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**THE BALKANS AND THE MIDDLE EAST:
ARE THEY MIRRORING EACH OTHER?**

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FOREWORD

When Edward Luttwak in his masterful synthesis *The Grand Strategy of the Byzantine Empire* explained the etymology of an Old Serbian word *husar* in an ancient Byzantine military manual, and translating it as “those who lead the way” (i.e. light cavalry) he was dutifully aware of the fact that Hussars – word still in use today for armoured reconnaissance troops – last time mounted horses in 1917 for a raid on Beer Sheva, the future “capital of the Negev”.

At some point in time after *the Campaign Organization* was written – allegedly for emperor Basil II - and before the campaign ending with the Balfour Declaration even started, a number of monks from Sinai left their cells in the desert which borders with Negev and went to the Balkans where they established a stronghold of their teaching on the Uncreated Light, known as Hesychasm. On Sinai they left, hidden behind the walls of the Monastery of St. Catherine, the oldest glagolitic books in Ancient Slavic that were brought from the Balkans in 9th and 10th century to serve the Slavic monks who settled in the hermitages of the Sinai Peninsula immediately after the disciples of St. Cyril and St. Methodius turned Lake Ochrid into “Slavic Jerusalem”.

In other words, there is a substantial history of Middle East–Balkan relations to be researched but despite a fair amount of scholarship done on the matter we still are waiting for a synthesis.

In the mean time, the scholars who met in October 2012 at the conference *The Balkans and the Middle East: Are They Mirroring Each Other?* or-

ganised in Peć and Belgrade were not to dive into the historical aspect of this fascinating comparative subject. Their interest was to mull over the present reality of both entities which seems to be no less turbulent and important than it was when the Crusaders on their fourth (alleged) voyage to the Holy Land repaid the Venetian transport services with the conquest of Dalmatian port of Zara, today Zadar.

On the contrary, centuries only added value to this comparison of military business: Dima Adamsky told us once that Israeli strategists carefully studied NATO operation against Yugoslavia in 1999 although it is not easy to understand what were the lessons learned and applied in the Second Lebanon War of 2006. A few years later *Mavi Marmara* incident marked the first serious fissure in Israeli-Turkish relations and would include a number of residents of former Yugoslavia, although some of them had their first passport issued in Syria.

The question that stood on table at the Conference – and it is visible in this book as well - was: how alive are these ancient historical, spiritual, economic and political relations between the Balkans and the Middle East today; how they influence actual processes in both regions; how do global and regional developments affect these relations? What are the main characteristics, similarities and dissimilarities today? And finally, can any predictions be made on the future of both regions and the mode of their relationship?

One of the Conference's conclusions must be mentioned in this *Foreword*: both regions – the Middle East and the Balkans – are witnesses to the fact that deepest human drives stem from humankind's spiritual level in both personal and collective consciousness and that they are shaping, influencing or determining all the other levels of life. In both regions it is true for their past, present and undoubtedly for their future. Therefore, be it Kosovo and Metohija or the Temple Mount, sanctity is an element not only to be accounted for but the element crucial for understanding the past and the present of the Balkans and the Middle East and for shaping their future.

The long and sorrowful history of peacemaking processes in the Middle East and the Balkans can at least partly be seen as history of neglecting or confronting religious foundations of the regions. Namely, if the religious nature of the Battle of Kumanovo in 1912 is not understood, then Zionism in its shift of the religious towards the Land of Israel will not be understood either.

Without understanding that, the murky outcomes of both the Dayton Peace Accord and the Oslo Process will get even murkier and the nature and future of the Arab Spring will provide issues unpredictable.

Therefore, this collection of essays is intended to be a view from aside, from a new point of view on both regions and their present, aimed at opening possible approaches to their future. Having in mind how important and influential the religions and the culture born and developed in the Middle East and the Balkans are for mankind's history and present situation, it is clear that the self-imposed limits will not prevent results of the Conference to reach the widest possible readership and reception.

Bishop of Ulpiana Jovan Ćulibrk

A TALE OF TWO DISASTER AREAS

MARTIN VAN CREVELD

The title of this essay may well mystify many readers, and with good reason. Here is the explanation. Back in 1994, my family and I visited New Zealand. We brought back with us a “New Zealand Tourist Map of the World” which has been hanging on our kitchen wall ever since. On this map, which is rectangular in shape, most of the space is taken up by the two islands of New Zealand. They are painted green, as in “green and clean”. The rest of the world’s land mass is proportionally much smaller and presented in red. New Zealand carries many designations such as “best beaches in the world”, “fastest girls in the world”, “finest hot air factories in the world”, and “most modest people in the world.” The reader will have got the idea. The rest of the world is marked by designations such as “impassable deserts”, “freezing cold”, “tornadoes”, “tidal waves”, “snakes”, “hot dogs”, “wild men”, and “wild women”. Again the reader will have got the idea. What interests us on this map is the eastern Mediterranean, the region where both Serbia and Israel are located. It is marked, succinctly but unfortunately quite accurately, “disaster area”.



Truth to say, by most standards, both the Balkans and the Middle East *are* disaster areas. To realize this fact, a good place to start is the United Na-

tions Human Development Index. On this index the quality of life in different countries is measured by means of a combination of five criteria, i.e. life expectancy, education, per capita GDP, and GINI index.¹ Other people would no doubt add such factors as child mortality, the rule of law (as measured, for example, by the number of people imprisoned without trial), media freedom, the number of computers per person, the number of violent crimes per 100,000 people per year, and so on. Presumably the effect would be to change the order of rank of some countries, but hardly by very much.

As it is, both Balkan and Middle Eastern countries have obtained fairly low ratings. The highest-ranking one is Slovenia at place No. 21. It is followed by Greece (29), Qatar (37), Hungary (38), Bahrain (42), Croatia (46), Romania (50), Montenegro (54), and Saudi Arabia (56). Serbia is No. 59 on the list. All the rest are way down. For example, Kuwait is 63rd, Libya 64th. Albania is 70th, Lebanon 71st, Bosnia-Herzegovina 74th, Iran 89th, Turkey 92nd, Jordan 95th, Egypt 113th, Syria (before the civil war) 119th. Some of these countries are very large, others very small. Some are well endowed with natural resources. Others have few or hardly any at all. Even the most cursory look at the Index will show that there is no correlation between a country's command of such resources and the place it occupies. Or else the oil-producing countries in particular should have been found near the top instead of near the bottom.

In both the Balkans and the Middle East, part of the explanation is the legacy of centuries-long Ottoman mismanagement. At their zenith, under Emperor Suleiman the Magnificent (reigned 1520-66), the Ottomans may have been a great and progressive people (though even at that time they needed European experts to teach them about artillery among other things).² Later, following the path of all other Moslem countries, they started falling further and further behind. For example, so great was clerical resistance that the first printing press was only introduced in 1775, more than three centuries after Gutenberg had published his Bible. The first railways in Anatolia only date to the 1860s, and even then they had to be built, equipped and operated by foreign firms, British, French and German.³ Throughout the nineteenth century the vicious mixture of despotism, lack of elementary human rights, corruption, low educational standards, and sheer incompetence remained intact. So bad was the situation that "the Unspeakable Turk" became prover-

bial. Both in the Balkans and the Middle East the disintegration of the Empire was followed by the establishment of a whole series of new states, Serbia and mandatory Palestine included. The borders among those states were often drawn up with little regard for national, economic, social and cultural realities on the ground. In both cases, the outcome has been political instability and intermittent warfare of both the intra-and interstate kind.⁴

Not to put too fine a touch on it, the outcome was a mess. As any visitor to the two regions in question will note soon enough, in many cases the mess has remained in being right down to the present day. In this sad environment, one country sticks out: Israel. On the abovementioned U.N list it is number 17. A brief comparison with Serbia will be useful in this context. Israel's population is similar to that of Serbia, but it only has one third of Serbia's land area. It has few natural resources; a late acquaintance of mine, who was an expert on the Bible, used to explain that when the Old Testament spoke of "milk and honey" it meant a poor country, not a rich one as most people mistakenly believe.⁵ A story in the Talmud says that God sent out an angel to distribute rocks all over the world. As the angel flew over what is now known as Palestine, the sack he was carrying tore open and all the rocks fell out. Even water, of which Serbia has plenty, is scarce. So low is the annual rainfall that about half of total area consists of desert. The rest is subject to periodic droughts that have been growing worse in recent years. Not for nothing are the media always talking about the level of the water in the Sea of Galilee; a 1940s-vintage guide for British troops stationed in the Middle East noted that "the first thing you'll notice is how arid the country is."

Nor has Israel been lucky in its choice of neighbors. Starting at the beginning of the twentieth century, Serbia was at peace—not just *de facto* peace, but formal peace, confirmed by treaties—from 1901 to 1911, 1919 to 1941, 1945 to 1991, and 1999 to 2012. This makes for a total of 91 out of 112 years. By contrast, Israel has never been able to shake off a state of war with many, occasionally all, of its neighbors. That remains the case down to the present day; even when formal peace agreements exist, as with Egypt (since 198) and Jordan (since 1994), state-to-state relations remain problematic and people-to-people-ones, owing to reluctance on the Arab side, almost nonexistent. Not only did the country go through several major wars, but it always had so-called "current security", read guerrilla and terrorism, to look after. Starting

in the 1970s, the resources that had to be devoted to that kind of security had to be multiplied many times over. All this has resulted in a sky-high defense budget. Even without taking U.S. aid into account, it takes up about 7 percent of national resources.⁶ Once that aid is factored in the figure may be as high as 9 percent. Serbia resembles Israel in that it too has a long and proud military tradition as well as several unpleasant neighbors. Nevertheless, the corresponding figure is just two percent.

To quote one of Benjamin Netanyahu's more witty *bon mots*, Israel is a developed country that landed in the Middle East by mistake. Surely this paper is not the place to boast about my own country's achievements. One may, however, briefly reflect on the origins of those achievements. First and foremost there were the very high educational standards of the Zionist Jews who started coming into the country from about 1900 on. Other third-world countries have long labored and still labor under the fact that so many of their people never received a proper modern schooling. By contrast, already during the period of the British Mandate (1919-48) the Jewish population in Palestine was better educated than that of quite some European countries. Compared with the native Arabs, who at that time were not yet known as Palestinians, the gap was simply enormous.⁷ The large-scale immigration of so-called "Oriental" Jews from various Arabic-speaking countries during the early 1950s changed the picture. For a time it caused average educational standards to drop; however, the country has struggled to maintain them as best it could. During the 1970s they started recovering, and since then they have been going nowhere but up. To this day, the fraction of national resources devoted to education is the highest in any OECD country.⁸ The number of new book titles published each year is also exceptionally high.

Education has gone a long way to compensate for the lack of natural resources. It has also served as the basis for Israel's high achievements in the fields of science and technology. Back in 1914 there was but one car in the whole of Palestine and no telephones at all. As of the present, in terms of the number of scientific articles per 100,000 population, the number of citations per article, and the annual number of patents issued (again, per 100,000 of population) Israel will stand comparison with highly developed countries such as the Netherlands, Norway, or Switzerland. In fields such as computer science and material science it is at the top or nearly so. The same applies to

start-up companies.⁹ Briefly, the results of education are there for all to see. Over the last few years they have even included a number of Nobel Prizes in the natural sciences. But why go so far? Some years ago a friend of mine who, with his family, had driven a car through much of Asia came to visit me in Jerusalem. Having reached my home, he opened the kitchen tap. For long minutes he just stood there, fascinated by the flow. When I asked him what he was doing he answered: “You don’t understand. This is the first time in weeks I have seen water fit for drinking coming out of a tap.”

Another very important characteristic of Israeli society is its democracy. The number of “developing” countries in the world is well over a hundred. Of those just three—India, Malta and Israel—have always been democratic. In sixty-five years there have been no coups (not even attempted ones), no periods during which the military or some other groups used force in order to rule by extra-parliamentary means. Elections have been orderly and, with a single exception occasioned by the 1973 Arab-Israeli War, always took place on time. Corruption and vote-buying do exist, but their scale has been limited. The critical separation of powers been maintained. The arrangement known as BAGATZ (the right of direct appeal to the Supreme Court against government decisions that appear to be against the law or simply “unreasonable”) has enabled the judiciary to monitor the executive as closely as in any other country.¹⁰ With few exceptions, human rights such as freedom of thought, of speech, assembly, etc. have been maintained. There have been no concentration camps (except, some would say, for Palestinian terrorists), no unpersons who disappeared and were never heard of again. The contrast with many other developing countries is indeed a sharp one. It is made even more remarkable by the vast size of the Army on one hand and the extreme heterogeneity of society on the other.

As of 2011 Israel’s per capita GDP reached \$ 32,000 or 66 percent of the U.S figure. Not a bad result for a country which, a century ago, probably only reached 4 percent.¹¹ Other factors have helped; including, of course, massive American political, economic and military assistance. Indeed it would be true to say that, throughout history, no country has received more aid than Israel did. Yet a dark shadow threatens these achievements—the shadow of occupation. Out of Israel’s population of almost eight million about a million and a half is Arab. As in other developed countries, there are a considerable number

of legal and illegal foreigners. While nobody knows how many there are, half a million might not be too far from the mark. But that is only part of the story. Depending on whom one chooses to believe, the population of the West Bank is somewhere between 1.5 and 2.5 million (the vast difference is rooted in the fact that no census has been held for many years. It also reflects the tendency of the Palestinian Authority to include those who have left years or decades ago and have no intention of returning). Before Prime Minister Ariel Sharon evacuated the Gaza Strip back in the summer of 2005 the 1.5 million Palestinians of that district also came under Israeli rule. Thus 6 million or so Jews ruled over anything between 4.5 and 5.5 million Arabs. Of those, 3 to 4 million were not citizens and were not allowed to vote. Even without Gaza the figure still remains between 3 and 4 million, of whom 1.5 to 2.5 million are not Israeli citizens. Such a situation does not bid well for the future of any country. Let alone a democratic one whose very *raison d'être* is to be Jewish.

Had the various statistics referred not to Israel alone but to all the ten million or so people who now live west of the Jordan River, then the picture would have been entirely different. Nominal per capita GDP would have been cut in half and corresponded to that of Barbados, Uruguay, or Antigua/Barbuda. To say nothing of the fact that, compared with the much larger Arab and Islamic world surrounding it, Israel is a mere drop in the ocean. Israel, in other words, owes its unique success to the fact that it does *not* form part of the disaster area broadly known as the Middle East. Not only that success, but its very existence depends on the separation being maintained.

In the eyes of many Israelis, the principal reason for holding on to the Occupied Territories is military-strategic by nature. They speak of “secure borders” and “strategic depth” as if ballistic missiles on one hand and terrorism on the other did not exist. As I have written more than once, I myself do not share that view. I believe that, militarily speaking, Israel can survive very well without the territories in question.¹² But even I, a secular Jew who has not visited a synagogue for years, find it very difficult to ignore one essential fact. It is that the area now known as the West Bank, rather than the coastal plain in which most of the population of present-day Israel is concentrated, forms the historical part of the country where the roots of the Jewish/Israeli people are to be found. To mention a few locations only, Rachel, wife of the patriarch Jacob and mother of the Tribes of Ephraim, Menasse, and Benja-

min, is supposed to be buried on the outskirts of Bethlehem. The remains of other patriarchs are buried in Hebron. The first Canaanite city to fall to the conquering Israelites under Joshua was Jericho. The Tribe of Judah used to occupy Judea, and the Tribe of Ephraim lived in Samaria. The patriarch Joseph is buried near Nablus. The city of Samaria was the capital of the Kingdom of Israel, and the Prophet Jeremiah was born in Anatot, a village not far from Jerusalem. It was in the Judean Mountains that the Maccabees fought and defeated their enemies in the second century B.C. The list goes on and on. Hardly a hill and hardly a valley that does not carry some Old Testament association. All these places go back thousands of years, long before anybody heard of Tel Aviv or Haifa or whatever. That is why World War I British Prime Minister David Lloyd-George once told the head of the Zionist Organization, Haim Weizmann, that he was more familiar with them than with those over which his, Lloyd George's, armies were fighting in France. Briefly, it is precisely in the Occupied Territories that the historical-religious-cultural roots of the Jewish people are found. But for those roots, Zionism would have been inconceivable. This situation bears a strong resemblance to that of the Serb people, whose roots go back to Kosovo and the principality of Rascia which was established there during the twelfth century A.D.¹³

Unfortunately for Israeli traditionalists, Bethlehem is home not only to Rachel's tomb but to approximately 25,000 Palestinians as well. The most recent figure for Hebron is 160,000. However, in view of the massive amount of "illegal" construction which has been going on for many years, 160,000 may well be a considerable underestimate. Nablus too probably has more than the 130,000 inhabitants who officially live there. Like all Palestinians in the West Bank, the last thing these people want is to continue to live under Israeli rule. For Israel their mere existence, let alone their continuing and occasionally violent resistance to the occupation, represents a burden—a "hump", to quote the late Moshe Dayan—which threatens to pull it down and overwhelm it. In most ways it would be much better off without them.

What applies to the West Bank at large is also true of Jerusalem. Jerusalem can only be called a monster. Currently the city has approximately 800,000 inhabitants. Owing partly to topography and partly to the lack of high-rise buildings, they are spread over a space of almost fifty square miles. It is estimated that, of the people in question, about one third are Palestini-

ans.¹⁴ Yet the truth is that many of the Palestinian-inhabited neighborhoods do not, in reality, belong to Jerusalem at all. As has happened in so many other places around the world, they were joined with it not because there is anything historical or holy about them but simply by a process of conurbation that was either preceded or confirmed by administrative decree. Some of the decrees date back to the British Mandatory Authorities. A few were issued by the Jordanians who occupied East Jerusalem between 1948 and 1967, and some by the Israelis from 1967 on. The latter more than doubled the area under municipal control.¹⁵

Needless to say, each occupying power had its own interests in mind. The various neighborhoods carry names such as Beth Hanina, Shu'afat, Abu Dis, Tzur Bakhar, Beth Tzafafa, and others. All these are poor neighborhoods inhabited exclusively by Palestinians. Had the U.N Index been applied to them, they would have come very low on the list. Whatever ties may link them with Jerusalem are neither religious, nor historical, nor even very old. Instead they consist of such mundane things as roads, public transport, power systems, sewage systems, and the like. Both before 1948 and from 1967 on there has also been a common municipality. In much of East Jerusalem, however, that municipality can only do its job, to the extent that it does do its job, thanks to the Israeli bayonets on which it has been sitting for so long.

Fortunately what has been done by one man can often be undone by another. By giving up those neighborhoods—I am not speaking of the Old City, which owing to its religious association will presumably remain a bone of contention for many, many years to come—Israel will be able to rid itself of perhaps another 200,000 Arabs. The social and psychological burden under which it is laboring will be eased in proportion.



As Machiavelli once wrote, at certain times it pays to do out of one's own free will that what the enemy is trying to force one to do. There are some significant parallels between the two areas and the two countries, Israel and Serbia. In both cases, in the long run the factor that will govern the fate of any nation is demography. In both cases, therefore, a large part of the problem is precisely how *not* to integrate with the surrounding "disaster area"; in other words, how to avoid being swamped by people who belong to a dif-

ferent religion, practice a different way of life, and hold different ideas as to what is right and what is wrong. By way of an analogy, suppose a man one of whose legs has been injured by some foreign body, become infected with gangrene, and has swollen to twice its original size. Understandably this man is very loath to part with it—who wants to be left with just one leg? So he does this and does that. At times he simply ignores the problem as best he can and does his best to convince others and himself that it does not exist. At others he implores the leg to please, please get well, hoping it will respond to his kind gestures and stop bothering him. At other times still, especially when the pain becomes rather hard to bear, he gets angry and hits it with his hands. As he does so he keeps crying, “bad leg, bad leg, get well or else.” All the while he knows very well, as indeed all the surgeons keep telling him, that his problem will only admit to one solution: namely, to apply a tourniquet and amputate the leg. Either he does that or he is going to suffer a slow, lingering, painful, death.

The analogy describes the situation of Israel very well. Some of its leading statesmen, such as minister of defense and former Prime Minister Ehud Barak, have in fact made proposals along these lines.¹⁶ So apparently did Ehud Olmert. As to Serbia, its government and people will have to make up their own minds concerning what has to be done.

Endnotes

- 1 See, for the list, http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_countries_by_Human_Development_Index#Complete_list_of_countries.
- 2 See J. J. Norwich, *A Short History of Byzantium*, New York, NY, Vintage Books, 1997, p. 374
- 3 See on this “History of rail transport in Turkey”, at http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/History_of_rail_transport_in_Turkey.
- 4 See, for the way it was done in the Middle East, D. Fromkin, *A Peace to End all Peace*, New York, NY, Holt, 2009.
- 5 I owe this insight to Prof David Flusser (1917-2000).
- 6 Israel Defense Forces, at http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Israel_Defense_Forces.

- 7 M. Asaf, *The Relationships between Arabs and Jews in Palestine, 1860-1948* [Hebrew: Tel Aviv, Tarbut Vehinuh, 1964] p. 217.
- 8 2008 figure; *Jerusalem Post*, 8.9.2008, p. 6.
- 9 See on this unfolding story D. Senor and S. Singer, *Startup Nation; The Story of Israel's Economic Miracle*, Twelve, 2011.
- 10 See, for the way it works, "Supreme Court of Israel", at http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Supreme_Court_of_Israel.
- 11 2011 figure from [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_countries_by_GDP_\(nominal\)_per_capitaxxxx](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_countries_by_GDP_(nominal)_per_capitaxxxx); 1900 one from A. Ruppin, *Syrien als Wirtschaftsgebiet*, Berlin, Harz, 1917, p. 12.
- 12 See M. van Creveld, *Defending Israel*, New York, NY, St. Martin's 2006.
- 13 See J. K. Cox, *The History of Serbia*, Westport, Ct, Greenwood, 2002, pp. 19-28.
- 14 The available figures are problematic and sometimes contradictory; see "Jerusalem", at http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jerusalem#Current_demographics.
- 15 See, for a map of the process, http://www.passia.org/palestine_facts/MAPS/images/jer_maps/Jlem1947-2000.html.
- 16 According to his adviser, Ben Caspit: see http://www.iris.org.il/divided_jerusalem.htm.

THE MIDDLE EAST BETWEEN DEMOCRATIZATION AND ISLAMIZATION

SHAUL SHAY

On December 17, 2010, Mohammed Bouazizi, a Tunisian street fruit and vegetable vendor, set himself on fire in a show of public protest. Bouazizi's self-immolation triggered widespread unrest in Tunisia which was dubbed the "Jasmine Revolution". Subsequently when massive protests broke out in a number of other Arab countries, the phenomenon came to be termed as the "Arab Spring".¹

The Arab Spring is a revolutionary wave of demonstrations, protests, and civil wars occurring in the Arab world that began on 18 December 2010. The phrase "Arab Spring" is misleading and these revolutions in the Arab world are better described as a "Tsunami" or "Earthquake" that has moved tectonic plates of the Muslim societies and will provoke aftershocks. The changes over the past two years have produced a fundamental transformation of the region – but not in the way most outside observers anticipated -they reflect the replacement of the dominant Arab national identity and mainly secular dictatorships by a more Islamic identity and Islamic regimes.

The revolutions in the Arab states captured the world's imagination as they toppled strong dictators and some observers have drawn comparisons between the Arab Spring movements and the pro-democratic, anti-Communist Revolutions of 1989 that swept through Eastern Europe.

The Arab nations differed dramatically from each other before the region-wide upheaval began, so it logically follows that the revolutions themselves, not to mention their conclusions and aftermaths, should also differ dramatically.² Each country in the region is unique and will make its own history. Nonetheless, the replacement of the dominant Arab nationalist secular identity by an Islamic identity is a regional trend that will likely affect every nation to varying degrees.³

As the role of European powers, especially France and Britain, declined, more Arab “states” acquired independence in the 1950s and 1960s. Since 1950s, Arab nationalism emerged as the dominant political philosophy. For some years, however, violence swept through most of the newly-formed states, in the form of military coups. Arab nationalist governments headed by military leaders replaced monarchies established by the withdrawing European colonial powers. During the 1950s and 1960s, Arab nationalists achieved power in Egypt, Syria, Iraq, Tunisia, Algeria Libya and Yemen, and exerted great influence elsewhere.⁴ It was not until the late 1960s-early 1970s that the fabric of the Arab state system was more clearly defined.

Socioeconomic background

Over the past decade, large segments of the populations in Arab countries suffered a progressive decline in living standards.

The generous welfare systems the governments had provided throughout much of the 1960s and 1970s were scaled back as a result of the implementation of structural adjustment reforms called for by the IMF and WB.

The state welfare system was going through a serious crisis, with a dramatic worsening in the quality and access of healthcare, education and housing provisions. Even in Tunisia, where the level of public expenditure for social policies remained relatively high, the regional gap with regard to both the coverage and the quality of social services widened dramatically, raising popular discontent in the regions of the interior. To make matters worse, during the last decade, ordinary citizens faced a gradual erosion in their purchasing power as their salaries stagnated and inflation particularly food prices, grew. In Egypt, soaring food prices was the main cause of rising income poverty over the last decade.⁵

As the numbers of poor and dispossessed increased, the ability of the regimes to provide pay-offs came under increasing pressure. In order to buy off the population, the Egyptian government was reportedly spending \$3 billion a year subsidizing the price of bread.

By the mid-nineties Tunisia and Egypt gradually began to boost their economic growth, reduce public deficits and contain inflation. Over the past decade, therefore, the countries have experienced positive macroeconomic performances. However, while macroeconomic indicators were clearly improving, employment opportunities, particularly among the educated youth, worsened dramatically. In this respect it is important to note that while over the last ten years unemployment at a national level has declined, this has not been the case among two important segments of the population: women and university graduates. Moreover, the informal economy has today become one of the primary sources of employment for the masses of disenfranchised youth in these countries. These jobs, however, tend to be grossly underpaid, unregulated and provide no social protection.

The reasons for these negative labor market trends are primarily attributable to the failures of the governments' economic policies and their inability to generate a sustainable and job-creating growth.⁶

One of those structural factors that caused the Arab spring is the lack of economic opportunities, which are mainly expressed in high levels of unemployment and underemployment that mostly affect young people, women and the highly educated. This, in turn, has been importantly influenced by constrained private sectors which are crowded out by the bloated role of the public sector in the economy; by low levels of entrepreneurship; by inefficient competitive practices that favor privileged businesses; by low levels of competitiveness; and by unfavorable business environments, among others.⁷

Most of the Arab countries are highly dependent on the import of basic food items and as such are vulnerable to world price fluctuations. In this respect it is important to note that in the months preceding the outbreak of protests in North Africa and the Arab world, between June 2010 and January 2011, the world prices of flower and sugar increased by a staggering 113% and 86% respectively. The different measures put in place by governments to sustain their citizen's purchasing power (such as raising civil servants' salaries, revising the minimum wage and expanding food subsidies) proved insufficient.

Deteriorating labor market conditions, particularly among the educated youth, an erosion of purchasing power and a crisis of the welfare system all contributed to a growing tide of popular agitation by early 2011.

Decades of political depression

The one-party system became the operative ruling measure in the Arab states. Attempts to organize political parties and/or movements other than the ruling regime were subjected to systematic dismissal and destruction. Any form of opposition was considered to pose a threat to national security, which was solely embodied in the person of the head of state. The leader was idealized, supposedly endowed with supernatural powers. Hence, the results of almost all elections and voting in the Arab world typically produced a 99% support in favor of the ruler. Parliaments and peoples' assemblies served to extend further legitimacy and backing to the head of state, rather than to legislate or to limit executive powers. The heads of states worked tirelessly to crush opposition, while vehemently violating human rights. A cruel prison system was established and those opponents who did not get killed or imprisoned were forced to seek refuge outside their countries.⁸

Corrupted regimes

Corruption, fraud and nepotism have been systematically employed to instill divisions and to win over the support, not of the average citizen, but rather of the elites and main power brokers. Instead of applying the rule of law, which was absent from the beginning, the heads of states acculturated the societies over which they ruled into submission and acquiescence.

Weakness of the regimes

In the face of extended street protests the elite solidarity, cracked. In Tunisia, Ben Ali ordered Rashid Ammar, the head of the army to fire on protestors. Ammar refused, thus sealing the fate of Ben Ali's rule. A similar dynamic was soon at work in Egypt, where Field Marshall Mohamed Hussein Tantawi refused to order the army to fire on demonstrators, thus hastening Mubarak's exit.

