

WAHHABISM IN THE BALKANS – ISLAMIC THREAT OR THREAT TO THE ISLAM

ВАХАБИЗМОТ НА БАЛКАНОТ – ИСЛАМСКА ЗАКАНА ИЛИ ЗАКАНА ЗА ИСЛАМОТ

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АПСТРАКТ: Во пост-конфликтната атмосфера на Балканот вахабизмот почна да се шири (на почетокот - срамежливо и со незабележителен бројот на членови кои со времето почна да расте и да го збогатува екстремното Балканско милје). Ако пред десет години неговите следбеници не можеа да пополнат повеќе од еден ред на верници во џамиите (нивното место беше во последните редови), денес сликата драстично се промени во нивна полза. Ситуацијата брзо се менува од ден на ден, нивниот број во одредени области се зголемува со аритметичка прогресија која создава нив можност да станат доминантни групи и на тој начин тивко да ги "окупираат" џамиите во повеќе балкански градови.

Со брзиот пораст на нивната структура, се зголемија нивните амбиции и цели, но, исто така, се зголеми и нивната агресија и агресивна реторика, радикализација на нивните цели, со што се отвора патот кон насилство и тероризам на нивните екстремни и радикални јадра. Како илустрација на нивните насилни дејствија во овој труд ќе се потенцираат голем број на интересни настани поврзани со безбедноста кои се случиле во последните години на територијата од Босна до Македонија.

Клучни зборови: закана, тероризам, вахабизам, Балкан.

ABSTRACT: In the post-conflict atmosphere of the Balkans the Wahhabism began to spread (at the beginning - shyly and with unremarkable number of members which in time began to grow and enrich its extreme Balkan milieu). If ten years ago its followers could not fill more than one row of believers in the mosques (their place was in the final rows), today the image has drastically changed in their favor. The situation is rapidly changing day by day, their numbers in certain areas are increasing with arithmetic

progression which creates the opportunity for them to become the dominant groups and thus to quietly "occupy" the mosques in more Balkan cities.

With the rapid increase of their structure, they have increased their ambitions and goals, but also their aggression and aggressive rhetoric, the radicalization of their goals, which opens the way to violence and terrorism of their extreme and radical nuclei. As an illustration of their violent actions in this paper will emphasize a number of interesting events related to the safety that have occurred in the recent years in the territory from Bosnia to Macedonia.

Key words: threat, terrorism, wahhabism, Balkan.

INTRODUCTION

Although Wahhabism is considered as a relatively new sect or occurrence by many analysts and scholars, its arch-beginnings should be searched in the early 18th century, or more specifically in the teachings of Muhammad ibn Abdul Wahhab (1703-1792). The term "Wahhabi" that is used today in the modern terminology comes from the Turkish language, but its original roots are found in the Arabic term "Wahabiyyah" which in modern language is used to denote the followers of the Arab learning of its creator and a great reformer of the Islam, Wahhab - who broke with the new innovations that were untypical of the Islam and its roots.

His followers claim for themselves that they continue the tradition and the path of Salaf al-Salih (pious ancestor) from the first generation of Muslims and that is why they call themselves "Sefafi" or "Early Muslims".

After the bloody Balkan conflicts which took part at the end of the last century, Bosnia became the most fertile soil in which the Islamist fundamentalist movement will root and start spreading in parts of Montenegro, Sandzak, Kosovo, parts of Serbia, Albania and Macedonia - the largest Balkan's hotspots of the Islamic fundamentalism and radicalism.

WAHHABI MOVEMENT IN BOSNIA AND HERCEGOVINA (BiH)

In this context, the most sobering event for the Balkan politicians and safety experts was the attack on the police station in Bugojno (which had a tragic epilogue). This event awoke the Bosnian government which despite the information for the existence of strong Wahhabi movement positioned in the village of Upper Maocha, remained quite inert and took no concrete measures to eliminate the safety threats with religious background.

Immediately after the terrorist attack, the government of Bosnia and Herzegovina admitted that there 3000 Wahhabi acting at the territory of their country.

Also, the safety situation in the town of Maglaj was drastically worsened as a result of the rise of radical Islam in the town. The result of their increasing activity was a series of incidents and activities in which the main actors were from the ranks of the aggressive Wahhabi movement in this part of Bosnia and Herzegovina.

