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Terrorism in the Balkans. Genesis – types – prognoses

Introduction

Although there are more than two hundred definitions of terrorism it is very hard to choose the most appropriate one which reflects the subject in the most precise way and which properly explains the nature of international order in the globalisation era. It does not change the fact that modern terrorism is political and social phenomenon which roots lie in the complicated processes occurring in the society. Many researchers claim that it is better to establish different kinds of terrorism than to give one definition. In the framework of this paradigm one can speak of a state terrorism, ethnic terrorism and international terrorism. In science there is also a notion of asymmetric threat which refers to the studies on war and conflicts.¹ It is hard to deny that terrorism, often perceived as non-selective and senseless, is in fact conscious and planned act of the use of violence.² Lack of one, reflecting the nature of the phenomenon typology causes that researchers attempt to systematize terrorism which involves with its division into doctrine objectives and ideological goals. International terrorism is commonly used term and it is understood as the use of force or the threat of the use of force by individuals or groups of people against other people, places or objects, violating international law with the intent to intimidate social (ethnic) group, society, nation or international society. The attention is also drawn to the fact that after the Cold War the cooperation between individual terrorist organisations is particularly dangerous as far as training, giving the shelter to terrorist commandos, joint actions and using terrorist methods by political, ethnic groups, religious movements and nations fighting for independence are concerned. Carrying out actions of terrorist nature by special services as well as cooperation between terrorist groups and organised crime and their joint actions with special services can cause some concern.³

It is worth noting that terrorist activities have been used for ages as an effective tool for fighting both the stronger opponent and the society because it is the intimidation of the terrorized subject that lies behind.

As every social and political phenomenon, terrorism has evolved over the centuries taking various forms until it became the real curse of our times. In an era of globalization it is known of brutal acts – actions and operations carried out by organizations linked ideologically and religiously to Islam. In spite of the complicated typology of the phenomenon, the following terrorism types can be specified with regard to historical perspective:

- anarchic terrorism of the 19th century and the beginning of the 20th century,

¹ R. Borkowski, *Terroryzm ponowoczesny. Studium z antropologii polityki*, Toruń 2007, p. 43.

² B. Hoffman, *Oblicza terroryzmu*, Warszawa 1999, p. 175.

³ *Encyklopedia Politologii*, ed. M. Żmigrodzki, vol. 5, Zakamycze 2002, p. 365.

- leftist terrorism of the 1960s and 1980s,
- right-wing terrorism of the end of the 20th and the beginning of the 21st century,
- postmodern, religious, global terrorism.⁴

However, there are other less known aspects of terrorist activities particularly referring to south-eastern part of The Old Continent. It should be noticed here that in no other European region one can encounter such wide spectrum of terrorism forms what undoubtedly makes this area unique for historians, political scientists and representatives of other fields of science. Over the last hundred years the Balkans have been a theatre of different subversive actions and numerous terrorist acts which influenced the world history. It was because of Gavrilo Princip and his comrades from the Young Bosnia, small terrorist organisation, responsible for an attack in Sarajevo and the assassination of Archduke Franz Ferdinand, what would lead to the outbreak of the First World War (1914-1918). Macedonian revolutionaries from the Internal Macedonian Revolutionary Organization (VMRO) started their operations in the Balkans several years earlier. Initially, they were determined to fight with the Ottoman Empire but over the years they turned against Yugoslavia. The phenomenon of post-Ustashe and post-Chetnik terror remains practically unexplored in Polish and global historiography. The link between the terrorism of Balkan origin and the Islamic terror organisations of modern type has been much better described; even though, it seems that this problem with regard to the Balkans is not imperceptible and that it is marginalised by political decision makers, from the Western Europe in particular.⁵

In this context it seems important to submit this specific Balkan terrorism to separate studies; heuristic studies mainly, with the use of the methods of analysis, synthesis and comparative analysis. Analysis method allows the research material to be processed. The usage of the method helps to divide described events into a set of individual, specific features and elements of events. Synthesis method, on the other hand, allows to formulate general statements. It also enables a generalisation of detailed data from the researched material. Using this research method is crucial while closing every stage of research and process of opinions justification. Frequent usage of synthesis is involved with the use of inductive methodology which enables the so-called generalising deduction (inductive inference). This method requires studying on the basis of the facts that form the basis for scientific deduction. However, comparative method enables to follow both the way and the forms of terrorist activities in different periods of time, countries and regions. Then it is possible to conclude what was specific and what was typical for the examined fact or event. They usually relate to comparing data from different countries, areas or regions. The comparative method is used to justify the validity of a certain thesis. Thanks to its usage, the important generalisations are made, which results in comparative deduction. Taking the above

⁴ R. Borkowski, *Terroryzm ponowoczesny...*, p. 49.

⁵ Vide: *Terrorism in the Balkans in the 20th and 21st century*, ed. Danuta Gibas-Krzak, Toruń 2018.

methods under consideration, the aim of this article is to identify types of terrorism in the Balkans, placing its origins in time, presenting its development and considering the present nature of this terrorism. Some research questions were considered helpful:

- What is the genesis of terrorism in the Balkans?
- What is the evolution of terrorism in the Balkans?
- What factors decided on the developments of terrorist activities in that part of Europe?
- To what extent the disintegration of communist Yugoslavia influenced the polarization of national relations and shaping radical religious movements linked to Islamic terrorism?
- Are the Balkans really a home to people of religious fundamentalist motivated terrorism?

The main hypothesis is: the Balkans open a great possibility for development of bases and training camps for terrorists linked to global jihad because of geographical conditions (natural conditions). This fact poses a threat to Europe's security and its democratic societies because of the probability of a conflict not only on a local scale, but also on an international scale.

