



## From Bosnia to Kosovo: The Re-Islamization of the Balkans

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### THE PROBLEM

On February 12, 1997, on the occasion of the `Id al-Fitr Festival, the Uighur rebels in Chinese Central Asia published, on their internet site, an appeal to all Muslims to heed the unfolding events in Bosnia. "What kind of festival is this," they asked, "when 250,000 Muslims are being murdered, tortured, and raped in Bosnia?" They sent their heartfelt thanks to the "Iranian people who are sending help in spite of the West's embargo," and accused the West of "stopping the Muslims when they were about to win, while at the same time aiding the Serbian Fascists." Evidently, the Uighurs in China's northwest had their own axe to grind when they used the universal festival which linked all Muslims together to draw attention to their own plight in Xinjiang, where their own land was being "robbed" by the "fascists" of China. However, as they thanked the Iranians for their assistance to the Bosnians, they might also have been referring to the backing that Islamic countries in the

Middle East were providing the Uighurs and other Islamic groups in China,<sup>1</sup> something that was recognized by and caused alarm in the midst of the China leadership.<sup>2</sup>

In April 1998, the State Department published its annual report on global terrorism. Among other things, it referred to the unidentified terrorists who acted against the international presence in Bosnia, and especially to the Mujahidin who had served in the Bosnian army during the civil war, but were now engaged in warrant killings. According to that report, the Bosnian government began arresting some of those loose terrorists, and by November 1997, it had incarcerated 20 of them, who were identified as Arabs or Bosnian Muslims.<sup>3</sup> In 1998 there were reports that Iranian intelligence agents were mounting extensive operations and even infiltrated the American program to train the Bosnian army. According to those reports, more than 200 Iranian agents were identified as “having insinuated themselves into Bosnian Muslim political and social circles . . . to gather information and to thwart western interests in Bosnia.” Those agents, it was believed, could be helpful in planning terrorist attacks against NATO forces or targets.<sup>4</sup> Taken together, these reports do identify the “unidentified terrorists” mentioned above. Moreover, these reports link together into an Islamic International centered around Iran indicating that most of the major terrorist activities are carried out by Islamists: from the Israeli Embassy in Buenos Aires (1992); the international gathering of Islamic terrorist organizations in Teheran (1997); the *Hizbullah* stepped-up activities against Israel in the late 1990s; the arrest in Israel of Stefan Smirak, a would-be “suicide-bomber” for *Hizbullah* (November 1997); the attacks against American interests in the Gulf, East Africa, and on American soil (throughout the 1990s),<sup>5</sup> to say nothing of the Muslim separatists in China, and the Islamic resurgence in Bosnia and Kosovo.

People today speak of the clashes between Serbs and Muslims in Bosnia, and Serbs and Albanians in Kosovo, in terms of ethno-national conflicts, with the more numerous Serbs figuring as the oppressors and their rivals as the underdogs and the oppressed. *Prima facie*, the very usage of the terms Serbs (and Croats for that matter) against Muslims, equates the latter (essentially members of a faith and civilization) to the former who clearly belong to religio-ethnic

groups. This points to the fact that not only did Yugoslavian statism and universalistic communism fail to obliterate ethnic and kinship identities (real or imagined), but that communal interest overrides the state umbrella, economic interest, or even sheer common sense. But this also raises the question of whether Islam, a universal religion predominant in more than 50 countries around the world, is, or can be, perceived as a nationalism that is particularistic by definition.

### THE HISTORICAL UNDERPINNINGS

After the Arab conquests had exhausted the immense primeval energies released by Islam since its inception in the 7<sup>th</sup> century and up until the 9<sup>th</sup> century, the Turks of Central Asia who arrived on the scene in the 11<sup>th</sup> century gave a new impetus to Islamic expansion, this time into the heart of Europe.

The Ottoman state, which reached Vienna at the pinnacle of its existence, was multi-ethnic and multi-religious, and under its Muslim-majority dominance, Christians, Jews, and others lived side by side for many centuries. However, this co-existence was not born out of a modern concept of tolerance of the other on the basis of acceptance of differences and equality to all, but on a sense of superiority, which tolerated the others in spite of their inferiority. Thus, even though Turks, or Muslims, may have constituted the minority population in some areas of the Empire, they reigned supreme by virtue of their Muslim master status, while the various Christian groups (and Jews for that matter) were relegated to the status of “protected people” (the *dhimmi*).<sup>6</sup> Christians and others who had integrated into the Ottoman system by embracing Islam, speaking Turkish, and going into the Imperial service, soon became part and parcel of the Ottoman culture, even when they kept their attachment to their ethnic origin and to their mother tongue. The case in point were the Bosnians, many of whom felt privileged to go into the *devisirme* system by enrolling their boys in the prestigious janissary corps, and in the course of time were Islamized though they preserved their Slavic roots and language.<sup>7</sup>

The Balkans were conquered by the Ottomans from the middle of the 15<sup>th</sup> century on. Serbia fell in 1459, and four years later Bosnia, with Herzegovina succumbing to the conquerors in 1483. Caught between the economic interest of milking the taxpaying

*dhimmis*, which necessitated maintaining the conquered population in place instead of expelling or converting it by force, and the military and security needs which required that the Muslim population be numerous enough to ensure the loyalty to the Empire, the Ottomans tended to implement the latter choice in the Balkans. They adopted a policy of deporting the native populations and settling their own people, or other conquered people, in their stead, thus ensuring that no local minority should envisage any insurgency among a Muslim population. In Bosnia, the process of Islamization was reinforced by the turncoats who flocked to Islam and became the worst oppressors of their former coreligionists; so much so that the Bosnians were notorious for their role in the Ottoman administration, military, and especially the janissaries.<sup>8</sup>