Weakness of the “sponsor” (US and the West).

In 2009, just five months into his presidency, Barack Obama gave a speech in Cairo to signal what he hoped would be a fresh start with the Muslim world. “I’ve come here to Cairo to seek a new beginning between the United States and Muslims around the world -- one based on mutual interest and mutual respect, and one based upon the truth that America and Islam are not exclusive, and need not be in competition,” Obama said. “Instead, they overlap and share common principles -- principles of justice, and progress, tolerance, and the dignity of all human beings.”

The Arab Spring has shown the limits of American power in the Middle East. No longer does the US have the prestige and resources to dominate Middle East affairs to the degree it has since the British withdrew from east of Suez in 1954. The U.S has decided in early stages of the Arab spring to support the “democratization of the Arab states and scarified her former allies. Neither the US nor Europe has the great financial resources needed to shape prospects in the Arab Spring countries other than marginally; significant investment will also have to come from elsewhere, particularly the Gulf states and China - countries that do not share to the same extent the Western interest in reinforcement of democratic values. Still the US has its experience, political and economic presence and global leadership to bring to bear.⁹

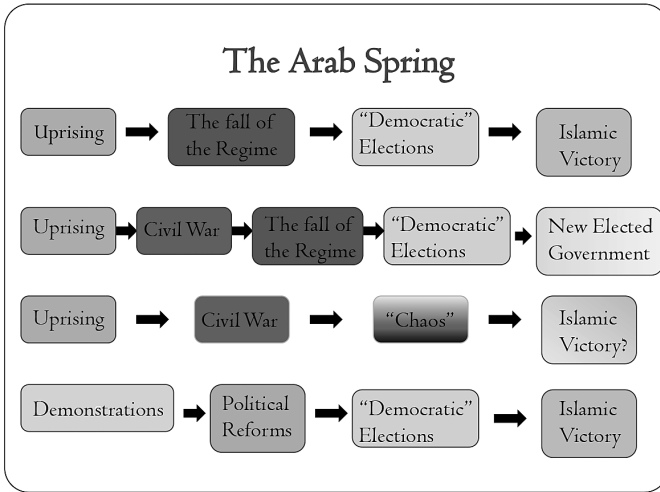
The media and cyber space

In the age of global media, where information is no longer the monopoly of state, it should have come as no surprise that mobilized masses, enabled and assisted by technology decided to revolt.¹⁰ The modern technology enabled citizens to challenge repressive security forces. The power of the internet moved the collective psyche of the people and helped them muster the courage to stand up against the dictators.

The main actors for change have been the youth. The protests have shared techniques of mostly civil resistance in sustained campaigns involving strikes, demonstrations, marches, and rallies. The “ Arab spring” revolutions launched by young activists made effective use of social media to organize, communicate, and raise awareness in the face of state attempts at repression and Internet censorship.

The effects of the Arab spring

The Arab spring has affected many of the Arab states: to date, rulers have been forced from power in Tunisia, Egypt, Libya, and Yemen; civil war has erupted in Syria; and protests have broken out in: Iraq, Jordan, Kuwait, Morocco, Bahrain and Sudan. The “Arab Spring” that reshaped the region’s political landscape, marked by fragile transitions from secular pro Western dictatorships through a “democratic procedure” to the formation of Islamic regimes. The chart below shows 4 main models of the transition of power.



Tunisia

Zine Al-Abideen Bin Ali of Tunisia, who brutally suppressed Tunisian opposition and forced many people in exile, had no choice but to flee the country to Saudi Arabia. The country has come through the Arab Spring’s first electoral test with an election on 23 October 2011. It has an elected Constituent Assembly, a president from the secular parties and an Islamist prime minister. The Islamist Party, Ennahda, won forty-three percent of the vote. Some of its supporters at the polls could be fairly described as Islamic moderates or mainstream religious conservatives, but the party’s leader, Rachid al-Ghannouchi, cannot be.

Ghannouchi during his twenty-two years in exile reveal a more militant agenda. In 1990, for example, he demanded that Muslims “wage unceasing war against the Americans until they leave the land of Islam, or we will burn and destroy all their interests across the entire Islamic world.”¹¹ He praises suicide bombers who murdered Israeli civilians and the terrorist insurgency that ripped the guts out of Iraq. “Gaza,” he said of the territory ruled by totalitarian Hamas, “like Hanoi in the sixties and Cuba and Algeria, is the model of freedom today.”¹²

More recently, in May 2011 Ghannouchi referred to Israel as a “germ” and predicted the state’s annihilation by 2027.¹³

At the same time, there are already indications that Ghannouchi and En Nahda are not as democratic as suggested and there is an occasional spark of tension on the background of the ideological divide between the secular and Islamist parties.

Egypt

Egypt was sitting on top of a volcano for many years, at least since Hosni Mubarak assumed office in 1981. He turned Egypt into a family business and instilled corruption in every corner of the country. Considered by Egyptians as the mother of the world, Umm Al-Dunya, was turned into a dumpster of some sort, as you would hear Egyptians collectively complain. Mubarak, the last Pharaoh of Egypt as many Egyptians sarcastically called him, now resides behind bars. In Egypt, post the ouster of Mubarak in February 2011 and after a prolonged period of uncertainty, parliamentary elections were finally held in January 2012 in which the Muslim Brotherhood’s Freedom and Justice Party emerged the winner; the other Islamist party that did very well was the Salafist’s Al Nour Party. In the subsequently held presidential polls in May and June, the Muslim Brotherhood’s candidate Mohamed Morsi won. Morsi has immediately set about putting things in order by reclaiming the presidential powers from the Supreme Council of Armed Forces (SCAF), overturning the controversial “Supplementary Constitutional Declaration” and ordering Parliament to reconvene (which had been dissolved under a court order in May).

He even ordered the retirement of SCAF chief Field Marshall Tantawi and his chief of staff Lieutenant General Sami Annan. A backlash against Mr.

Morsi and his Islamist allies over their authoritarian tactics in the fight over the constitution has led to new pressure to rebut charges that they intend to exploit loopholes in the charter in order to move Egypt toward theocracy.

Egypt's Brotherhood has never flinched from demanding an Islamic government and opposing secular rule. The Brotherhood believes that Islam's concept of "shura," or consultation, meant representative democracy. The group supported the right of those with a more secular vision to compete in free and fair elections. If differences arose over how to apply Islamic teachings to public life, then society should rely on democratic methods to settle any disputes. But the parameters of policy choices should be laid out by experts drawing not only on economics, political science and other disciplines, but also on a deep knowledge of Islam. In practice, liberals say, the Brotherhood's approach has already made its ruling Guidance Council the de facto overseer of Egypt's next government. Egypt has set course towards the transition to Islamization rather than to democracy. The formulation of an Islamic oriented constitution will dictate the nature of the post Arab spring Egypt and Middle East.

Libya

Libya under Gaddafi presented a different challenge as compared to Egypt. The problem has been compounded by the country's historical ethnic, tribal and regional splits especially between the ancient regions of Tripolitania and Cyrenaica. The challenge for Libya has been the transition to the post-Gaddafi era. There were no political institutions in Libya.

In the case of Libya, international opinion was generally oriented towards the ouster of Gaddafi. Even the Arab League came on board to levy sanction and authorize military action.

After long months of bloody civil war between the forces loyal to Qaddafi and the opposition backed by Nato Qaddafi was killed in a humiliating manner.

The Transitional National Council (TNC), formed in March 2011 under Mahmoud Jibril, has handed over power to the newly-elected assembly on 8 August; this election saw the victory of the liberal coalition under the National Forces Alliance and led by interim Prime Minister Mahmoud Jibril.

In Libya, the Muslim Brotherhood's Justice and Construction party did not fare as well as expected in July's elections. Despite the election victory of Mahmoud Jibril's more secular National Democratic Alliance, the Brotherhood is unlikely to fold its doors but will continue to vigorously campaign for a more influential voice in the government.

The Libyan government now has its task cut out. A constituent assembly of 60 members has been named for drafting a new constitution, while the various ethnic groups and tribal factions are accommodated into the national mainstream. In the meantime, the killing of the US ambassador on 11 September 2012 during the course of nation-wide anti-US riots has exposed the limited control of the government.¹⁴

Yemen

The president of Yemen, Abdullah Ali Saleh found himself unable to sustain his power in the face of persistent widespread protests, in spite of his reliance on brutal arbitrary oppression of his people. In Yemen, a deal brokered by the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) removed President Saleh from the presidency in February 2012. The new president, Abd Rabboh Mansour Hadi, is still coming to grips with a war-torn nation. Be it the Al Houthi rebels in the North or the Al Qaeda in Arabian Peninsula (AQAP) and separatist movements in the South, the Hadi Government has its hands full. It is still not clear whether the GCC plan will produce a more stable equilibrium. Hadi will be limited to two years in office, during which time he is meant to oversee the drafting of a new constitution, restructuring of the armed forces and preparing for a new, genuinely multi-party election. The opposition groups and tribal leaders do not seem too enthusiastic and remain wary of efforts to centralize power and dilute their traditional authority. All this in the backdrop of a simmering Southern Secessionist Movement present indications that Yemen is heading towards a situation of total internal strife and civil war.

Syria

The Syrian crisis has been the bloodiest so far. In Syria the regime of Bashar Assad has chosen to wage war against its own people turning a peace-

ful uprising into a bloody and protracted confrontation. After more than 22 months, the death toll has crossed the 30,000 mark. More than two millions Syrians have become homeless. Most of them have crossed over into Turkey, Lebanon and Jordan, sparking off a humanitarian crisis.

President Assad too has suffered setbacks. There have been some major defections including the head of the Republican Guard Major General Manaf Tlas, Prime Minister Riad Hijab as also a number of Syrian envoys in foreign countries. In addition, a number of Syrian envoys overseas were expelled after the Houla massacre on 25 May 2012.¹⁵ On 18 July, the Defense Minister and a number of high ranking officers including President Assad's brother-in-law were killed in a suicide attack in Damascus.

The Syrian opposition remains fragmented despite an umbrella of Syrian National Council,¹⁶ while Al Qaeda has found a new battleground in Syria. All this undoubtedly presents a conundrum for the international community. The tools available for dealing with the Syrian crisis are limited. Military intervention would be extremely risky and given the potential for civil war in Syria and an expanded conflict region-wide, it would be highly inadvisable.

Syria has also split the international community down the middle with the US-Saudi Arabia led group on one side and the Russia-China-Iran led group on the other. Ever since the uprisings began in the Southern city of Daraa in March 2011, all attempts including a six point peace plan by the UN have failed to bring an end to the crisis.¹⁷ Russia and China have repeatedly shot down UNSC proposals on Syria. Egypt tried to take the initiative in September 2012 to form a Quartet of Turkey, Saudi Arabia, Iran and Egypt for finding a solution to the crisis, but nothing has come of it till now.

The regime will fight to the hilt and the final battle will last for several months if not more. It is the day after that worries many. Syria could face partition and prolonged sectarian wars. The role and influence of radical religious groups in the shaping of Syria's future will be the next big story.¹⁸

The radical Islam and the democracy

In traditional Islamic political theory the state rested on three pillars: the Ummah (the community of Muslim believers), the Caliphate, and the

Shari'ah (Islamic Law). Except perhaps in the early decades of Islam, this theory, however, did not always conform to what happened in real life.

One of the most significant consequences of the Arab Spring has been the rise of the Islamists in the region.

The young activists have paved the way for the Islamist movements. The first and the main beneficiaries have been the Islamists because they are structured and because they have deep roots in society, unlike the youth who have not had time to organize. For many decades, Islamist movements were brutally suppressed by the region's dictators. Now, they have emerged as a major political force in Tunisia and Egypt. In Libya, too, Islamists under the banner of the Muslim Brotherhood stood second in the recent elections. There is also a widespread expectation that as and when regime change occurs in Syria, the Muslim Brotherhood could be a prominent part of the new system.

Even in countries that have not undergone regime change, Islamist actors appear to be formidable electoral forces. In Morocco, the King was forced to allow the Islamist Justice and Development Party (PJD) to form a new government. In Jordan, the Islamic Action Front has pressed for political reform and even raised the idea of a constitutional monarchy. Even in Kuwait, which was not directly affected by the Arab Spring, Islamist and conservative tribal candidates performed well in the most recent parliamentary elections in February 2012.

Hasan al-Banna(1906-49), the founder of the Muslim Brotherhood that came to power in some Muslim states, sought to purge Western influences. He taught that Islam was the only solution and that democracy amounted to infidelity to Islam.

Sayyid Qutb (1906-66), the leading theoretician of the Muslim Brotherhood, objected to the idea of popular sovereignty altogether. He believed that the Islamic state must be based upon the Qur'an, which he argued provided a complete and moral system in need of no further legislation.

More recent Islamists such as Yusuf al Qaradawi argue that democracy must be subordinate to the acceptance of God as the basis of sovereignty. Democratic elections are therefore heresy, and since religion makes law, there is no need for legislative bodies.

In recent years there could be observed a change in strategy used by radical Islamic organizations. Muslim Brotherhood openly seeks to establish "democracy" based upon Islamic principles. They are willing to accommo-

date it as an avenue to power but as an avenue that runs only one way. The Islamic world is not ready to absorb the basic values of modernism and democracy nor does acceptance of basic Western structures imply democracy.

The Islamists are using a “double talk”. They try to present to the west a moderate image of political Islam, to encourage the west to help and invest. But within the Muslim society the reality is different and most of the voices are very conservative Islamists themselves regard liberal democracy with contempt.

Summary and conclusions

Historical changes happening in the Middle East now are for sure equivalent to the shift of tectonic plates politically. While the political map of the future of Egypt and the rest of the Arab world is yet to be drawn, the process of Arab awakening is irreversible: the taste of change, even with pain and anguish, is not likely to be compromised.¹⁹

The political upheavals sweeping Tunisia, Egypt, Libya, and Syria are concurrent yet different phenomena, and it's premature to assume that any of them, let alone all of them, will bring their respective countries out of the of authoritarian rule. In the medium term, the number of genuinely liberal democracies to emerge in the Arab world is likely to be one or zero.

The Arab world is undergoing a process of massive transformation, necessitated by profound feelings of many years of humiliating national, regional and international injustices, Western-supported corruption and subjugation.

While predicting the future in a constantly dynamic region is futile, indications are that the desires of the people will eventually prevail. Egypt serves as an example for other Arab countries; at a time when some may have thought that the revolution was over with the removal of Mubarak, Egyptians loudly reminded the entire world that they were not about to accept an extension of the Mubarak regime through the Military Council.

Indeed, the pressure cooker has finally cracked. The “Arab street” has been, and will most likely remain, on alert. The transitional political Islamic forces themselves will also be held accountable.

The road ahead is rife with internal and international challenges. Yet returning to the corrupt regimes of the past will prove more costly than carv-

ing the path of freedom. The Arab masses will not wait passively at the receiving end. In spite of many odds, they will insist on being makers of their own history.

In light of the trends, it seems almost inevitable that much of the political space in the region will soon be dominated by the Muslim Brotherhood or the Salafists, who will, as always, focus on dawa, or Islamic propagation. By controlling the education and social affairs–related ministries, the Islamists will have even more of a leg up on radically transforming society in their direction. It will be difficult in this environment for “liberal” or secular parties to survive, much less thrive.²⁰

The salient fact of the Middle East, the only one, is Islam. The Islam that shapes the Middle East inculcates in Muslims the self-perception that they are members of a civilization implacably hostile to the West. The United States is a competitor to be overcome, not the herald of a culture to be embraced.

This is a crossroad in history and the road the nations involved take will determine our future. In the meantime we might see more Islamization there rather than Western style democracies. Where it will really lead Middle East and the rest of the world only future will tell.

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THE BALKANS AND THE ISLAMIZATION: TURKEY'S REGIONAL PRIORITIES

DARKO TANASKOVIĆ

The Balkans and the Middle East have been openly and repeatedly declared as two regional priorities of the actual foreign policy of Turkey, based on the neo-Ottomanist doctrine of so called „Strategic Depth“, theoretically elaborated by its minister of foreign affairs Ahmet Davutoğlu and by all available means put into practice systematically during at least last decade. Although the world media devotes considerably less attention to Turkish doings in the Balkans than to Ankara's policies in the Middle East, there is good reason to believe that for many reasons neo-Ottomanism may actually be more dynamic and more ambitious in Europe's soft underbelly. The fact that the subjects in international community whose judgement Turkey especially cares about consider Turkey a legitimate and reliable factor of peace, stability, and development in the Balkans must be a strong motive for the foreign policy of this geographically mostly Asian country to feel the Balkan region as its practical and symbolic priority on its way towards the EU. Although seemingly there is no direct link between the lines of Turkey's engagement in the Balkans and in the Middle East, its activities in these two regions should be analysed and interpreted comparatively and organically, as two facets of the same complex phenomenon and to some degree even interdependent. Such an approach would allow us to evidenciate some important typological fea-

tures of neo-Ottomanist ideological pattern as well as its practical political potentials, contradictions and limitations.

The lessened interest for analytical monitoring of the Turkish approach to South Eastern Europe stems from several reasons. Firstly, there is a belief in the West that its ally Turkey, being a secular Muslim country with extensive experience in the region, can be a useful complementary factor to the EU and US involvement, with Turkey's comparative advantage being the existence of Muslim population in some Balkan countries. Despite the appearance and a certain influence of Arabian (Wahabi) and Iranian Islam in the Balkans during and after the wars in former Yugoslavia which cannot be disregarded, all serious and impartial expert estimates agree that, for Balkan Muslims, Turkey remains the Number one address in the Islamic world. The events of recent years confirm this beyond any doubt. It is indicative that at the end of 2009, Iran already started exhibiting certain nervousness in diplomatic contacts regarding prominent Turkish activism among Balkan Muslims. The USA now turning to other, global priorities, with only a limited and selective focus on the region of South Eastern Europe, find it convenient to leave the Balkans to the attention and control of Turkey, which they believe capable of organising the region in line with general American projections for the future. Washington still believes that Turkey's regional interests also fit within the framework of these projections. Since the overall security situation in the Balkans, unlike the Middle East or the Caucasus, and despite all unresolved contradictions and remaining uncertainties following the conflict in Kosovo and NATO intervention against Yugoslavia, is now stable and no open conflict or a change of borders are expected, the relationship to all these factors, including the increasing Turkish activism, is perceived as a component of further stabilisation. Turkish diplomacy, naturally, strives to give this the appearance of truth. The benevolent stance to Turkish ambitions in the Balkans is also motivated by compensatory inclinations. Namely, it is considered that a more important role in the Balkans might be a kind of "consolation prize" for Turkey's unsuccessful efforts to integrate into the EU, and it would also strengthen Turkey's position as a regional leader in privileged partnership with EU, especially given that the road to Euro-integration for other countries in the region, with the possible exception of Croatia, might be of indefinite length. There has even been mention of

the year 2020 as a deadline for Euro-integration. The fact that Turkey is a NATO member gives it additional regional credibility, since it is envisaged that the Pact will extend to include most countries in South Eastern Europe, and definitely those where Turkish policy is embraced most whole-heartedly (B-H, Albania, Macedonia). Unlike their dithering about the sustainability of their full partnership with Ankara in the Middle East and in the Caucasus, the US and their closest European allies still perceive Turkey as an ally and a useful “contractor” in the Balkans. This is why they have so far allowed Turkey to continue its activities in peace, without too much publicity, sheltered by unspoken “political correctness”, working through institutionalised forms and channels of regional cooperation.

The fact that the subjects in international community whose judgement Turkey especially cares about consider Turkey a legitimate and reliable factor of peace, stability, and development in the Balkans (and we mustn't forget that the Balkans are a part of Europe) must be a strong motive for the foreign policy of this geographically mostly Asian country to feel the Balkan region as its practical and symbolic priority. To understand the Neo-Ottomanist perception of the Balkans, even more important than all the practical aspects is the need to understand what this region represents to the newly-awakened heirs of the Ottoman Empire in symbolic terms. If we fail to understand this, all the rational and logical conclusions drawn after observing the surface, monitoring events, and impartially considering all the facts, might miss their mark – Neo-Ottomanism. The most important thing here is not the Balkan region itself, but the Turkish, or Neo-Ottomanist perception of the Balkans. And it is this perception which makes the region more important than both the Middle East and the Caucasus, since it gives the region the central position in the Neo-Ottomanist definition of modern Turks' own identity as both legitimate heirs to the glory of an authentic Asian Muslim Empire and, not any less, indigenous Europeans. Both Kemalist and Islamist political and intellectual elites have long been equally fond of the idea of the Balkans, the Ottoman Rumelia, and not Anadolia, being the cornerstone of civilisational identity in Turkey which allows them to make the transition to universal modernity. Remote, mythical, Asian origins which lie at the foundations of the nationalist idea of Pan-Turkism and the abstract world Pan-Islamic Community (*Umma*) haven't completely disappeared from the horizon of the collec-

tive definition of self of the polyvalent Turkish nation, but have been gradually pushed into the second position and have faded beside the perception of Rumalian roots to fully-fledged, albeit occasionally disputed Turkish “European citizenship”. The Balkan region, as the legacy of Ottoman Rumelia, is the key in the shaping of the concept and policy of Neo-Ottomanism. The Balkan region is not just one of the several which comprised the Ottoman Empire and which Turkey is now returning to in its foreign policy, but also a home, core region of the formation of the Neo-Ottomanist view of themselves and the world.

On the other side the Middle East, taken in the wider sense with Iran as an important regional agent, has in the past few years been the region where Turkey most clearly demonstrated its intention, in line with the doctrine of “strategic depth”, to diversify its foreign policy approach. At the same time, given the geopolitical and geo-economic importance of the Middle East, which was the centre of the most dynamic and dramatic events at the end of the second and the beginning of the third millennium, the change of Turkey’s behaviour in this region caused the most reaction and comment, especially but not exclusively in the West. The USA exhibited a peculiar sensitivity, since Washington has traditionally viewed Turkey as its most loyal ally and the one in the most forward position to the Islamic world, rendered even more useful by the fact that the country itself has an almost 100% Muslim population, but is also constitutionally secular and democratic. Ankara took constructive steps closer to the “suspicious” regimes in Syria and Iran, and, on several occasions, exhibited understanding for the Palestinian Hamas movement, whose political strength confirmed in free elections went against Israeli interests. Since Turkey had, directed by the USA, built a solid relationship of strategic partnership with Israel, this new orientation of Ankara’s was placed under especially close scrutiny of American analysts with Israeli sympathies. Although official Ankara never renounced its partnership with America, the series of moves deliberately made by the government of Prime Minister Erdogan pointed to Neo-Ottomanists’ firm intent to have Turkey return to harmony with its natural and historical Middle Eastern Muslim environment from which it had been practically banished, first by Atatürk’s uncompromising pro-European stand, and then by Turkey’s long-time close alliance with the USA. Although the Ottoman Empire had most-

ly not been a particular favourite among the Arabs, it came to be perceived, especially after its fall and the long period of arrogant Western supremacy, as the only Empire capable of sustaining a long struggle against Non-Muslim forces on an equal footing. It is obvious that nowadays Ankara wishes to be seen as a modern heir of this mission among its Middle Eastern Muslim brethren, in changed circumstances, of course, and without unrealistic imperial pretensions. However, some analysts haven't missed the patronising conduct of some incumbent Turkish officials, which distinguishes their Neo-Ottomanist style from the more honest pan-Islamism of one Necmettin Erbakan, who had no Turkish hegemony in mind, but aspired towards developing equitable and "fraternal" relations with the countries of the Middle East and the entire Islamic world. Increasingly frequently, one might hear or read that Turkey wants to assume the role of "big brother" (ağabey) in relation to Arabs, and this is how Lebanese Prime Minister S. al-Hariri addressed R.T. Erdogan in January 2010 during his visit to Ankara. As big brother, Turkey would assist Arabs in overcoming disputes among themselves and embarking together on establishing better regional coordination among the countries of the same religion (see, e.g. S. Moubayed, "Turkey embraces role as Arab 'big brother'", *Asia Times Online*, 14. 1. 2010). With this goal in mind, Turkey has taken some practical steps, for example, establishing a visa-free regime with six Arab countries (Syria, Jordan, Lebanon, Libya, Tunisia, and Morocco), which was described by the Prime Minister as the first step towards a "regional Schengen". If it cannot join the European Schengen area, Turkey will create its own Middle Eastern and North African Muslim Schengen.

Although the Neo-Ottomanist opening towards the Middle East exhibits all the features of an approach at the widest, all-Muslim plane, and does not in principle exclude any Arab or Muslim country, this new Turkish foreign policy activism has so far focused on the countries in its immediate vicinity, all of them firmly stuck in the tangled web of several-year-long Middle Eastern conflict. This includes Syria, Iraq, and Iran, and consequently Israel, so it is no wonder that Ankara's moves in this tense quadrangle have been carefully monitored, analysed, and interpreted by all interested parties. As an ally, and in part regional "commissioner", of the USA, but also a country which, on several occasions, showed it had reservations concerning the

war against Iraq and disagreed with some Washington's plans and decisions (e.g. Ankara's initiative aimed at dissuading the USA from attack, which led to the "Istanbul Declaration" of Turkey, Egypt, Jordan, Saudi Arabia, and Syria), Turkey has in the West long been seen as an ideal and irreplaceable mediator in resolving the most sensitive Middle Eastern disputes. Erdogan's government readily accepted these expectations since they were fully in harmony with the Neo-Ottomanist vision of Turkey as the regional leader and privileged partner of other important power centres in the world. On the other hand, Ankara was completely aware that too great involvement in the awkward and intrusive American engineering, aimed at the creation of a "new great Middle East" would distance Turkey from all its regional (Muslim) neighbours, with the obvious exception of (non-Muslim) Israel. This certainly went contrary to the ambitious plans to raise Turkey to the level of a respectable macroregional power with lots of room to manoeuvre and a wide sphere of influence. Turkish officials, led by R.T. Erdogan, a skilled and astute statesman with extraordinary political reflexes, regrouped as they went in response to current bilateral and multilateral circumstances, using their own estimates of what short-terms and long-term interests of Turkey were to guide them. This produced results, but could not fail to reflect unfavourably on earlier exclusive alliances, especially those with the USA and Israel, since these two countries saw the diversification of Turkish foreign policy as a blow to their own geostrategic efforts, in which they had counted on the solidity and reliability of Ankara's position in a volatile region.

In recent years, whenever there was fierce Arab-Israeli conflict (in Lebanon or the Gaza strip) or large scale suffering of Iraqi civilians, Prime Minister Erdogan, his partnership with the USA and Israel notwithstanding, always made unambiguous, often undiplomatically sharp statements on behalf of his suffering Muslim brothers (he once equalled the conditions in Gaza to a "concentration camp", accused Israel of inquisitorial treatment of Palestinians, "state terrorism", and violating UN resolutions...), winning their sympathies and political points both on the pan-Islamic and domestic front. At the same time, Turkey also mediated in indirect contacts between Israel and Syria, tried to encourage Western countries to accept Hamas as the legitimate representative of the Palestinian people, extending its hospitality to controversial Hamas high representative Khaled Mashal in Ankara (2006)

to help inter-Palestinian reconciliation. Turkey also attempted to contribute to resolving the misunderstanding between Baghdad and Damascus, and Damascus and Beirut... We should also bear in mind that R.T. Erdogan, along with A. Gul, as a young moderate Islamist with a bright future, won the sympathies of prominent pro-Turkish Jewish lobbies in the USA in mid-1990s, and this has been of great help to him since in some difficult domestic situations. Neo-Ottomanism thus followed two tracks in its characteristic manner, but in the turbulent Middle Eastern region these tracks could not remain parallel for very long, so Ankara soon had the task of choosing direction at every crossroads. It more often chose the one which, at least temporarily, diverged from the route mapped in Washington, Tel Aviv, or some Western capitals. The incident at the World Economic Forum in Davos, in January 2009, was a good illustration of the manner in which Prime Minister astutely seizes every available opportunity to achieve maximum political impact, both for Neo-Ottomanism and for himself. At a panel devoted to the situation in Gaza, Erdogan severely criticised the lapse of concentration of Israeli President Shimon Peres, and, allegedly offended by his behaviour, left the meeting in a huff. He got ovations on his return to Istanbul, for "finally telling the Jews what they should be told", and this significantly improved his party's ratings before the local elections. By doing this he also showed the political circles and the general public in Turkey, Arab countries, and the whole world that Ankara values its dignity and is not just an executor of somebody else's commands. His timing and manner were excellent to create a spectacle, which in reality served to endorse the already taken steps of distancing from one side and moving closer to the other. This was done without completely losing balance, since both Turkey and Israel made efforts to put this unpleasant episode behind them, at least formally. Just like a dance on the high-wire! But what if the wire should snap at one point? It appears that Neo-Ottomanists, certain they have a good hand, are not thinking about that at the moment. The warnings that, in their efforts to turn their dual identity into their main strategic weapon, they might find themselves rejected by both sides, "too Muslim and Middle Eastern for the Europeans, and too secular and pro-American for the Middle Easterners" (N. Danforth, "How the West lost Turkey", *Foreign Policy*, 25. 11. 2009) do not scare the advocates of

“strategic depth”. On the contrary, they see it as confirmation that they are on the right path.