Types of terrorism in the Balkans in the 19th and 20th centuries

The history of terrorism in the Balkans is connected to national and liberation movements in this part of Europe. They used terrorist methods as a tool for Balkan nations to regain independence, lost during the Turkish invasion. One of terrorism precursors in the region was the Internal Macedonian Revolutionary Organization (VMRO) established in 1893, which used terrorist methods aiming at the liberation of the people living in the Slavic lands. During that time, the activity of Macedonian death squads was truly appalling; they were carrying out cold-blooded murders and spectacular attacks on wealthy members of Turkish families. It needs to be pointed out that in 1903 VMRO organized the biggest uprising in Macedonian history called the Ilinden Uprising.⁶ It should also be mentioned that Macedonian separatists were actively engaged in the process of disintegration of the Kingdom of Yugoslavia in the interwar period and their allies became members of the Croatian Ustasha – Croatian Revolutionary Movement (known as Ustashe). Alexander I Karadorđević, King of Yugoslavia and Louis Barthou, French Foreign Minister were assassinated in 1934 in Marseilles (France) by Macedonian and Croatian extremists. Ustashe, presented often as a movement which was using terrorist methods⁷, was also known for terrorist attacks in Belgrade and Zagreb, and in the 1930s they tried to begin an uprising in the area of Zadar, Banja and Kordun aiming to split Croatia and

⁶ T. Wasilewski, *Historia Bułgarii*, Wrocław-Warszawa-Kraków-Gdańsk-Łódź 1988, p. 207; Klejn, *Bułgaria. Szkice z dziejów najnowszych*, Pułtusk 2005, p. 54 et passim.

⁷ D. Trifunović, *Threat to international security – terrorism in South East Europe*, [in:] *Służby specjalne w systemie bezpieczeństwa państwa. Przeszłość – teraźniejszość – przyszłość. Materiały i studia*, ed. A. Krzak and D. Gibas-Krzak, Szczecin 2012, vol. II, p. 279.

the Kingdom of Yugoslavia.⁸ In the interwar Romania there was a political organization called The Iron Guard and its activity was described as terrorist. The organization was established in July 1927 as the Legion of the Archangel Michael.⁹ In the moment of the establishment it was only a secessionist group from the National-Christian Defense League (Liga Apărării Național-Crestine, LANC), which was active in Moldova from the beginning of 1920s. Nonetheless, terror and direct actions became crucial elements of the fight soon. LANC death squads attacked prominent state officials (they assassinated a prime minister for instance) and damaged public facilities.¹⁰ It cannot be forgotten that the Balkans were the arena of different mainstreams and forms of terrorism. Political assassinations, which can be classified as acts of political terror, were also quite popular in the interwar period in Yugoslavia and Bulgaria. Also Soviet special services which exercised control over the Comintern and communist parties in Balkan countries used terrorist methods. Their members used individual terror on a large scale particularly in the first years following the Great War, which was supposed to be the first stage of the proletarian revolution. Numerous attacks were often unsuccessful, like an attack on the Bulgarian tsar, Boris III at the Arabakonak Pass. It was neither the first nor the last failure of both Comintern and Bolshevik special services. Nevertheless, it resulted in the fact that Cremlin authorities were forced to abandon, at least partially, the idea of spreading revolution over other countries and regions.¹¹

During World War II, in a complicated situation in the occupied back then Yugoslavia, terror was institutionalized as a form of genocide with the main involvement of The Independent State of Croatia (Nezavisna Hrvatska Drzava, NDH) and its allies. Establishing in 1941 puppet NDH, led by the Ustashe, represented the idea of a Croatian state, which it had been fight for with terrorist methods. The activity of the state terror structures was aimed not only against Serbs, Jews or Roma, but also against those Croats who were opponents of Ante Pavelić. It should also be noticed that the Second World War was the time of a common state terror used by occupation authorities and regimes collaborating with the Axis powers. For the next several years after the end of World War II, communist authorities of Yugoslavia, Albania, Bulgaria and Greece were carrying out intensive actions using terrorist attacks in order to eliminate their political opponents. Yugoslavia chose the “out-of-the-block” option but it did not prevent it from the attacks of the general public that criticized the country for the support given to the international terrorism. The country indeed made considerable profits from arms trade which were provided to the Third World countries and earned approximately 700 million

⁸ J. Wilamowski, K. Szczepanik, *Ustasze i separatyzm chorwacki*, „Przegląd Historyczny” 1983, vol. LXXIV, pp. 82–90.

⁹ N.M. Nagy Talavera, *The Green Shirts and the Others. A history of fascism in Hungary and Romania*, Iasi 2001, p. 370.

¹⁰ A. Dubicki, *Terror as a method of fighting of the Iron Guard*, [in:] *Terrorism in the Balkans in the 20th...*, pp. 52–60.

¹¹ A. Krzak, *Active intelligence service (terrorism) of the Comintern and Soviet secret service in Bulgaria in the 1920s – case study*, [in:] *Terrorism in the Balkans in the 20th...*, pp. 36–48.

annually that way.¹² Another example was offering a shelter by communist authorities to famous terrorist, Carlos, members of Baader-Meinhof organization and Abu Abbas from the Palestinian Liberation Front, known for hijacking the Italian cruiser „MS Achille Lauro” in 1985. It cannot also be forgotten that in 1980s there were training camps of Palestinian and Libyan terrorists in Yugoslavia. Until the end of 1984 in Voivodina, there were more than 800 individuals trained in intelligence courses including the members of national and liberation movements and terrorist organizations from Third World countries.¹³ Between 1945 and 1990 special services of Yugoslavia carried out attacks on representatives of anti-Yugoslavian emigration killing 73 people.¹⁴ Serbian sources report that Josip Broz-Tito and German Chancellor Willy Brand reached a secret agreement which enabled killing Yugoslav dissidents in Germany. One of the contract killers was supposed to be Željko Ražnatović, aka Arkan, future commander of Serb paramilitary troops which were known for the war crimes committed during the disintegration of communist Yugoslavia and the ensuing civil war.¹⁵ In 1981 in Western Germany there was a trial of three Yugoslav agents of secret police who were sentenced to years in prison for planning and preparing acts of murder on Yugoslav (Croatian) migrants.¹⁶ Also some Serbian politicians, including the late former president Slobodan Milošević, are suspected of terrorist involvement. Under his government it came to a close cooperation between police and special services and criminal community, the most dramatic example of which was the assassination of the Serb Prime Minister Zoran Đinđić in 2003.¹⁷