As late as 1875, long after the introduction of the *tanzimat* reforms which were supposed to redress the situation of the non-Muslims throughout the Empire, the British ambassador in Istanbul reported that the Ottoman authorities in Bosnia recognized the impossibility of administering justice in equality between the Muslims and the Christians, inasmuch as the ruling Muslim courts accepted no written or oral evidence from Christians. One 1876 report from Bosna-Serai (Sarajevo) by the British Consul in town, tells the whole story:

About a month ago, an Austrian subject named Jean Udilak, was attacked and robbed between Sarajevo and Visoka by nine Bashi-Bazouks. The act was witnessed by a respectable Mussulman of this time named Nouri Aga Varinika, and he was called as a witness when the affair was brought before the Sarajevo Tribunal. His testimony was in favor of the Austrian, and the next day he was sent for by the vice-president and one of the members of the Court and threatened with imprisonment for daring to testify against his coreligionists.<sup>9</sup>

As Hans Majer tells us above, Muslims and Christians (and Jews for that matter) could keep to themselves in their own communities, with their lifestyles, rituals, and festivals running without hindrance, except in case of intermarriage. For here, the only allowed combination was Muslim men taking in Christian (or Jewish) wives, which

consecrated their joint offspring as full-right Muslims. The result was that while non-Muslim culture merged into the predominant Islam, there was also an outside input into the Muslim culture with material culture (food, dress, habits, language, etc.) growing to become common to all. All this was acceptable to the Ottoman authorities, who were reluctant to interfere, but as soon as the *dhimmis* became wealthy and were conspicuous in their dress and demeanor, it was considered a provocation to the Muslim population and dealt with accordingly. Christians who wanted to improve their lot in Bosnia and Albania could always do so through conversion to Islam or seek the protection of their Muslim family members.<sup>10</sup>

Toward the end of the Ottoman rule, as economic problems arose and the state was no longer able to enforce law and order in the face of the nationalist awakening in the various provinces of the Empire, local rule grew more despotic in an attempt to hold on to the territories that were slipping out of the Porte's grip. The notions of equality coming from liberal Europe, which made the maintenance of legal and religious inequities untenable, conjugated into national terms, and spelled out independence from the Ottoman yoke since the idea of a ruling Empire held together by Islam was no longer operative. It was ironically the Ottoman attempts at modernity, opening up the system, addressing individuals instead of traditional communities, which brought its downfall and opened the new vistas of nationalism and independence in the Balkans as elsewhere, a situation not unlike Eastern Europe after the Gorbachev perestroika in the late 1980s and early 1990s. But in view of the Greek and Bulgarian plans for a Balkan Federation under their aegis, to take over from the Ottomans,<sup>11</sup> and the tax repression imposed by the Bosnian Muslims, the Serbs rose up in arms (1875), and many of them ran into hiding, leaving behind children, the old, and women, something reminiscent of the horrors of the Bosnian War and then the Kosovo War more than one century later. Preytor and Banja Luka were the most harmed by the insurgents when Serb churches and homes were burned.<sup>12</sup>

After the Berlin Congress and the occupation of Bosnia by the Austro-Hungarian Empire, the Serbs allied with the Muslims against the occupiers, who were supported by the Catholics in the

province. The Hungarian governor of the province tried valiantly but unsuccessfully to create a new Bosnian identity merging together its three principal communities.<sup>13</sup> But the annexation of Bosnia by the occupiers in 1908 created a new alliance: the Serbs, who wished their merger with Serbia, were pitted against the Croat-Muslim coalition who would rather reconcile to their occupation than allow the Serbs to implement their dream. As a result, repression of the Serbs in Bosnia, coupled with the expulsion of Serbs from Kosovo, brought the bitterness of the occupied Serbs against their oppressors to a record level. Sukrija Kurtovic, a Bosnian Muslim, sought the differentiation between ethno-nationality and religion, and pleaded for the unity of the Bosnians with the Serbs in one single national group by reason of their common Serbian roots, arguing that Islam was a common religion of the Bosnians and the Turks, but that in itself did not make them share any national common ground.<sup>14</sup> The idea of Yugoslavism, a larger entity where all the ethnic and religious groups could find their common identity, came to the fore after the Balkan wars and precipitated World War I following the Sarajevo murder of the heir to the Austro-Hungarian throne in 1914. That war reinforced the Croat-Muslim alliance in Bosnia, which swore to expel the Serbs from Bosnia altogether and acted upon its vow by perpetrating large-scale massacres of the Serbs, and demonstrated the vanity of an all-Yugoslavian identity.<sup>15</sup>

A Yugoslavian state was created in 1918 nevertheless, which once again attempted to fuse its components in the ethnic and linguistic domains and leave, as befits a modern European state, the question of religion to the realm of each individual. However, while the Serbs and the Croats of Bosnia could look up to Belgrade and Zagreb respectively, the Muslims were left to vacillate between their Muslim, Ottoman, local, and Slavic roots. At first they allied with the stronger Serbs and turned their eyes on Belgrade where they ensured for themselves some privileges, but wary of the competition between the Croats who championed their nationalism and the Serbs who regarded themselves as the guardians of Yugoslavian unity, they focused more and more on their local and religious identity in the form of a Muslim party (JMO), while the Serbs and the Croats continued to claim that the Muslims of Bosnia were of their respective origins.<sup>16</sup>

