

JIHAD AS A POTENTIAL SECURITY THREAT IN THE WESTERN BALKANS REGION

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Abstract: *Modern terrorism is very often associated with radical Islamist ideology which in the name of Islam uses the methods of jihad, or i.e.holy war. The Western Balkans is an area where such security risks are today perhaps the most present, because this part of Europe, due to the turbulent history of war and always dynamic relations among the Balkan nations, is widely seen as a “powder keg” or the “area of winds of history”. As a result of historical, geopolitical, geostrategic, ethnic and numerous other factors in the Western Balkan today one can find many bases Jihad, which are used for training and preparation of Islamist terrorists for everywhere in the world, but also pose a real threat to the security of the Western countries whose capacity to respond to that kind of threat, after the turbulent and war-torn nineties of the 20th century, is objectively insufficient.*

Keywords: *jihad, the Western Balkans, geopolitical position, geostrategic position, the base station / cell of Jihad*

INTRODUCTION

The issue of contemporary international and regional security can not be considered unless we take into account all relevant potential threats which no longer respect national administrative borders. The nature of threats has changed, and terrorism is a new phenomenon facing the whole world. Modern terrorism is very often associated with radical Islamist ideology which in the name of Islam uses the methods of jihad, or i.e.holy war. As an integral part of it there are more frequent terrorist attacks all over the world. Such operations of radical Islamists aim to instill fear and to intimidate decision makers in legitimate governmental entities, as well as to draw public attention to their existence and their strength.

The wars waged for example in Bosnia and Herzegovina were not a threat to global security in the traditional way, but in a new way threatened the security system at the global level, and planted the seed that continues to strengthen, which refers to the radical Islamist ideas and activities for their use in practice through the use of force. So, these wars were stoked encouraged radical Islamists in their idea of jihad, and enabled them to practice actions that they will later implement around the world in the form of capillary attacks.

Balkan, particularly Western Balkan, is an area where such security risks today are very present. "The history of the Balkan region and relations between its nations caused the widespread perception of the Balkans as a 'spark of eternal unrest' or area 'of border guards on the line worlds', 'gateway to Europe' or 'bastion of Christianity', as the area of Eurasia which, by crossing the Danube and Sava rivers, rises to six Mediterranean seas and connects Europe and the Middle East, representing at the same time as 'East to West' and 'West to East'". [Stevčić, 2016]

In this paper we shall consider the possibility of conducting jihad by radical Islamists as a real threat in the Western Balkans, as well as factors that speak in favor of the fact that this threat must be viewed seriously and act preventively.

GEOPOLITICAL AND GEOSTRATEGIC POSITION OF THE WESTERN BALKANS

Balkan peninsula is a geographical determinant, while the word Balkan is primarily geopolitical and geostrategic determinant that relates to a specific area, which includes Greece, Albania, Bulgaria, Romania, the European part of Turkey and countries of the former Yugoslavia - Serbia, Montenegro, Macedonia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia and Slovenia. This place is characteristic by "ethno-political fragmentation, confrontations and mutual importance of the geographical position of the interests of the great powers. [Talić et al. 2015] "The term Western Balkans has come into use after the secessionist war in the SFRY, and its use is justified by the great geopolitical changes that have occurred in the post-Cold War time in the Balkans. "Today, the concept of "Western Balkans" is the region composed of newly emerging, but so far non-integrated countries of the former Yugoslavia. From the corpus of these countries exempted were Slovenia, and later Croatia as a member of the EU, and Albania was added. Therefore, it is about four poor and neglected states of the ex Yugoslav region - Serbia, Macedonia, Montenegro and Bosnia and Herzegovina, which, as well as Albania, faced with numerous and varied political, economic, social, ethnic, religious and security issues that they have not been able to independently and successfully resolve." [Talić et al. 2015]

Figure 1 shows the position in the Balkan of the Western Balkan area.

Geopolitics is a discipline within political science that is interested in the territorial and political relations between countries in one geographical area, as well as within them, as well as between other territorial and political entities. Geopolitics is engaged in the distribution and the structural organization of political power according to regional or geographical principle, as well as the means and methods for the acquisition and strengthening of state power and the influence of the natural environment, geographical and geopolitical factors on the growing power of the state.