Croatian dissident environment paid back the communist authority by using various forms of terrorist attacks. Factions of the Yugoslav emigration had prepared more than 400 terrorist attacks in and outside the country between 1946–1985 as a result of which 102 people died and 330 were wounded. The Croatian Revolutionary Brotherhood (CRB) which was established in 1961 aiming to prepare uprising in Yugoslavia and to gain independence for Croatia, carried out 120 attacks during which 53 people were killed and 118 were wounded. Terrorists prepared also an attack on Josip Broz-Tito (1976), an attack on Yugoslavian club in Paris (1966), an attack on Embassy of Yugoslavia in Germany (1966), and an attack on a vice-consul of Yugoslavia in Lyon (1969). Some members of CBR joined terrorist group linked to the Ustashe movement. The group was preparing a military uprising to liberate Croatia during the meetings of the conspirators in Austria in 1972.¹⁸

¹² I. Lučić, *Bosnia and Herzegovina and terrorism*, ”National security and the future” 2001, no. 3–4, p. 117.

¹³ Ibidem, p. 115.

¹⁴ *Emigrant Croats who were victims of federal terror after 1945*, ”Slobodna Dalmacija”, 15.08.2000, p. 10.

¹⁵ M. Lopusina, *Tajne srpske policije i zloupotrebe*, [in:] *Služby specjalne w systemie bezpieczeństwa...*, p. 213.

¹⁶ I. Lučić, *Bosnia and Herzegovina...*, p. 117. Vide: M. Doder, *Jugoslavenska neprijateljska emigracija*, Zagreb 1989.

¹⁷ M. Lopusina, *Tajne srpske policije...*, pp. 214–220.

¹⁸ D. Trifunović, *Threat to international security...*, p. 279.

Islamic terrorism in the Balkans

The origins of Muslim terrorism are usually associated with the medieval sect of Nizari which used assassins' methods and terror to a large extent. After the First World War in Egypt, there was a national and religious organisation called Al-Ichwan al-Muslimin (Muslim Brotherhood) established, aim of which was to return to traditions of the real, i.e. early Islam and liberation of the Muslim world from the Western civilisation which stands for depravity and decay for a true believer. Its followers introduced the rule of Islamic fundamentalism into international usage giving it some institutional frames. They preached the rule of jihad initially understood as a method of peaceful spreading of the religious rules. Nevertheless, it became an aggressive terrorist activity which influenced almost all fundamentalist, extremist and terrorist organisations over time.¹⁹

Terrorism related to extreme currents of Islam in the Balkans emerged and rooted during the disintegration of Yugoslavia and the fight between conflicted nations during the civil war (1992–1995). At present, this kind of terrorism is related to the presence and increase of Muslim fundamentalists' impacts in the region. It should be remarked that during the Cold War the society of Yugoslavia was not influenced by the radical Islam rules. In 1971 Muslims got a status of a separate nationality in Yugoslavia, but their rather superficial religiousness was of a more secular nature. The victory of the Khomeini revolution was a direct impetus for revival of local Islam believers.²⁰ In the 1970s Alija Izetbegović, future President of Bosnia and Herzegovina, called for application of the Islamic Declaration, and started the development of an organized Islamist movement that way.²¹

A participation of Muslim mercenaries in the civil war, which has generated several controversies, has become an important aspect of Islam believers' dominance. It is presumed that there were 1,500 to 3,000 volunteers taking part in fights in Bosnia and Herzegovina, called "warriors of God" (Allah). According to some statistics, at the beginning of 1995 there could have been even 20 000 of them. The first were recruited in 1992 by Muhamed Čengić, the vice Prime Minister of the government in Sarajevo, who went to Turkey with a task to collect weapon, munitions and mercenaries. "The warriors of God" came from Muslim countries: Saudi Arabia, Pakistan, Turkey, Algeria, Afghanistan, Egypt, Sudan, Iran and Syria. Many of them were veterans of the Afghanistan war and belonged to Al Qaeda, the Armed Islamic Group (GIA), Hezbollah, Hamas or Jamaat al-Islamiyya. They were fighting in the name of Allah launching jihad, and their goal was to spread the idea of Panislamism in Bosnia and Herzegovina, although some of them earned substantial sums of money

¹⁹ K. Izak, *Leksykon organizacji i ruchów islamistycznych*, Warszawa 2014, p. 7. Vide: J. Hauziński, *Asasyni. Legendarni zabójcy w czasach krucjat*, Poznań 2016.

²⁰ N. Beloff, *Tito's flawed legacy. Yugoslavia and the West: 1939-84*, London 1985, p. 216.

²¹ In the Islamic Declaration published in 1970 A. Izetbegović enclosed ideas of the Balkan Muslim state. I. Aralica, *Što sam rekao o Bosni*, Zagreb 1995, p. 88.

as mercenaries.²² Islamic fundamentalists in the Bosnian army ranks committed numerous war crimes. According to the report of 1993 by a special UN envoy, Tadeusz Mazowiecki, mujahedeen fighters in the region of Jablanica – Nonjic and Radesnie had deported and murdered non-Muslim inhabitants. The 7th Brigade of the 3rd Corps (“El Jihad”), which members boasted about their war crimes, was particularly brutal. Zelena Legija and Gerila Battalions as well as a Muslim unit from the town of Tešanj, „Al Mujahedeen”, were known for killing taken hostage adversaries particularly Serbs who were decapitated.²³ There were charges of committing the war crimes against the commanders of the 3. Corps, Enver Hadžihanović and Mehmed Alagić brought into the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia (ICTY).²⁴ They attempted to impose strict religious rules in the occupied territories, forcing the inhabitants to live in accordance with Sharia law; for instance, girls were obliged to wear long dresses under penalty of law and older women were obliged to wear hijabs.²⁵