During World War II, the renewed Croat-Muslim alliance had tragic consequences, inasmuch as under the shelter of its collaboration with the fascists and the Nazis, it brought about the murder, forced conversion, or expulsion of a million Serbs. After 1945, Yugoslavia was reconstituted, this time on its Soviet model, with its various components recognized on ethnic or linguistic grounds, and since 1971 on religious grounds for the Muslims of Bosnia. Since then, what was ethnic and religious sentiment for the Bosnians turned into a national identity, in spite of the paradox under which communism offered them nationalism based on faith.<sup>17</sup> This immediately reinforced their coalition with the Croats in order to scuttle Serbian hegemony in the federated communist Yugoslavian state, especially in view of the demographic presence of Serbs in all the federal republics, particularly in Bosnia and Croatia. So, once again, instead of using the idea of Yugoslavia to merge the populations of Bosnia-Herzegovina, the idea of faith (Islam and then Orthodox and Catholic Christianity) became a vehicle for reinforcing the hatreds and suspicions, which only waited for the end of the Tito rule and the Communist regime to burst out in violence and war. After the disintegration of Yugoslavia in the early 1990s, the Croats and Serbs of Bosnia expressed their wish to join their respective national republics, while the Muslims naturally regarded such a dismantling of what they viewed as their national state as detrimental to their national existence. None of the rival national groups possessed a demographic majority to claim legitimacy to rule all the rest, and the road was wide open to war.

### THE IDEOLOGICAL UNDERPINNINGS

In 1970, well before the collapse of the Yugoslavian order imposed by Tito and the outburst of communal nationalism which instigated the process of its disintegration, a political manifesto was written by an unknown Muslim in Bosnia, Alija Izetbegovic (born in 1925), but not immediately released to the public. It was, however, duplicated and made available to individual Muslims who circulated it among their coreligionists apparently to serve as a guide for a Muslim order to replace the godless Communist system in Bosnia. That pamphlet is known as the *Islamska Deklaracija* (the Islamic Declaration). In 1983, after Tito's death but while the Communist

state was held together, a trial took place in Sarajevo where the author and some like-minded individuals were prosecuted for subverting the constitutional order and for acting from the standpoint of Islamic fundamentalism and Muslim nationalism. Significantly, after the fall of Communist power, the accused were publicly rehabilitated, and the Declaration was then officially published in Sarajevo (1990). Izetbegovic, at the head of his Democratic Action Party (SDA) won the majority of the Muslim votes in the first free elections in Bosnia-Herzegovina (November 1990), but his pamphlet was obscured and not heard of again. Judging from the wide appeal of his later book, *Islam Between East and West*, which was published in English in the USA (1984), in Turkish in Istanbul (1987), and in Serbian in Belgrade (1988), and from the developments in the Bosnian war in the mid-1990s, one might be well advised to take a look at it.

The declaration, which in many respects sounds and looks like the platforms of Muslim fundamentalists elsewhere (e.g., the Hamas Charter),<sup>18</sup> assumes that its appeal will be heeded by Muslims around the world, not only by its immediate constituency. It accuses the West of wishing to “keep Muslim nations spiritually weak and materially and politically dependent,” and calls upon the believers to cast aside inertia and passivity in order to embark on the road of action.<sup>19</sup> And like Muslim radicals such as Sayyid Qutb of Egypt, who urged his followers to reject the world of ignorance around them and transform it according to the model of the prophet of Islam, the Declaration of Izetbegovic also calls upon the millions to join the efforts of Muslim individuals who fought against the *Jahiliyah* (the state of ignorance and godlessness which had preceded the advent of the prophet),<sup>20</sup> and dedicates the text to the memory of “our brothers who have laid their lives for Islam,”<sup>21</sup> namely the *shuhada'* (martyrs) of all times and places who had fallen in the cause of Islam.

The manifesto, again like other Muslim radicals, not only addresses itself to the restoration of Islam in private life, in the family, and society, but also expressly shuns local nationalism of any sort and substitutes for it the creation of a universal Islamic polity (the traditional *umma*) “from Morocco to Indonesia.”<sup>22</sup> The author awakens his people to the reality where “a few thousand true Islamic fighters forced England to withdraw from the Suez Canal in the early

1950s, while the nationalist armies of the Arabs were losing their battles against Israel,” and where “Turkey, an Islamic country, ruled the world,” yet when it tried to emulate Europe it dropped to the level of a Third World country. In other words, it is not nationalism that makes the force of Muslim nations, but their abidance by Islam in its universal version. Therefore, it does not befit Muslims to fight or die for any other cause but Islam, and it behooves Muslims to die with the name and glory of Allah in their hearts, or totally desert the battlefield.<sup>23</sup> Translated into the Bosnian scene, Muslims ought not take part in, or stand for, any form of government which is not Islamic and any cause which is not connected to Islam. To the Bosnians, whom Izetbegovic addressed, there were only two options left: either to subscribe to Muslim revival and its political requirements, or be doomed to stagnation and oblivion.<sup>24</sup>