The Wahhabi movement and the Islamic fundamentalism in Bosnia seriously started infiltrating in the territory of the Republic of Serbia as well, especially in the Rashka – Sandzak region.

WAHHABI MOVEMENT IN THE AREA OF RASHKA AND EXPANSION ACROSS EUROPE

The beginnings of the Wahhabi movement in the area of Rashka are closely related to Senica and Alia Mahmutovich, coordinator of the Wahhabi community in the Rashka area. The Wahhabi propaganda by Alia Mahmutovich started in 1993, after he returned from his pilgrimage in Saudi Arabia. He formed a special committee in the Islamic religious community for Wahhabis. This was the first step to start the missionary work for the networking of Wahhabism in the Rashka area. (Ahmed, 2000: 95).

The propagation of Wahhabism as a matrix (which will be shown later) started with verbal and physical harassment of believers and imams in the mosques and outside of them. As soon as the war in Bosnia and Herzegovina ended, there were more favorable conditions to strengthen the foundations of the movement, particularly in terms of enhanced coordination between the Wahhabis and mujahedin groups that existed in Bosnia and Herzegovina. The information in the media indicated that many of the Wahhabis in Rashka completed training in mujahideen camps and then engaged in global terrorist trends.

The further actions of the movement were directed towards recruiting people, indoctrinating and strengthening the movement in every sense. With the purpose of drawing the attention of the public, on 25.09.2010 in Senica they organized a column of a dozen of cars waving the mujahedeen flag and shouting "We love Bosnia" and "Sandzak is Bosnia" (Ahmed, 2000: 115).

The largest and most frequent gatherings occurred at the mosque "Valida", the oldest and central mosque in Senica. According to the estimates, Senica had around 150-200 people (men), and together with their families (women and children) this number increased significantly. Out of this number, 40 members can be pointed out as "hard core" members.

In Novi Pazar the Wahhabi "cell" began its operation in the late 1999 and soon after that, the number of members began to increase. The spiritual authority and organizer

in this initial phase was a citizen of Novi Pazar who completed his studies at the Faculty of Theology in Saudi Arabia.

Since there were a large number of incidents at the mosques, the members of the Novi Pazar Wahhabi movement began demonstrating their fundamentalist and Islamic aspirations elsewhere.

On 10 February 2002 there was a protest against the publication of cartoon of the Prophet Muhammad in Denmark. They were shouting "Allah ekber" and burned a number of flags of those countries which, in their opinion, were their biggest enemies - USA, Israel and Denmark.

The entire event was strikingly reminiscent of similar events that took place in Afghanistan, Lebanon and Palestine. The extremist activities were complemented by systematic attacks on cars in the outskirts of the town. In their opinion, in these attacks the "lechers" were beaten and tortured. None of the cases was reported to the police for fear that the Wahhabis and the possible compromise in the public. There is an interesting fact related to catching of the thieves who tried to enter the gold store "Dukat" in Novi Pazar by the Wahhabis. Until the police arrived the Wahhabis cut the arm to one of the thieves, the arm with which he tried to steal the gold.

The public is familiar with the case of "Balkanika", a band that was supposed to hold a concert in Novi Pazar and whose instruments were all broken prior to the concert by the Wahhabis, under the pretext that this kind of music was not in accordance with the Islamic norms.

Through all these incidents in which the greatest possible extremism was expressed, the Wahhabi movement was rising with great confidence. This number of incidents is not final, there were such a large number of them and they had such intensity that the other believers asked the Islamic Religious Community to prohibit the entrance of Wahhabis in the mosques. This initiative was rejected on the pretext that believers can not be rejected. The real reasons for rejecting this initiative were certainly different. In essence, the first reason was of related to finances since the financial centers that supported the Wahhabi movement largely financed the Islamic Religious Community of Sandzak as well.

The reason for the intensity in the use of extreme force of Novi Pazar's Wahhabis should be searched primarily in the Islamic ideology of Jihad as a means of establishing an Islamic state as the structure and organization of the community. This movement, unlike the others, was criminal and included individuals who were "former" fighters, drug dealers, pimps etc. Because of these and other reasons the Novi Pazar Wahhabis relatively quickly advanced to the path of terrorism. When the police teams were checking for operational information, on 16 March 2007 near Ninaj Mountain in the village of Zabren (near the

Kosovo border) they found a terrorist camp which was a confirmation that the Novi Pazar's Wahhabis took the path of global terrorism. The camp also had a hiding place for weapons, ammunition and a large number of propaganda material and video clips. The police arrested four Wahhabis found near the camp and they were accused of terrorism, illegal possession of weapons and membership in foreign terrorist groups.