The example of the design and implementation of its policy towards Syria, Iran, and Iraq can give us a clear insight into the syncretic nature of Neo-Ottomanism, which cannot be condensed into any one of its ideological components, and whose only constant has been the pragmatic care for short-term and long-term Turkish state and national interests. This insight can give us the key to interpret the ebb and flow in the relations with these important but difficult neighbours of Turkey’s, keeping in mind an ever-present factor of great importance for all three countries – the fear of Kurdish separatism and of the mere suggestion of any political developments in the region which might lead to the creation of any kind of administrative or (para) state independence of the Kurds. Cooperation with players outside the region, including the USA, has always been directed and evaluated with an eye to the “Kurdish variable”. When the relations between Ankara and Damascus reached their lowest ebb during late 1990s, this happened precisely because the guerrilla and some leaders of the Kurdistan Workers’ Party (PKK) were allowed logistic use of Syrian territory. In 1998 Turkey even threatened limited military intervention against Syria. In a situation where, after the first Gulf War (1991), Iraqi Kurdistan under the American umbrella practically became the base for anti-Turkish organisation and PKK’s combat activities over the border in the Turkish territory, Turkey relied on its military partnership with Israel. In 1996, Israel signed an agreement to deliver sophisticated military equipment to Ankara, denied it by the West due to the dissatisfactory human rights conditions in Turkey. At the moment, Syria was perceived as a common problem, the supporter of Kurdish, or Palestinian terrorists. “We’ll say Shalom to the Israelis in the Golan Heights” was one of the headlines in the Turkish newspapers! However, in early 2010, Syria insisted that Turkey should be the mediator in its indirect negotiations with Israel! Nowadays, with the turmoil called “The Arab Spring”, the situation turned around once again dramatically. The only element of consistency being, as usually, the actual Turkish assessment of its own national interest.

Under strong Turkish pressure, and to quite some degree in isolation, although it needed the Kurdish trump card in the strategic dispute with Turkey about using water from the Euphrates, Syria decided to banish the leader

of PKK Abdullah Ocalan and withdraw all its support of Kurdish separatism. This removed the main obstacle to the normalisation of Turkish-Syrian relations. Turkey's response was swift. The ice was broken by (then) President Sezer when he went to Damascus to attend the funeral of Hafez-el-Assad (2000). In January 2004, Bashar al-Assad was the first president of Syria since its independence in 1946, to pay an official visit to Ankara, which could not but provoke negative reactions from the USA, the EU, and Israel. His visit was returned that same year (and not long after the assassination of Lebanon's Prime Minister Al-Hariri, for which accusations were levelled at the Syrian secret service) by his counterpart, Necdet Sezer, a strict Kemalist and political opponent of Erdogan's, clearly aware that the improvement of Turkey's relations with Syria was in long-term interest of the country. In this respect, Sezer's actions clearly established continuity with Neo-Ottomanist protagonists of "strategic depth" doctrine. During his own visit, Bashar al-Assad, whose country was being pressured at the time to withdraw troops from Lebanon, didn't miss the opportunity to applaud the readiness of Turkey, as NATO member state, to oppose the will of the USA in matters of national interest. Following these two visits there was a period of quick improvement in Turkish-Syrian cooperation in all spheres. For example, the trade exchange volume between the two countries tripled between 2002 (when AKP came to power) and 2007, and the number of Turkish tourists in Syria increased 19 times between 2000 and 2005. In 2009 alone, over 40 bilateral agreements and protocols on cooperation in various spheres were signed, and a High-Level Strategic Cooperation Council of two countries was also established. The agreements in the sensitive sphere of water supply are of special importance, both practically and in symbolic terms. The sphere of water supply had been a source of chronic tension between Turkey and Syria. The project to jointly build a "Friendship Dam" on the Asi/Orontes River (which is part of the border between Syria and the disputed Turkish province of Hatay/Iskenderun which Syria claims to have historical rights to) will certainly mean more water for irrigating fields on both sides of the border. But to Neo-Ottomanists it will also mean indirect Syrian recognition of Turkish sovereignty over Hatay, since they never lose sight of the political dimension of economic cooperation!

Sunni Neo-Ottomanists in Ankara see nothing wrong in the Shia allegiances of the Syrian elite, since for the moment, their visions of the harmfulness of Sunni Kurdish separatism seem to match. For the same reason, they find acceptable the appeal of Iranian politician Ali Larijani for Iran, Syria, and Turkey to establish trilateral security cooperation to fight against Kurdish separatism, which has again started to rear its head. According to some indications, this resurgence of Kurdish separatism might have been discreetly encouraged by certain factors outside the region, the same factors which until recently were Turkey's chief support in controlling it, and the very same factors which still see Syria and Iran as the "countries which support terrorism". Syria and Turkey have even launched an idea to formulate a joint plan to secure the territorial integrity of a unified Iraq, which would have been unthinkable several years ago. Nowadays, with the turmoil called "The Arab Spring", the situation turned around once again dramatically. The only element of consistency being, as usually, the actual Turkish assessment of its own national interest. All Turkish partners in foreign policy, and specially those in the Balkans and in the Middle East, two Turkey's volatile regional priorities, should always take seriously in account this essential and unique constant element of unreliability.

Although seemingly there is no direct link between the lines of Turkey's engagement in the Balkans and in the Middle East, its activities in these two regions should be analysed and interpreted comparatively and organically, as two facets of the same complex phenomenon and to some degree even interdependent. Such an approach would allow us to evidenciate some important typological features of neo-Ottomanist ideological pattern as well as its practical political potentials, contradictions and limitations.

INTERNATIONAL SECURITY AND DOMESTIC STATE STRUCTURES: THE CASE OF BOSNIA & HERZEGOVINA

GORDON N. BARDOS

By their very nature, intelligence and counter-intelligence efforts usually benefit from various agencies sharing resources and pooling information. Thus, it is no surprise that in the case of Bosnia, international officials frequently complain about the lack of integration and coordination between the country's various entities and ethnic groups in this regard, and the extent to which the decentralized federal system Dayton put into place prevents more effective policing of international terrorists operating in the country. For instance, the U.S. State Department's *Country Reports on Terrorism 2009* argues

Bosnia remained a weak, decentralized state with poor interagency communication and competing security structures. Efforts by Republika Srpska officials to undermine state-level institutions slowed efforts to improve operational capabilities to combat terrorism and terrorist financing. These factors resulted in Bosnia being vulnerable to exploitation as a potential staging ground for terrorist operations in Europe.¹

1 See *Country Reports on Terrorism 2009: Europe and Eurasia Overview* (Washington, DC: Office of the Coordinator for Counterterrorism, 5 August 2010), available at: <http://www.state.gov/j/ct/rls/crt/2009/140885.htm> Accessed on 13 May 2012 at: 12:12pm EST. Alfred Lugert provides a similar view; thus, according to Lugert, "it has been the determined resistance of the RS leadership to any and all schemes to endow Bosnia with the laws, agencies and competencies required by any real state that has helped make Bosnia so vulnerable

Yet in fact, Bosnia provides an interesting exception to the rule that intelligence efforts are more effective when government agencies are united. This is because of a problem few international officials dealing with the country have recognized or are willing to acknowledge—i.e., that many Bosnian government and non-governmental organizations have been infiltrated by Iranian or Al Qaeda sympathizers and collaborators. Thus, in Bosnia it is precisely the country's decentralized political system that limits the expansion of Islamist extremists throughout the whole of Bosnia. Herein lies an unfortunate paradox—some of the most vociferous advocates of greater centralization in Bosnia are those groups and individuals aligned with Al-Qaeda, Iranian security agencies, and a host of other Islamist terrorist groups, and the US and many EU-member political establishments. In such a situation, advocating greater centralization in Bosnia for the sake of improving the fight against terrorism is akin to nominating Alman al-Zawahiri to be director of the FBI.

Much of this story revolves around the role of the late Islamist leader of Bosnia, Alija Izetbegovic. Though frequently portrayed as a “moderate,” Izetbegovic's own writings show considerable disdain for Islamic states and leaders such as Turkey and Kemal Ataturk, and, conversely, a pronounced empathy for Pakistan and Iran. As early as the 1940s, Izetbegovic and his circle, inspired by the rise of the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt, formed a group called the *Mladi Muslimani* (“Young Muslims”), whose goal, according to Izetbegovic himself, was the creation of “a great Muslim state.”² The *Mladi Muslimani* had a pro-Nazi orientation during World War II, with many of its members serving as recruiters for the first non-German SS division that Heinrich Himmler created, the Bosnian Muslim “Handzar” division. Within the context of World War II, the preference of the *Mladi Muslimani*

to accusations that it is soft on terrorism.” See Col. Dr. Alfred C. Lugert, “Preventing and Combating Terrorism in Bosnia and Herzegovina” (Vienna: Institute for Peace Support and Conflict Management; No date cited), 41, available at: http://www.bmlv.gv.at/pdf_pool/publikationen/luge01.pdf Accessed on 14 May 2012 at: 11:31am EST.

2 See Izetbegović's contribution to the edited volume of reminiscences of various members of the movement, entitled *Mladi Muslimani* (Sarajevo: Biblioteka Ključanin, 1991), 57.

became the creation of a Muslim-dominated Bosnia & Herzegovina under Nazi protection.

Izetbegović's political goals would not change over the coming decades. In his most famous political manifesto, the 1970 *Islamic Declaration*, Izetbegović had warned,

There is no peace or co-existence between Islamic faith and non-Islamic social and political institutions ... Our means are personal example, the book, and the word. When will force be added to these means? The choice of this moment is always a concrete question and depends on a variety of factors. However, one general rule can be postulated: the Islamic movement can and may move to take power once it is morally and numerically strong enough, not only to destroy the existing non-Islamic government, but to build a new Islamic government.

Izetbegović's *Islamic Declaration* remained unpublished until 1990, when, on the eve of Bosnia's first democratic elections, Izetbegović decided to release the book—without retracting or renouncing any part of it. In subsequent years it remained the policy guidebook for the radical Islamists Izetbegović led to power in Bosnia. In later years, Adnan Jahić, a rising star in the SDA who became the party's official spokesperson, flushed out Izetbegović's vision for Bosnia in more detail:

The territory controlled by the Bosnian Army after the war will be a Muslim state ... This is a desire of the Muslim people and, after all, our leaders: secular leader Alija Izetbegović and religious leader Mustafa Cerić (the latter one in a private conversation with me confirmed that the old dream of Alija Izetbegović, member of the organization Young Muslims, has been and remains the establishment of the Muslim state in Bosnia-Herzegovina; finally, his dream is close to realization and "he is not terribly upset because of that") ... The Muslim state will have a Muslim ideology, based on Islam, Islamic religious, legal, ethical and social principles, but also on the contents of Western origin which do not contradict Islamic principles ... The Muslim ideology will be the basis for the complete state and legal system of the future Muslim state, from the state and national symbols, over the ruling national policy, to educational system, social and economic institutions, and of course, the Muslim family as the unit on which the whole state is based ... the level of personal prosperity, besides personal initiative,

will especially depend on the degree to which the individual accepts and applies the principles and spirit of the Muslim ideology.³

The war in Bosnia in the 1990s provided Izetbegović with increased opportunities to foster the expansion of Islamist extremism in the Balkans, notably by increasing his regime's ties with the Iranians and Al Qaeda. In a telling observation on the Izetbegović's sympathy for the Ayatollah Khomeini's regime in Iran, Cees Wiebes, the leading authority on intelligence operations in Bosnia, noted that during the war "Turkey and Saudi Arabia were very willing to deliver weapons and to lure Izetbegović away from Iran, but the orientation of the Bosnian government was far more towards Iran."⁴ American intelligence operatives in Bosnia came to the same conclusion. As Robert Baer, a CIA agent stationed in Sarajevo for a period during the war noted "In Sarajevo, the Bosnian Muslim government is a client of the Iranians ... If it's a choice between the CIA and the Iranians, they'll take the Iranians any day."⁵

In August 1993, on the personal orders of Alija Izetbegović, the *Katebat al-Mujahideen* ("Battalion of Holy Warriors") was officially constituted as a unit within the Bosnian army.⁶ The roster of veterans of Izetbegović's personal Al-Qaeda battalion (and its ideological heirs) reads like a roll call of terrorists who have attacked the United States and other Western countries over the past decade. On 9/11, three of Izetbegović's soldiers (Khalid Sheik Muhammed, Nawaf al Hamzi, and Salem al Hamzi) planned and participated in the greatest mass murder in US history. Other Izetbegović army veterans include Ahmed Zaid Salim Zuhair (also suspected of murdering US citizen William Jefferson in Bosnia in 1995), Juma Al Dosari, Jamal Al Badani and Abu

3 See Jahić, "A Virtuous Muslim State," *Front Slobode* (Tuzla), 23 August 1996, available at: <http://www.ex-yupress.com/froslo/froslo4.html>. Accessed on 24 June 2012 at: 8:08pm EST.

4 See the interview with Cees Wiebes by Brendan O'Neill, "You are Only Allowed to See Bosnia in Black and White," available at: <http://www.spiked-online.com/articles/000000CA374.htm> Accessed on 13 May 2012 at: 9:20am EST.

5 See Robert Baer and Dayna Baer, *The Company We Keep* (New York: Broadway, 2012), 130.

6 See Evan F. Kohlmann, *Al-Qaeda's Jihad in Europe: The Afghan-Bosnian Network* (New York: Berg, 2004), 91-92.

Asim Al-Makki, involved in the 2000 attack on the *USS Cole*; Ahmed Ressam, the primary terrorist involved in the failed 1999 Millennium Bomb Plot; Abdul Rasheem al-Nashiri, involved in the 1998 US embassy bombings in Kenya and Tanzania; Juma al Dosari, involved in the 1996 Khobar Towers Bombing; Omar Saeed Sharim, a participant in the 2002 murder/beheading of journalist Daniel Pearl; and Adis Medunjanin, the Bosnian Muslim immigrant to the US involved in the 2008 New York City Subway Bomb Plot, which US Attorney General Eric Holder called the most significant threat to the United States since 9/11. Osama bin Laden himself was given a Bosnian passport by Izetbegović's foreign ministry,⁷ and was seen in Izetbegović's office at least once by Western journalists.⁸

After 9/11, given his support and involvement with such a wide array of international terrorists Izetbegović realized that his position had become untenable, so within a month of the attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon he resigned from his last public position. Upon his death in 2003, the International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia (ICTY) announced that Izetbegović had been under investigation for war crimes. At his funeral, seated in the front row place of honor next to his son Bakir Izetbegović were a group of individuals alleged to be among Sarajevo's leading

7 Senad Pečanin, "I Osama bin-Laden ima bosanski pasoš," BH Dani (Sarajevo) 12, 24 September 1999, available at: <http://www.bhdani.com/arhiva/121/t212a.htm> Accessed on 1 June 2012. In just one instance, Alija Izetbegović and his son Bakir reportedly gave fifty Bosnian passports to a group of Bosnian jihadis. See Vildana Selimbegović, "Putovnica za gori život," BH Dani 224, 21 September 2001, available at: <http://www.bhdani.com/arhiva/224/t22416.shtml> Accessed on 1 June 2012 at: 7:13pm EST.

8 Erich Follath and Gunther Latsch, "Der Prinz und die Terror-GMBH," Der Spiegel (Hamburg), 15 September 2001. Yossef Bodansky also reports that bin-Laden visited the Balkans at least once in the early 1990's to help set up a terrorist/financial network; see Bodansky, *Bin-Laden: The Man Who Declared War on America* (New York: Prima Publishing, 2001), 100. Other reports have claimed that bin-Laden visited the Balkans on three occasions between 1994 and 1996. See Marcia Christoff Kurop, "Al Qaeda's Balkan Links," *The Wall Street Journal* (Europe), 1 November 2001. When asked to respond to allegations that he had met bin-Laden and Ayman al-Zawahiri during the war, Izetbegovic replied "During and after the war I met with thousands of people coming from the Islamic world but I can remember the faces and names of only a few . . . if by some chance I have met them, then they could not have talked to me about terrorism." See the interview with Izetbegović in *Time* (European edition), 31 October 2001.

criminals: Ramiz Delalić-Čelo, Senad Šahinpašić, Taib Torlaković and Muhamed Ali Gashi.⁹

Unfortunately, the damage that Alija Izetbegović and his clique did to Western interests did not die along with him. As a result of the infiltration of Islamist extremists into Sarajevo's political and security structures, known terrorists conveniently "escape" custody and disappear into Bosnia's mountainous interior with disconcerting regularity. For this reason, many US and European initiatives to reign in Islamist extremists in Bosnia have come to naught. Consider the following:

During the war, Bosnian security agents betrayed the identity of the CIA station chief to Hezbollah operatives in Sarajevo, who thereupon began planning his assassination. American intelligence agents fortunately discovered the betrayal and quickly removed the station chief. Indicative of how bad the situation in Sarajevo had become for American agents there is the fact that they began holding clandestine meetings in Croat- and Serb-held areas to avoid being compromised by their nominal Bosnian Muslim allies.¹⁰

- In February 1996, NATO troops in Bosnia raided a joint Bosnian-Iranian intelligence training facility at Pogorelici, outside the central Bosnian town of Fojnica. The raid took place only hours after a meeting between Izetbegović and U.S. Secretary of State Warren Christopher in Sarajevo, where Izetbegović had assured Christopher that there were no terrorist training camps in Bosnia. Among the items confiscated in the attack were an arsenal of weapons, the plans to several NATO installations in Bosnia, what looked to be shower-gel but was in reality a liquid explosive, and booby-trapped children's toys.¹¹ Individuals who attended courses at the camp were trained to commit various forms of terror, including the assassination of opposition figures in Bosnia, making car bombs, and various forms of ecological terrorism.

9 See Dunja Larise, "Corrupted Political Elites or Mafiotic State Structures: The Case of the Federation of Bosnia & Herzegovina," *HumSec Journal*, Issue 3, p. 13, fn. 29. Available at: http://www.humsec.eu/cms/fileadmin/user_upload/humsec/Journal/dunnja_larise_final_version.pdf Accessed on 25 June 2012 at 1:06pm EST.

10 The story of the foiled Iranian plot to kill the CIA station chief in Sarajevo is told in Robert and Dayna Baer, *The Company We Keep* (New York: Random House, 2012). See also H.K Roy (pseudonym), *Betrayal in the Balkans*, August 2001, available at www.worldandi.com

11 1996 Patterns of Global Terrorism Report. Washington, DC: US Department of State, 1997.

- During and after the war, the Iranians developed an extensive intelligence network throughout the territory and in the various institutions controlled by the Izetbegović regime. By 1997, Vevak, the Iranian secret intelligence service, was estimated to have approximately 200 agents in various BiH institutions. A particular target of the Iranians was the American-sponsored “arm and train” program for the Muslim-Croat Federation Army. Drivers, translators, and clerical personnel for the program were all picked by the pro-Iranian faction in Izetbegović’s security service. Iran also extended its influence throughout Bosnia by infiltrating agents into various charities, news agencies, and even a hamburger chain in Sarajevo.¹² Izetbegović himself was on the Iranian payroll at this time, receiving at least \$500,000 in cash from Iranian agents to help finance the SDA’s 1996 electoral campaign. Hasan Čengić, one of Izetbegović’s closest collaborators, was considered to be the leading Iranian asset in BiH, and reportedly an agent of the Iranian secret service, MOIS.¹³
- Another example of the collusion between parts of the Bosnian political and security establishment and Islamist radicals is the case of the Tunisian-born radical Kamel bin Ali, alias Abu Hamza. A member of the mujahedin unit during the war, Abu Hamza continued his terrorist activities after the conflict, most notably by being involved in an

12 See Mike O’Connor, “Spies for Iran are Said to Gain a Hold in Bosnia,” *The New York Times*, 28 November 1997, available at: <http://www.nytimes.com/1997/11/28/world/spies-for-iranians-are-said-to-gain-a-hold-in-bosnia.html?pagewanted=all&src=pm>. Accessed on 14 May 2012 at: 11:47am EST. For a sustained analysis of Iran’s involvement in southeastern Europe, see Gordon N. Bardos, “Iran and the Balkans: A History and a Forecast,” *World Affairs* 175 (January/February 2013), 59-66.

13 Hasan Čengić had been imprisoned with Izetbegović in 1983 during the trial of the Mladi Muslimani. According to one report, Čengić had during the war been envisioned to become the head of the Bosnian secret intelligence service. See Medina Delalić and Jelena Stamenković, “Kako je Izetbegović štitio kriminal i zločin(c)je,” *Slobodna Bosna* (Sarajevo), special edition, 1999, available at: <http://www.hdmagazine.com/nrp/articles/SH-SBI.html>. Accessed on 4 June 2012 at: 11:18am EST. Čengić was the only member of Izetbegović’s inner circle who addressed him with the familiar “ti” rather than the more formal “Vi.” The reports on the Iranian connection to Bosnia, based on CIA intelligence documents, were originally carried by the *Los Angeles Times* on 31 December 1996. A written statement released to the press by the SDA in 1997 admitted that the party received the money, which it claimed was used to provide student scholarships. See Senad Slatina, “Iranski novac za bosanskog predsjednika?” *Slobodna Bosna* (Sarajevo), 12 January 1997.

attempt to assassinate Pope John Paul II in Bologna in 1997. In 2001, Italian authorities requested Abu Hamza's extradition, but Bosnian officials refused, allegedly because Hamza had Bosnian citizenship.¹⁴ Arrested in 2007, he was released from Zenica prison and allowed to take a short "holiday," during which he promptly escaped.¹⁵

- Former Bosnian mujahedin Ali Ahmed Ali Hamad has testified that Al-Qaeda members visit Bosnia with "state protection."¹⁶
- Perhaps the gravest instance of how the Izetbegović regime strove to help al-Qaeda members evade the detection of US and other Western security services can be seen in the distribution of Bosnian passports to Islamist militants. As security expert Evan Kohlman has noted, "The Dayton Accords had specifically mandated that the Bosnian government expel soldiers who were not of 'local origin.' In order to evade this provision, Izetbegović's regime simply issued thousands of BiH passports, birth certificates, and other official paperwork to various members of the foreign [mujahedin] battalion ... many of the most dangerous ones ... were protected by religious and political hardliners at the most senior levels of the Bosnian government, and thus were able to easily 'melt into' mainstream Bosnian society."¹⁷

Ten years after Izetbegović's death, Islamist extremists remain just as influential in many parts of Bosnia, having infiltrated both the Muslim-dominated political and security institutions in Sarajevo and organizations such as the Islamic Community. Izetbegović's son Bakir, currently a member of Bosnia's collective state presidency, is according to Sarajevo media the leader of the pro-Iranian, hardline Islamist faction within the SDA. The younger Izetbegović is known for his many criminal ties; for instance, the *New York Times* reported that the younger Izetbegović was involved in a criminal enterprise

14 See Anes Alic, "The Ringleaders of the Bosnia-Herzegovina Wahhabi Movement," available at: [http://www.jamestown.org/single/?no_cache=1&tx_ttnews\[tt_news\]=1048](http://www.jamestown.org/single/?no_cache=1&tx_ttnews[tt_news]=1048) Accessed on 14 June 2012 at: 8:06pm EST.

15 See Srecko Latal, "Intrigue Over Islamic Fighter's Escape," available at: <http://www.balkaninsight.com/en/main/news/21424/> Accessed on 3 August 2009 at 10:30am EST

16 See "Jihad, Bought and Sold," ISN Security Watch, 26 January 2009, available at: <http://www.isn.ethz.ch/isn/Security-Watch/Articles/Detail/?lng=en&id=95734> Accessed on 30 June 2012 at 3:09pm EST.

17 See Kohlmann, Al-Qaeda's Jihad in Europe: The Afghan-Bosnian Network, op. cit., 163.

to sell Croat and Serb homes in Sarajevo. As late as May 2012 the leader of the SDA's Security Policy Group was no less than Bakir Alispahić, for more than a decade one of Izetbegović's leading contacts with the Iranian regime. Indicative of the ultimate loyalties of the Izetbegović clique is the fact that Alispahic, despite being on the US government's watch list of suspected terrorists, has not been forced out of his position. Similarly, Fikret Muslimović, another key member of the Bosnian-Iranian connection, is a member of the SDA's Defense Group.¹⁸

The official Islamic Community in Bosnia, under the leadership of Izetbegović cadre Mustafa Cerić, largely condones Wahhabi violence and excesses in Bosnia. As Rešid Hafizović, a professor at the Faculty of Islamic Studies in Sarajevo notes "The reaction of the top of the Islamic community has always been understood by the Wahhabi gang as a tacit green light for their actions. That this is true is confirmed by the fact that every new Wahhabi attack in the country has been worse, more planned out, and more dangerous."¹⁹ Another Sarajevo academic, Esad Duraković has similarly noted that "Wahhabi doctrine ... has expanded very seriously, it has metastasized in the institutions of the Islamic Community: in some madrasas, at some faculties of the Islamic Community, etc. Wahhabis pronounce their own fatwas, that is, they give their own formal and parallel interpretations of Islam, and the Islamic Community is silent. Thus, the Wahhabis have entered deeply into the system, they are educating the youth, while the leadership of the Islamic Community is silent or compliments them for being the "new Muslims."²⁰ Similarly, the leading Bosnian journalist tracking Is-

18 See I. Čatić, "Paraobavještajni odbor SDA ignorira vladu SAD-a: Čovjek s američke crne liste šef ministru sigurnosti," *Dnevni Avaz* (Sarajevo), 5 July 2012, available at: <http://www.dnevniavaz.ba/vijesti teme/99173-paraobavjestajni-odbor-sda-ignorira-vladu-sad-a-covjek-s-americke-crne-liste-sef-ministru-sigurnosti-bih.html> Accessed on 6 June 2012 at: 1:55pm EST. Muslimović was one of the main figures responsible for incorporating foreign mujahedin into the Izetbegović regime's military structures.

19 See the interview with Hafizović, "Vehabije dolaze po tapiju na BiH," *Oslobodjenje* (Sarajevo), 5/6 November 2011, 32. Available at: <http://www.scribd.com/doc/74688492/Vehabije-dolaze-po-tapiju-na-BiH-intervju-dr-Re%C5%Alid-Hafizovi%C4%87-Oslobo%C4%91enje-05-11-2011-god> Accessed on 24 June 2012 at: 7:26 pm EST.