As against the perceived failure of Turkey and other Muslim countries due to “the weakening of the influence of Islam in the practical life of the people,” the author posits that “all successes, both political and moral, are the reflection of our acceptance of Islam and its application in life.”<sup>25</sup> Therefore, while all defeats, from Uhud at the time of the prophet to the Sinai War between Israel and Egypt, were due to “apostasy from Islam,” any “rise of the Islamic peoples, every period of dignity, started with the affirmation of the *Qur'an*.” The author complains that in the real world the *Qur'an* is being recited instead of practiced, mosques are “monumental but empty,” the form took over from substance, as the Holy Book turned “into a mere sound without intelligible sense and content.”<sup>26</sup> This reality was caused, laments the author in line with other Muslim fundamentalists, by the Western-inspired school system in all Muslim countries.<sup>27</sup>

Secularism and nationalism, the products of that foreign educational trend, took over the minds and hearts of the new generation of Muslims. The masses, who do not submit to these fleeting concepts which are foreign to Islam, chose indifference. But if they are rightly guided they can rise to action provided they are spurred by “an idea that corresponds to their profound feelings, and that can only be the Islamic idea,” instilled by a new intelligentsia that “thinks and feels Islam” and would ultimately “fly the flag of the Islamic order and together with the Muslim masses initiate action



for its realization.”<sup>28</sup> This new Islamic order should unite “religion and law, upbringing and force, ideals and interests, the spiritual community and the state, free will and coercion,” for “Islamic society without Islamic rule is incomplete and impotent; Islamic rule without Islamic society is either utopia or violence.”<sup>29</sup> This, in effect, means, in the vein of other Muslim fundamentalist platforms, that the Muslim state ought to enforce (“coerce”) the Islamic order, short of which violence would erupt by necessity. For, according to this scheme, and contrary to the European concept of a liberal society where the individual is prized, a Muslim “does not exist as an individual entity,” and he must create his Islamic milieu in order to survive, by way of changing the world around him if he does not want to be changed by others.<sup>30</sup>

This would mean, in the Bosnian context, that only a religiously based society, on the model of religious associations (*jemaat*) is viable, and no provision is made for non-Muslims or for a multi-religious or multi-cultural society in its midst. (See the question of minorities below.)

The question of life in such a Muslim community is left unclear. On the one hand, the manifesto assures the “equality of all men”<sup>31</sup> and discards divisions and groupings according to race or class. But, if man’s value is determined according to one’s “integrity, and spiritual and ethical value,”<sup>32</sup> and these noble qualities are grounded in Islamic creed and value system, then only if one is a good Muslim can he be considered worthy. This is all the more so when the concept of the *ummet*, the universal congregation of all Muslims is taken as the “supra-nationality of the Muslim community,” and Islam and Pan-Islamism define its boundaries: “Islam determines its internal and Pan-Islamism its external relations,” because, “Islam is its ideology and Pan-Islamism its politics.”<sup>33</sup> By Islam, the author means certain limitations on private property in order to ensure a fair distribution of wealth based on *Qur’anic* precepts. The restoration of *Zekat* (paying of alms, one of the Five Pillars of the Faith) to the status of a public obligation as of old, and the enforcement of the *Qur’anic* prohibition of collecting interest, are seen as the instruments to achieve social justice.<sup>34</sup>

Izetbegovic, in intending to establish the “Republican principle,” namely that power should not be inherited, defeats his purpose by

positing at the same time the *Qur’anic* “recognition of the absolute authority of Allah, which means the absolute non-recognition of any other omnipotent authority,” for “any submission to a creature which implies unsubmission to the Creator is not permissible.”<sup>35</sup> This, of course, would have a direct ramification on the entire question of sovereignty, democracy, authority, and power. In this scheme, the idea of the inviolability of the individual is totally rejected, as it is made clear that in statements of equality of all men notwithstanding, and “irrespective of man’s merits” he must submit to the Islamic order where there is a “synthesis of absolute authority (in terms of the program) and of absolute democracy (relative to the individual).”<sup>36</sup> It takes a lot of intellectual acrobatics to extricate the meaning of this “absolute democracy” that is strapped to the “absolute authority” of the divine *Qur’anic* message under which the believer is expected to operate. For, while the author subscribes to the idea that all men, including the prophet, are fallible, and worshipping them is a “kind of idolatry,” he assigns “all glory and praise to Allah alone, because Allah alone can judge the merits of men.”<sup>37</sup> This, of course, would render any process of election between men impossible, and anyone who reaches a position of authority can only gain legitimacy if he submits to the “absolute authority” of the *Qur’anic* teachings.

Part of this brand of democracy is insinuated to us when the author suggests that in his envisaged Islamic order the mass media “should be controlled by people of unquestionable Islamic moral intellectual authority. Perverts and degenerates should not be allowed to lay their hands on these media . . . and use them to transmit the senselessness and emptiness of their own lives to others. What can we expect if people receive one message from the mosque and a totally opposite one from the TV relay?”<sup>38</sup> The author does not spell out the criteria to judge the “emptiness and senselessness” of journalists under his regime, nor does he explain how he, or anyone else, can judge any person when all judgment is left to Allah. But he dares, under the heading of “Freedom of Conscience,”<sup>39</sup> to suggest all those limitations on the media, which would certainly make them anything but free, the protestations of the author notwithstanding.<sup>40</sup>