WAHHABI MOVEMENT IN KOSOVO

The beginnings of the Wahhabi movement in the area of Kosovo can be traced at the end of the last century, especially in the duration of the Serbian - Kosovo conflict when a considerable number of mujahideen were fighting for UCK. After the end of the war activities (as was the example in Bosnia) part of them remained in Kosovo and infiltrated deeply into the local population.

The radical Wahhabi movement in Kosovo did not find strong support among the citizens, yet the biggest reason for concern is the information about their growing membership - a tendency that is typical and characteristic of all analyzed countries.

The original purpose of the movement is "confrontation" with the regular ICM in Kosovo. A parallel goal with this "campaign for conquering the hearts and souls of the true Muslims" is to carry out continuous attacks over the new Kosovo institutions (declared as pro-Western) and to reduce the influence of the EULEX mission in Kosovo. In this context we should point out the operation of a Wahhabi group consisting of around 15 people who "operates" in Kosovska Mitrovica.

In Kosovo, a group of five members was arrested (who are considered to be Wahhabis) suspected of planning armed attacks and incitement to hatred. Among the arrested in the group there were Kosovo Albanians and Bosnians who were perceived at a gathering of Sunni religious extremists in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

WAHHABI MOVEMENT IN THE REPUBLIC OF MACEDONIA

The Kosovo crisis in 1999 and the conflict in the Republic of Macedonia in 2001 significantly contributed to the radicalization of ethnic Albanians and opened the way for networking of the extreme - radical Islamic teachings and the rapid infiltration of Islamic fundamentalism and Wahhabi movement in our country. Since 2001 there has been an increasing number of expert reporting on the presence of Islamist extremists in the region (Binh)) and in the Republic of Macedonia. According the analyses based on some studies, in the region and in Macedonia there is presence of several groups, three of which are the most extreme: Tarikat, Black Rose and the Wahhabi (Morrison, 2008: 110). The Republic of

Macedonia and the region are most affected by the presence and rapid penetration of Wahhabis who are continually winning new "spaces" for their activities.

The ethnic composition of the Wahhabi movement in Macedonia is dominated by representatives of the Albanian population, but members of other ethnic communities are noted as well, such as the Macedonian Muslims, the Bosnians and an insignificant number of Turks. The Wahhabi movement is mainly concentrated in the Skopje region, in the rural parts of Northwestern Macedonia (characteristic of the poor illiterate population with strong religious affiliation) in the Northern parts of the Republic that border with Kosovo - Kumanovo, Tetovo and Gostivar. Their networking continues in the regions of Struga, Debar and Kichevo, but their presence has also been marked in Radovish, Prilep, and partially in Resen and Ohrid (early beginnings). Among their major leaders are the Albanians from the Skopje region that maintain strong connections not only with Kosovo, but with certain Arabic countries as well. In the stage of their positioning in the religious landscape of the Republic of Macedonia, their efforts are completely focused on taking control over the major mosques in Skopje and over the Islamic Religious Community. Indirectly, it is a sign of a subtle struggle to achieve domination over the Muslim population and a quiet struggle to increase the gap of distrust between the Macedonian and Albanian communities in the Republic of Macedonia. The former goal of their action is the radicalization of Muslims, intensifying of their project of "Great Albania" and introducing young believers into the dangerous paths of Jihad, perceived in a negative connotation of its original meaning, thus assuming complete control over the young Islamic population.

In the recent period, ICM was involved several times in dealing with the tensions that rose between the radical Wahhabis and the traditional Sufi Fraction. By its planned, well-organized and aggressive actions they succeed in a relatively short period to evolve from insignificant minority into a dominant category that gained control over the religious life of the Muslims in the country's capital.

With their active support and the persistence of young imams who acquired their education in the Middle East, Saudi Arabia and Syria (and some of them in Istanbul - Turkey), the Wahhabis symbolically took the "supremacy" over the biggest mosque in Skopje - "Yaya Pasha" and today they control the five largest mosques in the city. The ICM saw the red light and were so alarmed by the Wahhabi penetration in the religious objects that they asked for protection by the state.