20 See the interview with Esad Duraković, "Vehabizam je ovdje izrazito suicidna ideologija, tragično je što to ne shvataju mnogi muslimani, ni Bošnjaci, 5 November 2011, available at: <http://www.depo.ba/front/vehabizam-je-ovdje-izrazito-suicidna-ideologija-tragicno-je-sto-to-ne-shvataju-mnogi-muslimani-ni-bosnjaci> Accessed on 24 June 2012 at 7:44pm EST.

lamist extremists in Bosnia, Esad Hečimović, has noted “Even though the Bosnian tragedy is in the very center of the motivations of [Al-Qaeda], never did one single Bosnian-Herzegovinian religious, national, or state leader oppose these abused ideological interpretations which created a pretext for the new crimes against civilians from Jerusalem to New York.”²¹

The results of such “tacit green lights” for Wahhabi terrorism within Bosnia are frequently evident in post-Izetbegović Bosnia. In September 2008, Wahhabis and other hooligans attacked participants in the Sarajevo Gay and Lesbian Festival, after which the chairman of the Bosnian Helsinki Human Rights Commission said that the incident was reminiscent of “the pogroms that happened in the times of Adolf Hitler.”²² This was not an isolated incidence, however, for gays and lesbians are frequently the target of various forms of physical and verbal assault by the Islamists. In a recent issue of the Islamist publication SAFF, a leading Bosnian Islamist penned an article entitled “The Spectre of Pederasty . . . “ in which homosexuality—in the author’s vocabulary, “pederasty” is represented as “Fascism=Pederasty.”²³ In February 2012, Sarajevo canton’s education minister resigned after becoming the target of Wahhabi death threats. What had earned the minister the wrath of the official Islamic establishment in Sarajevo and other extremists was his proposal that primary students’ grades in religion classes not be factored into their overall grade point averages. A letter sent to the minister’s home stated “Abandon Allah and his religion and the hand of the faithful will get you.” Enclosed was a 7.32 caliber bullet.²⁴ At the newly built King Fahd Mosque in Sarajevo, the headquarters of the Wahhabi movement in Bosnia, a western journalist reported on a sermon preached by one of Izetbegović’s former commanders, Nezim Halilović-Muderis:

21 Esad Hečimović, “Nastavak ‘pobjede iz Jemena?’”, op. cit.

22 See Walter Mayr, “The Prophet’s Fifth Column: Islamists Gain Ground in Sarajevo,” *Der Spiegel* (Hamburg), 25 February 2009, available at: <http://www.spiegel.de/international/europe/the-prophet-s-fifth-column-islamists-gain-ground-in-sarajevo-a-609660.html> Accessed on 14 June 2012 at 7:29pm EST.

23 See Alispahić’s article “The Spectre of Pederasty . . . “ SAFF (Sarajevo), 16 June 2012, available at: http://www.saff.ba/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=2365:bauk-pederluka-krui&catid=49:kolumna&Itemid=82 Accessed on 26 June 2012 at 10:42am EST.

24 See Elvira Jukic, “Islamist Death Threats Force Out Bosnia Minister,” available at: <http://www.balkaninsight.com/en/article/dignity-rather-than-chair-sarajevo-slogans-say> Accessed on 7 June 2012 at 7:25pm EST.

The obliteration of Israel is heralded in a torrent of words. “Zionist terrorists,” the imam thunders from the glass-enclosed pulpit at the end of the mosque. “Animals in human form” have transformed the Gaza Strip into a “concentration camp,” and this marks “the beginning of the end” for the Jewish pseudo-state ... Over 4,000 faithful are listening to the religious service ... The women sit separately, screened off in the left wing of the building. It is the day of the Khutbah, the great Friday sermon, and the city where the imam has predicted Israel’s demise lies some 2,000 kilometers (1,240 miles) northwest of Gaza. It is a city in the heart of Europe: Sarajevo.²⁵

Cerić himself recently accused Israel of committing “genocide” against the Palestinians²⁶ while another radical Bosnian cleric, Muharem Štulanović, offered the following views in October 2008:

There are three foreign-political factors that play a role in creating BiH—America, the Jews, and the Shiites. As far as the Americans are concerned, everything is known. It is one of the main enemies of Muslims and Islam in the world. Furthermore, the Jews are the enemies of Islam, and enemy number one at that. And Judgement Day will not come, that is faithfully in the Hadis and it is true, without the Muslims completely winning. Judgement Day will not come, the conclusion of this world, until the Muslims begin a total battle against the Jews, and in that battle the Jews will be so defeated that they will hide behind every tree and behind every rock. And every tree and every rock will say, “Oh, Muslim, Servant of God, here is a Jew, he has hidden behind me, come and kill him.”²⁷

Apart from the growth of the Wahhabi movement in Bosnia in recent years, Iranian influence in Bosnia has continued to grow throughout the post-Dayton period as well. Sarajevo is now home to the largest Iranian em-

25 See Walter Mayr, “The Prophet’s Fifth Column: Islamists Gain Ground in Sarajevo,” *Der Spiegel* (Hamburg), 25 February 2009, available at: <http://www.spiegel.de/international/europe/the-prophet-s-fifth-column-islamists-gain-ground-in-sarajevo-a-609660.html> Accessed on 14 June 2012 at 7:29pm EST.

26 See the cable produced by the US Embassy in Sarajevo, “Bosnia: Gaza Reaction Reveals Ugly Side,” available at: <http://www.cablegatesearch.net/cable.php?id=09SARAJEVO40> Accessed on 2 May 2012 at: 4:59pm EST.

27 See “Islamska Zajednica je sve osim Rijaseti,” *BH Dani* (Sarajevo) no. 647, 6 November 2009, available at: http://www.bhdani.com/default.asp?kat=txt&broj_id=647&tekst_rb=4 Accessed on 25 June 2012 at: 11:44am EST.

bassy in Europe, and, according to Malcolm Hoenlein, Executive Vice Chairman of the Conference of Presidents of Major Jewish Organizations, for radical Islamists Sarajevo is becoming “a jumping-off place, a radicalization place, a crossroads, something like Berlin during the Cold War.”²⁸ Indeed, a number of observers have noted that in the post-1995 period, Al-Qaeda developed capabilities to use Bosnia as a launching pad for terrorist actions in Europe and the United States. Part of Bosnia’s attraction to Al Qaeda was the opportunity to recruit indigenous Muslims as a form of “white Al-Qaeda,” i.e., terrorists who looked “European” as opposed to Arab and could thus avoid racial profiling by Western security agencies.²⁹

Reform of Bosnia’s security services continues to be a priority for many international officials. Unfortunately, as has been pointed out in this article, under current conditions the dangers inherent in unifying and centralizing Bosnia’s security and intelligence efforts remain insufficiently analyzed. As a result of the concerted, decades-long effort of Izetbegović and his cohorts, the grip of Islamists (of both the Iranian and Al Qaeda varieties) on Bosnia is now considerable. In many parts of Bosnia Islamists have infiltrated political and security institutions, the NGO community, and the official religious establishment as well. And as has been seen in the past, efforts to combat Islamist radicals in the country through central institutions is doomed to failure from the outset. For these reasons, a much more practical strategy for dealing with the terrorist threat in Bosnia is to take advantage of Bosnia’s decentralized political structure to limit the room for maneuver that Islamists have within Bosnia. This strategy will at least guarantee that there will be large areas of Bosnia that do not provide Islamist extremists with the permissive environment they need to survive and thrive. Just as importantly, however, international officials need to begin taking the threat of Islamist extremism in Bosnia seriously. The distorted understanding of Alija Izetbegović and the Islamist political movement that he led propagated in many western circles—bordering on an almost willful denial of reality—has done little to fur-

28 See “Iran Quietly Infiltrates Europe’s Underbelly,” available at: <http://www.thetrumpet.com/9381.8230.0.0/religion/islam/iran-quietly-infiltrates-europes-underbelly> Accessed on 13 May 2012 at: 9:07am EST.

29 See Rade Maroevic and Daniel Williams, “Terrorist Cells Find Foothold in the Balkans,” *The Washington Post*, 1 December 2005.

ther US and European security interests in the region. On the contrary, they may only be setting the stage for further conflict in southeastern Europe at some point down the line, and provide Islamist radicals with an even more effective base from which to wage it.

GLOBAL POWER AND PARTICULAR RESPONSES *

(THE BALKAN WARS AND THE „ALBANIAN ISSUE“ IN LIGHT OF NEOREALISM)

VLADIMIR N. CVETKOVIĆ
SLAĐANA ĐURIĆ

Centuries-long fighting over territories in the Balkans is no different from any other around the world. The motives for conflict between the current political communities, however they may be organized or called, have always been similar if not identical: along with the traditional quest for glory and the standard need for the confirmation of, that is the increase in political power and prestige – or in modern terms “credibility” – and the inevitable laments over the “righteousness” of one’s own struggle, etc. (the group of “ideological motives”), there is always the inevitable problem of control over trade and natural resources in the given territory, its strategic significance for further conquests or defence, etc. (the group of “Realpolitik motives”). Another reasons for fighting, often occurring in conjunction with those two groups of motives, is the preservation (or more often: the imposing) of a particular collective identity, which necessarily produces changes in the ethnic, reli-

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gious, and even national structure of the population in the given territory. All statesmen, military leaders and politicians, from the ancient times until today, have found them to be indisputable, although differently ranked war priorities. Hence, the so-called Balkan Wars at the beginning of the 20th century, which may be considered the first modern or “industrial” wars in that part of Europe, could not have been any different. They were literally the “extension of politics by other means” and were brought about by numerous intertwined reasons and motives: political, economic, ethical, and historical – in all their fictitious and real meanings. Also, the Balkan Wars were and still are a paradigmatic example of the continuity of geopolitical constants, i.e. of the permanently shaped interests of local and global “players”.

Exactly one hundred years ago, large-scale armed conflicts were being conducted in a considerably broader area than the one currently (and for ideological reasons) referred to as the “Western Balkans”², though at that time this area was commonly known as the “European Turkey” and belonged to the Ottoman Empire during the last stage of its existence.³ In popular historiographical literature, it is usually stated that those wars “rounded off” the territories of the newly established or arising Balkan nation states (Romania, Serbia, Montenegro, Bulgaria, Greece), at the expense of the European territories of the declining Ottoman Empire. At the same time, a powerful impulse to establish identity and a state, together with the traditional call to

2 This catchphrase of Euro-bureaucrats and new “experts” revises the meaning of the ostracised “dark Balkans” reducing it to its traditionally most sensitive part: Bosnia and Herzegovina, the south part of Serbia with Kosovo, Albania, Montenegro, and Macedonia. Of course, in different projections (“scenarios”) of the nearer or further politico-economic future of that area, it is as necessary broadened to include other countries of the South-East Europe (Greece, Bulgaria, Romania, Croatia...) – depending on the geopolitical interests of those who name and/or designate (“securitize”) the concrete region. This only confirms the almost banal insight that each naming is simultaneously also a specific understanding of the given object (or here: region). The example of the “Balkans” abounds in ideological-political launching of “geographical” headwords, always coined in accordance with the current interests of the present conductors of the global orchestra. More on this, in the classical point of reference – Marija Todorova: *Imagining the Balkans*, Oxford University Press, New York, 1997.

3 From the Turkish perspective, ever since the 15th century, this area was called “Rumelia”. It is both interesting and symptomatic that the British understood the term “Middle East” to include the Asian and African parts of the Turkish empire, as well as all parts of the Balkans that were within the Ottoman empire ever since the 1699 Karlovac Peace Treaty, until the very end of World War I.

looting, also aroused the Albanian tribes in this region. As a result of these exertions, a completely new state – Albania – was created for the first time in Balkan history.

The decisive role in this entire contrivance was played by the great European powers of that time: Austria-Hungary, Germany, Russia, Great Britain and France, and, last but not least, Italy. A century later, the *struggle for territory, identity and power* (including the spoils of war in the form of natural resources) in the Balkans is still ongoing! Naturally, there have been some new and significant developments: the old local players have been joined by new national states unknown to previous history: Slovenia and Croatia in the west, Macedonia, a newly-established “national” state in the east, as well as an “independent” state with a similarly vague identity and the status of an international (pseudo)protectorate – Bosnia and Herzegovina. The same is true for the most recent political experiment called the Republic of Kosovo.

As to big players, the role of Austria-Hungary, after its dissolution, was taken over by a much bigger and more powerful empire – the U.S.A., whereas the other “big players” have changed the costumes without changing their roles: Russia is no longer tsarist, but it is still vast; there is no Second Reich, there is no Third French Republic: today they, along with Great Britain, Italy and some other old players familiar to the Balkans, function under the common name – the European Union (we will disregard their differences under this umbrella organization). Finally, the Ottoman Empire is now a territorially reduced national state of Turkey, whereas ethnic Albanians in the Balkans also have a new “attempted state” – Kosovo – in addition to Albania (and a *de facto* separate territory – “Western Macedonia”). We will attempt to interpret these historical facts from the standpoint of security studies, especially the standpoint of the neorealist school and its subsection – the theory of regional security, whose sensitivity to the sub levels of a global (systemic) analysis provides an insight into the details which defy globalist generalizations, and is hence the most relevant for the assessment of the causes and effects of conflicts between states as well as between non-state factors in the Balkan region.

1. The Balkan Wars: Local Interests and Global Solutions

Let us recall: the arrival of the Ottomans to the Balkans (14th century) signalled the beginning of the end of the Byzantine Empire, as well as of all its rivals, enemies and occasional Balkan allies, the medieval states of Onogurs, Bulgarians and Serbs. For centuries after that, they, as well as other more or less numerous Balkan peoples, were exposed to constant assimilation, persecutions and slaughter, until early in the 19th century when the Ottoman Empire suffered a long crisis which ended in its virtual expulsion from Europe (as well as from the Middle East!) and was reduced to a national state which bears the modern name of the Republic of Turkey.⁴ The gradual reduction of European and other (Caucasian and Middle-Eastern) parts of Turkey, i.e. of the Ottoman Empire, came about through the competition of the great European powers of that time. The ethnic struggles of Balkan peoples for their national states were therefore fully dependent on which among the above mentioned “protector powers” of the Christian peoples under the Ottoman yoke had the upper hand.

It is important to be aware that the gradual emergence, i.e. the gaining of independence and growth of national states in the “European Turkey” (Serbia *de facto* in 1824-29, together with Walachia and Moldavia; Greece in 1830; Serbia *de jure* in 1878, together with Romania and Montenegro; Bulgaria in 1886; the Austro-Hungarian occupation of Bosnia and Herzegovina in 1878 and its annexation in 1908; the formation of independent Albania in 1912), could never be considered by the great powers without taking into account the position that the Ottoman Empire had in the crucial area – the Middle East. As such, the control over the Balkans and/or South-Eastern Europe was (and still is) perceived by the great powers from a considerably broader perspective than the Balkan peoples could ever discern and recognize. Despite the popular literature and numerous political stereotypes, the Balkans have never been interpreted and accepted as a “region apart” (similar to the notions of “Europe”, “the Middle East”, etc.) in the global Realpolitik, but primarily as a *geopolitical mediator* between the European (Christian) and oriental (Muslim) worlds. To

4 Today, it chiefly comprises the territory of Anatolia with a small, but strategically not irrelevant, European territory (so-called Eastern Thrace, the south-eastern part of the Balkan Peninsula, of meager 26,623 square kilometres or 3% of the total Turkish territory in size).

those who shape the history of the world, the Balkans have never been, nor could ever be, important “in themselves” or “as such”; the Balkans have always been interpreted – perceived – primarily as a border, the place where a “wedge” is driven into the space of the Other, i.e. the crossroads leading to the subjugation of a promising part of the world.

In other words, regardless of the characteristic Balkan pretentiousness, narcissism, as well as the habitual nihilist self-annihilation, the Balkans have never been an “*axis mundi*”, let alone a mere “blind alley” of Europe. Seen from the standpoint of so-called regional security, the Balkans are a volatile combination of Europe and the Middle East, of Christian and Muslim civilizations⁵. Hence the significance of the Balkans exceeds the issue of local relations (of peoples and states) and ventures into a much more intricate (complex) structure of international power and into the issue of relations between these opposing cultures/civilizations. The Balkans could therefore never be left to the Balkan peoples: the stakes have always been much higher. Let us reiterate: the dominant and/or paternalist attitude of great powers toward the Balkan peoples is neither an issue of mere desire for domination nor of paternalism, but always stems from the fact that the Balkans represent a border, a place where positions are taken for more resolute advances towards the East or the West. This has always been the case, even in mid-19th century when the first national states in this area were created.

On the other hand and considered from a traditional culturological viewpoint, the external and internal problems of Balkan (self)reflection stem from the same (or at least from a similar) problem that the recent indisputable ruler of the Balkans – Turkey – continues to experience. There is no doubt that this former Big Brother of the Balkans (which is also attempting to be the current one!) preserves the elements of European tradition (especially the organization of state administration, the military, etc.)⁶ within a

5 In previous history: the ancient watershed of the Persians and Greeks, of the oriental Eastern and Western Rome, of orthodox and catholic churches, etc.

6 Here, we have in mind primarily the reformist attempts at revitalizing the Empire during the time of tanzimat, who introduced the secular way of life and thinking into the Ottoman Turkey: they undermined the traditional patterns of Islam in the public and family life, promoted modern institutions such as the constitution and parliament, Turkish nationalism, even inaugurated certain forms of liberalism and socialism, etc. For more details refer to Ilber Ortajli: *Najduži vek Imperije*, Srpska književna zajednica, Beograd 2004.

part, albeit marginal, of its identity; however, it remains far outside of modern European politics in terms of culture, and especially in terms of *religion*. The current position of Turkey proves this without any doubt: ever the candidate for EU membership, it persistently feigns its willingness to join the European political community; on the other hand, the main opponents of it joining the EU (Germany and France) display similar disingenuousness in hailing Turkish efforts to achieve “the high European standards” in the fields of human rights, religious freedoms, etc. In this way, Turkey remains outside so-called European integrations, as a specific reflection of everything that Europe is and is not (but could be), whereas the much criticized understanding of the “conflict of civilizations” seems to garner increasing legitimacy. Despite all its (inevitable) exaggerations and superficialities, the much criticized concept of viewing global future through trans-state, civilizational (religious and cultural) confrontations⁷ has proven to be a relevant analytical framework for understanding the geopolitical reality of the modern world.

This approach may provide a partial interpretation of current cultural-political processes within the former “European Turkey”. Due to the Ottoman invasion in the late medieval period, the Balkan peoples failed to experience the Renaissance and the Enlightenment and were quite late in undergoing the industrial and political revolutions of the Modern Age. At the same time, they continued to adhere to traditionalist – Christian orthodox interpretations of Christianity. Orthodoxy was well-nigh the only token of collective identity of most Balkan peoples throughout the entire period of Ottoman domination. On the other hand, it should not be forgotten that Orthodoxy has for centuries also been the rival of western Christianity in all its variants. Thus the orthodox Balkan peoples were caught in a twofold conflict of cultures: aggressive Islam on the one hand and no less belligerent Catholicism on the other.⁸

For all this, the Balkans *are* Europe, but not its “organic part”. The status of the currently perhaps most problematic EU member – the ever contro-

7 Samuel P. Huntington: *The Clash of Civilization and the Remaking of World Order*.

8 Owing to the vicinity of Rome, but primarily to the powerful influence of Vienna, the Protestantism has never been a very viable religious or political option in the Balkans. The contemporary domination of the USA in the Balkans cannot be correlated to the protestant culture, regardless of any para-religious and pseudo-ethical calls for “humanitarian inter-

versal Greece – demonstrates the consequences of this “historical fact” and its perception (shaped mainly by political interests of the western great powers), as well as of the real historical outcomes resulting from it⁹. The same is true of the real reputation/treatment of the new members of the “European family” – Romania and Bulgaria – which never cease to stick out in a seemingly ordered procession of states with voluntary limitations on their sovereignty. More and more frequent announcements of the introduction of a new structure of the European Union with two or even three “columns” (read: different levels of significance/decision-making powers), quite certainly mean that Balkan states – old and new – will be relegated and/or restricted to the status of second-rate parts of Europe.



The typical aspect of the 1912-1913 Balkan conflicts is that they were overshadowed by the preparations for a big showdown of European powers. That is why they failed to respond adequately to the unprecedented impudence of small Balkan peoples to make key decisions about their existence *on their own*. The expectations of great European powers were that “their (Balkan) war” would not be long, but that it would, regardless of its outcome, undoubtedly weaken the Ottoman Empire, which was destined to destruction and division among them anyway. The key players in this case – Austria-Hungary and Germany, on the one hand, and Russia and, indirectly, France, on the other, with Great Britain in the middle as the perpetual owner of the controlling stakes in the balance between the European political shares, fought to get their slice of the pie in the forthcoming struggle for world domination. Still, the key to modern Balkan politics was in the relations of two (pre-modern) empires – Austria-Hungary and Russia.

Czarist Russia had been playing a prolonged power game with its western rivals ever since Napoleon’s conquests, but its first real global challenge

ventions” which have dominated in the justifications for military actions of the American foreign policy until recently.

9 Not only because of its imminent bankruptcy – which, by the way, is nothing novel for Greece, but rather a destiny already endured several times in its modern existence – but also because of the Greek position in the measuring of strength with Turkey: within the NATO as well as regarding the Turkish candidacy for the EU membership.

was the Crimean War (1853-1856); which many believe to have been “the First World War” preceding the 1914 World War. The unexpected allies (the Ottoman, French and British empires, along with Sardinia) defeated the Russian Empire in the territory encompassing the Balkans, the Caucasus, the Crimea, the Black and Baltic seas and the Pacific Ocean after a series of dramatic reversals of war fortune! What did actually happen? The Turkish agreement to the peace treaty with Russia, followed by the destruction of the Turkish war fleet and the anticipation of the fall of Constantinople, provoked the establishment of the western alliance of great powers. In an effort to provide a balance of powers in Europe and the Mediterranean, they sent an ultimatum to Russia to withdraw from the conquered Danube principalities (Moldavia and Wallachia) and thus alleviate the pressure put on the Sublime Porte. The western allies subsequently added several military-political requests intended to finally stop Russia from being a real threat to the Ottoman Empire, i.e. to the western interests in this part of the world. They were met with Russian refusal and resulted in a vicious war with over half a million dead and twice as many wounded soldiers and civilians. The war ended in a victory of western allies, but without triumphalism: according to the Paris Peace Treaty (1856), Russia withdrew, or rather – lay low. After the subsequent dramatic progress of the Prussian state, especially after its great victory over France (1871), Russia gained an opportunity to re-form the Black Sea fleet and thus reconfirm its interest in this region with the political assistance of Bismarck and the new French Republic. Very soon, Russia became directly involved in the events in the Balkans and the war that Serbia and Montenegro, provoked by the 1875 Herzegovina uprising, were already waging against the Ottoman Empire. The upshot of this engagement with partial success was the Berlin Congress (1878) and a new hand of cards dealt in the Balkans: new national states were officially established, whereas Austria-Hungary, and through it indirectly the new united German Empire (the Second Reich) as well, became a part of the Balkan war games (the occupation of Bosnia and Herzegovina; the opening of the route to the Middle East). Simultaneously, Russia’s Balkan interests were recognized (the annexation of Bessarabia and a part of the Caucasus – the Kars province); whereas Great Britain occupied Cyprus. Thus begun a new global power game which, in the case of the Balkans, meant the struggle of the great powers for

custody over the new states. The new Balkan “sovereignties” switched Russian and Austro-Hungarian (German) hands, with constant supervision by Great Britain and France, as well as by the still present Ottoman Empire. The balance of power was somehow always achieved and only local (Balkan) rulers and dynasties, i.e. their new/old (foreign) patrons changed.

The presented matrix of motives for and causes of war for and over the Balkans and their status in the international division of power has practically continued to this day. This confirms that the word “Balkans”, in its strategic and security senses, implies (South)Eastern Europe, then the Mediterranean, and finally the real thing – the Middle East besides the main geographic meaning!



In contemporary historiography, the conventional conclusion is that the Balkan Wars were caused by separate interests of small Balkan states which saw the instability of their centuries-long enemy – the Ottoman Empire – as their chance to finally achieve national sovereignty within their “historical borders” and thus become independent factors in international politics. There is no doubt whatsoever that this is only partially true. No Balkan nation or state has ever had either the strength or the capacity to actually be the creator or implementer of its own ambitions. That is why this is also true of the Balkan Wars, which have the prefix of “liberation” for the Balkan peoples whereas the Turks, paradoxically, see them as “aggressive” or “occupying” (earlier, similar instances of resistance to the Sublime Porte were treated as uprisings, rebellions or simply as “internal conflicts” between the centre and the margins/fringes of the Empire). As a whole (1912-1913), they must be examined from the standpoint of the struggle for supremacy of the great powers in the European continent, which includes the domination over the Mediterranean, that is, the Middle East.

Perhaps the only, and hence the most significant, difference, when compared to the previous conflicts between the Balkan peoples and the Ottoman Empire, is the already highlighted fact that, in 1912, the Balkan states waged the war to liberate themselves, i.e. to liberate their “historical territories” without the direct consent of the great powers. The complete elimination of the Ottoman Empire from the Balkans did not suit anyone at the time,

not even Russia which was nevertheless the only one to provide diplomatic support to the Balkan states once the war began. The Balkan Wars were unwelcome for the great powers because the European balance of powers was somehow still being maintained at the time. To disturb such a balance, even partly, by advisory military assistance to any of the warring sides for instance, as the commonplace wisdom of the “high politics” at the time went, would have been a prelude to a universal war.¹⁰ That is why neither Russia nor its old-new enemies Austria-Hungary and Germany were willing to participate in the Balkan Wars directly.¹¹ This is probably why the Ottoman Empire finally buckled – because it could not receive the usual diplomatic and, more importantly, *military* support from its allies among the European powers interested in the maintenance of the international *status quo* in the Balkans/Mediterranean, and, hence, the Middle East.

Left without the military support from any European power, the Ottoman Empire suffered previously inconceivable defeat by the small united Balkan states. In fact, for the first time in modern history of the Balkans, such an outcome truly reflected the actual strength of the warring parties. On the other hand, it is no wonder that the results of those wars did not even make it to newspaper headlines, let alone deeper political analyses: only about ten months after the last shots fired in the Balkan Wars, the Great War, an unprecedented conflict of world states and nations waged not only across Europe but across almost the entire planet, began at the same location but with far greater force and consequences. We will use Albanians, an ethnic community crucial for the stability of the present-day “Western Balkans”, as an example to show how the relevant Balkan ethnic groups were (not) out of their depth and could (not) make their way in the big scheme of the great powers.

10 The war occurred directly after the end of the Balkan Wars, when one of the great powers (Germany) decided that it could no longer wait nor allow its opponents to potentially gain strength.

11 Russia suffered a huge military defeat in its conflict with Japan (1905), as well as adequate diplomatic humiliation in the form of public acceptance of the annexation of Bosnia and Herzegovina by Austria-Hungary (1908); not to mention the Russian internal social turmoil. Austria-Hungary also suffered the consequences of the internal disharmony in the relations between Vienna and Budapest; whereas the German colonization failures (the guerilla war in Tanzania and Namibia with several hundred thousand dead natives), controversial building of the naval fleet, etc. forced the imperial military heads to remain patient.

2. Albanian controversies

At the beginning of the Balkan Wars (1912), the Ottoman Empire had long lost control over the Middle East, having become just another regional power instead of the powerful global one that it had once been.¹² This is precisely why the weak Balkan states were able to attack their long-time enemy and finally take over its European provinces. One of the key *internal* factors for such a development, in addition to the internal upheavals during the time of *tanzimat* and the development of the Young Ottomans movement (not accidentally renamed “Young Turks” in the West)¹³, was the controversial attitude of ethnic Albanians regarding the issue of the survival of the Empire.

Owing to the alleged “cosmopolitan” character of the Ottoman empire, where Islam as the supreme religion, world view and way of life dominated the diverse ethnic population of Muslim faith (Turks, Arabs, Albanians and so on), the belligerent Albanians were long considered a key factor of Ottoman stability in the Balkans. Independently of the strict rule of the successful grand viziers from the Frasheri family, it was the Albanian beys who supported the central authority in Constantinople most often and most fervently (because it was in their direct personal interest) out of all Balkan Muslim leaders in the Ottoman Empire. Between the renegade janissary groups scattered along the Danube and Rumelia on the one hand, and the Bosnian

12 The Ottoman Empire had been crumbling from the beginning of the 19th century: along with continuous resistance of the Balkan peoples, the situation in the east was even graver: when Great Britain occupied it in 1882, Egypt was autonomous in fact already; Tunisia was occupied by France in 1881; Libya was left to Italy in 1911; the uprising in Yemen happened in the same year... Just before the end of World War I, Syria also gained its independence; whereas Iraq became the British protectorate... Following the further progress of the Balkan states, the onset of the revolution (civil war), as well as the parallel war against Greece, the Empire definitely dissolved upon the establishment of a completely unexpected creation – the Republic of Turkey in 1923.