Geopolitical position of a region represents the sum of the natural, political, and economic factors, and it is reflected through the natural potentials, and geodemographic movements and political and cultural factors of the observed region. Geopolitical region of the Balkans encompasses a network of the Mediterranean, the Black Sea and the Caspian Sea and in this Balkan network there appears a kind of geopolitical collectivity, which has historically always been the perfect meeting place for intermingling of interests of big powers. In the current moment, experts and politicians from the Balkans often publicly argue that today Balkan is the area of interest of the USA, and Russia and the European Union, and as such the field, interlaced with numerous, often diametrically opposed interests and aspirations, Balkan has been the focal point of the European security and stability of the region.

The geopolitical importance of the Balkans is reflected in the very wide-spread and broader implication of developments in this area, namely, the impact of the Balkan events is often stretched to Russia, North Africa or the Middle East.



Figure 1. Position of the Western Balkan countries within the Balkan region

Source: <http://scindeks-clanci.ceon.rs/data/pdf/0042-8426/2015/0042-84261505057T.pdf>

With the appearance of new state entities in the Balkans, which in the twentieth century were largely the product of armed conflicts and wars, this geopolitical space is greatly changed, and this had an impact on the growing influence of big powers in far smaller and poorer countries in the Balkan Peninsula. The influence of the United States, which in mi-

litary terms is most usually implemented with the help of NATO, in many countries in this region is very noticeable, and it has often been accompanied and supported by the factor of force or threat of force and the use of force.

The number and structure of the population, as well as ethnic and religious affiliation also affect the geopolitical situation. For the population of the Balkan countries we can give a joint assessment that it is characterized by disproportionate development trend of Christian, Catholic and Orthodox, and Islamic etno-demographic system. For this reason geo-space of the Balkans undoubtedly falls under the influence of the Islamic world. "The greatest significance in this respect has Turkey, which is the most important geopolitical center of the Balkans. It is undisputed economic and military-political giant ... pro-Muslim support from the US / NATO in Bosnia, Kosovo and Metohija, Macedonia and Albania allows Turkey powerful geopolitical influence on the Muslims of the Balkans... Turkey realizes geopolitical ambitions in the direction of integration and connectivity of existing Muslim enclaves in the Balkans." [Sekulović et al. 2004]

If we observe the Republic of Serbia as part of the Balkans, and if one bears in mind the fact that the quality of neighborly interstate relations have a significant impact on the geo-strategic sensitivity of the borders, it can be noted that in this case "even 55% of the borders of the Republic of Serbia is related to geopolitical unstable neighborhood - Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Albania and Macedonia." [Sekulović et al. 2004]

As to the geopolitical position, it is defined as the sum of specific and strategic geographic factors, which affect the positioning of specific states or wider collectivity in geographical terms, such as regions. Balkans lies in the southeastern part of Europe, whose borders are made of natural objects and its unique position connects three continents - Europe, Asia and Africa. This is one of the reasons why the Balkans for centuries have been faced with influences from Europe and Asia.

Natural objects of Balkans, which are resource of geostrategic and military-strategic importance, consist of the Pannonian Plain, the Danube Region, the Strait of Bosphorus and Dardanelles, Aegean Islands, Otranto and the Adriatic port. Furthermore, a considerable potential lies in the directions of Lombard-pannonian, Adriatic-pannonian and Albania-Bulgarian. In contemporary international relations the lines of Western influence was heading towards the east, so that the global Balkans remained a sensitive zone, for which the interest is shown both by the old and new centers of power.

Unfortunately, today we can often hear that the Balkans is the "home of Islamic extremists who are trying to destabilize Europe through their terrorist activities." [Tešić, 2005]

UNDERSTANDING THE PHENOMENON OF JIHAD

Striving to transform all the countries of the world into a single land of Islam - *dar al Islam*, includes activities in the Arab world known as Jihad. The concept of jihad to this day carries with it a number of controversies, it is interpreted in different ways, but most often as a holy war. The missionary objective of Islam is to spread Islam to the area ruled by "infidels", and this objective also includes the constant proof of belonging to Islam even in the declared Muslims. Because of this complexity, which involves actions spread of Islam the term jihad began to be used, to "sublimate all kinds of efforts to strengthen and expand the Islamic religion and the community based on it." [Jevtić, 2001]

Since Jihad has not only its armed form, may be the most acceptable definition of this phenomenon could be the definition given by M. Jevtić: "Jihad can be defined as a system of actions and procedures at individual and collective levels, which Muslims make in order to strengthen the Islamic religion and expand the community of believers." [Jevtić, 2001]

