *Defense & Foreign Affairs Daily*, ISSA-The International Strategic Studies Association, Vol. XXVIII, No. 69, Alexandria, US, October 31, 2010.

they face numerous intractable questions concerning their internal organization and functioning, but also because they have been “excommunicated” from Euro-Atlantic integrations. Global radical Islamists are skillfully using this situation to push their agenda in the region, embodied in the project of the Balkans Caliphate. Their confidence is based on a significant number of Bosnian Muslims and Albanians – some estimates place them as high as 500,000 – who have accepted “original Islam” and practice “political Islam” in which terrorism is a significant component. If only one percent of this population is prepared to resort to conventional terrorism, that still means up to 5,000 terrorists. Considering some attempts at suicide bombings attempted by Balkans Muslims, thwarted at the last moment, it is reasonable to assume that among the several thousand potential terrorists there are at least some suicide bombers. These bitter facts suggest that radical Islamist terrorism is a major risk factor in the internal security considerations of Balkans states, with potential to escalate into mass armed conflict and spill beyond the boundaries of the region.

Therefore, if the states involved do not urgently re-examine and improve their defenses against the “unstoppable” aggression of the radical Islamists (including Al-Qaeda), even their eventual integration into the EU, NATO or both – which isn’t likely in the short run – will not help improve their stability. Simply put, the principal objective of the “re-Islamized” Bosnians and Albanians – the Balkans Caliphate – is in direct opposition to a vision of European unity, and they are willing to resort to aggressive action to achieve that objective.

This explains why the Bosnian and Albanian radical Islamists are not satisfied even with the enormous gains they have made so far. This is why the Albanian radical Islamists relentlessly insist on “Natural Albania” (or as it has been known for over a century, “Greater Albania”), the establishment of which would directly infringe on the sovereignty of Serbia, Macedonia, Montenegro and Greece.

Likewise, the Bosnian Muslim radical Islamists continue to campaign for the revision of the Dayton Accords and the establishment of a centralized government, in which they reason that Muslims would dominate the Serb and Croat communities by the strength of their numbers.

These radical Islamist projects could lead to the resumption of open warfare in the Balkans, with the high likelihood of involving many external actors. Many reputable authorities in the security field have warned of this cataclysmic possibility, but their warnings have fallen on deaf ears.

In 2011, Russia classified Serbia (with Kosovo) as a state where an “explosive situation has arisen as a result of inefficient central government, economic disorder, energy dependency, low standard of living and rising crime”⁸³.

In May 2001, *Washington Times* columnist Jeffrey Kuhner wrote that a new war in the Balkans was “just a matter of time” and that the “so-called international

83 *Politika*, Belgrade, June 18, 2011

community has fanned the flames of ethnic conflict.”

Ten years later, head of Croatia’s intelligence service Ivo Lučić argued that a real possibility existed of an armed conflict between Bosnia’s Croats and Muslims. In a statement to the Bosnian Serb TV (June 7, 2010), Lučić said that “a mobilization was already afoot,” referring to the Bosnian Muslim news programs “routinely opening with stories of mass graves, murdered children and victims calling for justice and vengeance.” He said that a new war could be prevented, but only if the danger from it was taken seriously.

Vice-president of the (Bosnian) Serb Republic Emil Vlajki referred to Lučić’s statement in an op-ed titled “War was declared long ago,” (Rat je odavno objavljen), and pointed out the threat by Bakir Izetbegović, Muslim member of the Bosnian Presidency, that “Croat attempts to seek autonomy will inevitably lead to conflict” and that “Bosniaks [sic] outnumber the Croats four to one.” Vlajki also pointed out the statement by Zlatko Lagumdžija, leader of the Social-Democratic Party (the senior partner in the Bosnian Muslim ruling coalition) that a renewed conflict would “make Tripoli look like Disneyland.”

With all of this in mind, it is necessary for non-Balkans actors, Europe in particular, to seriously re-examine their estimates and positions about the turbulent portion of the Balkans, and offer the necessary aid in combating the most pressing problems, the foremost of which is the terrorist threat of jihad.

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РАДИКАЛНИ ИСЛАМИСТИ НА БАЛКАНУ И ТЕРОРИСТИЧКЕ ПРЕТЊЕ МЕЂУНАРОДНОЈ БЕЗБЕДНОСТИ

Резиме

Балкански војни сукоби у периоду 1991 – 2001, често погрешно тумачени у западној јавности, су били највећи пораз народа бивше Југославије, као и велики пораз Европе – али и победа за глобални џихад. Џихадисти су користили ратове да регрутују велики број сунита са Балкана (Босанаца и Албанаца) у редове политичког ислама и војног џихада. Конвертити у вахабитски/салафистички ислам не само да представљају регруте за такозвану „Белу Ал-Каиду“, већ и показују територијалне претензије и желе успостављање „Балканског халифата“. Моћне силе ван Балкана су незаинтересоване или чак прећутно одобравају ове чињенице. Џихадистичке активности угрожавају безбедност не само Србије, Македоније, Црне Горе и Босне и Херцеговине, већ и Европе и света.

Кључне речи: Балкан, вахабизам, салафизам, џихадисти, тероризам, Ал-Каида

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