13 The leaders of the opposition to the sultan Abdul Mejid I and his despotic rule, the intellectuals gathered together in Paris in mid-19th century, called themselves the Young Ottomans, whereas their French hosts called them “Young Turks” in the spirit of the time. They were not a unified movement. On the contrary, groups of new intellectuals, i.e. lower officials of various ethnic origins discussed the ways to modernize their backward Empire. Regardless of their influence on the issue of the constitutionalism in the Ottoman state, they were a heterogeneous group which failed either to rein in the old emancipating aspirations of the Christian peoples in the Balkans or to rein in the emerging Arab, Turkish and Albanian nationalism. For further information, see I. Ortajli, *ibid*, pp. 224 ff.

nobles on the other, only the Albanian warlords (tribal leaders) had reasons to go to war directly for the Sublime Porte in most of the 19th-century conflicts.

The real problem arose when Serbia and Greece gained independence and Bulgaria emerged as an extended hand of Russia from the famous, never implemented, “Treaty of San Stefano”.¹⁴ The idea was for Bulgaria to become the dominant state in the Balkans, extending from the Black Sea to the Albanian mountains, including parts of modern Greece, entire Macedonia and south-eastern Serbia. The Congress of Berlin has thwarted such Bulgarian (i.e. Russian) ambitions, serving the interests of Great Britain, Austria-Hungary and Germany. At the same time, although the proclaimed war goals of Serbia were not achieved (the liberation of the Old Serbia, i.e. Kosovo, as well as of Macedonia), the Congress of Berlin granted it independence which was no longer a subject of disputes among the great powers. In all those schemes, which left no one in the Balkans indifferent, the least was gained by Albanians whose proto-modern social elite in Constantinople formed (after the defeat of the Sublime Porte in the conflicts with Russia, Serbia and Montenegro) the so-called *League of Prizren*¹⁵, as a political-military attempt to unite the Albanian (predominantly Muslim) population *within* the Ottoman Empire. The main goal of the League was the creation of “an integrated Albanian territory”.¹⁶ At the same time, the Porte tried to

14 The treaty of San Stefano, as the preliminary sum of Russian ambitions in the Balkans after the relatively successful conclusion to the war against the Ottoman Empire (January 1878), stipulated a multiply enlarged territory of the conceived new or “Greater Bulgaria”, which had access to as many as three seas! That megalomaniac plan (otherwise completely in opposition to the previous treaty between Russia and Austria-Hungary reached only a year before), was probably conceived as Russia’s starting negotiating position in its bargaining with other great powers. In spite of all that, it is still a strong source of frustration of Bulgarian nationalists. Their actions in the Second Balkan War, just as in the First and Second World Wars, were a telling example of violence resultant from those “failed” (artificial) dreams, always in full contradiction to the stark reality. The unimplemented peace treaty of San Stefano has remained a good example of manipulation characteristic of historical activities of virtually all great powers in the Balkans.

15 Full name: League for the Defense of the Rights of the Albanian Nation.

16 In the administrative division of the Empire, the Albanian population existed in four of the total six European vilayets, i.e. administrative provinces or “regions” within the Empire: Skadar, Janjina, Kosovo and Bitola. It is typical that the former Kosovo vilayet of the Ottoman Empire, with its seat in Skopje and constituent Sanjaks (counties) Peć, Priština, Priz-

use the League for its own needs, i.e. to preserve the compromised integrity of the Ottoman Empire in the Balkans through the League's activity. That was the beginning of the establishment of controversial relations between the Albanian and Turkish (Ottoman) elites who were at times close only to fall out again. This duality of goals and interests, which wove together the national (ethnic; Albanian) and Muslim ("Ottoman"; then "(pan)Turkish") identities, has persisted among Albanians practically to this day.¹⁷

Since the Congress of Berlin ignored the Albanian requests, the League of Prizren soon openly came into conflict with its insincere Constantinople mentor, because it considered it the main culprit for its failed expectations. A series of separate, but persistent armed rebellions of Albanian groups in the new-formed Balkan states ensued – first in Montenegro (fights around Gusinje, Plav and Ulcinj), then in Greece (the dispute about a part of Epirus). The Albanian dissatisfaction soon turned into a general uprising which spilled over from the newly established Balkan Christian states to the other side – into the redefined (reduced) space of the Islamic Ottoman Empire in the Balkans.

When the rebelling Albanian leaders sent a request to the Sublime Porte to form an integral autonomous Albanian vilayet in the Empire, this was inevitably interpreted as a prelude to secession, so Constantinople was forced to make a military intervention against Albanians in its territory (1879-1881). It was the beginning of an armed conflict that lasted until the end of the Ottoman Empire in the Balkans (1912). However, the Sublime Porte suppressed the Albanian rebellion and disbanded the League of Prizren immediately after the first military advance of Albanians. This did not put down the Albanian armed resistance. That is why the Constantinople authorities directed the Albanian dissatisfaction to the local Christian population whose property and lives were a (temporary) compensation to Albanian leaders.¹⁸

ren, Pljevlja and Novi Pazar, is still a part of the dream of "Greater Albania" in the projections of modern Albanian nationalists.

17 Thus Sami Frasheri, one of the prominent leaders of the League of Prizeren and also a member of the Young Turks movement, already maintained that Albania (with all Muslim Albanians) was "our special homeland" within "our common (Ottoman) homeland".

18 "It was through Albanians that the Porte took measures to establish the sultan's rule in the Balkans. Albanians from the surrendered territories (after the Congress of Berlin; Niš, Pirot, Leskovac and Vranje in Serbia, Plav and Gusinje in Montenegro – author's note) moved to

Simultaneously, Porte's open support to Albanian violence against the local Christian population was an important leverage in preventing the decisions on the divisions of territory passed at the Congress of Berlin from being implemented, a situation which was directly in favor of the interests of the Ottoman Empire.

Be that as it may, Albanians never gained autonomy within the Ottoman Empire. At the time, their main stumbling block, besides the regions of Kosovo and Metohia, was Macedonia. From the very first step taken in their struggle for autonomy (the League of Prizren), it figured as the center of their projected national territory.¹⁹ However, Macedonia was the object of desire for others as well – for the Christian peoples in the disintegrating Ottoman Empire. After the failed uprising of the Macedonian Slavic population against the Empire (1903), which was suppressed by the regular Ottoman army and Albanian ad-hoc military units,²⁰ the Sultan put the former Con-

the territory of Kosovo, where they carried retribution against the local Serbs for their lost estates and lands. The Ottoman authorities encouraged the settlement of Albanian highlanders into the fertile valleys, increasing their presence in Kosovo, Macedonia and Epirus. Ever since, the Ottoman authorities fully used Albanian military forces. The propaganda claimed that the progress, even the survival of Albania, depended on the Ottoman Empire... And whereas the Albanians from the south loyally fought in the 1897 Greek-Turkish War, the Albanians from the northern regions joined the increasingly active chetnik warfare of the armed gangs of various ethnic groups, entering into clashes even with the regular army. The region of Kosovo once again became the highest security issue, since the illusion of the Ottoman system survived in the mountain regions only at the price of buying loyalty and irregular military services of fickle robbers, by means of privileges, military ranks and money." Stevan K. Pavlović: *Istorija Balkana. 1804-1945*, Clio, Beograd, pp. 219-220. The persecution of Serbs and Montenegrins did not stop until the beginning of the Balkan Wars, only to be continued during and after the conclusion of the World War I – in the new state of the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes (later, the Kingdom of Yugoslavia). The intensity of persecution was increased during World War II, to be whitewashed and covered up during the communist Yugoslavia led by Tito. The dissolution of such Yugoslavia culminated in the war led on behalf of Albanians in Serbia by the top world superpower – the U.S.A.

19 According to the Albanian leaders, the vaguely defined area of Macedonia was part of the Albanian vilayet (either in the form of an autonomous region or as a national state), whereas, according to the past as well as contemporary Albanian beliefs, the "natural Albanian space" also included parts of south-eastern Serbia, Macedonia, and the north-western part of Greece, in addition to the today Albania and Kosovo. As we can see, the one and the same "chimera" on the size of the space needed to satisfy the appetites of Albanian political leaders has existed for over 150 years already.

20 This is a tradition of military-looting organization of Albanian units in the Balkans. The loyalty of those formations depended primarily on the current political affection of local clan leaders.

stitution (adopted back in 1876, only to suspend it the following year) back into effect and thus enabled elections in the Empire, which were won by the Young Turks and their Committee for Unity and Progress. However, despite Albanian expectations, all those changes helped further centralization of the Empire, which finally led to an open Albanian rebellion against Constantinople – in Kosovo in spring 1911.

At the time, the weakened Sublime Porte offered Albanians new concessions, but was unable to fulfil them because a war broke out against conquerors from Italy at the opposite end of the Empire in Libya, followed by the uprising in Yemen somewhat later. In the meantime, the Albanians rebelling against the Porte took Skopje. The leaders of the Albanian movement were then ready for the final agreement with Constantinople, but it was never to be because they were beaten to it by Balkan Christians who had secretly arranged a joint assault against the Ottoman Empire. That marked the beginning of the First Balkan War in 1912, which shattered the Ottoman rule in the Balkans and, in addition to the enlargement of the existing Christian national states (Serbia, Greece, Montenegro, Bulgaria, Romania), resulted in the creation of the first Islamic – Albanian – state in the region of the former Skadar vilayet. Albania was created solely through the strong efforts of western great powers (above all Austria-Hungary, then Italy and others), which were worried that the dissolution of the Islamic empire would open a new opportunity for Russia to expand its influence in the Balkans, hence in the Mediterranean, and, finally, in the Middle East. This is why the newly-established *Albania*, as the first (semi)independent state of the Albanian people, functioned under the Austro-Hungarian, then Italian and finally German protectorate from the first moment of its constitution. In the period following World War II, after a brief involvement with the Yugoslav, Soviet

A common command was almost always absent. This is true for the time of the Ottoman Empire, the subsequent state of Albania and the recent events in Kosovo and Metohia, where the so-called Liberation Army of Kosovo was actually a mechanical sum of local guerillas led by the rival leaders. The common goal – in this (Kosovo) case – eviction of Serbs, could never be coordinated from a single Albanian center because it would immediately disturb the ever fragile balance between divided fis and families. That is why the leading role of the NATO forces, that is, the U.S.A., against the security forces of FRY/Serbia, at least regarding the armed actions, was acceptable for all Albanian political powers. To be sure, once the common enemy was forced out, the old and new rivalries emerged in all their intensity.

and finally Chinese leaderships, it was virtually a (self)isolated communist island in Europe. After the fall of the Berlin wall (1990), Albania failed in its attempts to reform its legislature and economy, which underwent total (self) destruction in 1998, bringing the country under a new type of custody by Italy – this time in the form of a EU peacekeeping operation.²¹



Regardless of the failure of the League of Prizren or the failure of Albanian intellectuals to achieve their goal of “Greater Albania” within the Young Turks movement, the very inception of the Albanian national movement already became one of the constants of the policies of the “external players” (first Constantinople, then all western powers) in the south-eastern Europe during the last two centuries: *use the Albanians to rule the Balkans*. Whereas the Porte sought support for its struggle against the Christian Balkan peoples from Albanians, the western powers – on different occasions and for different needs – saw Albanian nationalists (either Muslim or otherwise) as a basis for the suppression of Russian (“Orthodox”) interests (promoted through Greeks, Bulgarians or Serbs). This demonstrates that, in the “Balkan affairs” of the great western powers, Albanians have been the main leverage through which concrete geopolitical interests have been imposed and realized. Hence the so-called Albanian issue has served as a *means* for the realization of interests of great Western powers ever since the Balkan wars. Usually, such policy has ended in an engagement *against* other Balkan states, that is, nations.

After the fall of the Ottoman Empire, Albanian interests, however they were formulated or conceived (ethnic, religious, national), could be realized only when and if they were not in collision with the western ones.²² Mutual

21 Upon the formation of the first Albanian state at the Conference of London (1912-1913), the first International Control Mission was also established to organize constitutionality, security and border of the new state. It failed in its mission, just as the present-day EU Mission is having a hard time fulfilling its own.

22 On the other hand, ever since the establishment of the League of Prizren until today, the Albanian interests have always been portrayed almost exclusively as territorial: from the League’s demand for the autonomy of the (Greater) Albania, through to various resolutions of Albanian political forces in Serbia, Macedonia, Greece, Albania etc., the request for “all Albanian countries” is always prominent. Any other political issues have been drowned in the current PC

struggles for supremacy between Italy and Austria-Hungary, Great Britain and France, Germany and all others, always remain in the shadow of the *fear of Russia* and its “access to the warm sea”, i.e. the Mediterranean (the Middle East). Such a fear, perhaps not entirely irrational, previously dramatically confirmed by the Crimean War, remains a key reference for understanding modern developments in the region.

The subsequent evolution of the so-called Albanian issue is best illustrated by the above. The attempt to use Greece, together with the Ottomans, as a dam to stop Balkan Slavs, or Russia, as formulated by the British diplomats from the late 19th century, is a mere inkling of the use of Albanians and their goading against their neighbours at the end of the 20th century. On the other hand, the Albanian issue from that (as well as the present) time ought to be examined from at least two viewpoints: social and national. Although such a rough division of two intertwined aspects is questionable for a number of reasons, it is still possible to reduce the entire issue to those levels for easier reference, bearing in mind the concrete historical circumstances: hence the *social* dimension includes internal Albanian relations (the distribution of tribal power; power over the country, and so on), whereas the *national* one implies relations with other nations and their interests. Bearing this in mind, we may comprehend why Albanian leaders (beys and large landowners) were successful in leading rebellions within the Ottoman Empire, and why they mostly held back during the Balkan Wars when others occupied the territory that they were also interested in. It is in this way that we interpret the current attitude of modern Albanian beys (officially: “party leaders” and “businessmen”, but in fact leaders of clans) to the current political dictates of the USA – as long as they are allowed free “business in the field”. When and if a collision between “internal freedom” and “external demands” occurs, it is certain that a new rebellion of modern Albanian leaders will also occur. Simultaneously, internal political conflicts will, as it seems, remain the bloody fighting of clans, rather than, if at all, a political conflicts of social strata and ideas.

It is symptomatic that internal Albanian relations have not developed in harmony with modern political and social developments. Regardless of its

rhetoric: from the monarchic proclamations, through revolutionary (Marxist-Leninist) leaflets, to pseudo-liberal manifestos, unskillfully tinted with chauvinist slogans.

external form, Albanian society has remained virtually “closed”: entrenched in the norms of the practiced customs and “family” economy, especially in the sphere of economy and justice system. A typical example is the phenomenon of blood feud which persists even today in all areas populated by Albanians living in Balkan states.²³ Customs code as a relatively stable set of norms used to regulate the relations among Albanian tribes, clans or extended families (and within them), has never been overridden by written laws of any state – medieval Byzantium, the Bulgarian or Serbian empires, including the Ottoman Empire. The outcome was the same in former Yugoslavia or modern Albania. The vitality of the tribal organization, even in modern Albanian communities in towns, has made any type of state organization – even when it is undoubtedly and fully “ethnically pure”, i.e. Albanian (as is the case in modern Albania and Kosovo) – seem like a threat to the direct interests of their gens or clans in the eyes of Albanians. Hence all modern institutions, from politics, through the judicial system, the police and the military, to economy and finance only have the external form of modernity, whereas they are internally burdened with the pre-modern system of Albanian society where unwritten laws still override all official proclamations and institutions.²⁴ In such an environment, the only cohesive factor may be the “external factor of disturbance”, that is their immediate neighbors: Slavs (Serbs, Montenegrins, and Macedonians) and Greeks.²⁵

23 See Slađana Đurić: *Osveta i kazna* (Sociološko istraživanje krvne osvete na Kosovu i Metohiji), Prosveta, Niš 1989.

24 It may be generally said that transformations occurring at a broader, social level, have not been accompanied with the expected changes in social life. In the Albanian ethnic community in Kosovo and Metohia, as well as in Albania and Macedonia, numerous specificities are still preserved as opposed to dominant cultural models of other ethnic communities. The survival of Albanian customs code principles of regulation and blood feud is quite unusual and difficult to explain if this community is compared to communities which lived in similar circumstances some hundred years ago (Montenegrins), which live in similar circumstances now (Serbs in Kosovo and Metohia), to communities which used to live in the same institutional framework (ethnic groups in former Yugoslavia), which live in territories freed from the Turkish rule in 1912 (Slavs, Tzintzars and Greeks in Macedonia), to the population of European states which gained independence at approximately the same time (Ireland, Iceland, Norway, Czechoslovakia), to other Mediterranean nations which live in similar economic circumstances (Portuguese, Bulgarians, Syrians), but where blood feud has disappeared.

25 Italians are partly privileged because Italy has been a traditional immigration area for Albanians. On the other hand, it was Italy that put most effort in preventing the sovereignty of

We can draw a conclusion that as the third most numerous Muslim people in the Ottoman Empire (after Turks and Arabs)²⁶, Albanians had a logical claim to their own independence at the beginning of the modernity owing to the national awakening led mostly by Ottoman intellectuals. However, from the establishment of the League of Prizren, through Balkan Wars and the establishment of the state of Albania, World War I and II, to the formation of the so-called Republic of Kosovo (that is to say, for more than a century), there has not been an even remotely clear idea, force or movement which would unite different groups of the Albanian population in the Balkans. Despite numerous announcements, and even sincere intentions, even the official national state of Albania, whose sorry fate is paradigmatic of all such former and present attempts, failed to achieve this goal.

If we agree with the theoretical viewpoint according to which the legitimacy of a “modern society” is acquired by the existence of an institutionalized normative system based on universalistic principles, the Albanian community could be characterized as pre-modern. This is so because the prevailing normative system based on customs can in no way be considered

Albania: first, it had the status of the occupying force in a part of Albania (1915/1918); then, through a series of various international and bilateral agreements, it became the “protecting power” (since 1921), the main economic and military mentor (1927; 1936), to finally annex Albania (1939). The Italian annexation met no serious internal resistance by Albanians because it soon gave them the opportunity to realize the old dream of the League of Prizren – the Greater Albania. The Italian occupation zone in the beginning of World War II included almost entire Kosovo, Western Macedonia and parts of Montenegro with majority Albanian population. Those territories were annexed to Albania in 1941, which itself became a part of the Italian empire with limited statehood.

26 In this context, it is interesting that there is still no reliable data on such a banal fact as the total number of Albanians in the Balkans. Because of loose borders and the absence of the lawful state, the same people are most often the citizens of three or four to five Balkan states (Albania, Macedonia, Serbia, semi-recognized “Republic of Kosovo”, or Montenegro). Also, depending on the daily political objectives, the number of Albanians is often multiplied and when censuses are organized local Albanian communities often boycott them if they are not their organizers. This is what traditionally happens in Serbia ever since the 1980s (before and after the secession of Kosovo), but has also happened in Macedonia recently. At the same time, according to various data, the total Albanian population is between 2,990,000 and 3,500,000 (in 2010) in Albania; some 600,000 in Macedonia; the census in the southern Serbia was boycotted; some 1,700,000 (although the officials state over 2,200,000) in Kosovo; some 30,000 in Montenegro. There are some 467,000 Albanians in Italy (2010); over 600,000 in Greece; 1,100,000 with the emigrant status in the EU according to the EU-STAT (the same number is included in the 3,500,000 listed as living in Albania), etc.

modern law, whereas civil regulation is accepted only if seen as necessary and imposed by force.

In terms of the non-receptiveness to universalistic principles in the Albanian community, it is necessary to say that, in addition to the rejection of state laws, it is also reflected in the application of the customary practices, where there is also no uniform universalistic application of general patterns. Those patterns increasingly become vague and acquire a predominantly conditional character especially in modern circumstances, which only intensifies the simplification of the forms of articulation of normative contents. In that case, there can hardly be any contemplation of the existence of legal norms or regulation *sensu proprio*, but rather mere practices or relations which are usually repeated and whose application to concrete cases may be partial and lack objectivity precisely because they do not contain a sufficient level of generality. Frequently, the alleged rules of the customs code serve only as a declarative cover for actions that someone assesses as useful to them (or detrimental to enemies) in particular circumstances. On the one hand, this reflects and then establishes the general unwillingness of this community to accept any form of institutional relations management (unless some benefit is expected, that is only to the extent that it satisfies individual interests).

The traditional patterns of the tribal system of this community with a relatively clearly ordered hierarchy of positions (tribal and clan assemblies, village heads, dukes, etc.) has disappeared from the social life of Albanians, but the traditional values and norms of conduct that structurally oppose the acceptance of a rational-legal system of authority (Weber) have essentially been preserved. Thus the institutional system of a broader environment can hardly establish primacy in a community which has lost the traditional structures of authority but cannot establish new ones. At the level of the organization of social life in the community, this opens huge opportunities for action based on a specifically understood social reputation and prestige (wealth + strength); at a lower level of organization, it reflects a distinct submissiveness to the authority of the host of a home, thereby almost excluding the possibility of establishing submission to an objective principle such as legality. The evolutionary path of submission that always progresses from personal to impersonal authority entails the acceptance of universalistic and

general principles of regulation of inter-relations, which this community has so far resisted.

In such an undifferentiated community there is no developed network of institutions and mechanisms for social promotion. A desirable status is acquired through the possession of considerable material wealth (whose acquisition is made easier in view of the relatively modest standards of everyday life, the centralized system of family income, the large number of family members working abroad) and through family's physical power, which is reflected in the status gained through occasional conflicts with other families. Individuality, as a distinctly modern civic category and true emancipation of its members, rarely develops in such a community. Primary, closed groups have priority in the community structure, and there is almost no developed system of social roles through which an individual's identity could be expressed.²⁷

The analysis of the parameters of social life in the area controlled by Albanians, especially in post-war Kosovo, including Albania and Macedonia, cannot in any way support the positive international evaluation of the situation or the optimism regarding its fast progress. There is nothing to indicate the prospects of a rapidly developing civil society with institutions that could ensure personal safety, the respect of legal norms, the conditions for regular economic activity, the upholding of social rights, the infrastructural supply and, generally, all functions of the state implied in normal life of a European society in early 21st century.

Post-war Kosovo and Metohia may be characterized as a society in a state of disorganization. There are fewer and fewer Serbs; the presence of international institutions is constantly declining, and local Albanians do not display the maturity necessary for the independent management of their newly-established state. If this situation persists or deteriorates, this may lead

27 As we have already stated, it is due to the lack of differentiation (social or ideal) of the researched community that its many phenomena and relation types can hardly be generalized from the standpoint of most modern sociological theories without the generalization having the form of merely global statements; one of such being, for instance, the determination of this community (according to the dominant type of social relations, the primacy of kinship ties, lack of differentiation, etc.) as *societas* (rather than *civitas*, Morgan), natural (rather than social, Hobbes) community, community (rather than society, Tönnies), common mechanical (rather than organic, Durkheim) solidarity.

to social unrest due to poor living conditions, high unemployment rate, the impoverishment of a considerable part of the population or the escalation of attacks against the remaining non-Albanian population, which may be a cause of serious threats to security in the region. All this, along with the fact that Albanians are becoming increasingly outspoken in showing their dissatisfaction with their status in the neighboring countries as well (Macedonia, Greece, southern Serbia) and increasingly free in voicing their claims for unification, requires the humanities to make this significant social problem a topic of their study.

Political life in Kosovo and Metohia does not have many similarities to the usual mechanisms of political struggle: first of all, the strongest political parties are led by former warlords, who most often owe their popularity and influence to their participation in the 1998-1999 guerilla war against the Serbian state. Furthermore, the usual methods of “political” action are murders, extortion, threats and crime, which means that political power is neither gained nor lost primarily in elections and through other procedures of a regular political system, but depends on a multitude of personal, familial (clan) and regional structures that are always ready to support the credibility of their “political” programs with violence.

What are the reasons for this and can Albanians create a modern state? What is certain is this: from the standpoint of the theory of security, as long as Albanian national interests are formulated and guided exclusively by the logic of being *against* someone (Serbs, Macedonians or Greeks; individually or in groups – it makes no difference), they will continue to build their future on the demise of the stigmatized other and will as such remain a mere tool in the hands of great powers. Until recently it was the Ottoman Empire, then Austria-Hungary, followed by Germany, Italy; today it is U.S.A., it could yet be their old patrons – Germany or Turkey... Regardless who it is, it will always be someone else who makes final decisions on the fate of Albanians. The external factor aside, the key problem remains the *internal* issue: as long as the customs codes of the community and mere force prevail over modern individualism and the law, it is certain that the Albanian state (“greater” or not) will not be free either externally or internally. It will not exist at all as a modern state in the form of an abstract entity, in harmony with universal law, etc. To be sure, the maintenance of the customs code un-

der a modern guise is not typical of Albanians only, but it is hyper-emphasized in their community and as such seems fatal. Seen from the perspective of realpolitik, it is, therefore, difficult to be optimistic regarding any stability of regional security in the Balkans.

TURKEY IS BACK

PRESENTED AT THE INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE
THE BALKANS AND THE MIDDLE EAST AT THE PATRIARCHATE OF PEĆ

SRDJA TRIFKOVIC

For over a decade Turkey has been pursuing three key areas of neo-Ottoman expansion: the Balkans, the Arab world, and the predominantly Muslim regions of the former Soviet Union. Each has played a significant part in reshaping the geopolitics of the Greater Middle East over the past decade. This complex project, which remains under-reported in the Western media and denied or ignored by policy-makers in Washington, is going well for Prime Minister Rejep Tayyip Erdoğan and his AKP (Justice and Development Party).

On the external front, Ankara's decision to support the uprising against Bashar al-Assad's regime in Syria has changed the equation in the region. Until last spring, Erdoğan's team was advising Bashar to follow the path of political and economic reform in order to avoid descent into violent anarchy. Within months, however, Turkey has become a key player in Washington's regime-change strategy by not only providing operational bases and supply channels to the rebels, but by simultaneously confronting Iran over Syria. The war of words between them is escalating. Earlier this week, Iranian Chief of Staff General Hassan Firousabadi accused Turkey of assisting the "war-waging

goals of America. The AKP government has reinforced Turkey's old position as a key U.S. regional partner. It is skillfully pursuing its distinct regional objectives, which in the long run are bound to collide with those of the U.S., while appearing to act at the behest of Washington and revamping its Cold War role as a reliable NATO-“Western” outpost in the region.

This newly gained credit has enabled Erdoğan to make a series of problematic moves with impunity, the most notable being Turkey's growing support for Hamas in the Palestinian Authority and its treatment of Iraq as a state with *de facto* limited sovereignty. In a highly publicized symbolic gesture, on July 24 Erdoğan met Hamas leader Khaled Mashaal at his official residence to break the daily fast during the holy Muslim month of Ramadan. Ties between Turkey and Hamas, which rules the Gaza Strip, have blossomed since Turkey's alliance with Israel collapsed following a raid by Israeli troops on a Turkish aid ship bound for Gaza in 2010. At the same time, Ankara's links with the more moderate Fatah movement, which rules the West Bank, are at a standstill; Turkey wants Hamas to prevail in the Palestinian power struggle.

In northern Iraq, Turkey has developed close relations with the Kurdish leadership in Kirkuk. It has made significant investments in the autonomous Iraqi Kurdish region as a means of exerting political influence and thus preempting demands for full independence, which could have serious implications for the Kurdish minority in eastern Turkey. In an audacious display of assertiveness, Turkish Foreign Minister Ahmet Davutoglu visited the Kurdish-ruled northern Iraq earlier this month without notifying the government in Baghdad, let alone seeking its approval. Turning the putative Kurdish statelet in Iraq into its client is a major coup for the government in Ankara. The partnership is based on the common interest of denying the Marxist PKK guerrillas a foothold on either side of the border. In a joint statement, Turkey and Iraqi Kurdistan warned the PKK that they would act jointly to counter any attempt to exploit the power vacuum in Syria. Another far-reaching albeit unstated common goal is to provide Iraq's Kurds with a potential northwestern route for their oil and gas exports, which Al Maliki's central government would not be able to control. The net effect is likely to be further weakening of an already unstable Iraq in the aftermath of U.S. withdrawal; yet Washington appears unperturbed by Turkey's gambit.

At home, over the past decade Erdoğan's AKP government has successfully dismantled all key elements of Mustafa Kemal's legacy. What remains is an empty shell of constitutional secularism. The long-term design got a boost with the appointment of Ahmet Davutoglu as foreign minister in 2009. His "strategic depth" meant the systematic projection of influence in the Balkans, the Caucasus, Central Asia, and the Middle East. On the day of his appointment Davutoglu asserted that Turkey had an "order-instituting role" in the former Ottoman lands: "Beyond representing the 70 million people of Turkey, we have a historic debt to those lands where there are Turks or which was related to our land in the past. We have to repay this debt."