In contemporary public on the global level phenomenon of jihad is mentioned every day, but it is intertwined with different, often wrong and superficial interpretations. After the terrorist attacks on the United States, which were carried out on 11 September 2001, the concept of jihad has been in the center of the constant interest of the world public and the security and political circles. Al Qaeda, the organization that claimed responsibility for the attack on the US, which was the first in history that affected the US territory, in its later actions called for jihad too. Abdul-Salam Faraj, one of the leaders of the group "Jihad" has argued that Islam is a religion of combat, and that armed struggle is the only possible form of jihad. To the group to which he belonged he gave the exclusive right and privilege to judge who threatens their community of believers, and on the basis of that assessment has the right to kill those who threaten Islam.. [Jevtić, 2005] Such ideology and understanding of Islam as a form of combat, as was expected eventually grew into a major security risk at the global level, and the targets, or those that have been estimated as the biggest threat to this ideology of Islam were mostly the United States, NATO, and primarily Israel. However, recent developments and terrorist attacks that are related to jihad testify that today of almost all countries and almost all the inhabitants of the world have become targets.

However, in explaining the phenomenon of Jihad one must not fall into the trap that all Muslims be marked as jihadists and potential terrorists, but also, on the other hand, must not fall into the trap to ignore the religious element as a motivating factor in analyzing terrorist attacks performed as a religious mission.

When analyzing the concept of jihad one cannot bypass definitions that come from the Islamic world, and there is an often quoted notion by Matin-Daftari, a moderate Islamists, former Prime Minister of Iran and professor of public international law who emphasized that "Al-Jihad, translated and known as a holy war, is a struggle undertaken in the path of God to spread the word, spread the Islamic faith based on pure monotheism. Finally, the true goal, the ultimate essence of jihad is peace, a definitive peace for the whole mankind that would be ruled by only one religion." [Jevtić, 2005] Even such a moderate understanding does not hide the ultimate goal, which is the Islamization of the world that should be regulated by Sharia, i.e. the world should be ruled by a single, Islamic law.

In the Muslim world one can hear explanations that jihad can have its peaceful form, but in this case, the goal is the same, and it is global Islamization. Certain peaceful means Jihad certainly has, but because the goal set before it, and this is the Islamization of the world and the structure of the world according to the Shariah, peaceful means are certainly insufficient, because it can not be expected that modern states give up their appliances and their legal order and peacefully accept another organization. Thus, it is wrong and dangerous to forget the ultimate goal of jihad, and forget its combat forms.

Until the attack on the United States on 11 September 2001 there had been a widespread practice both in the public and in professional circles to ignore the danger of the combat side of Jihad. This is often explained by the fact that the Islamic countries, primarily because of oil, came to the big funds which they used to buy also a benevolent view of the idea of Islamization, both in the general public and at official state institutions. The terrorist attack

on New York, therefore, represents a turning point and the beginning of the public to pay attention to all the dangers that the phenomenon of jihad carries.

JIHAD BASES IN THE BALKANS

The war in the former Yugoslavia, specifically in Bosnia and Herzegovina, which took place from 1992 to 1995, were viewed by the Islamist movement, Tehran and Al Qaeda as a good chance to use in order to achieve the objective of creating a foothold for entry of Islamic radicalism toward the center of the European continent, i.e. an initial point for the holy war in Europe and the penetration of Islamic militarism into Europe.

At the head of the Bosnian Muslim authorities at that time was Alija Izetbegovic, President of the Party of Democratic Action, who in 1970 published his "Islamic Declaration", in which, among other things, he stated: "There can be no peace or coexistence between the Islamic faith and non-Islamic faith and non-Islamic institutions. Islamic movement can and must use force as much as possible, because it is morally and numerically strong enough. Not only for the destruction of non-Islamic forces, but also to build a new Islamic nation." [Drecun, 2008] From these words it is clear that the intention was to use the fighting jihad to achieve religious goals. All of this was carried out simultaneously with the construction of a large number of mosques in BiH, together with sending a mass of Muslim youth into high Islamic studies especially in Iran, from where they returned with diplomas of mullah. Bosnian Muslim youth was in a planned and systematized way placed under the strong influence of Islamic extremists and terrorists, many of whom later passed terrorist training and was indoctrinated in Lebanon and Iran. With the return in BiH thus trained and indoctrinated Muslims began with the radicalization of Islam.