They had a more marked media promotion in 2006 by organizing protests Skopje and Tetovo. The reason for those protests was to condemn the publication of cartoons of the Prophet Muhammad. This action at the same time transferred part of the religious coloration of the Middle East into the streets of Skopje, which in its turn, marked the first

public promotion of events of this kind in the Republic of Macedonia (similar promotions had occurred in some areas which during the Crisis of 2001 where under "mujahedeen protection"). With this act, the Wahhabis publicly showed their presence in a symbolic way, by following an already familiar matrix, as seen in Bosnia, Sandzak and Kosovo. With their presence they also wanted to send a message that the capital has been transformed in their center in the Republic of Macedonia.

In 2002, the local Wahhabis were reinforced by fighters from the Arab countries. In a violent manner and with use of weapons, they occupied the main religious building in Tetovo - Tekje. This violent act was the culmination of a confrontation process with the group Sufizi - Bektashi, a group whose members were mainly in Tetovo and had long tradition of acting in this region. Their mutual animosity was initiated by the diametrically different approach in the interpretation and practice of the Islam and that was an introduction to the struggle between different Islamic groups in Macedonia. Since then, the Wahhabis have been using Tekje in Tetovo to perform their religious rituals (Scwartz, 2007: 11-12).

Based on all studies published that deal with this phenomenon in the Balkans and Macedonia we can conclude the following essential goals and methods of action:

- The Wahhabi aggressive agenda is primarily focused on indoctrinating, selecting and recruiting young Muslims
- The age range of their target group include boys between the age of 16 and 20 (and older categories).
- The process of selection and safety assessment of candidates includes analysis of their financial situation, the level of intellectual ability, resourcefulness and loyalty;
- The process of their encouragement and "cleansing" in order for them to accept the Wahhabi style of living and thinking unconditionally;
- The process of parallel introduction to the glory, courage and life of the mujahideen and their struggle to accomplish their universal goals (getting familiar with their "international struggle" in Bosnia, Chechnya, Iraq, Afghanistan, etc.)
- Following the selection of candidates, the best of them are sent to be educated abroad at the universities in Saudi Arabia, Syria and Egypt (and elsewhere) to study the Islam;
- Part of the "selected" candidates are sent to the well-known training camps for terrorist training;
- After completing the terrorist training, they are actively involved in the crisis regions across world or in putting into effect the terrorist acts primarily in Europe and USA, but also in other parts of the world.

The extensive and growing infiltration of the Wahhabis in the Republic of Macedonia shortly after became the subject of scientific interest of many experts studying the phenomenon of terrorism.

In 2004 the French terrorism expert Claude Monet already brought out his findings that some leaders of the Islamic Community receive significant amounts of financial funds, possibly from al-Qaeda. In addition, he pointed out that the Wahhabis tend to take control over the IRC (Islamic Religious Community) by using that money. Monet also warned that there are around 100 fundamentalists linked to terrorist organizations that operate in Macedonia (Deliso, 2006: 6). To our knowledge, in 2001 and 2002 there were about 550 fundamentalists operating on the territory of the Republic of Macedonia. Some of these mujahedeen operated individually, while some took part in the terrorist group ANA (in total, about one-sixth of the total composition of ONA – the National Liberation Army).

Their organization, positioning and intense activity began in 1990 through the formation of a significant number of Islamic relief agencies. During 1998 they started to transfer the so-called "triplets" of KLA in the Republic of Macedonia with the purpose to set off explosives in several cities. One of the main organizers of these activities was educated in Syria and Jordan and had contacts with many people from the Republic of Macedonia who acted in favor of the Islamic fundamentalism.

During the conflict in the Republic of Macedonia in 2001 the participation of mujahedeen groups was registered in all crisis areas. In the Kumanovo-Lipkovo region the Mujahideen unit called "Imran Elezi" (around 120 people) acted independently, meaning it was not included in the organizational structure of the 113th Brigade of the so-called ONA. In this region, the mujahedeen groups were located in the villages of Slupchane, Matejche Vishtica, Vaksince, Otlja and Lipkovo (MVR, 2002: 4).

In the Skopje crisis region, the mujahedeen took part in the armed activities in the villages of Tanushevci, Brest, Malino maalo and Arachinovo.