The decline of the old Kemalist order appears irreversible. The change of the Turkish state and society, of its ethos and institutional culture, is profound. "The secular elites are gripped by panic, paralyzed, unable to act, living just for today," Claire Berlinski told me on my last visit to Istanbul in January 2011. She compared the atmosphere in the city to the last days of the Weimar Republic in Berlin: the writing is on the wall. The secularists' dilemma, for decades before Erdogan, had been to resist the lure of irredentism abroad, and at home to turn Islam into a matter of personal choice separate from the state and distinct from society. It could not be done.

The arrests of over two hundred active-duty and retired military officers as part of an investigation into an alleged plot to topple the government was the final chapter in the demise of the Turkish army as a relevant political factor. This was a massive purge in preparation for the largest show trial ever in the non-Communist world. The officers were accused of plotting terrorist attacks to foment unrest leading to a military takeover. There never was a "case" at all; it was a successful attempt by the AKP regime to neutralize Turkey's once-powerful military once and for all. According to Dani Rodrik of Harvard University – whose father-in-law, retired general Cetin Dogan, is one of the defendants – we were witnessing machinations in the guise of the judicial process aimed at achieving political advantage instead of justice.

Vis-à-vis the Arab world, one of three geographic foci of neo-Ottomanism, the common denominator is Islam. In March 2010 Saudi King Abdullah presented Erdogan with the Wahhabist kingdom's most prestigious prize for his "services to Islam." He earned the King Faisal Prize for having "rendered outstanding service to Islam by defending the causes of the Islamic nation." In-

deed, Erdogan has rendered a host of other services to “the Islamic nation.” Turkey is favoring the replacement of Bashar al-Assad in Syria, ostensibly in the name of democracy, but fully cognizant that the beneficiary of the regime change would be all sorts of hard-core Islamists. The pressure to conform to Islam at home has gathered pace over the past decade. It is now relentless. Turkish businessmen who take a glass of raki in public hurt their chances of landing government contracts; but it helps if their wives wear the hijab.

Ankara’s continuing bid to join the European Union is running parallel with its neo-Ottoman policy of re-establishing an autonomous sphere of influence in the Balkans and in the former Soviet Central Asian republics. Turkey’s EU candidacy is still on the agenda, but the character of the issue has evolved. When Ankara started the process by signing an association agreement with the EEC (as it was then) in 1963, its goal was to make Turkey more “European.” The secularists hoped to present Turkey’s “European vocation” as an alternative to the growing influence of political Islam, and at the same time to use the threat of Islamism as a means of obtaining political and economic concessions from Brussels.

The motives of Erdogan are vastly different. Far from seeking to make Turkey more European, he hopes to make Europe more Turkish — many German cities are well on the way — and more Islamic, thus reversing the setback of 1683 without firing a shot. Sensing a mix of Western weakness and wishful thinking, he asserted two years ago that the tables have been turned: in the decades ahead, Europe will need Turkey more than Turkey needs Europe. “European labor markets and social-security systems are comatose,” he declared, and “European societies are near geriatric,” in contrast to Turkey which is “bursting with the vigor that the EU so badly needs”: “Europe has no real alternative to Turkey.” Erdogan’s implied threat is that Turkey would turn against “Europe” if it is not admitted into the EU, which is in itself an eloquent argument against admission. No responsible family would unlock the door to an uninvited guest with a long criminal record who threatens unpleasantness if he is not admitted. Fortunately, leading EU countries seem to realize that “Europe” with Turkey in its ranks would be weaker, poorer, and infinitely less safe.

The cooling of traditionally strong relations between Turkey and Israel started with Erdogan’s sudden burst of anti-Israeli rhetoric at Davos four

years ago. At the same time, Turkey's support of Hamas became more vehement than anything coming out of Cairo or Amman. Talking of terrorists, Erdogan has stated, repeatedly, "I do not want to see the word 'Islam' or 'Islamist' in connection with the word 'terrorism'!" After the "Gaza Freedom Flotilla" incident in May 2010, Turkey's "special relationship" with Israel was over. Israel's defense and security community is alarmed. "There is a deep strategic change," according to Amos Gilad, a senior Defense Ministry official. The Israelis are worried by Erdogan's success in neutralizing the once-powerful military. Israeli analysts suspect that Turkey could acquire weapons technology under the cover of a civilian nuclear program. "Turkey will become Iran No. 2," former National Security Council director Uzi Dayan says.

Turkey's Balkan strategy, intentionally or not, conforms to the old paradigm of the Green Corridor. This is not a paranoid invention, but a clear geopolitical concept with two meanings. It denotes the *objective* of creating a contiguous chain of Muslim-dominated polities from Istanbul in the south-east to northwestern Bosnia, a mere 100 miles from Austria. It also denotes the *process* of ethno-religious assertiveness among the Muslim communities along that route. Understanding this strategic concept is essential to an understanding of the motives, actions, and expectations of different actors in the Yugoslav wars of 1991-1999 and their aftermath.

The Bosnian war was still raging when the late Sir Alfred Sherman, once-advisor to Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher, warned that the objective was "to create a 'Green Corridor' that would separate Serbia from Montenegro. Western powers are "in effect fostering this Islamistan," Sherman warned. In addition, Turkey has been moving away from Ataturk's secularist and Western stance back to a more Ottomanist, pan-Muslim orientation, and is actively helping the Muslim forces."

Sherman's 1994 diagnosis proved to be prescient. A decade later it was echoed by Col. Shaul Shay of BESA Center at Bar-Ilan University. He noted that "the Balkans serve as a forefront on European soil for Islamic terror organizations, which exploit this area to promote their activities in Western Europe, and other focal points worldwide." His conclusions are disquieting: "[T]he establishment of an independent Islamic territory including Bosnia, Kosovo and Albania... is one of the most prominent achievements of Islam

since the siege of Vienna in 1683. Islamic penetration into Europe through the Balkans is one of the main achievements of Islam in the twentieth century.”

John Schindler, professor at the U.S. Naval War College and former National Security Agency intelligence officer, concurs: the Balkans provide the missing piece in the Jihadist geopolitical design. Radical Islam played a key role in the Yugoslav conflict, Schindler says: like Afghanistan in the 1980s, Bosnia in the 1990s became a training ground for the mujahidin. 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. Bosnia, to Erdogan, is a *waqf* bequeathed to Turkey by Izetbegović on his deathbed.

Washington’s stubborn denial of Turkey’s political, cultural and social reality goes hand in hand with an ongoing attempt in some quarters of the Western academia and mainstream media to rehabilitate the Ottoman Empire, and to present it as a precursor of Europe’s contemporary multiethnic tolerance and diversity. In reality, salient features of the Ottoman state were institutionalized discrimination against non-Muslims, insecurity of its non-Muslim subjects, especially Armenians, and an unfriendly coexistence of its many races and creeds. It was a sordid Hobbesian borderland with mosques. The Ottoman Empire gave up the ghost after World War I, but a century later the Turkish Republic is a self-assertive nation-state of 78 million. Atatürk hoped to impose a secular concept of nationhood, but political Islam has reasserted itself. The Kemalist dream had never penetrated beyond the military and a narrow stratum of the urban elite.

The near-impossible task facing Turkey’s Westernized intelligentsia before Erdogan had been to break away from the lure of neoimperial irredentism abroad, and at home to reform Islam into a matter of personal choice – in other words, to make Islam separate from the State and distinct from the society. The Kemalist edifice, uneasily perched atop the simmering Islamic volcano, had always been unstable. Today it is an empty shell. Today’s Turkey is a regional power of considerable importance which bases its strategy on the concept of neo-Ottomanism, while denying its existence. Neo-Ottoman Turkey’s interests and aspirations no longer coincide with those of the United States or Europe, and they are diametrically opposed to the interests of the traditionally Orthodox Christian nations in the Balkans.

THEOLOGY SHAPED BY POLITICS: FACT IN THE MIDDLE EAST, POTENTIAL IN THE BALKANS

BORIS HAVEL

The Arab-Israeli conflict is complex and complicated. There are many aspects of it, such as ethnic, economic, social, territorial, psychological, historical, ideological and security-related. Study of any of those aspects would help us understand it better. However, there is one aspect which, if ignored, would leave any analysis wanting: religious. While for a long time the mainstream media and academia chose to disregard the importance of religion in the most intensive Middle Eastern conflict,¹ after the events of September 2001, and after the wave of Islamic terrorism in Israel the following year, more scholars and political analysts did pay closer attention to it.² The fact that religion influences Middle Eastern politics, primarily in the Muslim community, has become impossible to ignore.

Even though that recognition came about, it has often been shallow and rarely sufficiently discoursed. The old school of thought which dismissed religion altogether as relevant, and defined Zionism and Imperialism as the

1 Conflict in the Middle East in this article means primarily the Arab-Israeli conflict. It should be noted though that there are conflicts in the Middle East, which have no connection to the Jewish state, such as Shia-Sunni, or Kurdish-Turkish.

2 Cf. Tanasković, 2006:254, and Trifkovic, 2002:7

root cause of turbulences in the Middle East,³ is still intrusive, even though its premises are today questioned more freely. My impression, however, is that insufficiency in comprehending the role of religion in the Arab-Israeli conflict is not only due to the leftist, secular-humanist, ideological persuasion of most Western analysts⁴ and “Saidist”⁵ restraint of Orientalists. It is also a result of a lack of expertise necessary to properly examine the topic. To examine it in a scholarly fashion, one should approach it applying a multidisciplinary method involving at least three fields of research: political science, history and theology, and with some acquaintance with Oriental languages, law, psychology, sociology and cultural anthropology. By thus studying the Holy Land, one would discover the unyielding importance of political religion ever since the Israelites conquered Canaan, some three and a half millennia ago, until today. During that period many rulers, kingdoms, ideologies and theologies fought over, influenced and dominated the Holy Land. They all shaped or tried to shape the intellectual, cultural and spiritual atmosphere of the domain they ruled, according to the fashion of the day and their own civilizational legacy. Many of them succeeded. It created a heterogeneous sequence of cultures probably unprecedented anywhere else in the world. Israeli tribal alliance during the times of Joshua and Judges, Kingdoms of the First Temple period, Judah’s circumstances under Babylonian and then Persian rule, Judean Hellenistic period, First period of the Roman rule, Second period of the Roman rule (after the destruction of the Second Temple), Byzantine, Arab-Muslim, Crusader, reestablished Muslim rule, Ottoman Empire, British Mandate and finally the modern Israeli state, all differed significantly. During all these periods and countless sub-periods,

3 Cf. The Middle East and the Powers in Kedourie, 2004:5. The guru of this thinking was late Edward Said, whose ideas have shaped more than a generation of Western Orientalists, and brought Orientalism as a field of research away from scholarship and deep into domain of ideological leftist-liberal activism. That activism has been epitomized by recent claims that Jews and Christians on the one hand, and Muslims on the other, worship the same God; for more about it see Havel, 2010:37-58.

4 More on leftist bias at departments of Social Studies and Humanities of Western Universities, see Klein & Stern, 2005:40-52 (survey available even at: <http://econfaculty.gmu.edu/klein/survey.htm>), Gordon, 2011:76-95 and Sesardić, 2012:68-69. For extensive critical analysis of Middle Eastern studies in America see Kramer, 2001. That the same is true even in research institutes in Israel, see Stav, 2001:9-10.

5 Cf. Ibn-Warraq, 2007:17-54

diverse as they were, there is one stream of thought that could be detected throughout all ages: there has always been one (Jewish) or more (Jewish, Christian and Muslim) religious communities which have perceived their government over territory between the Jordan river and the Mediterranean Sea as determined by their spiritual condition. In other words, one or more religious communities always believed that their right standing *vis-à-vis* God would produce their military supremacy over other contesters, and ensure their political possession of the Holy Land. In spite of multiplicity and diversity of political actors and ideologies which have swept through Eretz Israel/Palestine, political religion has always been a constant.

Interaction of politics and religion

It still is. Religion influences many political, social and military events in the current Arab-Israeli conflict. Many Jews and Muslims believe that their religious duty is to possess the land of Eretz Israel/Palestine. Their political platform is thus to a certain degree fashioned by religious beliefs. Unyielding radicalism of Islamic terrorist groups such as Hamas or Hezbollah is a direct outcome of the implementation of Islamic religious principles into politics.⁶ But that is not the only way in which religion and politics interact. The issue which I find particularly interesting is not so much how and to which degree religion has influenced politics, but rather what happened *vice versa*: how reestablishment of the Jewish state influenced Jewish, Christian and Muslim theology. This particular aspect in which religion and politics interrelate passed rather unnoticed in most political studies, even though it is practically common knowledge among religious political actors in the Middle East.

History as Revelation

The paramount reason behind political influence on religion in the Middle East is the following: history has epistemological value in all three monotheistic religions interacting there. The main source of theological knowledge in Judaism, Christianity and Islam is revelation, and a significant part of it came through history. Perception of history and degree of historicity in

⁶ See Charter of Hamas in Stav, 2001:391-405

Jewish, Christian and Muslim narratives are, of course, different, but that aspect is too complex to address here and not necessary for this introduction.⁷ What demands attention is the way in which Jewish and Muslim canonical writings are composed: large parts are made of historical narrative, from which theological conclusions about God's will and involvement in human affairs are drawn.⁸ Interpretation of historical events as a reflection of divine will did not stop with the closing of the canon. It continued on, up to the modern age, which provided interpreters with one of the most appealing material ever: creation of the State of Israel. The phenomenon of a nation scattered throughout the globe, passing through the danger of near destruction, gathering in its ancient homeland, and rebuilding it, never happened before in human history. The seemingly miraculous development of the Zionist movement and subsequent emergence, expansion and survival of Israel, could hardly leave unimpressed anyone who is acquainted with either the Judeo-Christian eschatological portions of Holy Scriptures, or with the normative Islamic view of how history should develop. Political realities created by the Jewish state, interpreted in light of the Jewish, Christian and Muslim sacred texts thus prompted reconsiderations and changes in parts of theological thought in all three religions.

Islam

Orientalists would find it least unexpected in Islam. Not a few Muslim beliefs developed as an outcome of political and military struggle, and contemporary social circumstances (the Prophet's promise of Paradise to par-

7 Fred Donner in the Chapter "The Qur'an and History" (Donner, 1998:75-85) explains that Koranic view of the world and humankind is "profoundly ahistorical" whereas the "very concept of history is fundamentally irrelevant to the Qur'an's concerns" (p. 80). Nasr, however, writes that "Qur'an [...] contains a sacred history..." (Nasr, 2007:42, cf. Sharon, 2007:311), and Bernard Lewis states that the Islamic world is a society of "unusually keen historical awareness" in which "historical knowledge, back to the advent of Islam in the seventh century, is widespread, extensive, and, if not always accurate, both vivid and detailed (Lewis, 2010:169-170).

8 Christianity is somewhat different, because it builds on doctrinal premises of incarnation, atonement and resurrection. However, its aspects of history and historicity should not be underestimated. Paul wrote to the Corinthian Church: "And if Christ has not been raised [that is, if the resurrection is not a fact of history], your faith is futile, you are still in your sins" (1 Corinthians 15:17, NIV).

ticipants killed in marauding raids against Meccan caravans, declaring Jerusalem holy by Caliph in Damascus contesting his political rival in Medina,⁹ etc.). Since Jewish military superiority has been unknown in Islamic tradition and previous history, some religious novelties were introduced in explaining and dealing with Israel. One of them has been acknowledging suicide-terrorists, the Islamikaze as Professor Raphael Israeli named them,¹⁰ as *shaheeds* by prominent Islamic scholars. Even though suicide bombing has no “antecedents in Islamic history, and no justification in terms of Islamic theology, law or tradition,”¹¹ modern scholars such as Yusuf al-Qaradawi, and clerics affiliated with Islamic terrorist groups, approved it.¹² Far less numerous and influential, are Muslim clerics and activists who, based on a “Zionist” interpretation of the Surah 5:21, acknowledge the right of Jews to the Land of Israel.¹³ They promote peaceful coexistence between the Jewish state and the Muslim countries, which is another thought unparalleled in earlier Islamic mainstream traditions.

Judaism

In Judaism, political Zionist activism has been increasingly recognized as a theologically legitimate step toward introducing an eschatological and messianic era. This trend has been gaining momentum since the Six Day War of 1967. Just a few decades prior to 1967, such an attitude toward political Zionism in religious Jewish circles was almost unthinkable. True, there were a

9 Contrary to common perceptions, Jerusalem was not conquered by Caliph Omar, and the city had no particular significance to early Muslim conquerors, as it is not even once mentioned in the Koran. The city’s religious importance grew in history: first during political conflicts within the Islamic community towards the end of the seventh century, and later during Muslim conflicts with Christians, and finally with Zionism and the Jews (more on early development of Islamic reverence for Jerusalem see Kister, 1980:173-196, Busse, 1984:73-119, Busse, 1986:149-168, and Busse, 1968:441-468). For understanding the context in which early Islamic tradition developed I am much indebted to Professor Moshe Sharon of the Hebrew University.

10 Israeli, 2003

11 Lewis & Churchill, 2009:153

12 Cf. Israeli, 2003:7, 22-24, 161

13 Cf. Al-Hussaini, 2009:9-14, where the author attempts to trace this irenic interpretation of the Qur’an to earlier Islamic Scholars, Tabari and Ibn Kathir.

few rabbis who advocated a return to Zion,¹⁴ but those were vastly outnumbered by their colleagues who held the opposite opinion: that abandoning *galut* means rebellion against God and his corrective punishment. For Jews to be restored to their homeland, as the majority of rabbis believed, they must first repent of their transgressions. The “triple notion of transgression, repentance and restoration,” which was central in Judaism,¹⁵ was blatantly absent from the Zionist program. Another reason for religious political passivism was historic experience. The last time when the Jewish nation rallied around a “Messiah” was during Bar Kokhba’s revolt, which resulted in perhaps the greatest national tragedy prior to the Holocaust as Jews were *en masse* massacred and expelled from Eretz Israel.

In Jewish religious-political thought after 135 AD, there was little or no place for a movement of gathering exiles back to Zion with the purpose of re-establishing Jewish political sovereignty. Jews were discouraged from engaging in politics, and taught to patiently wait upon God to send the Messiah instead. When Messiah comes someday, the Jewish nation would be restored by him. Human effort in an area regarded as God’s exclusive mandate was, in the eyes of religious Jews, nothing short of blasphemy. Even more scandalous was the radically atheistic platform of the early Zionist movement. That is why prior to the Holocaust some of the most fervent opponents of Zionism were religious European Jews.¹⁶ Today, sixty-five years after the State of Israel has been declared, most zealous Zionists come from the religious community. Most settlers in Judea and Samaria, and in Gaza until they were expelled in 2005, are religious. A key factor behind this shift in theology lays in the history of modern Israel. In a religion worshipping “the God of History,”¹⁷ Israel’s stunning political and miraculous military achievements could easily be interpreted as divinely orchestrated.

14 See Goldwater, 2009

15 E. Kedourie: Judaism and Zionism in the Holy Land in Sharon, 1988:289

16 When Rabbi Alkalai visited England in 1852, his ideas about Jewish return to Zion found more support among Christians than among Jews (Reinharz & Shapira, 1996:43). Practical messianism and Zionism of Rabbi Cvi Hirsch Kalischer (1795-1874) was considered heresy by many European rabbis (Sachar, 2001:7).

17 The Religious Meaning of the State of Israel in Spero & Pessin, 1989:41

Christianity

The most spectacular change in theology prompted by the Jewish return to Zion and the ensuing political events in the Middle East, however, occurred in Christianity.¹⁸ That religion, which for centuries harbored religious anti-Jewish sentiment, in the second half of the 20th century saw emergence of massive religious philo-Semitism, and Christian Zionism.¹⁹ Only a hundred years ago a Christian who would claim that the Old Testament as interpreted by Jews is still theologically valid, would be branded a heretic in many, if not most, Christian denominations. Three or four hundred years ago he could have been burned at the stake for suggesting such an idea. And yet, Jewish return to Zion brought about a profound theological change on the issue: Christians reconsidered and reinterpreted the meaning of the word *Israel*.²⁰ Whereas traditional ecclesiological interpretation viewed Church as the “New Israel”²¹ the idea that it is not so, and that Israel, meaning the Jewish people, has not been replaced by the Church is today held by large parts of the Church, particularly Evangelical.²² Christians increasingly see Judaism as the historical root of their faith and the Jewish people as their older brothers, worshipers of the same God; a nation chosen and blessed, from which salvation came and to which Christian gratitude is due.²³ To be

18 I am referring primarily to the Evangelical and to a lesser degree to Catholic Christianity. Orthodox Christianity has not been a field of my deeper study yet. This, however, does not mean that the changes in ecclesiology which I am about to address did not occur even in Orthodox Christianity.

19 Christian Zionism appeared earlier, in the 19th century (more about it later in the text), but it was first after the state of Israel has been established that it became widespread and can be considered “massive.”

20 Cf. Brog, 2006:13

21 A classic study of the topic is Simon, 1996.

22 The term evangelical is not without ambiguity, as its meaning somewhat changed since it first appeared in the sixteenth century until today. It may refer to a denomination. However, theologian McGrath explains that it is now “used widely to refer to a transdenominational trend in theology and spirituality, which lays particular emphasis upon the place of Scripture in the Christian life. Evangelicalism now centers upon a cluster of four assumptions: 1 the authority and sufficiency of Scripture; 2 the uniqueness of redemption through the death of Christ upon the cross; 3 the need for personal conversion; 4 the necessity, propriety, and urgency of evangelism” (McGrath, 2007:80). Such evangelical platform can be found even within traditional denominations, and it is mostly within those circles that even Christian philo-Semitism thrive.

23 Some of the New Testament references for this position are John 4:12 and Romans 11.

sure, Christian theological identification with the Jewish people and their faith is not solely a by-product of political developments in the Middle East. A widespread study of the Bible, and its interpretation based on more literal understanding of the text and eschatological expectations, even if that interpretation collided with some traditional scholastic dogmas, preceded Christian political support of the Jewish statehood.²⁴ The establishment of Israel, however, is almost certainly the main factor behind such an interpretation's popularization, and also in turning it from being apocalyptic semi-heretical, into a mainstream Christian thought. Concern for the Jewish people and their state is today a "growing mainstream movement of Christians."²⁵

Christian unity: a by-product of Christian philo-Semitism

The change which religious philo-Semitism prompted within the Church has not been limited to Jewish-Christian relations only. Discovering common roots of their faith moved many Christians to view other Christian denominations in a new, positive light. Not surprisingly. If Christians and Jews have come closer to each other and recognized their common values and parts of theology, based on the shared Scripture, it was logical to expect different Christian branches to pursue the same path. After all, Christian denominations have more in common theologically than any main Christian denomination and Judaism do. As Christians rallied in support of the Jewish state, the question of Christian unity almost spontaneously became an issue.²⁶ Some of the most prominent Christian advocates of the Jewish state

24 Christians which advocated Jewish return to Zion precede even Jewish Zionist movement. Among them is 17th century puritan preacher John Owen, Lord Shaftesbury (1801-1885) and Anglican priest William Hechler (1845-1931). For more on development of Christian Zionism, see Brog, 2006, and also Ariel, 2002, who presents somewhat more critical analysis of the phenomenon.

25 <http://int.icej.org/about/about-us>, accessed January 3, 2013.

26 It would not be difficult to establish a connection between the advance of Christian unity and Jewish-Christian friendship, with the "clash of civilizations" in which Judeo-Christian civilization confronts radical parts of the Islamic world. As I explained elsewhere in this article, the origins of Christian philo-Semitism are theological, not political. Politics certainly proliferated (and in leftist pro-Palestinian groups restrained) the idea, but politics did not generate it. The issue of Christian unity in some cases might be more complex and demand additional explanations. The possibility that the conflict with Islam would prompt it will be discussed in the next chapter.

are at the same time championing the cause of Christian unity. Among them is Ulf Ekman, founder of the Word of Life movement, and one of the most well-known Christian Zionist organizations, the International Christian Embassy Jerusalem, with branches in more than 80 nations worldwide and supporters in all main denominations.

Political cause related to Israel is certainly not the only reason behind growing theological, ethical and civilizational approximation of different denominations and branches of Christianity.²⁷ However, it is apparent that politics – epitomized by recognition of the reestablishment of the State of Israel as God’s work in history – was an important factor behind prompting these considerations in many parts of the Church. As branches found the place of unity – by going back to the Olive tree, which is Israel²⁸ – it is hard to disregard the fact that their very detection that the Olive tree still even exists, largely took place because the Olive tree emerged as a political entity.

Lesson to be learned in the Balkans

Conflicts in the Balkans are in many ways unique and in many details differ from the conflict raging in the Middle East. And yet, the Balkans contains some features which make it a political dynamic probably the most similar to the Middle Eastern in the world. Perceptible reality and threat of the global jihad is one of them. Comparative civilizational, and at times, political proximity of non-Islamic political actors is another. Both Israel and the Balkans were once ruled by Islam; their return under “infidel” rule is by many Muslims considered a “reverse of history”²⁹ and political anomaly, since *Dar al-Islam* is never supposed to turn back to *Dar al-Harb*. There are even more striking political and historical parallels. Both the Middle East and Balkans feature new nations, formed in response to recent political turmoil, seeking to anchor their identity into a distant past. Most notable of these are Palestinians, and Bosniacs.³⁰ Religious Zionism, the movement of National Religion-

27 An example of a movement toward Christian unity which developed independently from Christian support of Israel and is not political, can be found in the Community of Taizé.

28 Romans II:17

29 Sharon, 2007:63-64

30 On change of perception of Palestinians from an Arab refugee group to a nation see Bjereld & Carmesund, 2008:8-14. On development of modern Bosniac national identity see Ta-

ists (מיימואל סייחד),³¹ whose influence in Israeli politics is persistently growing stronger, originated in the Balkans.³² The first Muslim cleric, who called for pan-Islamic jihad against Jews and played a crucial role in the deterioration of Arab-Jewish relations in Palestine,³³ was active even in the Balkans. Haj Amin el-Husseini, the Grand Mufti of Jerusalem, whose role in the extermination of European Jews is yet to be examined,³⁴ established SS divisions in Bosnia and in Kosovo, and used his authority to mobilize Balkan and Middle Eastern Muslims to aid Nazis.³⁵ Based on those, and other similarities, we may ask whether or not some of the above mentioned theological changes, connected to the Middle East, might be expected even in the Balkans?

Christianity and the Balkans disturbances

To begin with, let me point to another similarity between the Middle East and the Balkans: events in both places are harder to anticipate than perhaps anywhere else in the world, and they tend to catch by surprise most of the experts and analysts. Without ambition to predict the future development, I would like to briefly discuss one particular topic: the prospect of different Christian denominations and groups in the Balkans developing a profound, sincere, and lasting amity toward each other. My thesis is that a way to achieve it is by emulating processes which have happened elsewhere in the Christian world: to interpret Israel as fulfillment of the Biblical promises to the Jewish people.

Christian cooperation is not unknown in the Balkans. If we look back in history, we see that Christians made many political and military alliances

nasković, 2006:144-221. Among other new-forged nations in the Middle East and the Balkans are Jordanians, Slavic Macedonians, and most recently Kosovars.

31 For definition of Religious Zionism see Spero & Pessin, 1989:13-15.

32 Its first pioneer, Rabbi Yehudah Ben Shlomo Chai Alkalai (1798-1878) was born in Sarajevo, and entered rabbinic office in Zemun, in the vicinity of Belgrade (Goldwater, 2009:13-34).

33 Karsh, 2010:16

34 See EI Vol. XII:69 where Eichmann's associate Dieter Wisliceny accuses Hussein as "initiator" of policy of extermination. Some contemporary authors point that Arab-German relations during 1933-1945 were never thoroughly researched and investigated (Cf. Mallmann & Cüppers, 2010:viii).