While the statement that “there can be no Islamic order without independence and freedom” may still sound plausible, in view of the Islamic regimes of Iran and Saudi Arabia, it is vice versa, namely

that “there can be no independence and freedom without Islam”<sup>41</sup> which seems a bit presumptuous by any stretch of the imagination. For that would mean that the freest and most democratic nations of the world are in fact deprived of freedom and independence as long as they do not see the light of Islam. Unless, of course, he means that the idea applies only to Muslim peoples. In that case, the author argues, only if the Muslims assert Islamic thought in everyday life can they achieve spiritual and political liberation. Moreover, he claims that the legitimacy of the ruler in any Islamic nation will always depend on the extent of the ruler’s commitment to Islam, short of which he turns for support to foreigners who maintain him in power.<sup>42</sup> Conversely, if he acts according to Islamic requirements, he thereby achieves the true democracy by consensus which is inherent in Islam and which alone makes violence redundant.<sup>43</sup> But the road to this utopian state of affairs is not obtained in “peace and tranquility, but in unrest and challenge.”<sup>44</sup> That means that like other Muslim fundamentalist movements which promise their constituencies sweat and blood, and they earn credibility and appeal in so doing, the Islamic Declaration under discussion treads the same road to contrast with the empty promises of rulers in the Islamic world who make sweeping pledges of peace and prosperity but are unable to deliver.

Now comes the problematic issue of the relations between the Muslim host culture and minority guest cultures under the Islamic order. The manifesto provides religious freedom and “protection” to the minorities, “provided they are loyal,” something that smacks of the traditional Muslim attitude to the *dhimmi* (protected people) under its aegis. The interesting aspect of all this is that when the situation is reversed, namely Muslim minorities dwelling in non-Muslim lands, their loyalty is made conditional on their religious freedom, not the other way around. Moreover, even under such conditions, the Muslims are committed to carry out all their obligations to the host community “with the exception of those that are detrimental to the Muslims.”<sup>45</sup> The question remains unanswered as to who is to determine what is detrimental to Islam, and when and where. Assuming that the status of Muslim minorities would depend on “the strength and reputation of the Islamic world community,” it would mean two things:

1. There was a possibility, in Izetbegovic’s thinking, that the Muslims of Bosnia would remain a minority. Indeed, their rate is about 40 percent of the total population (and growing, due to higher birth-rate), and if the Catholic Croats and Orthodox Serbs of Bosnia should gang up against them (something quite unlikely), this manifesto still provides them with a chance for survival.
2. In either case, the Bosnian Muslims are counting on the intervention of the world Muslim community, something that was to be corroborated during the Bosnia and then the Kosovo wars.

Again, like the Hamas and other branches of the Muslim brotherhood, this manifesto proclaims the primacy of education and preaching, in order to conquer the hearts of the people before power, a prerequisite of the Islamic order, is conquered. “We must be preachers first and then soldiers,”<sup>46</sup> is the motto of the manifesto. Force to take over power will be applied “as soon as Islam is morally and numerically strong enough, not only to overthrow the non-Islamic rule, but to develop the new Islamic rule,” because “to act prematurely is equally dangerous as to be late in taking the required action.”<sup>47</sup> The author is confident that this can be done, because “history is not only a story of constant changes, but also of the continual realization of the impossible and the unexpected.”<sup>48</sup> The model for the new Islamic order, which the manifesto puts on the pedestal, is Pakistan, the Muslim state that, in spite of its many deficiencies, remains the “great hope” of Izetbegovic.<sup>49</sup>

Under the heading “Christianity and Judaism,” the manifesto determines the future relationships of the envisaged new Islamic order with those two faiths, which the author considers “the two foremost religions” and the “major systems and doctrines outside the sphere of Islam.”<sup>50</sup> Nonetheless, the author distinguishes between Jesus and the Church. The former, he says, in line with *Qur’anic* teachings, is part of divine revelation while the latter, as embodied in the Inquisition, is abhorrent to his heart. At the same time, however, as is the normative Islamic wont, he accuses Christianity of “distorting certain aspects” of the divine message while accusing the Church of intolerance.<sup>51</sup> Similarly, he differentiates between

Jews and their national movement — Zionism — idealizing the times when they lived under Islam, but he totally rejects their plea for independence and nationhood.<sup>52</sup> So, as long as the Jews are submissive and stateless in their *dhimmi* status within the Islamic state he envisages, all is well, but to dare to declare independence and stand up to the Islamic world — that is unforgivable. He claims that Jerusalem is not only a Palestinian city but first of all a Muslim one, and therefore he warns the Jews, who “have created themselves” the conflict with the Arab regimes (not the Arab or the Muslim people), that a prolonged war will be waged against them by Muslims until they release “every inch of captured land.” He threatens that “any trade-offs or compromises which might call into question these elementary rights of our brothers in Palestine will be treason which can destroy even the very system of moral values underpinning our world.”<sup>53</sup>

In sum, this passionate message of Izetbegovic, based on the *Qur'an* and the revival of Islam, addresses the universal congregation of all Muslims, and strives to establish an Islamic world order based on *Qur'anic* precepts. The idea of nationalism, any nationalism, is totally rejected in favor of the Islamic republic, which alone can respond to the challenges of the modern world and restore to Islam its glory and preponderance. Like the platform of the Hamas and other fundamentalists, the text of *Qur'an* rather than the commentaries of the Muslim establishment, provides the rationale for the cultural, social, and political revolution that the author proposes to undertake. Indeed, the profuse citations from the Holy Book that we find interspersed throughout the text of the Declaration bear witness to *Qur'anic* hegemony in the thought and plans of the author. Moreover, by positing the listed principles as deriving from the Holy Scripture, namely the eternal and immutable Word of Allah, the document creates the impression of a divinely guided program, which is not given to debate or consideration.