Iran, as one of the first ally of Bosnian Muslims in the conflict, advocated the view that the situation in BiH is a good opportunity to check the value of the export strategy of the Islamic Revolution, i.e. World Jihad. Tehran loudly urged other Muslims to help Muslim brothers in Bosnia, which resulted in the arrival of mujahedism in Bosnia-Herzegovina, who were eager for jihad and self-sacrifice in the name of Islam BiH. In the war conditions it was extremely important for creating a base of jihad.

War in BiH has undoubtedly had a distinctly religious character, as evidenced by the fact that within the Muslim units from the beginning of the armed conflict there was a large number of local Islamic religious officials involved. Further, in this area a chance for the implementation and dissemination of its ideas was seen by the organization Al Qaeda, whose leader, later notorious terrorist Bin Laden, at the beginning of the war made an alliance with the Bosnian Muslims. After that, the Bosnian Muslims received assistance from this organization, in the form of money, weapons and sending mujahedeen groups as auxiliary forces.

On the territory of Kosovo and Metohija Shiptar terrorism, together with the characteristics of extreme Albanian separatism, also had another feature, a radical Islamist feature. Much like in Bosnia, in Kosovo and Metohija there were rapidly built new mosques and renewed old, and there was work on the indoctrination of Muslim Youth, which was sent to the radical Islamic centers in the world to be educated and trained in terrorist camps for later operations. In the ranks of the later formed the Kosovo Liberation Army fought the Mujahideen from Islamic countries, who were highly prepared to carry out terrorist attacks on the territory of Kosovo. Also, it is known that Al Qaeda's network in this part of the terri-

tory was very well organized, it has been continuously expanding network of members, and it has become a safe haven and transit point for Islamic extremists and terrorists, and as such is similar to the planning and execution of strong terrorist attacks both in the Balkans, but also in other parts of the world.

The presence of foreign radical Islamic factor in Kosovo is demonstrated by numerous facts. One of these data is the one that in 1995, when there were already set up bases for logistical and financial support from Al-Qaeda organization in Albania, there was a meeting in which, along with former President Sali Berisha, then head of the secret police of Albania Bashkim Gazidede (on that occasion was selected for one of the heads of the Al Qaeda Balkan area), Hashim Tachi and Haradinaj, was attended by Osama bin Laden himself, who organized this meeting in order to establish Al Qaeda cells in the area of Kosovo and Metohija." [Trifunović et al. 2011]

In this way, by the inclusion of radical Islamists from other countries, who were extremely well trained warriors and terrorists, in Kosovo and Metohija there were also created radical Islamic experts, i.e. another outpost base of jihad was created. As Kosovo today is still an unresolved issue both in political and in many other respects, the risk of the presence of trained advocates of radical jihad becomes even more serious.

Macedonia, as another emerging country in the former Yugoslavia, ethnically and religiously diverse, also proved insufficiently strong to resist penetration and influence of radical Islamist forces that advocated jihad as a means of achieving their goals. Macedonian Muslims are ethnically very mixed and belong to Albanians, Turks, Bosniaks, Macedonians and Roma, so the Islamic community as such is burdened by conflict within their own ranks, primarily due to the expressed aspirations of Albanization and politicization of the Muslim population by Albanian political parties. Because of all this, modern Macedonia faces a huge test of whether it will be, as a relatively new and young country, able to resist such threats to security of both Macedonia, but also the wider region.

Albania is a known and recognized center of Al-Qaeda operation in the Balkans. Financing of their activity was also carried out according to the tested model, i.e. funding through the so-called charitable organizations.

"In Albania there are about 15,000 people along with their families, which are estimated to be Islamic radicals that can be mobilized in a very short time. Through Islamic non-governmental organizations Al-Qaeda has successfully connected its network in Kosovo, in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Macedonia and Albania into a single Balkan Jihad base, to which we should also add the structures that are created in the south of Central Serbia and Sandzak." [Drecun, 2008]

Further, Montenegro, as an integral part of the Balkans, particularly in recent years has not been spared from the operations of the radical Islamic factor, i.e. it is not exempt from danger of jihad. This phenomenon in Montenegro corresponded to the war in Bosnia and Herzegovina, when it was not uncommon for Montenegrin radical Muslims to be involved in armed conflicts in BiH, in order to, together with the Bosnian mujahideen and the mujahideen of Afro-Asian origin, fight against "infidels", displaying very often religious fanaticism. Radical Islamist element is still present in this country, it is financed in the same way as other cells of Jihad in the Balkans, it indoctrinates the local Muslim youth and is a serious potential threat to regional security.