In the Tetovo crisis region the mujahedeen groups were located in the villages of Bozovce, Vejce, Gajre and Poroj (MVR, 2002: 4) and participated in the execution of the bloody massacres over the members of the Macedonian security forces. In addition, another mujahedeen group was stationed in the Skopje suburb of Gazi Baba. This group had a large amount of weapons and was supposed to provide logistical support to a terrorist group that was eliminated on 7 August 2001, in the same neighborhood.

In the duration of the conflict and after it ended, there remained several groups that were part of the so-called "ANA" (Albanian National Army) in the area of Skopje and its surroundings, as well as in other crisis regions. These groups intended to plan and perform new operations against the Macedonian security forces in Tetovo, Kumanovo and Skopje.

"Within the frames of the so-called "ANA" in the crisis regions it was noted the presence of groups of Mujahedeen (domestic and international politicians and experts in a very hypocritical and insolent manner continuously denied the existence of ANA-author's note). Therefore, in October 2001 approximately 100 mujahideen were located in the village of Lipkovo, around 40 in the village of Otlja and from 35-40 in the village of Matejche, whereas in the village of Dolno Orashje – Tetovo there were between 50 and 60 Mujahedeen (including some from the Arab countries). On 18 and 19 January 2002, a group of mujahedeen (25-30 people) entered in Macedonia from Kosovo and was stationed in the village of Bogovinje (MVR, 2002: 4).

The purpose of this group (as of other "flying groups" that illegally crossed the borders with Kosovo and Albania - author's note) was to carry out monitoring activities and plan the future terrorist actions against the Macedonian security forces, as well as to reorganize and restructure the current "war" formations that were operating in this region.

Their ultimate goal was to restart the conflict from 2001, and not virtually, (because according to the claims of "experts", ANA was a virtual organization existing only on the web pages and the Internet) but rather real with previously developed plans.

One of the recent warnings about the presence of Wahhabism in Macedonia was in the article of 26 March 2010 in the British newspaper the *Sunday Times* in which unambiguously confirms that Saudi Arabia invests in Islamic groups in the Balkans" (The Sunday Times, 2010) and consequently, in the Republic of Macedonia.

But despite the warnings, the Macedonian authorities do not believe that Macedonia is the main target, but instead, they think that Macedonia is only a territory only used for recruiting young Wahhabis and a starting point from which they will carry out the attacks on the Western countries.

Their quick and effective positioning in Macedonia was largely facilitated by the poor economic conditions and the deeply polarized and unstable interethnic relations and, as well as by the free flows of financial funds which through various channels end in the Wahhabi funds.

What is characteristic about their recruiting activities of new members is the recruitment of young Wahhabis with psycho-physical disabilities who in the future should be used as potential "suicide bombers".

The current events in this field from the aspect of national safety are inevitably categorized into the sphere of safety risks from terrorism. This means that on the territory of our country and outside its borders there is a well positioned terrorist collectivity (with its structural elements: major segment, aides, reporters and segments in charge of propaganda, recruitment, logistics and training) who aspire to achieve their ultimate goal.

In this context, it is a dynamic and a preparatory stage which has not yet developed into a direct threat to the country and its vital values, i.e. Into a threat which implies the achievement of all terrorist goals on the territory of the Republic of Macedonia.

Herewith we may emphasize the latest findings related to the increased interest of Wahhabi groups to infiltrate and position within the structures of the Army and Ministry of Interior Affairs (particularly in the special forces), in the sphere of intelligence and counterintelligence services, as well as the findings regarding the increased frequency of military training with the hardcore members of the Wahhabis (especially in the rural centers after the religious rites have ended).

Therefore, the question that arises is whether the Republic of Macedonia, due to their presence on its territory, is turning into "a new nest of Islamic terrorism" together with the other Balkan countries, a nest which will give rise to a brand new, highly dangerous terrorist threat to the Balkans, Europe and beyond.

Although this security threat is still in its latent phase, it is still a "venomous snake" into the core of our society – a snake which is still resting, but will certainly in the end put in its poison (at the first attempt of the potential to make a quick and unpredictable move, trying to protect itself against the incoming threat). At this stage, the Republic of Macedonia is but an "oasis of peace" to this venomous snake, a logistic base or a "safety heaven", a safe route on the way to Europe, but in the next stage in will turn into a highway to hell on a national and international level.