Muslim countries were very supportive to the Balkan jihad. In the years 1992-1995 Iran supported the authorities in Sarajevo financially and logistically.²⁶ In the report of the US Congress of January 1997 it was stressed that Iranian Revolutionary Guards had been integrating with Bosnian military structures quickly. Iranian intelligence VEVAK (Vezarat-e Ettela’at va Amniyat-e Keshvar) organized its nets all over the country and Iranians controlled significant part of the security apparatus there. Special services became a tool of Islamisation (for example Muslimanska obavještajna služba, MOS), which stayed in contact with bin Laden and Al Qaeda during the civil war as well as with other Arab organizations supporting jihad like Tvaik Group, which was a cover for Saudi intelligence according to the German Intelligence Service BND. Nevertheless, it was a net of car rental companies in Europe officially. MOS was issuing Bosnian passports for members of terrorist organizations who were fighting in the Balkans. Bosnian diplomats were selling passports even to common criminals and their prices were up to 500 US dollars for one document.²⁷ In May 1992 „Ševe” team was established and it was comprising former officers of the Yugoslav intelligence fighting the so-called internal opponent. It was led by Nedžad Ugljen who was responsible for the personal security of Izetbegović since the spring of 1994.²⁸ Former major of the Yugoslav counterintelligence, Enver Mujezinović was

²² D. Džamić, *Psi rata na Balkanu. Strani plaćenici u ratnim sukobima na prostorima bivše Jugoslavije*, Beograd 2001, pp. 204–207.

²³ Ibidem, p. 209.

²⁴ Contrary to a standard opinion that war criminals in the civil war in Yugoslavia in the late 20th century were mostly Serbs, it is also individuals of Muslim nationality and religion (and Croatians) who were charged for crimes and barbaric acts during the long and brutal conflict.

²⁵ D. Džamić, *Psi rata na Balkanu...*, pp. 208–209.

²⁶ Ibidem, p. 81.

²⁷ Džon P. Šindler, *Nesveti teror. Bosna, Al Kaida i uspon globalnog džihada*, Beograd 2009, pp. 145–147.

²⁸ J. Elsässer, *Jak džihad przybył do Europy. Wojownicy Boga i tajne służby na Balkanach*,

also involved in the team's work. Terrorist attacks on Serbian and Croatian people were the tasks of the group, and they were preceded by special services' snipers recruitment in Sarajevo. Their aim was to kill Serbs and Croats in order to make them leave the city.²⁹ The Ševe team dealt also with eliminating political opponents.³⁰ In summer 1993 Muslim special forces sent two groups to kill Fikret Abdić who turned out to be inconvenient. He was against the presidency of Izetbegović claiming that he ought to take the post according to the result of the election. He advocated development of economic cooperation and agreements with Serbs and Croats, strongly criticised religious fanaticism and continuation of the civil war, which in his opinion could have been ended earlier. The attacks prepared with the knowledge of Izetbegović were a failure and five assassins, trained by Iranian intelligence, were arrested by the Croatian police.³¹

After the Dayton Agreement was signed (1995) Izetbegović publicly paid tribute to mujahedeen fighters, praising them for their commitment and bravery. It is worth noting that the politician did not take any actions to prevent the formation of the Wahhabi sects which were frequently offering shelters for terrorist groups linked to Al Qaeda in the country. After the end of civil war political elites helped mujahedeen fighters to find employment, mostly in the police and in the army.³² There were also some Wahhabis among them who proclaimed slogans of Islam reforms in more radical way. After the civil war, there were numerous incidents regarding Islamisation of the society and closing mosques which imams did not agree to preach fundamentalist ideas. The incidents started to turn into terrorist attacks over time. According to experts, Al Qaeda had at least two training bases in Bosnia and Herzegovina where terrorists had been trained. An Algerian, commander of the El Mujahid, Abu Al Mali was the head of one of the training groups. He was arrested while going to Istanbul and using a Bosnian passport. One cannot omit the fact that four out of seven terrorists responsible for 9/11 attacks had been fighting in Bosnia and Herzegovina and had a citizenship of the country. There are theories that there was also Muhammed Atta, the best known terrorist, who was recruited by the German citizen and Al Qaeda member, Muhammed Hadar Zammar who had also been a participant of a Bosnian jihad.³³

The police and security forces continue to take many actions to counter terrorism and Islamic extremists. One of the biggest operations was carried out on 1 and 2 February 2010 in the village of Gornja Maoča³⁴ between Tuzla and Brčko,

Warszawa 2007, pp. 130–131.

²⁹ D.P. Šindler, *Nesveti terror...*, pp. 158–159.

³⁰ *Ibidem*.

³¹ *Ibidem*, pp. 203–204.

³² A. Wejksznar, *Ewolucja terroryzmu motywowanego ideologią religijną na przykładzie salafickiego ruchu globalnego džihadu*, Poznań 2010, pp. 215–216 et passim.

³³ A. Krzak, *Niebezpieczeństwo terroryzmu dla państw narodowych na Bałkanach*, [in:] *Problemy bezpieczeństwa wewnętrznego i bezpieczeństwa międzynarodowego*, ed. Krzysztof M. Księżopolski, Warszawa 2009, p. 439 et passim.