While in Serbia in 1998 and 1999, when I met academics, politicians from the opposition, and journalists who did not hold much sympathy for their government, but were at the same time concerned about the revival of Islam in the Balkans, I was given more details about Izetbegovic and his Islamic activities. It is said that immediately after World War II, in the spring of 1946, as a

member of the “Young Muslims,” he, together with Omer Behmen (later vice president to SDA Party), and Dr. Shachirbay (father of Muhamed Shachirbay, the Bosnian ambassador to the UN), started an illegal magazine — the *Mujahid*, in which the following song was published:

The earth throbs, the mountains quake,  
Our war cry resounds through the land.  
Heads held high, men old and young,  
In a holy *jihad* our salvation lies.

**Chorus:** The time has come, onward brethren.

Onward brethren, onward heroes,  
To the Jihad, to the Jihad let us go.  
Proudly the green banner flies,  
Close ranks beneath it in steel-like file.  
Let the brotherhood of Islam bind us,  
Let us scorn death and go to the battle.

**Chorus:** The time has come, onward brethren. . . .

With our war-cry “Allah Akbar,”

Rot the old and corrupt world.

For the joy and salvation of mankind,

Boldly, heroes, let us go into battle!

**Chorus:** The time has come, onward brethren. . . .

These themes are strikingly similar to those propagated in cassettes by the Hamas organization<sup>54</sup> to glorify the death for the cause of Islam in the course of jihad. They also strikingly form the same thinking which produced the Islamic Declaration analyzed above.

### THE CONCEPT OF GREATER ALBANIA

During the turmoil which swept the Balkans on the eve of the Berlin Congress (1878), the Albanians, as an ethnic group, came up with the concept of including within their fledgling national entity all the Albanians of the Balkans, beyond the geographic boundaries of Albania itself. Being Muslims, the Albanians, like the Islamized Bosnians, enjoyed a privileged status in the Ottoman Empire. In 1878, the Albanian League was established in Prizren, which presented the Greater Albania plan. While the Albanians constituted the majority in the core areas of Albania proper, their



proportion in Kosovo did not exceed 44 percent.<sup>55</sup> Like in the case of Bosnia where ethnicity was religion-bound, there could not exist an Orthodox Croat, nor a Catholic Serb, nor a Bosnian who was not Muslim.<sup>56</sup> So in Albania, Islamized Serbs, Greeks, and Bulgarians became *ipso facto* Albanians. In 1912, an attempt was made under Austro-Hungarian auspices to implement the idea, followed by another such attempt under the Italian fascists in 1941. The third attempt, initiated at the end of the 1990s as a result of the collapse of the Soviet Union and Yugoslavia, translated into tearing Kosovo, by now predominantly Albanian-Muslim, from Serbian sovereignty, following up on the Bosnian experience which had subtracted that province from Serbian-Yugoslavian hegemony.

The precedent of Bosnia, which had allowed in 1971, ironically under the Communist rule, the recognition of Bosnia's nationalism as Muslim, would now propel the ethnic Albanians to revive their Islamic heritage and claim their Muslim identity which *ipso facto* would justify their separation from the Serbs. At first, the awakening of the Albanians was undertaken along the ethno-national track. Prior to 1971, the break between Maoist Albania and Yugoslavia had occasioned the Albanian revolt in Kosovo (1968), but after the normalization of their relationships in 1971 the Albanians turned to cultural propaganda by peaceful, if subversive, means. Interestingly enough, like the Palestinians who are competing with Israel over their ancestral land by conveniently claiming that they are the descendants of the ancient Canaanites who had preceded the Israelites on the land, the Albanians now advanced the claim that they inherited the ancient heritage of the Illyrians who were the original inhabitants of Kosovo.<sup>57</sup> This resulted in the Albanian rebellion of 1981, in which they demanded the status of a republic (no longer an autonomous region within Serbia, like Voivodina in the north), still within the six-republic Yugoslavian Federation. After the fall of communism in Albania, the new regime recognized in 1991 the self-declared Republic of Kosovo, and its head, Ibrahim Rugova, opened an office in Tirana.<sup>58</sup>

The disintegration of Yugoslavia by necessity revived the old dreams of a Greater Albania, which now eyed not only Kosovo, but also parts of Macedonia, Greece, Serbia, and Montenegro, where an Albanian population had settled over the years. The rising of

Muslim consciousness in the Balkans, after the Bosnian precedent, and the spreading of the Izetbegovic doctrine, now acts as a catalyst to draw together, under the combined banners of Greater Albania and Islam, all the Albanian populations of that region. In 1992, Albania joined the Conference of Islamic Countries, and it has been working to attract support of other Islamic countries to the Greater Albania plan, actually presenting itself as "the shield of Islam" in the Balkans.<sup>59</sup> It has been noted that while the Albanian demographic explosion in Kosovo, which has allowed them to predominate and demand secession, has not taken place in Albania itself,<sup>60</sup> perhaps an indication, as in Palestine and Bosnia, that the "battle of the womb" heralded by nationalists and Muslim fundamentalists, is not merely a natural growth but may be also politically motivated.