Sandzak today i.e. Rasko-Polimska area includes five municipalities in Montenegro (Bijelo Polje, Rozaje, Plav, Pljevlja and Berane) and six municipalities in Serbia (Novi Pazar, Sjenica, Tutin, Nova Varos, Prijepolje i Priboj). This area is highly multiethnic and it has the single largest Slovenian Muslim community in the Balkans outside of Bosnia and Herzegovina. In this area there began the formation of a strong Islamist extremist network after the end of the war in BiH, on the territory of Macedonia and Kosovo. This area is characterized by the paramilitary organization of radical Islamists since the early nineties, and the parallel construction of a large number of mosques. These radical Islamists, known as Wahhabis, argue for a jihad against the infidels and their operations are much more organized than the general public can imagine. "The most important goal of violent or "military" operations that the Wahhabis want to achieve is the creation of" Islamic state of Sandzak, "which would include parts of Serbia and Montenegro, was based on Sharia law and annexed the Muslim Bosnia." [Trifunović, 2011] In this light, Novi Pazar, which is the center of the area, is now perceived by many as the most radical Islamist place in the world. Jihad is there a real threat to security, especially having in mind the fact that the Sandzak Wahhabis have been continuously arming themselves and undergoing military training and ideological indoctrination. This network, which is still growing has the option of performing terrorist and paramilitary activities, and in front of them they have a clearly defined goal to strengthen the unique Jihad base in the Balkans to serve for the transfer of radical Islamist activities into Western Europe.

VULNERABILITY OF THE WESTERN BALKANS TO JIHAD AS A MODERN SECURITY THREAT

"Jihad, the holy war and the means to spread the ideology of radical Islamism as a global phenomenon has not bypassed the Balkan region." Its geographical location, historical legacy and current social and political processes that are carried out in this area indicate the potential for creating a solid foundation for the operation of the radical Islamists, which could exceed the regional boundaries." [Stevčić, 2016]

Events of recent history and armed conflicts in the Balkans, especially in the former Yugoslavia, as well as a global advancement of radical Muslim campaign led to the current situation that the radical Islamic action, or jihad as a means to spread Islam found fertile ground in the Balkan states. In support of this is the phenomenon that the Balkan countries are increasingly recruiting followers of radical Islamists war conflicts in Syria and Iraq."

Balkan countries had long been under Ottoman rule, which from this area officially left after uprisings and wars in the 19th and 20th centuries, but traces of Ottoman rule and the influence of Islam is something that remains a reality that and is now present in most of the Balkan countries. After the liberation and the creation of small independent states, the Balkan countries were trying to join the European mainstream, but that in their case was not and still is not an easy effort, especially due to uncertainty of the political elite in these efforts, as well as the heavy burden inherited from the past, which is related to a collision of various ethnic and religious groups in this area.

The rest of Europe, which due to such historical circumstances viewed the Balkans as the gate of Islam and the Ottoman Empire, today also with great caution perceives the

Balkan states and peoples as an equal part of Europe and the European family of nations. However, “many issues of global importance have their regional reflection in the Balkans, where they were imbued with complex relations that govern the different segments of the Balkan countries. One such issue is the phenomenon of radical Islamism, which, at least in the broader public opinion, has been actualized in the last few decades.” [Stevčić, 2016]

Radical Islamism as an ideology that is present in all parts of the world, and jihad and associated terrorist actions advocated by practitioners of this ideology, unquestionably finds its place in the Balkan countries too, as evidenced by the many bases of Jihad in the Balkans, especially in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo then in Albania, Macedonia, Montenegro and Serbia also has not been spared this problem. The specificity concerning the Balkan Muslims refers to the fact that they are not homogenous in this area, they are of different ethnic structure (Slovenian, Albanian, Turkish and Roma Muslims) and have different traditions and group history, so this is one of the reasons why Balkan is a fertile ground for radical Islamist ideas and ventures.