³⁴ *Dłgie brody i krótkie spodnie*, 4.02.2010, <http://mojesarajevo.blogspot.com/>, [access: 12.04. 2018].

where mujahedeen community established by members of El Mujahidin was active. In the action some members of Wahhabi sect with its leader Nusret Imamović were arrested. Imamović, having been instructed by Osama bin Laden, presented his radical, justifying terrorist attacks views on the Internet. In the premises of the sect there were weapon and propaganda materials in Arabic found.³⁵ The investigation revealed that Bosnian Wahhabis cooperated with a similar sect from Novi Pazar. According to Serbian authorities, the arrested took part in planning terrorist attacks in Western Europe and one of the attacks was supposed to take place during the burial ceremony of the Pope John Paul II.³⁶

Although after 1995 mujahedeen activities in the Balkans have been weakened, the phenomenon cannot be underestimated because in the 21st century terrorist nets related to Muslim fundamentalism started to recover. A new strike team of terrorist suicide bombers started to act in 1996, and it was comprising young nationals of Bosnia and Herzegovina with fair hair and bright eyes. They were imitating terrorists from the Middle East, and were trained in explosives and suicide operations. Al Qaeda leaders decided to recruit new terrorists from among Slavs creating the “White Al Qaeda”, more difficult to identify and to trace because of the European look of its members.³⁷ In the middle of 2013 radical Islamist leaders accepted a plan called The Balkans 2020 by Ayman az-Zawahiri³⁸, in which the Balkans are one of the centres of the Islamic terrorism, playing at the same time a key role in Al Qaeda’s strategy accepted to 2020. In the Balkans, and most of all in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo, Sandžak and Croatia there are still new terrorist recruitment centres established. Financial means for their activities come mostly from drug trafficking.³⁹ Enhancing actions in Western Europe is mainly based on collecting the White Al Qaeda and preparing its members for terrorist strikes. Until the end of 2014 about 200 terrorists in the age of 20-25 had been prepared for the attacks. They were trained in Islamic countries and it was financed by Al Qaeda’s branch responsible for the Balkans and Europe. Then, the terrorists were placed mainly in Macedonia and Kosovo. In 2005 the training of suicide bombers was continued in the northern Albania and in Kosovo. There were women recruited from among widows who lost their relatives in the war, so they became the victims of the manipulation easily.

Many experts think that orthodox Islam believers started to settle down in the regions and countries, where they had not been before: so in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo, Serbia and Croatia and lately in Bulgaria. The League of Muslim World is responsible for spreading Wahhabism idea, and particularly its branch the World Council of Mosques, which finances the building of Muslim

³⁵ D. Halimović, *Vehabije u BiH: Od Bočinje do Maoče*, 6 February 2010, <http://www.slobodnaevropa.org/>, [access: 12 IV 2018].

³⁶ Ibidem.

³⁷ M. Drecun, *Alahovi ratnici*, Beograd 2008, pp. 305–310.

³⁸ Y. Bodansky, *Osama bin Laden człowiek, który wypowiedział wojnę Ameryce*, Warszawa 2001, p. 95.

³⁹ M. Drecun, *Alahovi ratnici...*, pp. 6–9, 304–305.

places of worship in the Balkans. In Kosovo they are built in the places of burned Orthodox churches. Moreover, new religious centres of Islamic cult were opened in the capital of this quasi state⁴⁰ every month in 2008. It should also be pointed out that the problem of the disputed province has its broader dimension, both of ethnic and religious nature as it is involved with Muslim community in the Old Continent.⁴¹ Young Albanian elites living in Kosovo regard Serbs as their enemies and chant the slogans calling for the elimination of that “foreign” nation. The strong ties of this quasi state with Islamic terrorism go back to the times of the Kosovo Liberation Army (Ushtria Çlirimtare e Kosovës – UÇK), the Albanian organisation aimed at gaining the independence of Kosovo and the creation of the so-called Great Albania. Since 1995 UÇK has intensified fights using terrorist methods. During the next four years its members repeatedly took many actions of physical elimination of people of Serbian nationality (administration employees, security services officers mainly), as well as the so-called Albanian collaborators who were in favor of the coexistence with other nations living in Kosovo and those who were in favor of resolving the conflict with the peaceful methods.⁴² The UÇK raids on the towns inhabited by Serbs were supported by the volunteer units of fighters from Bosnia and Herzegovina, which resulted in the escalation of ethnical tensions and it also increased the number of military conflicts and terrorist acts.⁴³ Murders and assaults were aimed to force Serbian minority to leave Kosovo and to provoke Yugoslavian army and militia maintaining the order in the province. Since 1997 UÇK had started regular fights with Serbs taking 30% of the Drenica region in Kosovo. Western countries regarded UÇK as a terrorist organisation until 1998; nevertheless, they changed their attitude because of the support given to the organization by the USA. Due to the growing involvement of the USA in the Kosovo conflict, in February 1998 the US State Department removed The Liberation Army of Kosovo from the list of terrorist organisations. The reason was that it became a desirable ally in fight with Slobodan Milošević’s rule.⁴⁴ Growing animosities between Serbs and Albanians caused an outbreak of an open armed fight. The escalation of that fight resulted in the NATO military intervention in 1999 and in establishing the UN international protectorate in the province. Actions taken by international community

⁴⁰ On 17 February 2008 Kosovo formally announced its independence. The act was not recognized by Serbia. Independence of Kosovo is not recognized by for example Russia, Spain, Cyprus, Romania, Greece and Slovenia standing for affiliation of the disputed territory to Serbia. E. Bujwid-Kurek *Serbia w nowej przestrzeni ustrojowej. Dzieje, Ustrój, Konstytucja*, Kraków 2012, p. 94.

⁴¹ K. Izak, *Leksykon organizacji i ruchów...*, p. 522.

⁴² S. Schwartz, *Kosovo: Background to a War*, London 2000, pp. 137–143.

⁴³ T. Arbuckle, *Unhealthy climate in Kosovo as guerillas gear up for a summer confrontation*, „Jane’s International Defense Review” 1999, no. 2, p. 60. Serbian and Russian special services reported many times on links between UÇK and Al Qaeda, and Osama Ben Laden was involved in financing the Liberation Army of Kosovo. He passed Albanian terrorists 500 to 700 million US dollars. Paul L. Williams, *Al-Kaida. Międzynarodowy terroryzm, zorganizowana przestępczość i nadciągająca apokalipsa*, Poznań 2007, p. 88.