### CONCLUSIONS

While in Serbian national terms the loss of Kosovo to the Albanians is equivalent in their eyes to Israel losing Jerusalem,<sup>61</sup> in international terms, the importance of this issue lay in the emerging pattern of the re-Islamization of the Balkans. True, the immediate concern of the Serbs is to what extent can a minority which achieves a local majority within their sovereign territory, demand the right of secession, especially when that demand is backed up by irredentist claims of a neighboring country. If that should be the case, then entire areas of the United States populated by Mexican-Americans, or parts of Israel where the local Arab population has achieved the majority, or the Kurdish populations of Turkey, Iraq, Iran, and Syria, or Arab enclaves in France, could raise the question of their autonomy and ask for their right to secede. For that matter, the Croats and Serbs of Bosnia could also revert to their initial demand at the outset of the Bosnian crisis to merge with their respective national entities. The larger concern, however, is to what extent the settling patterns of the Albanians can disrupt the physical continuity between the major Christian powers of the Balkans: Greece, Macedonia, Serbia, Bulgaria, and Romania; or, more importantly, whether a new continuity of Islamic settlement, from Bosnia through Kosovo and now southern Serbia, can link up with the Muslims of Bulgaria to achieve a geographical continuum with Muslim Turkey. In view of the Islamic Declaration analyzed above,

which does not accept the present state of affairs in the Balkans and Turkey, and makes provision for an Islamic revolution to redress the situation to its liking, the Bosnia and Kosovo events seem only to be an ominous precursor of things to come.

These concerns have been raised due to the perverse link that has been established in real politics between Muslim fundamentalist powers like Saudi Arabia and Iran who seek to further the penetration of Islam into the Balkans, against Western interests, and the inexplicable rush of that same West to facilitate that penetration which is already turning against it. From the Muslim point of view, things are easy and goals are clear: to ensure the continuity of a Muslim presence from Turkey into Europe, namely to revitalize a modern version of the Ottoman Empire. True, the present successive governments of Ankara are committed to secularism of the Kemalist brand under the guardianship of the military. But as the Erbakan experience has shown (1996–1998), when democracy is allowed to operate, then the Algerian scenario may have the upper hand and an Islamist government may be elected to power that may also opt for the strengthening of the Islamic factor in Europe. Muslim fundamentalists across the world, from the Uighurs of Chinese Turkestan to the Arabs of the Middle East; from the Mujahidin of Afghanistan to the disciples of Izetbegovic in the Balkans, do not hide their designs to act for the realization of this new world order.

A summons by the Saudi scholar Ahmed ibn-Nafi` of Mecca, which was circulated to all centers of the Pan-Islamic Salvation Committee at the outset of the conflict in Bosnia, states in no uncertain terms:

Let it be known, brothers, that life in this ephemeral world differs immensely from the life lived in keeping with the principles of *jihad*. . . . Fortunate is he whom Allah enlightens in this life . . . by waging a *jihad* for Him. Following Allah's instructions, the Pan-Islamic Salvation Committee has devised a holy plan to clean the world of unbelievers. We entrust you to see to the imminent establishment of the Caliphate in the Balkans, because the Balkans are the path to the conquest of Europe.<sup>62</sup>

This appeal was by no means an isolated case. In the same month of August 1992, a poster was plastered on walls in Sarajevo, signed by the spiritual head of the Iranian Revolution, Imam Khamenei, which accused the Western nations of not preventing the genocide against the Muslims of Bosnia, due to their innate hostility to Islam, and urged them to clear the way for Iranian Mujahidin and other young Muslims to wage the war and “drive the Serbs from this Islamic country.”<sup>63</sup> In Zagreb, which at the time was the ally of the Muslims against the Serbs, a local journal echoed that call:

The Muslim nation in Iran began its revolution with “Allahu Akbar!” and succeeded. On the territory of Yugoslavia, the Serbs could not tolerate a Muslim [Izetbegovic] as the president of Bosnia-Herzegovina. Their only rival is Islam and they fear it. The time is approaching when Islam will be victorious.<sup>64</sup>

While the traces of Iranian and other Muslim volunteers' *jihad* in Bosnia were rife, Western reactions seemed more and more obtuse. Except for the theory that the United States had to please Saudi Arabia as it had done during the Gulf War when it desisted from occupying Baghdad, other explanations range from sheer misunderstanding of the dangers that Islamic fundamentalism poses to the West to cold-blooded commercial gains in the short run which obscure the long-term strategic considerations. If that quandary raised many eyebrows in the West during the Bosnia War, where the United States and European powers supported Bosnia at the detriment of the Serbs, so much more so for the intransigent, costly, and destructive military intervention of NATO in Kosovo. As it is known, war does not determine who is right, it only determines who is left. It is time to draw the balance of who is left and what is left from that war.

The “good guys” of NATO had set out, under the cover of a barrage of propaganda, to address the humanitarian problem of “ethnic cleansing,” forgetting the “ethnic cleansing” that the Serbs had suffered over centuries in Bosnia and Kosovo. While accusing the Serbs of inflicting collective punishment on the entire Kosovar-Albanian population for the sins of the Kosovo Liberation Army, they have themselves destroyed the lives and livelihoods of millions

of innocent Serbs, depriving them of bridges, potable water, supplies, municipal services, broadcasting stations, and what not. And all that while relentlessly repeating in their harrowing press briefings that they held no grudge against the Serbian people, only against their leader. The real questions for the horrors of that war were never raised by NATO, and certainly never answered: What has caused the mass uprooting of people from Kosovo, including Serbs? Was it only Serbian abuses against the Albanian population, or perhaps also the fear of people who were caught in the crossfire? Why were only the elderly, women, and children the ones who ran away to safety in refugee camps? Was it only because the Serbs callously imprisoned or exterminated able-bodied men, or perhaps because they were recruited into rebellious KLA troops who aided NATO's designs? Was Serbia encouraging or preventing ethnic cleansing? One day we were told that the refugees were pushed across the borders of Kosovo, another time we were told that they ran away by themselves, and yet another time we were assured that the Kosovars were prevented by the bad Serbs from crossing in order to serve as human shields. Who could take these inconsistencies seriously?