35 Some of the Muslims he mobilized, along with some Yugoslav Communist World War Two veterans, later joined Arab armies in their aggressions against Israel (cf. Frantzman & Culi-brk, 2009:189-201).

against the Islamic conquests. For example, in an uprising prior to Austrian annexation of Bosnia and Herzegovina, the province's Croats and Serbs were engaged in a common struggle, defending themselves from Turks and local Muslims.³⁶ Even the First Balkan War of 1912 was nothing else than the common Christian struggle for liberation from Islamic rule; a culmination of a centuries-old fight of the Cross with the Crescent.³⁷ All those alliances, created *ad-hoc* to fight the common enemy, however, proved fragile and ephemeral. The main factor behind them was interest, i.e. political and military pragmatism, but not an understanding of a common Christian spiritual or civilizational heritage.³⁸ Alliances were made against an adversary, which at the time posed greater danger to each Christian group than they posed to each other. As soon as interests or danger changed, inter-Christian rivalries resumed, and Christians turned against each other, at times even in alliance with the Muslims. Controversial and rarely discussed are some micro-level Christian alliances made even during the wars of 1991-1995 in which Yugoslavia disintegrated. Catholic Croats and Orthodox Serbs in Central Bosnia sometimes cooperated against Muslims, who were on the other hand enforced by *mujahedeen* from Asian Muslim countries.³⁹

In spite of the centuries-long Christian-Muslim struggle, Christian support of Israel is, to the best of my knowledge, not a much discussed issue among Balkans Christians.⁴⁰ In particular, Western trends in Christian Zion-

36 See Evans, 2007

37 Ćorović, 2005:709. The author (1885-1941) in the section in which he explained the religious aspects of the First Balkan War wrote that it was one of the most popular wars ever fought by the Serbs.

38 Most Christians of the Balkan States of the anti-Ottoman alliance were Orthodox. However, the alliances were made after Catholic Italy declared war on Turkey. At the same time, a major concern of the Alliance in commencing war against the Turks was the reaction of the Catholic Austria, lest it would join forces with the Turks (for more about the War and the motives behind it, religious and other, see Ćorović, 2005:704-715).

39 This cooperation should not be overestimated, as it should not be ignored. Significant role in its creations was played by the foreign mujahedeen, who instructed local Bosnian Muslims (otherwise largely secular and liberal), that their enemies are not only Serbs, but also Croats and any other Christian group, whom they often addressed as "Crusaders" (cf. Hamad, 2007).

40 I am not familiar with any research about the Balkans Christian attitude toward Israel. However, during almost two decades in which I have been interested in the topic, I have met many Christians from the former Yugoslavia ("Balkans" in this chapter means primarily that area), who described themselves as Christian Zionists. Most of those came from different

ism have not made significant impact on the states which once constituted Yugoslavia. I would suggest two main reasons for this. One is the lasting legacy of anti-Israeli bias from the former Communist regime led by Tito. Even though newly formed societies changed thoroughly during the last two decades, many foreign policy issues are still interpreted in light of the old Yugoslav socialist and “non-alignment” tradition. The second is poor first-hand acquaintance with the Bible among Christian grassroots.⁴¹ To interpret modern Israel through the text of the Scripture is, of course, impossible unless one knows both facts about Israel, and the Scripture.

A friendlier understanding of Israel among Balkan Christians is, one might argue, not particularly important, since Balkan Christian nations are not significant actors in the Middle East drama. We may or may not agree with that argument, but the fact is that Balkan Christians are missing the other point elsewhere closely related to the Biblical view of Israel, and that is the increase of inter-Christian dialogue, and a sincere move toward Christian unity beyond political alliance. Such a result of a Biblical interpretation of Israel has been perceptible even where steps toward Christian unity were not achieved by other means. Advocates of Christian unity throughout the centuries sought to achieve it primarily by making or demanding compromises. Issues of disagreements were interpreted as *adiaphora* or bypassed in other ways, often without much success. Interpretation of Israel in light of the Scriptures within any given Christian community, sheds a new light on Christianity as a whole and its different branches. It reveals, or reemphasizes, the common root to both Christian denominations and the Jews, the Olive tree, and no compromise by any branch is necessary to acknowledge the fact that the others grew from the same stem. Going back to the common origin bypasses doctrinal, ecclesiastical, liturgical and other denominational differences which have accumulated through history. Considering notorious stubbornness of the Balkan nations when it comes to making compromises,

Evangelical churches, but in recent years I have also met quite a few Catholics and Orthodox Christians who shared the same view.

41 Christian philo-Semitism has been largely a grassroots movement (cf. Skarsaune, 2002:436-443), and the fact that its modern version appeared primarily in Protestant/Reformed circles, which emphasize acquaintance with the Bible among ordinary believers, not just clergy, is not surprising.

finding a way of building friendship without making compromise just might be the only way to pursue a lasting, sincere peace.

However, there is also a danger in the Balkans which was not present in most other places in the world where Christian philo-Semitism developed. Christian philo-Semitism and Christian Zionism in the West preceded the Western conflict with radical Islam; as we saw earlier, it was born out of a Biblical interpretation and events related to Jews, not out of necessity for political alliance. Current conflict with Islamic radicalism did enhance it and made Christian understanding of Israel more resonant, discussed and widespread, but it did not originate there, and it does not halt there.⁴² In the Balkans, on the other hand, Christian sympathies for Israel might develop not out of Biblical interpretation, but out of perception that both Balkan Christians and the Israeli Jews face the same danger alongside Islam's "bloody borders."⁴³ Such sympathies would be based solely on reaction to political perception, and being political and not Scriptural they would not imply a desire for Christian unity, only a need for Christian, or Christian-Jewish alliances.⁴⁴ As such, they would probably last only as long as it is politically convenient, like similar alliances before.

Conclusion

Study of the Bible for the understanding of Israel, as we have seen among other Christians and Churches, was usually preceded by its study with the purpose of understanding the Gospel, and building a personal faith in Jesus as the Savior. That is why recognition of the Jewish people and Christians from other denominations as brethren, has been largely a product of a

42 Malcolm Hedding, former director of the ICEJ wrote that "Israel and the Jewish people are not the ultimate goals of Christian Zionism. It must always direct one back to God. For the focus short of Him is idolatry" (Hedding, 2004:47). He also stressed that God loves other peoples, including the Arabs, the same way he loves Jews (p. 48). That position, and an emphasis that religious hatred and racism of any kind is unacceptable, is held by all prominent Christian leaders active in promoting Christian Zionism whose work I am familiar with (cf. Ekman, 2000:96, Ekman, 2004:93, Hagee, 2007:172-173, Brog, 2006:191 etc.).

43 Huntington, 1993:35

44 An example of Christian-Jewish political alliance can be observed in Lebanon. Some Lebanese Christians supported the creation of the Jewish state already during the Mandate (Woolbert, 1938:318), and they were allies of Israel in the war against PLO.

changed heart, not of a changed strategy.⁴⁵ Since much of the Balkan turmoil consists of conflicts among different Christian groups, we may say that, what Balkan nations need today more than new policies and repositioned alliances is just that: a change of heart. More broadly speaking, Balkan Christians need a change of culture and mentality which is more in line with Biblical and evangelistic values, and less a reaction to the conflicts, past or present.

Could divided and often antagonized Balkan Christians perceive each other in a different way: as servants of the same King, children of the same Kingdom and partners in the same mission of bringing it on Earth as it is in Heaven? The (unintended) role of Israel might be crucial in determining it. Israel's marvelous story might prompt more Balkan Christians to research their Bibles thus finding – alongside fulfilled promises and wonderful prophecies about Israel – even other mind-changing messages. Based on what we have seen in recent Jewish-Christian and inter-Christian relations elsewhere, I believe that – while it is always wise to be on alert for appearance of grotesque phenomena in the Balkans – it is not unrealistic to expect positive spiritual developments emerging out of the harsh and tough political environment. In spite of past animosity and conflicts, the rift between, say, Catholics and Orthodox Christians, have not been deeper and wider than the one between Christians and Jews. Why then should it be less bridgeable?

45 Ulf Ekman strongly warns against ecumenism based on syncretism, church-politics and strategic motives (Ekman, 2009:244).

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THE WESTERN BALKANS AND THE ISLAMIC SCHISMS THE CASE OF BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA

VLADIMIR AJZENHAMER

Introduction

Religious divisions are an important part of the historical heritage of the Islamic world, which is still, to a large extent, heavy burden of mutual relations between “countries of Prophet Muhammad”. These divisions determine not only the nature of relations between Islamic countries, and the rules of the foreign affairs “game” in the Islamic world but they also determine their internal political turmoil. The “Earthquake” of the Arab Spring which has been shaking the Middle East for two years now is the latest example of how divisions among Muslims create not only reality but also future of this region. Without understanding the Islamic schism it is impossible to understand the uprising against Assad in Syria or answer as to why Arab countries such as Qatar, UAE and Saudi Arabia support the rebels in that country and yet at the same time violently suppress the revolution in Bahrain. Without understanding these issues it would be impossible to understand the complex relationship between Saudi Arabia and Iran, two Middle Eastern states which both claim the right to be considered as the guardians of the “true” Islam. Through the lens of Middle Eastern version of the “Cold War”, an expression which can most suitably describe the relationship between these two countries in the past few decades, best reflects the depth and significance of the religious divisions in Islamic

world,¹ and above all, the importance of Sunni-Shia divisions. However, it is important to emphasize that the Sunni-Shia division and the diverse consequences which this rift carries is something which is primarily related to the Middle East. This region represents both the cradle of the Islamic faith and the root of its division. On the other hand, the Balkan Muslims as authentic and “autochthonous” European Muslim populations have, until recently, never faced this kind of division. After the Ottoman conquest of this part of Europe a significant number of Christians converted to Islam. One part of the local Slavic population embraced the new Islamic religion and life in this region was getting, slowly but surely, a completely new and different physiognomy, marked by the spirit of the Sunni Islam. Due to centuries of stability in the Ottoman Empire and to the lack of religious reform movements in this part of the “Islamic” world, the Balkan Muslims remain primarily aware of the Sunni Islamic teaching and practice. The other interpretation of Islam remained remote and exotic to them.

But before we deal with the problem of Balkan Muslims encounter with the Sunni-Shia division it is necessary to first illuminate key features of the oldest divisions between the followers of the Prophet Muhammad.

Islamic schism - the basic facts

The divisions in the Muslim community began shortly after the death of Muhammad in the early period of the caliphate. During his lifetime Muhammad did not appoint his successor and after his death Muslims were forced to choose a new leader among them by consensus. Since it was broadly accepted that Muhammad can not be inherited as the prophet of God, the question of succession came down to the question of further management over the Muslim community.² The first two caliphs, Abu Bakr and Omar, enjoyed

1 Frequent public concerns made by Saudi Arabia on the rise of Iranian influence in the Middle East strongly support this remark. At the donor conference for the reconstruction of Gaza, held in early March 2009, in Sharm El-Sheikh, Saudi Arabia's Foreign Minister Prince Saud al'Faisal called for Arab unity in suppressing the growing Iranian influence in the region. Saudi calls for anti-Iranian and anti-Shiite mobilization in particular gained strength in particular after the start of the current „Arab Spring”, when Gulf Arab monarchies faced the danger of a stronger Iran-Iraq-Syria-Lebanon (Hezbollah) Shia axis.

2 Muslims believe that Muhammad was the last in a series of prophets. Therefore the revelation that he brought (the Quran) is also God's last and final revelation.

major support among the faithful, but the selection of Uthman ibn Affan to the position of the third caliph became very controversial.³ Turning a large number of Muslims against him, Uthman ibn Affan ended up as the victim of a plot which was a prelude to the bloody civil war which would sow the seeds of discord that would soon permanently divide the Islamic community into three major branches of this religion - Sunnis, Shiites and Kharijites.

Even during the election of Abu Bakr for the first Caliph there was a large number of faithful who believed that the title of successor must remain within the Muhammad's family. Given that Muhammad did not leave male descendants this group of believers gathered around Mohammed's nephew and son in law Ali ibn Abi Talib. They believed that he had the right to Mohammed's spiritual and secular heritage. Ali was forced to accept the appointments of the first two caliphs but when he was bypassed for the third time his party Shi'atu Ali began to confront the newly elected caliph more openly. Uthman's rule led to a general dissatisfaction which culminated in an open rebellion. The rebellion erupted in Medina in 656 and the caliph was killed in the urban riots. After his death, the Muslim community started to slide into anarchy. Ali and Uthman's cousin Muawiyah stepped forward as two most powerful pretenders for the title of the new caliph. Ali's followers in Medina proclaimed him as the new caliph, but Muawiyah's supporters did not accept this choice and war among these fractions became inevitable. Ali came out as "virtual" winner from this conflict. He became the fourth caliph but he gambled away the chance to completely defeat his main rival Muawiyah. Eager to avoid bloodshed among Muslims, Ali agreed to negotiate. Although, he was eventually recognized as Caliph during these negotiations, the decision to negotiate was fatal for him for several reasons. First, because of this decision he lost part of his followers, who will form a separate party since then known as Kharijites. Second, Muawiyah proved to be a more skilled politician than Ali and by skillful fraud and intrigue he would soon significantly weaken the political influence of newly elected caliph and once again start to threaten him militarily. However, Ali will remain caliph until the end of

3 The controversy was most likely caused by the fact that Uthman ibn Affan was from a family of Umayyads, whose members initially opposed Muhammad's preaching of the Allah's truth. However, there are also different opinions on this subject. Some authors argue that dissatisfaction was provoked by much more practical reasons, primarily corruption, nepotism and greed of the third caliph. For more see text Fred M. Donner, „Muhammad and the Caliphate,” in *Oxford History of Islam* (edited by John L. Esposito), Clío, Belgrade, 2002.

his life. He was assassinated, not by his bitter opponent Muawiyah but by the hand of his former supporters. He fell as a victim of Kharijit revenge, who accused him of being too merciful towards Muawiyah and his followers. After Ali's death Muawiyah will take power and establish Umaayyad caliphate in Damascus. This led to the first and most important division in the history of Islam. Muawiyah's followers would form the nucleus of the Sunni Islam which the majority of Muslims in the world profess. Professor Darko Tanasković described their doctrine as follows: "According to the initial Sunni stance, for caliph to be elected or appointed, he must originate from the tribe of Quraish⁴ and his subjects owe him unconditional obedience even when he is wrong."⁵ Ali's followers would form another important branch of Islam-Shi'ism or Shia Islam and they have remained attached to their belief that Muhammad's blood must run through the veins of Islamic rulers. For their rulers they would choose only the direct descendants of Muhammad.

The conflict between Shiites and Sunnis, the fight that started in the "early childhood" of this great faith, remains to this day one of the main sources of instability in Islam. If we analyze the main characteristics of this schism, it can be noted that in its nature this was primarily a political division. In simple terms, it was a struggle for the succession of Mohammed which can be clearly characterized as a struggle for power. However, another dimension of this schism is very important - a dimension of genealogy. Muslim rulers always tried to trace their origins to either *Quraish* bloodline (Sunni) or with the direct descendants of Muhammad (Shiites).

Theological context of this schism will appear later on, through further development of the Islamic thought. With the further development of Shiism, the division would be deepened with significant theological differences, primarily with the learning of the mystical meaning of the Qur'an in which Ali was initiated by the prophet Muhammad. Also, the belief in divine providence behind the words and actions of Shiite Imams inherited through the bloodline,⁶ emerged over time as one of the main specifics of Shia Islam.

After the first schism, the Islamic community continued to split on the multitude of sects, religious schools and movements. As Tanasković noted

4 Tribe of the Prophet Muhammad.

5 Darko Tanasković, *Islam - dogma i život*, Srpska književna zadruga, Belgrade, 2008, p. 162.

6 This doctrine is known as Ma'sum, which indicates infallibility of the Imam, who is inspired by Allah.

“...singular tree of faith branched in a wide treetop.”⁷ Analyzing the reasons and motives for further divisions in Islam, Oliver Potežica concludes that these schisms were caused primarily by: theological disagreements, differences in religious and legal doctrines, different attitude towards mysticism in Islam, and demands for restoration of the “original” or “fundamental” Islamic teachings.⁸ For our topic, two lines of this latter division are relevant: theological and reform-fundamentalist one.⁹ Wahhabism, the official “version” of Islam in Saudi Arabia, is a religious movement that emerged exactly on these lines of division.

Wahhabism is often described as a both radical fundamentalist and traditionalistic reform movement within Sunni Islam. This movement was founded by Sheikh Muhammad ibn Abd al Wahhab in the 18th century. It is important to emphasize that this is one of the first reform movement in the Islamic world. Significant contribution was given to the birth of Wahhabism by dissatisfaction with theological innovation, revision of faith and other deviations of the mainstream Sunni Islam. Even today this movement actively aims to “return” the Muslims to the “path” of *Salaf al Salih* - pious predecessors from the first three generations of Muslims. Therefore, there are some opinions which exclude Wahhabism from the scope of Sunni Islam. Such position is reinforced by the fact that the Wahabi does not recognize the authority of any of the four Sunni *madhhabs* (legal-religious Islamic schools). They also prohibit many of the religious traditions that are practiced throughout the Sunni Islamic world.

Islamic “re-conquest” of the Balkans

For centuries, the Western Balkans Muslims tied their religious identity to the Ottoman Empire and for Hanafi school of Islam, which was the dominant interpretation of Islamic religious teaching on the European territory of the Ottoman Empire. With the war that followed the dissolution of Yugoslavia, the other interpretations of Islamic teachings found their way

7 Darko Tanasković, *Islam - dogma i život*, Srpska književna zadruga, Belgrade, 2008. p.160.

8 Oliver Potežica, *Vehabije između istine i predrasude*, „Filip Višnjić“, Belgrade, 2007.

9 It should be stressed that these two lines of division are deeply intertwined, and that it is impossible to make a strict distinction between them.

to this region. The situation that emerged in Bosnia during and after war in 1992-95 greatly increased and opened up new political, religious and security challenges for the Western Balkans region. One of the major challenges is the increased influence of the leading Islamic, Middle Eastern states on the Muslim population of Bosnia and Herzegovina and on the total Muslim population in the region, particularly the Muslims in the territory of the Republic of Serbia (Sandžak, Kosovo). But it should be emphasized that the same phenomenon can be noticed in Macedonia and Albania.

Three Muslim states in particular are interested in the Muslim question in this region: Saudi Arabia, Iran and Turkey. Since the end of the 80's these countries have shown continued interest in the Balkans. With the war events that followed the dissolution of Yugoslavia, begins the arrival of the Muslim jihadists from the Middle Eastern countries, which came to help their Bosnian "brothers" in war with Christians (Serbs and Croats). As *John L. Esposito* noted, they came inspired by the new global jihadist sentiment that was conceived on the Afghan battlefield. Sense of solidarity and global jihad sentiment was born among Arab-Afghans fighters (Arabs and other Muslims who had fought in Afghanistan during the Russian occupation) which "...subsequently brought Muslims from various parts of the world to participate in jihads in Bosnia, Kosovo..."¹⁰ Evan F. Kohlmann gives the following description of the true nature of this solidarity: "It would not be long before a much more serious effort was made by distant Islamic extremists to aid the suffering Bosnian Muslims. These young men, galvanized by hateful religious and political ideologies, were determined to turn the global tide against the 'infidel' regimes, even those outside the traditional boundaries of the Middle East."¹¹

This way the Saudi and Iranian interpretations of Islamic teachings found their way to the Balkans region, which had a significant impact on the change in religious consciousness and understanding of Islam among the local Muslim population. Under the mask of Islamic solidarity and through political, military and humanitarian aid, Salafi teachings, as well as the Shia interpretation of Islam arrived to this region from the Muslim states of the Middle

10 John L. Esposito, *Unholy war -Terror in the Name of Islam*, Oxford University Press, 2002., p.116.

11 Evan Kohlmann, *Al-Qaida's Jihad in Europe-The Afghan-Bosnian Network*, Berg, Oxford, 2004., p.16.

East. In this way the traditional Ottoman Islamic heritage ceased to be the only form of practicing Islam and space was opened for different Islamic religious teachings that originated from Middle Eastern countries.

States such as Saudi Arabia and Iran have thus achieved considerable religious and political influence over the Balkan Muslims, thereby becoming, besides Turkey (which has a traditional presence and influence among the Muslims of this region) another “external” factor of their internal religious and political relations.

Bosnian “public debate”

The issue of emerging division among Bosnian Muslims opened manifestly in 2006 with a provocative text about Wahhabism published in Bosnian daily newspaper “Oslobođenje” (“Liberation”). Author of this text was Professor Rešid Hafizović, who is among the most respected and most prominent contemporary Bosnian intellectuals. As Professor of the Faculty of Islamic Studies and a great expert in the field of Islamic philosophy and Islamic mysticism, he is very present in the social and public life of Bosnia and Herzegovina. His comments on current social, religious and political issues are often used by the media in this country. Hafizović shocked Bosnian public for the first time in 1996 when he gave an interview to the Bosnian magazine “Dani” (“Days”) in which he sharply criticized the policy of former Saudi King Fahd. Interview provoked the strong response of the leadership of the Islamic community in the form of statement of Riyasat,¹² which stood to protect the “proven Bosniak friends and benefactor” King Fahd. Hafizović was by then among the intellectuals in Bosnia who were dissatisfied with the politics of the Riyasat (notably a number of professors from The University of *Sarajevo*) became known as one of the fiercest opponents of “wahhabisation” of Bosnia and Herzegovina.

This reputation Hafizović will confirm ten years later, when he wrote his article “They’re coming for our children” published in the daily newspaper “Liberation”.¹³ In this article Hafizović attacks without hesitation not

12 Highest Islamic religious and administrative body of the Islamic Community in *Bosnia and Herzegovina*.

13 Rešid Hafizović, „Oni dolaze po našu decu”, Oslobođenje, Sarajevo, 25th November, 2006.

only the Wahhabi community in Bosnia, but the very validity of the Wahhabi teaching itself. He also wrote that Wahhabism is the greatest tragedy in the history of the Islam and the fatal virus which will soon dissolve the very substance of Bosnian Muslims. Those charges would again provoke very sharp response of the Riyasat and Bosnian Reis ul Ulema Mustafa Cerić. In the new statement from the Riyasat, Bosnian Islamic Community condemned “inappropriate qualifications of Professor Rešid Hafizović on the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, which was immensely helpful to our country and our people, when it was most difficult”¹⁴ The statement of Riyasat regarding the Hafizović article would then cause division in the Bosnian public and provoke a large debate in Bosnia about Saudi influence.

On this occasion, in a new interview given to the magazine “Dani”, Hafizović talked more openly about Saudi influence on the current leadership of the Islamic community. He said “...I must honestly admit that I have never imagined how far does the hand of the mentioned monarch reach. To the point where he begins to prescribe our academic standards and patterns of thinking and speaking. So things seem to have gone much further than we thought”¹⁵

Hafizović indicated without hesitation a problem of Wahhabism as a key issue for survival of Bosnia and Herzegovina, the problem that must be solved, otherwise “again a river of blood will start to flow trough Bosnia”¹⁶ In a few places in the text, Hafizović again predicted the possibility of bloodshed among Muslims.

The other professors from the Faculty of Islamic Studies have also take part in this debate. For example Esad Duraković and Adnan Silajdžić. Professor Silajdžić also strongly opposed the trend of the increasing Wahhabi influence. He said that Wahhabis in Bosnia are not able to articulate the ways of Muslim modernity. He pointed that they are not able to do that neither for themselves, nor for the others Muslims. Silajdžić warned of the danger of Wahhabis in terms of the dissolution of the essence of the traditional Bosnian Islam. “Wahhabism in Bosnia is installed as a distinctive religious, cultural and social

14 Statement of Riyasat from November 26th 2006.

<http://www.bosnjaci.net/prilog.php?pid=19911> (accessed on December 20th 2013.)

15 Interview given to the magazine Dani, Sarajevo, 1st December, 2006.

16 Dani, Sarajevo, December 1st, 2006.

phenomenon and as such it affects the social practice of Bosnian Muslims and other citizens of Bosnia and Herzegovina. It seriously divided parents and children, spiritual leaders and imams, teachers and students etc.”¹⁷

During this debate, public began to talk about how Wahhabists penetrated deep into Bosnian institutions - secular and those of the Islamic community. It became clear that the Wahhabists already operate institutionally, through Islamic pedagogical academies, run by people who were trained for their educational work at the very source of this uncompromising Islamic movement, at the Wahhabi universities of Mecca and Medina. The Bosnian public found out that at the University of Zenica and Bihać students do not learn anything about Islamic philosophy or Sufism, because the Wahhabi teachings marked them as deviations or “infidel” learning.

On the other side, representatives and supporters of the Wahhabi circles also joined the debate. Infamous Abu Hamza, one of the founders of the Wahhabi community in Bosnia and Herzegovina responded strongly to these attacks, but he also went a step further. He said that Muslims in Bosnia and Herzegovina did not live the authentic Islam, which was introduced only after “their” arrival, and that the Muslims in Bosnia live a form of a communist, reduced Islam!¹⁸ Pro-salafi journal Saff also joined the debate, attacking the mentioned professors, and opening many questions about the orthodoxy of certain religious practices such as the practice of *Dovište* which is a traditional Bosnian “pilgrimage site”.¹⁹ In this way, the public debate moved away from the problem of harmful impacts of Wahhabi teachings on the Bosnian Islamic Community, to the question of orthodoxy of the Bosnian Muslim religious practices.

The tragicomic part of this story is that this debate took place in the shadow of the “Resolution on the constitutional changes and the interpretation of Islam” of the Islamic Community of Bosnia and Herzegovina, written only few months earlier. Item II/4 of this Resolution underlines that “Riyasat believes that in Bosnia and Herzegovina there are no extremist individuals or groups that may undermine the unity of Muslims”!²⁰

17 Interview given to daily newspaper *Oslobođenje*, Sarajevo, November 11th, 2006.

18 For more information, see the interview with Professor Silajdžić in *Oslobođenje*, Sarajevo, November 11th, 2006.

19 Traditional prayer in the open, usually on the site of former pagan temples.

20 http://www.rijaset.ba/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=195:rezolucija-o-ustavnim-promjenama-i-tumaju-islama&catid=235&Itemid=223 (accessed on December 20th 2013.)

As we saw, with their engagement in the field of anti-Wahhabi action professors from the Faculty of Islamic Studies provoked rage of the members and supporters of the radical Islamic movement, and of the highest levels of the Bosnian Islamic Community. And in that particular moment this story becomes more complex. Division stopped being based simply on “black and white” distinction (Bosnian muslim vs. Wahhabi), because Wahhabis would play the Shia card and accuse Hafizović to be a Shia Islam promoter. And with this counterattack, the whole public debate began to slide into murky waters...

In further verbal clashes and accusations, Professor Hafizović was marked as Iran’s insider in the Bosnian Islamic community. He was accused to be an enthusiastic missionary and agitator of Iranian Shiism. These charges will again revive rumors from the nineties about pro-Iranian subversive activities of his close colleague Enes Karić and Adnan Silajdžić. Yet it seemed that some of these rumors have ground in reality. Professor Hafizović’s involvement in work of scientific research Institute “Ibn Sina”, a non-governmental organization which is financed by Iran, could be easily characterized as an “effort” on bringing Shiism closer to the Bosnian Muslims. For this purpose Hafizović wrote and translated a number of articles of similar topic, seeking to awaken interest of Bosnian public for this form of confession and practice of Islam.²¹ Although he never explicitly declared himself as supporter and advocate of political system introduced by Khomeini in Iran, he has repeatedly expressed open sympathy for the political organization of Islamic republic. However, these views could still be considered relatively benign had Hafizović not, according to his opponents, crossed the line of sympathy and entered into open invocation of spreading achievements of the Islamic revolution beyond the borders of Iran in certain public events.²² It is also very

21 In 1997 Hafizović published a book “Signs of Shiite spirituality” (published by The Bosnian Book, Sarajevo), and in 2001 he wrote an article “To be Shia - being a Muslim in another way” (in the magazine Signs of the Times, published by “Institute of Ibn Sina”). In addition, he wrote impressive number of books and papers devoted to great Iranian philosophers and thinkers.

22 At the panel which marked 19th anniversary of the death of Imam Khomeini, Hafizović said: „The Iranian friends should take into account that it is much harder to preserve the achievements of the revolution, and even harder to do everything you can to spread those values to the Muslim world. It (the Muslim world) has long been ready to remove some of its political regimes.” Video of this speech can be found at the following address:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0k3nHHOIJQc> (accessed on December 20th 2013.)

indicative that his fiercest attack on the Bosnian Wahhabis and on the policy of Saudi Arabia (his article in “Oslobodjenje”), came less than a month after he officially became a member of the Iranian Academy of Philosophy in Tehran. In October 2006 he became the second non-Iranian member in the entire history of this famous academy. Also in late 2009 Hafizović went to Iran, where he was given the “Al Farabi” award for the best scientific research in the field of Islamic studies.