⁴⁴ D. Gibas-Krzak, *Serbsko-albański konflikt o Kosovo. Uwarunkowania – przebieg – Konsekwencje*, Toruń 2009, pp. 178–183.

did not solve the conflict. During the fights UÇK became a conglomerate of various military groups, aim of which was to establish the so-called Great Albania. There were units financed by intelligence services from the USA, Germany, the UK and Croatia. Police actions aimed at Muslim radicals were often followed by arrests, seizure of the rifles and ammunition. According to special services, Kosovo (like Bosnia and Herzegovina) has become an area where terrorists fighting in the Islamic State ranks and on different fields of jihad are recruited. There are theories that they also take part in attacks on civilians in Western Europe.⁴⁵ Recruitment of the White Al Qaeda was a success, as police investigations and special services reports confirmed. According to the American intelligence assessments, in 2004 there were about 6,000 people from Albania, Bulgaria, Macedonia, Kosovo and Bosnia and Herzegovina who had direct or indirect links to Al Qaeda. British antiterrorist units stationing in Sarajevo detected links between terrorists responsible for London attacks of 7 July 2005 and members of Bosnian cells. In 2005 members of the Sarajevo group equipped in explosives were arrested. Also a terrorist group Maximus, Al Qaeda's cell for Northern Europe, active in Sarajevo canton was dismantled. Its leader was 19-year-old citizen of Sweden Mirsad Bektašević. He was responsible for recruitment of young Muslims for bin Laden's net. Terrorists planned to carry out an attack on the EUFOR in Sarajevo. In March 2005 next five suspects were arrested for contacts with Muhammad Porča, a radical imam from Vienna.⁴⁶

The base in the Balkans has been established to enable terrorists to get to Western Europe quicker. Another alarming phenomenon is its radicalisation, building of paramilitary structures, establishing close cooperation with Al Qaeda and other extremist or terrorist organisations. It does not remain a mystery that the Balkans are one of the regions which inhabitants joined terrorist networks of the Islamic State to a large extent. According to the CIA data, as well as other special services from different countries, even hundreds of people could have left the Balkans for Syria and Iraq.⁴⁷ According to the analyses of Israeli special services, Islamic humanitarian organisations are constantly sending funds for Muslims of Bosnian and Albanian origin laying the financial foundations for the future actions of terrorist nature.⁴⁸ Bosnian security services assessed that there can be about 3,000 armed Islamists in the country.⁴⁹

⁴⁵ *Džihadisti iz BiH. Ako BiH uđe u EU, mnoga vrata će nam biti otvorena* (2016), <http://www.nezavisne.com/novosti/bih/Dzihadisti-iz-BiH-Ako-BiH-udje-u-EU-mnoga-vrata-ce-nam-bit-otvorena/353577>, [access: 25 III 2018].

⁴⁶ K. Izak, *Radykalny islam na Balkanach źródłem konfliktów społecznych i terrorystycznego zagrożenia dla Europy*, „Przegląd Bezpieczeństwa Wewnętrznego” 2013, no. 9, p. 54.

⁴⁷ K. Karnowski, *ISIS pokonane. Upadł ostatni bastion Państwa Islamskiego w Syrii*, 4.11.2017, <https://wiadomosci.wp.pl/isis-pokonane-upadl-ostatni-bastion-panstwa-islamskiego-w-syrii-6184061996299905a>, [access: 12 IV 2018].

⁴⁸ *Lieberman: Balkans the next target of Worldwide Jihad*, 6.01.2010, <http://serbianna.com/news/archives/3788>, [access: 12 IV 2018].

⁴⁹ *Bosnia: 3,000 militants pose grave security threat*, 13.07.2010, <http://www.adnkronos.com/AKI/English/Security/?id=3.1.677269022>, [access: 12 IV 2018].

Radical Islamists actions still pose a serious threat to security, the example of which is the attack on the American Embassy in Sarajevo perpetrated by Mevlid Jašarević on 28 October 2011 under the slogan of revenge for Gaddafi.⁵⁰ In January 2015 during the Charlie Hebdo attack in Paris there was weapon and ammunition from Bosnia and Herzegovina used. In November 2015 in the suburbs of Sarajevo two Bosnian soldiers were killed by a member of Wahhabi sect. The same year near Mostar, there was a car bomb attack in which the head of corps staff in Military Forces of Bosnia and Herzegovina, General Anto Jeleč travelled. In 2016 Bakir Izetbegović, a former member of the Presidium of the Republic of Bosnia and Herzegovina assessed during the Organisation of the Islamic Cooperation summit in Istanbul that his country suffers from a syndrome of religious extremism development combined with the instances of terrorist acts.⁵¹ One could make a hypothesis that other terrorists are likely to prepare next attacks aimed against US diplomatic missions, against NATO bases or military forces of Bosnia and Herzegovina sent in order to take part in operations abroad. One should not be astonished by the popularity of fundamentalist movements and increase in the number of their supporters in Bosnia and Herzegovina. There are approximately 100 000 believers and followers of radical Islam movements in the country who are waiting for the chance to prove that they are true Muslims. And they are able to do it in very drastic and radical way.⁵² Bosnian sources claim that nowadays Muslim extremists take part in the military trainings in the town of Mahnjača on the border of Teslić commune in the republic of Serbia and Zenica commune in the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina.⁵³ New studies also indicate that new training camps for fundamentalists are being established. The most important ones located in Bosnia and Herzegovina are in the town of Ošve, 250 km from Belgrade, Dubnica (as the centre of jihadists) and Jezera which was bought by Wahhabi sect. In Serbia there is also Furkan centre in Novi Pazar where volunteers for fights in Syria and other jihad battlefields are recruited.⁵⁴

Impacts of Islamic terrorists in Bulgaria, Albania, Macedonia and Greece

Not only the countries of the so-called Western Balkans have experienced this dangerous phenomenon of Islamic terrorism linked to radical Islam movements. In Bulgaria almost one sixth out of the total number of 7,1 million inhabitants are Muslims who are Sunni believers. For the last 20 years the country was able to keep ethnical

⁵⁰ S. Mišljenović, *Vehabija iz Novog Pazara pucao na ambasadu SAD*, 28 X 2011, <http://www.novosti.rs/vesti/planeta.70.htm>, [access: 12 IV 2018].