The wars in the former Yugoslavia, especially the war in Bosnia 1992-1995 are historical evidence of turbulent Balkan soil, where one of the causes is also religiously mixed population and strong Islamic strongholds in these countries. Propaganda that followed the events of the war in Bosnia at that time favored the Bosnian Muslims, who were represented by the world as the victims of conquering aspirations of the Serbs, and Croats from Bosnia. Then the rapporteurs from the field neglected the religious factor in the conflict in Bosnia. “Either due to ignorance or premeditation, western journalists have failed to notice how the ruling Muslim party, although it presented itself as a fully democratic and impressively multicultural, actually was of radical Islamists orientation, which viewed revolutionary Iran as an ideal society. Even worse, the presence of thousands of holy warriors in the ranks of the Bosnian Muslim warriors imported at the request of Sarajevo from all over the Muslim world to wage jihad in Europe was hardly mentioned at all.” [Šindler, 2011]

Therefore, the leading Western countries and their public long failed to pay the necessary attention to Bosnia and its role in the practice of jihad and jihadists, who later all the lessons learned in the Bosnian war began to practice through numerous and frequent acts of terrorism around the world, performed in order to spread of Islam as the final goal. Many terrorists who are now arrested and are sought after have Bosnian passports, which is another fact set forth in favor of the view that the Balkans have long been faced with potential threats of jihad and radical Islam, as its supporting ideology.

The influence of radical Islamism on the developments in Kosovo and Metohija at the end of 20th and beginning of the 21st century is much different than it is the case with Bosnia and Herzegovina, although it happened here, for example, that the Albanian president (Sali Berisha) called the war on the territory of Kosovo Jihad, and called upon Muslims to join the defense of their Muslim brothers in Kosovo. However, the religious element in Kosovo Muslims was less pronounced than it was among Bosnian Muslims, and for the Kosovo Muslims separatism was the guiding idea, not a holy war in the name of spreading Islam. “Radical Islam in Bosnia and Herzegovina and southern Serbian province of Kosovo represent the center where the representatives of this ideology exert influence on the ideology of Muslim population, depending on the ethnic group to which they belong. The weakness of the authorities, the availability of remnants of recent wars and topographical characteristics

of the soil have lead to that in Bosnia and Herzegovina and Kosovo and Metohija strong radical Islamic bases have been formed.” [Stevčić, 2016]

In recent years there is a tendency among Balkan Muslims to engage in Islamic issues around the world, primarily those active radical Islamists who advocate jihad, or holy war conducted for achieving religious objectives.

CONCLUSION

Strengthening of the radicalization of Islamist ideology and its organizations is not a typical characteristic of the Balkans only, but it is a real danger today globally. Factors that helped to strengthen these tendencies in the Balkans are primarily related to the effects of the recent war in this region, with which all the countries of the Balkans are faced, both the old ones and those that have only recently been formed, thereby insufficiently strong to cope with these dangers.

The Balkan area, with a recent history of armed conflict, proves to be a fertile ground to strengthen the ideology of radical Islam among the Muslim community. It is undisputed that this ideology exists, and we can only ask the question to what extent it is rooted among the Muslim population in the Balkans, as well as the extent to which it is linked to the radical Islamist centers worldwide.

Radical Islamists always aim to achieve the remodeling of societies and countries to measure and in accordance with the rules of their ideologies, so almost always the first direction of their activities is aimed at the Muslim states, i.e. later on to the states in which there is a certain percentage of the Muslim population.

In terms of the global threat of jihad and the position of the Western Balkan countries in this regard it can be concluded that this area has long been in the background when analyzing the global issue of jihad, in the shade of issues of the Middle East and Muslim activities in Western countries. However, we must not neglect this kind of safety hazards at the regional level, namely the threat of radical Islamic influences that could easily come from the cells of Jihad that were rooted and undoubtedly strengthen in all Balkan countries. The survival and strengthening of the radical Islamic factor in the Balkans is supported by the geographical position of the Balkan countries, which are a link between Europe in the Middle East, therefore an open way for the spread of radical Islamic ideology and the practice of jihad.

To all the above mentioned facts we should add a generally known and now increasingly recognized truth that the war in the former Yugoslavia, especially Bosnia and Herzegovina, by the Western powers and their media was represented in a way that neglected, and perhaps even concealed the influence of Islamic radicalism, which later contributed to rooting and spreading of jihadist network that has its effect far beyond the Balkan region. “The war in Bosnia was perhaps the most wrongly presented conflict of the modern era, to the great benefit of radical Islam and the global jihad. Many difficult questions were rarely asked, and they were never answered.” [Šindler, 2011] It is precisely this situation that followed the events of the war in the Balkans in the late 20th century that has added extra strength and power to all of today’s jihad fighters.

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