At this stage, both sides are "satisfied" with the established status-quo situation regarding the safety in the country, in which both sides "enjoy" the false and seemingly peaceful situation, up until the moment when one of the sides makes the fatal move. "The day" will not occur until the extremists and fundamentalists strengthen to that extent to which they will transform not only into an Islamist threat, but into a threat to the Islam and a threat to the national safety of the country and even more – a threat to the Islam, but also a threat to the national, regional and international safety.

CONCLUSION

Today when the stabilization process of the post-conflict situation in the Balkans is still far from its full completion, the question that arises is what to do next. The answer to this very complex question is neither simple nor easy, as it is essentially difficult to fight against the world's greatestt evil - the terrorism. Not only that the Balkan terrorist scenarios are not completed, but they are still in the process of being written. What is certain about this Balkan-European terrorist scenario is only one thing - its ending which is bound to be very bloody. This scenario probably seems overly pessimistic; however, the

extent of terrorist links between the terrorists from Islamic countries and their associates in the Balkan countries should finally reveal – present the new growing and long-term threat to the stability of the Balkans and to the democratization process which is at a very critical point at this stage.

We should also point out that there are serious obstacles to the "foreign terrorist and extremist forces" vision to create a state on the Balkans according to their model and "teachings". The greatest and primary obstacle is the large cultural gap that exists between the knowledge and practice of Islam in the Middle East and its manifestations in the Balkans.

However, there are serious indicators showing the strong connections installed and nurtured in the past by the militant groups, particularly their success in the relations with these groups on which they were acting upon, leading to the conclusion that the prospects for terrorist and other forms of illegal activities in the Balkans will increase and become more intense. The process of their intensifying will have negative implications and will pose serious threats to both the countries in the region and to the Western interests, with a high possibility of strengthening even more their irredentist claims for the entire area.

The only thing that needs to be done at this stage is to detect the new and increasing safety threats in a timely manner, and to make solid security analysis and assessments. The second goal that should be simultaneously achieved is that the European and US intelligence – security services focus on the new threats generated by the "terrorist links", in order to minimize the negative consequences and repercussions with no political tactization. The Balkans is a geographical and integral part of Europe, a part which shares its fate and future with the fate and future of Europe.

Today when the whole world is directly or indirectly, more or less involved in the war against terrorism and when the consequences of terrorism become global, the safety of Europe will inevitably depend on the safety conditions in the Balkans. Europe will have to cut all routes of terrorism leading to and from the Balkans. The war against terrorism on a global, regional and national level will last for a very long period of time and this modern evil can be fought against only with joint efforts, which will reduce the consequences from terrorism to minimum.

The countries that were involved in armed conflicts that raged in the past fifteen years in the Balkans have become involved in the vicious circle of armed conflicts and terrorism. It's a perpetual symbiosis of two threats that are mutually supportive, i.e. one successfully paves the way to the other and vice versa. The involvement of these countries into the global terrorist network represents a serious threat that could generate an intensive wave of terrorist activities that may escalate and transform into new and even

more bloody armed conflicts. As long as these "hidden" threats exist, there is a great possibility of renewing the armed conflicts in the still unstable Balkan countries. The Balkans are once again becoming a hostage to a new hegemonic strategy, which is very subtle at this stage, but has a tendency to culminate in the next decade on an international level and in that context, on a regional level - in the Balkan's closed circle of uncertainties and threats.

The conflict and post-conflict situation in the Balkans has created a favorable ground for terrorist networking of al-Qaeda, for its strengthening, positioning and successful execution of new terrorist attacks in the USA, Europe and worldwide. At same time, in the Balkans there is a parallel implementation of the Wahhabi movement and teachings, which has managed to recruit and mobilize a significant number of young people for a relatively short time and to "occupy" the largest Islamic religious buildings in many cities of the Balkans.

The penetration of Wahhabism in the Balkans was a well-planned operation with the purpose of achieving their strategic goals for penetration in Europe.

In the future, we will find the "blond" Balkan extreme Wahhabis in all well-known crisis regions across the world (Islamic hotspots), but they will also be the main perpetrators of the major terrorist attacks in Europe and beyond in the future. The Balkans have become a solid operational and planning basis for preparing and executing the future major and bloody terrorist attacks of Al Qaeda, as well as of the "local" terrorist networks.

The Balkan lessons are quite instructional, particularly to the countries of the region and beyond. Their underestimation in the period to come could further aggravate and complicate the safety conditions in the region and block all democratic processes in the Balkan countries and thus prove a serious obstacle for their successful integration in NATO and the EU.

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