⁵¹ F. Alispahić F., *Posrbljavanje bošnjačkog liderstva*, „Preporodov Journal” 2016, p. 40.

⁵² *Egipćanin okuplja vehabije u BiH*, 21 V 2011, http://www.rtv.rs/sr_lat/region/egipcanin-okuplja-vehabije-u-bih_254995.html, [access: 12 IV 2018].

⁵³ Ibidem.

⁵⁴ *Ako nas Srbija ne spasi terorizma, onda smo načisto propali*, 24.08.2015, <https://www.fokus.ba/vijesti/globus/ako-nas-srbija-ne-spasi-terorizma-onda-smo-nacisto-propali/100222/>, [access: 12 IV 2018].

balance although the expansion of Wahhabism is also seen there. Since the mid-1990s significant amounts of money were allocated for more than 150 new mosques and the so-called “educational centres”, aimed at spreading Wahhabi ideas.⁵⁵ There are 1050 mosques in the country and new ones are built mostly with the money from Saudi charity organisations. They also finance scholarships of Bulgarian students in religious schools in Saudi Arabia and Jordan.⁵⁶ The authorities try to suppress fundamentalist tendencies and in many cases these activities are successful. In 2003 a few Islamic centres, financed mainly by Saudis, were closed. Nevertheless, the researchers claim that the number of fundamentalist centres and madrassas teaching Wahhabi rules is increasing, particularly in the south and north-eastern Bulgaria (Plovdiv, Kazanlak, Velingrad, Bilka, Razgrad). At the same time the most dangerous is that some schools controlled by Islamic radicals are not subjected to any state control.⁵⁷

Only some Balkan countries are able to take effective counter-terrorist measures. Albania remains an exception; its authorities have been effectively cooperating with Western European and American institutions fighting Islamic terrorism for a long time. And it seems that their effectiveness can be a good example for other countries of the region. One of the most spectacular examples of such policy was an action carried out by special services and the police between 2004 and 2006. It was to suppress a sedition of a Saudi businessman Yasin Abdullah al Khadi, who had been cooperating with Al Qaeda and other terrorist organizations. He was running his business in Tirana and he was a leader of a charity organization and that made it easier for him to support terrorists as well as to assist in establishing local Islamist centres. At the same time a group of fundamentalists suspected of financing terrorism and taking part in Egyptian Islamic Jihad was removed from Albania.⁵⁸

Nevertheless, there is an alarming situation in Macedonia nowadays where growing radical Islam currents contribute to the split in Muslim societies. In an officially running Islamic Religious Community one can perceive a struggle for power between moderate representatives of the main stream and a branch of Wahhabis, who fight for the influence and money among themselves. In this case religious divisions are related to ethnic divisions, which are not beneficial to the state stability but they only generate further tensions and threat to security.⁵⁹ It should be stressed that the radicalisation of Muslim society took place along with the collapse of communist Yugoslavia in this territory. In January 1992 Albanians from Macedonia voted in favour of setting up an autonomous republic of Illiryda. Following the separatists from Kosovo they started to create illegal organisational structures including schools and universities. After

⁵⁵ *Balkany coraz bardziej islamskie*, <https://euroislam.pl/balkany-coraz-bardziej-islamskie/?print=print>, [access: 12 IV 2018].

⁵⁶ K. Izak, *Leksykon organizacji i ruchów...*, p. 525.

⁵⁷ *Balkany coraz bardziej...* <https://euroislam.pl/balkany-coraz-bardziej-islamskie/?print=print>, [access: 12 IV 2018]. *Terrorism in the Balkans...*, pp. 8–9.

⁵⁸ K. Izak, *Leksykon organizacji i ruchów...*, p. 521.

⁵⁹ I. Stawowy-Kawka, *Miejsce ludności muzułmańskiej w Macedonii – przemiany i perspektywy*, „Prace Komisji Środkowoeuropejskiej PAU” 2014, vol. XXII, p. 135.

the Kosovo War in 1999 political aspirations of Albanians increased. They started to demand the status of equivalent nation in Macedonia and annexation of border regions to Albania. In 2000 a Macedonian branch of the Liberation Army of Kosovo triggered incidents on the borders of Macedonia and Kosovo. There was a rebellion of the Liberation Army of Kosovo in spring 2001. On 15 March 2001 Albanians attacked Tetovo. Islamic fundamentalists also took part in the rebellion and they were supported by Kosovars, who had not been disarmed by international forces. The offensive of Macedonian troops led to the withdrawal of the separatists to the border areas but fights were ceased after the diplomatic intervention of the West.⁶⁰

Macedonian authorities unwillingly admit to the threat posed by the radical Islam although facts seem to confirm the threat. In 2007 three Albanian brothers from Macedonia together with a Jordanian, Turk and Albanian from Kosovo, all living in the USA, were supposed to take part in preparations of the attack on Fort Dix, American military base in New Jersey. In May 2010 four extremists transporting weapon were killed in a police action near Skopje.⁶¹ Although Macedonia belongs to international coalition of countries fighting with terrorism, it cannot be dispensed from tracing and responding to any possible terrorist activity. Moderate Muslims admit that at present five mosques in Skopje are under control of Wahhabis, despite the fact that the Islamic Religious Society banned Ramadan Ramadani (alleged leader of the movement) from organizing services and serving as imam in Isa Beg mosque in Skopje. While seeking followers to overthrow present authorities of the Islamic Religious Society, Ramadani rejected accusations of radicalism and denied the reports of any threats from Islamic political and religious movements.⁶²