If we put aside the rumors of subversive involvement of Professor and Academic Raešid Hafizović (rumors of him being an Iranian “agent” and “insider”) and if we take into consideration only the presented facts, it is clear that his professional and social “engagement” may be, with a considerable degree of certainty, denoted as missionary activity. It is necessary to clearly pointed out that Hafizović and his colleagues from the Institute “Ibn Sina” and the Foundation “Mulla Sadra” (some of whom are Iranians by nationality) do not directly promote Shiism. However, in the part of Bosnian public their actions were for a long time perceived as “selling Shiism under the mask of Sufism”. Although Sufism (a mystical form of Islam) is not unknown to Sunni Islamic tradition, the fact is that Sufism is very compatible with Shiism and that it is very easy to sell Shiism under the mask of mystical teachings. So, the awakening of interest in Sufism among Bosniaks, can easily serve as a first step towards the awakening of interest in Shi’ism. That is why this activity can be seen as preparing the ground for conversion of the interested ones into Shi’ism.

All these reasons made it possible for Bosnian Wahhabis to draw attention from themselves towards, until then, an almost imperceptible Shiite missionary activity. From that moment the public debate is not only having in mind the Wahhabi community, but also the community of Shia converts which according to some unofficial data today has 2500-3000 followers. Bosnian public has focused on the activity of a wide range of institutions and associations which were associated with the Islamic Republic of Iran. Beside the mentioned “Ibn Sina” Institute and “Mulla Sadra” foundation, as main centers of Shiia missionary work were marked the Iranian Cultural Center, “Zehra” association, and Persian-Bosnian College in Iljaš. Dr. Šukrija Ramić, professor at the Bosnian Islamic Pedagogical Faculty, emphasizes a number of effects of their actions: “We already have the Bosnian Muslims who converted to Shiite

Islam. According to some estimates, there are about three thousand of them (Shia converts). They don't pray Friday prayers and *Tarawih* prayers, they don't pray daily prayers with our priests, they do not recognize Reis ul Ulema as their leader, they do not pay *Zakat* to Islamic community, but they send a fifth of their income to Iran to their spiritual leader.”²³

After a lot of mutual accusations, which eventually caught up media representatives too,²⁴ Bosnian public debate on “foreign” influences in the local Islamic community ended as suddenly as it began. Turkish Foreign Minister Ahmet Davutoglu, in order to promote Turkey's new foreign policy doctrine, came to Sarajevo in 2009 and in front of Sarajevo's central mosque delivered a speech about “big comeback” of Turkey to the Western Balkan region. In this way, he openly marked Bosnia and Herzegovina as the Turkish sphere of influence. After that, Bosnian media became less and less interested in the problem of Saudi and Iranian influence, and all the “lights” were pointed (and still they are) at new “Turkish March” toward the Balkans. Problem of Bosnian Muslim division was “pushed under the carpet”. But it's still far from being solved. That is why the Riyaset of Islamic Community recently established an “Institute for the Study of the tradition of Bosniaks” in order to determine what is, and what is not, the traditional Bosnian Islam. But this institution has failed to provide answers to the key questions so far. So the problem remains unsolved.

Conclusion

It is clear that the confessional “reconstruction” of Bosnia and Herzegovina is in progress and that the consequences of this process can not be accurately predicted yet. We must be objective and admit that “new” or “im-

23 Interview with Šukrija Ramić published in the magazine SAFF, Zenica, 25th October, 2008.

24 For example, at 16th Decembar 2009. Riyaset issued a statement which criticizes Duška Jurišić, host and editor of the TV show „Pošteno” („Honestly”), for the topic about Wahhabism in Bosnia. In this statement Riyaset expressed „surprise that Federal Television, as a public service broadcaster, took for the topic of its show a narrower doctrinal issues in the field of specialist discussions of Islamic experts.”

http://www.rijaset.ba/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=5526:saopenje-rijaseta-u-povodu-emisije-ftv&catid=203:mina-vijesti-kat&Itemid=459 (accessed on December 20th 2013.)

ported” Islamic teachings can not seriously jeopardize the primacy of Hanafi Islam traditional in this region. Turkish diplomatic offensive in this region additionally reduced chances for the success of Shiite and Wahhabi teachings. But their very presence brings confusion among the Balkan Muslims. Bosnian public debate clearly pointed that out.

This kind of confusion can have serious consequences. In theological terms unity of the Muslim community could be seriously threatened. And to some extent it already is. Members of the Wahhabi community have already shown hostility and animosity towards the religious heritage of the Balkan Muslims. Their mentors from Saudi Arabia assist this intolerance by all means available: “Saudi aid agencies have been responsible for the destruction or reconstruction of many historic mosques, libraries, Quran schools, and cemeteries in Bosnia and in Kosovo because their Ottoman architecture, decorations, frescoes, and tombstones did not conform to Wahhabi iconoclastic aesthetics that regard statues, tombstones, or artwork with human representations as idolatry and polytheism.”²⁵ But, architecture and other material historical heritage is not the only Islamic legacy which is threatened. Certain traditional religious practices are also “under fire”. For example, the already mentioned *Dovište* - traditional prayer in the open, or the local Ramadan tradition of eating plums for *iftar* meal. No matter how ridiculous it may sound, these and similar religious practices represent thorn in the eye of the local Wahhabis, and may in the future provoke some security incidents.²⁶ And when we take into consideration the fact that among the local Muslims we now have Shia minority too, it is not difficult to imagine that the traditional Islamic rivalry between Sunnis and Shiites, especially Wahhabi and Iranian Shiites, may also, in the near future, come to life in this region. Professor Ramić stresses this concern: “I’m afraid that, in Bosnia, in the near future, we will have conflicts of radical Bosnian Sunnis and radical Bosnian Shiites, in a similar way that we have them today among the Arabs in Iraq, and Pakistanis and Afghans in Pakistan in Afghanistan.”²⁷

25 John L. Esposito, *Unholy war -Terror in the Name of Islam*, Oxford University Press, 2002., p.108.

26 Some incidents of this kind have already happened. For example, a bomb attack on a police station in Bugojno in 2010., conducted on the jubilee of five hundredth Ajvatovica, which is the largest *Dovište* site in Bosnia.

27 Interview with Šukrija Ramić published in the magazine *SAFF*, Zenica, 25th October, 2008.

Therefore, it is necessary to closely monitor further developments: the potential growth of Wahhabi and Shiite community in Bosnia, their mutual confrontation and rivalry, and engagement of professors like Professor Hafizović and his colleagues (especially those from the institute “Ibn Sina” and the Foundation “Mulla Sadra”), as well as non-governmental organizations which are associated with the Islamic Republic of Iran or the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.

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“Resolution on the constitutional changes and the interpretation of Islam” of the Islamic Community of Bosnia and Herzegovina

http://www.rijaset.ba/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=195:rezolucija-o-ustavnim-promjenama-i-tumaju-islama&catid=235&Itemid=223

Other

Resid Hafizovic speech on commemoration of the nineteenth anniversary of death of Imam Khomeini

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0k3nHHOIJQc>

APPENDIX

A TALE OF TWO WILAYETS

IVANA BARTULOVIĆ AND MIRKO DAUTOVIĆ

The year 2012 was a year of an important centenary for the Balkan countries: a century has passed since the First Balkan War in which the Ottoman Empire's possessions in Europe were reduced to Thrace and Istanbul. A century passed since the political entity which ruled both the region of the Balkans and the Middle East expired and was carved up by new countries and old powers. The Serbian Orthodox Church marked the occasion of the centenary by opening Office of its Committee for Kosovo and Metohija in Pečka Patrijaršija (the Patriarchate of Peć), with Jovan (Ćulibrk), bishop of Ulpiana leading it. In cooperation with the Faculty of Security Studies from the University of Belgrade and Belgrade Open School, the Office organised an academic conference on the relations of the Balkans and the Middle East.

The tales of the two regions bear many similarities, stemming from a shared Ottoman history and sanguinary fissures in their heterogeneous societies. But their experiences are rarely compared and modern connections remain unknown to their inhabitants. The common heritage was cast aside in the Balkans, the links with the Middle East lying forgotten.

The history of Balkan-Middle East relations did not begin with the Ottoman Empire, nor were these relations weaved only while there were empires which controlled both regions, like Byzantium. Initiatives came from

small players as well. For Serbia, the spiritual and diplomatic relations were laid ground for in the Middle Ages when St. Sava, the first Serbian archbishop visited the Holy Land twice in the 1330s. There he undertook several very important moves to diplomatically establish presence of the Orthodox Church in the land where the Crusader presence was rapidly diminishing before the Muslim reconquest. To this end, he established several monasteries and pilgrim houses in the Holy Land and in Egypt where he met with the Ayubid sultan Al-Kamil.

In more recent times the government of the Kingdom of Serbia, then exiled to Corfu was the first to support the Balfour Declaration, immediately upon its proclamation in 1917. But some from the Middle East also had influence on events in the Balkans. Haj Amin al-Husseyini, the Grand Mufti of Jerusalem was paramount in Nazi effort to recruit enough Balkan Muslims for three SS divisions. And after the defeat of the Nazi overlords, the surviving members of these SS divisions appeared in the Middle East, fighting against the newly established state of Israel. Finally, Socialist Yugoslavia was a staunch ally of the PLO but a full research on this topic is yet to be done.

The two regions are intertwined in past and present. But it was not for going through the rich past that this conference was organised but for the analysis of the present and glimpsing into the future relations of the Balkans and the Middle East.

So to shed more light on each other's experiences, neglected in both regions, Balkan and Middle East scholars met in the ancient monastery under the auspices of [His Holiness] Irinej, the Patriarch of Serbia. The conference had two parts: the first in the Patriarchate, the second in Belgrade. Beside the experts whose works we publish here, a great many of the diplomatic corps, academia, international organisations and military diplomacy attended.

The location and the topic were very apt: in every carving-up of the Balkans since 1912 Peć changed hands. As did many Balkan lands between 1912 and today. Many changes happened since and the current state is that Serbia lost many of the territories she had won, that the Republic of Turkey never held more sway in the Balkans and that other Middle Eastern powers and new interpretations of Islam made their entrance in the region; and it was these parallels, of the present and the future, that the scholars discussed of at the conference in Pećka Patrijaršija in mid-October.

Speakers from Israel were professor Martin van Creveld of the University of Tel Aviv, and Colonel (res.) Shaul Shay of the Begin-Sadat Center for Strategic Studies, who gave several lectures on the inevitable rise of Islamism after two ongoing years of Arab Spring. Neither of the speakers ventured into idealism nor optimism.

Prof. van Creveld held two lectures, one in Peć, another in Belgrade. The article presented in this collection of works deals with the Peć one, which was a comparative study of Israel's and Serbia's politics, economy and the role of history and religion in both nations' cultures. As the most important factor in one nation's long-term development, van Creveld sees demography, a source of particular concern for both Israel and Serbia. In regards to multicultural and multi ethnic societies, he expresses doubt in the one state solution where two nations coexist apart, peacefully and successfully. Such an arrangement leads in time to one group numerically surpassing the other. From the perspective of the diminishing community the choice is either to continue the coexistence, leading to ultimately being swamped numerically by the otherness; or to separate, creating different states for different peoples. This is the general view on two-state solution in Israel in regards to Arab Palestine. Professor van Creveld applied the same reasoning to the Serbian problem with Kosovo.

In the other part of the conference which took place in Belgrade, professor van Creveld gave a wholly different lecture, reiterating his well-published opinion that the wars of the future would not be waged between major powers, or even small countries, but within failed states. And the form these would assume would be skirmishes of small, specialized units. He foresaw that the nation-state would not be the only agent of war, as more non-state actors such as Hezbollah or Hamas continued to chip away at the concept of sovereignty worldwide. In that regard, van Creveld proposed Serbia needed no new war planes but should rather invest in highly mobile armies capable of small-scale, ground-based conflicts in the diverse terrain of the Balkans. A force he supposes is making a comeback is religion which will influence the societies of the 21st century far more than it did in the 20th.

This thesis was seemingly supported by Col. Shay's series of lectures on what he saw as a destructive tsunami of the Islamic revolution called by the westerners the Arab Spring. Whichever of the scenarios for the overthrow

of old regimes we would apply (and he gave analyses on five most severe cases), including democratic elections, the result would be the rise of Islamism in the Arab world: „It could be said that Islamists have been very much in favour of one-time elections, but once they assume power, they intend to close that road for others and undertake islamisation of society and politics, all the time double-talking the West.” Compared to such prospects, Shay preferred „the devil we knew” - secular Arab dictators - for the sake of Israel’s security.

Between the conference and the submission of this article (October 2012 - April 2013), time only proved Col. Shay’s projection right: in Egypt, the Muslim Brotherhood is trying to impose Islamism and not democracy upon recalcitrant Egyptians; and the rebel forces in Syria are turning out to be not one but many devils whom Israel would rather not know. What Col. Shay’s projections did not take into account was the resistance to the Islamists by the Egyptian people and how much incompetent would the Muslim Brotherhood prove in governing any country, let alone one the size of Egypt. As the Arab spring enters its third year, the drama seems nowhere near the end and yet the prior structures of power seem intact by the uprisings.

How do these new developments in the Middle East reflect on the situation on the Balkans?

Since 1990s, most of the Muslims in former Yugoslavia have turned to Turkey as their guide, a few to Saudi-originated Wahabism and even fewer to Iran. Professors Darko Tanasković and Srđa Trifković (Universities of Belgrade and Banja Luka, respectively) spoke of Turkey’s rise globally, in the Middle East and the Balkans. The foreign policy doctrine of the Foreign Minister Davutoglu called „zero problems with neighbours” clashed with Turkey’s other ambition, one of reclaiming the Ottoman sphere of influence.

As a result, there might soon be zero neighbours with which Turkey has no problems. By now, Turkey fell out with Israel after Mavi Marmara flotilla incident; in the Balkans the talk of the Ottoman times as the halcyon days of tolerance and multiculturalism shocked the Orthodox nations and raised doubt of Turkey’s true intentions with Muslim peoples in the Balkans; in Syria it is now openly siding with the rebels. What prof. Trifković finds the way it effectively ignores Iraqi government in dealing with the Kurdish north

particularly insolent. Also, while once the secular elite of the 20th century Turkey wanted to turn their country more European, PM Erdogan of the Justice and Development Party now seeks to turn Europe more Turkish, issuing arrogant remarks of EU.

Both lecturers made it clear that Turkey's ambitions will take precedence over her wish to be universally beloved.

Although Turkey's influence in the Balkans was described as pernicious and destabilising, Mssrs Vladimir Ajzenhamer (of the Centre for Asian Studies at the Faculty of Political Science in Belgrade) and Gordon Bardos (former Assistant Director of the Harriman Institute at Columbia University) presented a stronger case for Saudi Arabia doing so, through a thorough history of Jihadist movement in Bosnia.

Many Jihadists came in 1990s thanks to the Saudi sponsorship to fight the war on Bosnian Muslim side and had since stayed there, making Bosnia a springboard to the West for many radical islamists. As Bardos pointed out, every major action of Islamic terrorism had perpetrators who had built their jihadist reputation in Bosnia. The Wahabis already established firm ground in the village of Gornja Maoča from which they conducted several operations, including a lone shooter's failed attack at the US embassy in Sarajevo.

But their main target are other Muslims whom they charge with religious falsehood, claimed Ajzenhamer. The Islam the Ottomans brought to Bosnia in late medieval times is of Hanafi school, the most liberal one, and in Bosnia it was always lax and tolerant of transgressions. These were perceived as „shirk” and libertinism by a new, „purer” version of Islam that came from Saudi Arabia. Its fundamentalist adherents feel they need to deal with the traditional Muslims whom they consider apostates. In that sense, Wahabism threatens traditional Bosnian Muslims first, and non-believers second.

Both Ajzenhamer and Bardos analysed the role and history of yet another completely new player that entered Bosnia alongside the Wahabis in 1990s, transferring an ancient rivalry from the Middle East to Bosnia: Shia Iran. Iran's influences are thought to be small-scale but they are in many ways hidden. Wahabis estimate the number of Shias in Bosnia at two to three thousand. This estimate is unfounded and may be exaggerated as Wahabis consider Shias their greatest enemy and their appearance might either be a call for mobilisation or a call to Saudi sponsors to keep paying attention to Bosnia.

In relation to Iranian influence, Bardos posited a hypothesis which has since been partially confirmed and which he had already written about for the *Jerusalem Post* in August 2012. The hypothesis was of a Hezbollah-Bosnia connection involved in the attack on Israeli tourists this summer in the Bulgarian city of Burgas. Since then, the Bulgarian government confirmed Hezbollah executed the attacks but no mention was made of a possible Bosnian connection.

One can only conjecture at the Iranian plans and achievements in the Balkans, but the size of Iran's embassy in Sarajevo testifies to the importance Iran sees in Bosnia.

Religion featured heavily in each paper here presented, as a force of primary importance in politics. Boris Havel (of the Faculty of Political Science in Zagreb) approached the matter reversely, looking into the influence of politics on new developments in religion. In particular the effect the founding of the state of Israel had on Jewish-Christian relationship. He argued this historic event opened a new understanding between two religions and offered a possibility of a similar rapprochement on common political and theological grounds between Christians on the Balkans.

It is clear that in the focus of the conference this year were Bosnia and Herzegovina and allochthonous forms of Islam in the Balkans, while the Arab Spring was the main topic on the Middle East. Despite the venue of the conference being in Kosovo and Metohija, that issue did not feature heavily in the discussions.

Additional speakers in the Belgrade were Darko Trifunović of the Faculty of Security Studies and Dušan Bataković, an historian and a former Ambassador of Serbia to France. While Mr. Trifunović gave a comparative study of the role of Turkey, Iran and Saudi Arabia in the South-East Europe, Dr. Bataković gave his insight into the ties between the two regions from his diplomatic and personal experience.

In this book were compiled selected articles based on the lectures given at the conference and described in this review, including the paper of Vladimir Cvetković and Slađana Đurić (both of the Faculty for Security Studies) giving more insight into the geopolitics of the Balkan wars. Kosovo awaits more attention in forthcoming conferences

SUMMARIES AND BIOGRAPHIES

MARTIN VAN CREVELD

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A TALE OF TWO DISASTER AREAS

Judging by the ranking of the various countries on the U.N's Human Development Index, both the Balkans and the Middle East are disaster areas. In both cases the origins of this sad state of affairs can be traced back to centuries of Ottoman mismanagement, the disintegration of the Ottoman Empire, and the establishment of new borders that took no account of national, political, economic, social and cultural factors. In this mess, one country stands out: Israel. I shall very briefly survey the roots of its success, and suggest that Serbia may have something to learn from it.

One of the most distinguished military historians today, Martin Van Creveld holds M.A. from the London School of Economics, and B.A. and Ph.D. from the Hebrew University of Jerusalem where he was on the faculty since 1971.

Books: Wargames: From Gladiators to Gigabytes (2013), The Land of Blood and Honey: The Rise of Modern Israel (2010), The Culture of War (2008), Hitler's Strategy 1940-1941: The Balkan Clue (2008), The Rise and Decline of the State (1999), Technology and War: From 2000 B.C. to the Present (1991).

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THE MIDDLE EAST BETWEEN DEMOCRATIZATION AND ISLAMIZATION

The Islamic evolution is stronger than the “Arab spring” revolution: The „Arab spring” revolutions launched by young activists using all the resources the Internet has to offer, have paved the way for Islamist movements. The main actors for change have been the youth. The first beneficiaries have been the Islamists because they are structured and because they have deep roots in society, unlike the youth who have not had time to organize. The outcomes of recent Arab uprisings have confirmed the organizational superiority and appeal of Islamist political parties in a number of countries in the Middle East.

The „Arab Spring” that reshaped the region’s political landscape, marked by fragile transitions from secular pro western dictatorships through a „democratic procedure” to the formation of Islamic regimes. This “tsunami” has moved tectonic plates of the Muslim societies and will provoke aftershocks that will lead to an Islamic dominant region.

The Islamic fundamentalism and the democracy: Hasan al-Banna (1906-49), the founder of the Muslim Brotherhood that came to power in some Muslim states, sought to purge Western influences. He taught that Islam was the only solution and that democracy amounted to infidelity to Islam. Sayyid Qutb (1906-66), the leading theoretician of the Muslim Brotherhood, objected to the idea of popular sovereignty altogether. He believed that the Islamic state must be based upon the Qur’an, which he argued provided a complete and moral system in need of no further legislation.

More recent Islamists such as Yusuf al Qaradawi argue that democracy must be subordinate to the acceptance of God as the basis of sovereignty. Democratic elections are therefore heresy, and since religion makes law, there is no need for legislative bodies. In recent years there could be ob-

served a change in strategy used by radical Islamic organizations. Muslim Brotherhood openly seeks to establish “democracy” based upon Islamic principles. Islamists themselves regard liberal democracy with contempt. They are willing to accommodate it as an avenue to power but as an avenue that runs only one way. The Islamic world is not ready to absorb the basic values of modernism and democracy nor does acceptance of basic Western structures imply democracy.

The Islamists are using a „double talk”. They try to present to the west a moderate image of political Islam, to encourage the west to help and invest. But within the Muslim society the reality is different and most of the voices are very conservative.

Historical changes happening in the region now are for sure equivalent to the shift of tectonic plates politically. This is a crossroad in history and the road the nations involved take will determine our future. In the meantime we might see more Islamization there rather than western style democracies. Where it will really lead Middle East and the rest of the world only future will tell.

Col. (Res.) Shaul Shay is former head of the IDF Military History Department and former deputy head of the National Security Council of Israel. He holds M.A. and Ph.D. degrees from the Bar Ilan University with special interest in counter-terrorism; he is a lecturer at his alma mater and the Interdisciplinary Center, Herzliya (IDC); Dr Shay is also a senior research fellow of the Begin–Sadat Center for Strategic Studies and the author of the books: *Somalia Between Jihad and Restoration* (2008), *Islamic Terror and the Balkans* (2008), *The Red Sea Terror Triangle: Sudan, Somalia, Yemen and Islamic Terror by Shaul Shay* (2006), *Post-modern Terrorism: Trends, Scenarios and Future Threats* (2006).

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**THE BALKANS AND THE MIDDLE EAST:
TURKEY'S REGIONAL PRIORITIES**

The Balkans and the Middle East have been openly and repeatedly declared as two regional priorities of the actual foreign policy of Turkey, based on the neo-Ottomanist doctrine of so called „Strategic Depth“, theoretically elaborated by its minister of foreign affairs Ahmet Davutoğlu and by all available means put into practice systematically during at least last decade. Although the world media devotes considerably less attention to Turkish doings in the Balkans than to Ankara's policies in the Middle East, there is good reason to believe that for many reasons neo-Ottomanism may actually be more dynamic and more ambitious in Europe's soft underbelly. The fact that the subjects in international community whose judgement Turkey especially cares about consider Turkey a legitimate and reliable factor of peace, stability, and development in the Balkans must be a strong motive for the foreign policy of this geographically mostly Asian country to feel the Balkan region as its practical and symbolic priority on its way towards the EU. Although seemingly there is no direct link between the lines of Turkey's engagement in the Balkans and in the Middle East, its activities in these two regions should be analysed and interpreted comparatively and organically, as two facets of the same complex phenomenon and to some degree even interdependent. Such an approach would allow us to evidenciate some important typological features of neo-Ottomanist ideological pattern as well as its practical political potentials, contradictions and limitations.

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**ASSESSING THE THREAT OF MILITANT ISLAMISM
IN SOUTHEASTERN EUROPE**

Many of the major terrorist actions of the past fifteen years, including the 9/11 attacks, the Khobar Towers bombing, the bombings of the US embassies in Kenya and Tanzania, the bombing of the USS Cole, etc., have Balkan connections. This paper will review the history of the emergence of the militant Islamist movement in Southeastern Europe, assess the degree of the current threat to the region posed by radical extremists, and review the various policy options available to local governments and the international community for dealing with the threat.

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**GLOBAL POWER AND PARTICULAR RESPONSES
(THE BALKAN WARS AND THE „ALBANIAN ISSUE“ IN LIGHT OF NEOREALISM)**

Today, the word “Balkans”, in its strategic and security senses, implies (South)Eastern Europe, then the Mediterranean, and finally the real thing – the Middle East, in addition to its main geographic meaning! Despite the popular literature and numerous political stereotypes, the Balkans have never been interpreted and accepted as a “region apart” (similar to the notions of “Europe”, “the Middle East”, etc.) in the global realpolitik, but primarily as a geopolitical mediator between the European (Christian) and oriental (Muslim) worlds. To those who shape the history of the world, the Balkans have never been, nor could ever be, important “in themselves” or “as such”; the Balkans have always been interpreted – perceived – primarily as a border, the place where a “wedge” is driven into the space of the Other, i.e. the crossroads leading to the subjugation of a promising part of the world. Seen from the standpoint of so-called regional security, the Balkans are a volatile combination of Europe and the Middle East, of Christian and Muslim civilizations. Hence the significance of the Balkans exceeds the issue of local relations (of peoples and states) and ventures into a much more intricate (complex) structure of international power and into the issue of relations between these opposing cultures/civilizations. The same goes for the Middle East: the control over it is beyond the status of local players. However, unlike the Balkans, which have most often served as a geopolitical “means”, the Middle East has always been an important “goal” in the struggle for power of key global players.

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A HUNDRED YEARS LATER: TURKEY IS BACK

It is historically unprecedented for a former great power which undergoes a period of steep decline to make a comeback and reestablish its position as a major player in world affairs. After the Peloponnesian War Athens was finished for all time. Following the collapse of the Western Empire, Rome has never regained its old stature and glory. After Philip II Spain declined precipitously and has remained a third-rate power ever since. The list goes on.

Turkey appears to be an exception to the rule. One hundred years after the fate of the Ottoman Empire was seemingly sealed in the First Balkan War, the Turkish Republic has an ever-increasing clout in three key areas of neo-Ottoman expansion: the Balkans, the Arab world, and the predominantly Muslim regions of the former Soviet Union. Each has played a significant part in reshaping the geopolitics of the Greater Middle East over the past decade. This complex project, which remains under-reported in the Western media and denied or ignored by policy-makers in Washington, is going well for Prime Minister Rejep Tayyip Erdoğan and his AKP (Justice and Development Party).

Dr. Trifkovic's paper looks at the causes and dynamics of this remarkable transformation, which has fundamentally changed -- over the past decade -- the security architecture of the region.

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**THEOLOGY SHAPED BY POLITICS:
FACT IN THE MIDDLE EAST,
POTENTIAL IN THE BALKANS?**

Conflict in the Middle East is complex and complicated. There are many aspects of it, such as national, economic, territorial, security-related, psychological and historical. Analyzing any of them would help us understand it better. However, there is one aspect which, if ignored, would leave any analysis wanting: religion. While for a long time the mainstream media and academia chose to disregard its importance in the Middle Eastern conflict, after the events of September 2001, and after the wave of Islamic terrorism in Israel the following year, more scholars and analysts did actually pay significantly more attention to it. Thus, the fact that religion *to a degree* influences Middle Eastern politics, primarily in the Muslim community, has become impossible to ignore.

Conflicts in the Balkans are in many ways unique and in many details differ from the conflict raging in the Middle East. And yet, Balkans-conflict contains some features which make it a political set-up probably the most similar to the Middle Eastern in the world. Perceptible reality and threat of the global jihad is one of them. Comparative civilizational proximity of non-Islamic political actors is another. Could those similarities inspire Balkan Christians to view each other through different eyes than they used to? Could divided and often antagonized Balkan – and for that matter all European – Christians perceive each other in a different way: as servants of the same King, children of the same Kingdom and partners in the same mission of bringing it on Earth as it is in Heaven? Based on what we have seen in Jewish-Christian relations in the Middle East, I believe that it is not unrealistic to expect positive spiritual development emerging out of the harsh and tough political circumstances. In spite of past animosity and conflicts, the rift between, say, Catholics and Orthodox Christians have not been deeper

and wider than the one between Christians and Jews. Why then should it be less bridgeable?

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