The havoc that was wreaked on Kosovo, far from settling the issue, on the contrary, aggravated it: the Serb population was almost totally forced out of the province, and those who stayed could only do so under the protection of the NATO or UN forces. Two months after they had "established order" there, a *New York Times* editorial had this to say about it:

Kosovo remains lawless and violent. There are no local police, or judges. . . . NATO is doing an uneven and unsatisfactory job of preserving order. . . . Local thugs, rogue fighters of the Kosovo Liberation Army, and Albanian gangs slipping [from Albania] across the unpatrolled borders, have taken advantage of the law enforcement vacuum to terrorize the Serbian and Gypsy minorities and drive them from their homes. . . . The same violent elements also prey on Kosovar Albanians subjecting people to extortion, and potential political rivals and suspected collaborators with the previous Serbian authorities, to intimidation and murder. . . .

NATO must rethink its overly indulgent attitude toward the KLA, which has been permitted to postpone the deadline for surrendering heavy weapons and expects to see its former fighters included in the new local police forces.<sup>65</sup>

One year later, in July 2000, chaos seemed to be still prevailing, and the parties determined that the Kosovars want independence from Serbia, and the Serbs want to prevent it lest the Greater Albania plan comes to be implemented with the related instability in Macedonia and other areas inhabited by Albanians.<sup>66</sup> The UN troops are supposed to impose a "substantial autonomy" for the Kosovars under Serbian sovereignty, but that does not seem to be in the making, but Albanians who live in Serbia Proper may want to draw UN troops across the border. Reports from the spot identify a "Kosovo-wide problem of attacks on [Serb and other] minorities, harassment, intimidation, and persecution" and the "vicious Albania-based mafia that is spreading crime."<sup>67</sup> The irony in all this is that while the problem of Bosnia remains unsettled, with the Serb and Croat entities there entertaining their hopes to join their motherlands, and the Kosovo issue festering as an open wound, NATO finds itself backing, or at least seeming indifferent to the Islamic takeover in the heart of Europe.

Robert Cohen-Tanugi, in his series of articles which has drawn world attention,<sup>68</sup> proposes the thesis that the USA is basically interested in promoting Islamic radical states to create the "Green Belt," loyal to it, around Russia and China, and its subsidiary, the "Green Diagonal" designed to link Central Europe with Turkey, in order to restore the power and hegemony of this pivot of American strategy to its Ottoman times. That is the reason, he claims, for American determination to advance the cause of Islamic revival in Bosnia and Kosovo and, conversely, to eliminate nationalist Serbia which stands as the major obstacle on that road. However, rising fundamentalist Islam, which is inimical to the United States in particular and Western culture in general, will not necessarily play the American game and may turn against its benefactors sooner and with more vengeance than either the United States or its European allies suspect.

## Endnotes

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- 4 Policy Watch No. 296, p. 3, 1998, The Washington Institute, citing reports by the *New York Times* and the *Washington Times*.
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- 8 Bat Ye'or, *The Decline of Eastern Christianity under Islam: From Jihad to Dhimmitude* (London: Associated University Presses, 1996), p. 132.
- 9 Ibid., p. 176–177. For documents about the inequities in Bosnia against the Christian population, see also p. 421–427.
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- 19 Alija Izetbegovic, *Islamska Deklaracija* (the Islamic Declaration), introduction, p. 1–2.
- 20 Ibid., p. 2.
- 21 Ibid.
- 22 Ibid., p. 3.
- 23 Ibid., p. 4.
- 24 Ibid.
- 25 Ibid., p. 12.
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- 43 Ibid., p. 35–36.
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- 46 Ibid., p. 45.
- 47 Ibid., p. 45–46.
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- 51 Ibid., p. 55–56.
- 52 Ibid., p. 56–57.
- 53 Ibid., p. 57.
- 54 See, for example, R. Israeli, "Islamikaze and Their Significance," in *Terrorism and Political Violence*, vol. 9, no. 3, (Autumn 1997): p. 112–113.
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- 56 Jens Reuter, "From Religious Community to Nation: The Ethnogenesis of the Bosnian Muslims," in Terzic, *Islam, the Balkans and the Great Powers*, p. 617–623.
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- 58 Ibid.
- 59 Ibid., p. 47–48.
- 60 Ibid., p. 49.
- 61 Duro Fuletic, "Consequences of a Possible Creation of 'Greater Albania,'" *Review of International Affairs*, vol. L, no. 1085–6 (October–November 1999): p. 23.
- 62 The handwritten Arabic text of the epistle of August 17, 1992, appears in Hadzivukovic et al., *Chronicle of Announced Death*, p. 52.
- 63 The text of the summons, with Khamenei's picture, appears in Serbo-Croat, *ibid.*, p. 54.

- 64 Vecernui List, Zagreb, August 9, 1992.
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