According to Ioannis Michaletos, Greece lying in the Balkans between Turkey and Northern Africa, located in the Mediterranean, not distant from the Black Sea and the Middle East is an important transit zone for international terrorism and it serves as a corridor for jihadists. Greece is also a convenient place for the attacks of lone wolves who can act immediately and in a spontaneous way without any need of tight links to terrorist nets. Lone wolves seem to constitute the next mainstream in modern terrorism, particularly dangerous for Greece which is vitally important from a tourist's perspective.⁶³ Between 2015 and 2016 a huge wave of immigrants flooded Greece and went further to Europe. At the same time a new group of non-governmental organization emerged in order to help refugees. However, among them there were many organisations connected to different fractions of political Islam such as Islamic Relief Worldwide, which closely cooperated with terrorist net established by the Muslim Brotherhood. It rooted in Greece as an organization helping migrants, although in November 2014 it was officially recognized as terrorist

⁶⁰ A. Koseski, *Główne problemy transformacji w Republice Macedonii (1991–2000)*, [in:] *Transformacja systemowa w krajach Europy Środkowej, Wschodniej i Południowej 1989–2002*, ed. T. Godlewski, A. Koseski, K.A. Wojtaszczyk, Bydgoszcz – Pułtusk 2003, p. 160.

⁶¹ K. Izak, *Leksykon organizacji i ruchów...*, p. 525.

⁶² *Balkany coraz bardziej islamskie...*, <https://euroislam.pl/balkany-cora-bardziej-islamskie/?print=print>, [access: 12 IV 2018].

⁶³ The so called *lone wolves* can be dangerous for other Balkan countries as well.

organization by the United Arab Emirates. The organization financed for example Hamas and in July 2014 authorities of the US Missouri State stated that the local, American branch of the organisation transferred 1,4 million US dollars to terrorists in Iraq and Afghanistan. Furthermore, Russian special services indicated that Islamic Relief tends to sponsor Caucasian jihadists. The Greek analyst identified also other linked to Islamic terrorism organisations, which are active on a Greek island of Lesbos, i.e. Al Muntada Trust and One Nation NGO. The first finances Nigerian extremists, the second provides weapons to Syria and is linked to Turkish organisations known for supplying the ISIS with weaponry. It also maintains contacts with Al Qaeda.⁶⁴

Conclusions

According to different intelligence assessments in the so-called Western Balkans there are about a few thousand people linked to Al Qaeda and other terrorist organisations. The leaders are identified and to a large extent the same also applies to the names of the members of such organisations for example Sahid Emir Musa Aiza (veteran of the Afghan war) who are responsible for the recruitment of Slavic people of Islamic faith. Such young people are found mainly in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Macedonia, Kosovo and Sandžak. Ayman az-Zawahiri is regarded as the main leader of terrorist underground in the Balkans. The number of mujahideen fighters, who had come there during the war, undoubtedly decreased. But their followers were left there which contributed to the fact that the Balkans became popular among many terrorist organisations and they also became an arena of struggles for power and influences of different Muslim countries. International situation was also favourable because many Balkan countries has not been able to cope with numerous internal problems of social and economic nature since the Cold War. There is high unemployment, economic stagnation, local politicians focused more on struggle for power and fuelling ethnic and religious conflicts rather than on necessary reforms. It all generates frustration in the young generation that do not see any perspectives. Therefore, its representatives are “an easy prey” for recruiters from terrorist organisations.⁶⁵

One cannot ignore the aspect of natural environment, which is beneficial to terrorists. Training camps and bases can be inaccessible for special services and the police because of topography. In distant parts of the Balkans, particularly in the mountainous part of the region, there are convenient conditions for the development of modern and global terrorist organisations. This is even more dangerous because the Balkans are one of the most important interfaces between organisations from the Middle East and their goal is the expansion to the Northern and Eastern Europe. One of the most dangerous aspects of this proximity is the development of terrorist net and recruitment

⁶⁴ I. Michaletos, *Contemporary risk assessment of extremism and terrorism in Greece. The case of Islamist-driven security risks in Greece*, [in:] *Terrorism in the Balkans...*, pp. 187–195.

⁶⁵ Vide: *Paradoxes of stabilization. Bosnia and Herzegovina from the perspective of Central Europe*, ed. M. Szpala, OSW Report 2016, no. 2.

of future terrorists, particularly in the form of a “white jihad”. Muslim countries after the civil war in Yugoslavia did not stop financing actions which goal was the promotion of Islam in the region. The financial means come from not only governmental institutions but also from private charity organisations.⁶⁶ There are frequent examples of religious indoctrination in educational institutions in post-Yugoslavian countries, where those children who worship religion other than Islam are discriminated because of that.⁶⁷ Also social networking sites spreading rules of the radical Islam and harsh criticism of Western culture and way of living are becoming more and more popular in the Balkans. These include official websites of radical organisations for instance “Young Muslims” or the websites of Islamic communities. All of these cause that radicalising Islam and its terrorist cells can contribute to the a new conflict in the Balkan powder keg.

Abstract

The author of the article presents a phenomenon of terrorism in the Balkans throughout the 19th, 20th an 21st centuries. She highlights a thesis that specific phenomenon of terrorism in the region requires additional studies, mostly of heuristic nature. Among the types of Balkan terrorism there is terrorism connected to national and liberation movements and political terrorism. Furthermore, terrorist actions in Romania and Bulgaria, terrorism of the Ustashe and terrorism of the anti-Yugoslav emigration and other its forms have been indicated. A particular attention has been paid to terrorism connected to extreme streams of Islam, which appeared in the Balkans as the aftermath of the civil war (1992–1995). In the post-Cold War era Islamic terrorism in the Balkans is linked to a growth of influences of Muslim fundamentalists. The author proves a thesis that due to their topography the Balkans create a great possibility for the development of training camps and bases for terrorists linked to a global jihad. It poses a threat to the security of Europe and its democratic societies because of the probability of inciting a conflict, not only on a local but also broader, even non-European scale.

Keywords: international terrorism, Balkans, political terror, Islamic fundamentalism, Wahhabi sects, net of a global jihad.

⁶⁶ V. Janková, *Wahhabism in the Balkans. The case study of Bosnia and Herzegovina*, Praha 2014, p. 72.

⁶⁷ *Ibidem*.