Instability and Desperation: The Balkan Link to Terrorism

Sheila Rom
Peace, War and Defense Program
University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill
Chapel Hill, NC 27514
rom.sheila@gmail.com

Abstract

The asymmetrical threat posed by non-state actors, particularly terrorists, has replaced the traditional threat posed by rival nations as the greatest security concern for developed western nations in the 21st century. Non-traditional hotbeds can quickly develop a major terrorist problem if not given adequate attention, forces and funding needed to combat the problem. The Balkans unique history of inter-ethnic and religious conflict has led to an increasingly pervasive sense of desperation that leaves the region susceptible to terrorist ideology. The chaos created by the various wars for independence in the former Yugoslavia brought the rise of more direct terrorist interest in the area and allowed Arab-Afghan fighters refuge in Europe. The foreign mujahedeen took this opportunity to attempt to gather recruits for their cause as well as establish a base of operations in Europe. Though largely unsuccessful as a major base and recruitment center, the Balkans ties to organized crime and black market dealings have provided terrorists a staging area. Increased international cooperation and support are necessary to eradicate existing terrorist operations in this region and prevent this region from becoming a major player in global terrorist network.

Key words: Terrorism, Balkans, Instability, International Security, Political Violence and War

Introduction

The increased globalization of the 21st century has engendered a transitional period in the field of national security and defense. The threat of large-scale conflict with rival nations or rogue states is no longer viewed as the greatest or most imminent threat to the security of the western world. Though the United States certainly has an awareness of at least some of the activities of states that have declared opposition to its national interest, the primary function of its security and defense program is the prevention, disruption and eventual eradication of non-traditional threats, most specifically terrorism.[1] (Blair 2010) The threat of terrorism is a great concern for most western nations, particularly the United States, because many of the terrorist organizations have cited the destruction of the United States and the West as their ultimate objective. (Blair 2010) Due to the limited number of individuals needed to successfully undertake a potentially deadly attack, the asymmetric threat of terrorism can only be defeated through improved information sharing and cross border cooperation.

Non-state actors such as corrupt NGOs, terrorist groups and organized criminal networks pose the greatest security concern for the Western world for several crucial reasons. These groups are composed of a list of frequently changing, disposable individuals and are actively engaged in efforts to develop new areas for recruitment, transit and recovery. (Blair 2010) Areas that are non-traditional hot beds can quickly develop a terrorist problem. Regions prone to

developing terrorists generally share several common factors, most importantly strife and poverty (Woehrel, 2005). One such region with a lengthy history of conflict and poor economic development is the Balkan Peninsula in Eastern Europe[2]. The prolonged instability in the Balkans has created a unique culture of desperation, which has enabled the rise of systemic corruption (pervasive organized crime) and left the region susceptible to terrorist activity and influence. This development poses a potentially major security threat to the Western World, especially, the United States (Kolhmann, 2004).[3] Continued international attention is needed in this area to prevent this region from transforming from a minor terrorist threat to major operating or breeding ground.

An examination of the unique historical context and current situation in the Balkans provides a basis to extrapolate future implications for the region. The rancorous state of affairs in the Balkans has its roots in centuries old inter-ethnic conflict. Though immediate or even foreseeable resolution of the various battles and prejudices is simply impossible, the region's inhabitants cannot continue to walk their current path. Ethnic and sectarian animosity and strife have led to alternately dictatorial or ineffective governments, institutional corruption and widespread crime. Pessimism that these problems can be resolved has begun to foster a sense of desperation, making the criminal activity and terrorist ideology more appealing.

Setting the Stage: History of Violence

It is impossible to understand the current state of the Balkans without a basic knowledge of its complex and violent history.[4] The Balkans have long been a region in constant flux and conflict. For 3000 years this region has been marred by a seemingly endless series of migrations, settlements, wars and invasions by a variety of competing empires (Roucek 1946)[5]. Unsurprisingly, this legacy of change and upheaval has left an indelible mark on the region witnessed by the wide variety of ethnicities, religions, and cultural nuances present today. (Kaplan, 2005)[6]

Slavs, Illyrians, Hungarians and Turks have all descended on this area and contributed to the modern diversity (de Blij 2006). Several major occupations have left lasting effects on the ethnic and religious fabric of the Balkans. Lack of written records and artifacts have made it difficult to determine which peoples were indigenous to the Balkan Peninsula (Schevill 1991). The Greeks, though perhaps not the original inhabitants, left the first record of having lived in the region (Schevill1991). Greeks inhabited this region several centuries before the advent of Christianity. Following the death of Alexander the Great, the region fell under Roman control around 2 BC (Schevill 1991). The Roman influence in the area lasted several centuries up through the 5th century and is seen in Roman Catholicism still practiced in parts of the region (Roucek 1946). The Byzantine Empire had primary control of this region from the 5th through 14th centuries (Roucek 1946). The Eastern Orthodox brand of Christianity which many Balkan inhabitants still practice, is a legacy of the Byzantine Empire and was used by some as a means to promote unifying nationalist ideology (Roucek 1946).

Following the decline of Byzantine control in the 14th century, Muslim Turks from the Ottoman Empire conquered the region (Roucek 1946). The Turks were not known for being especially lenient on their conquests; "they dealt with their subject nationalities in a manner suggested by the word 'rayah' (cattle or herd)"(Roucek 1946). By the time the Austro-Hungarian Empire aspirations for dominance reached the Balkans in the early 20th century, Islam had dramatically increased amongst the region's inhabitants, due to both voluntary and forced

conversion under threat of death (Roucek 1946). These conversions are most visible among those concentrated in the present-day areas of Albania, Kosovo and in portions of Bosnia, which have the highest Muslim populations. (de Blij 2006).. The repeated cycle of conquest and defeat in this region has forced an unusual living arrangement, bringing ethnic and religious groups that have no particular affinity, if not outright hatred, for one another into close quarters (Roucek 1946). Many of the groups feel strong resentment toward other groups because they are the descendants of peoples attacked, conquered and mistreated by other groups (Kaplan 2005). [7] Here memories of past glories and humiliating defeats are long and the resulting scars run deep. In 1918, after World War I, Yugoslavia, a new autonomous state was õthrown togetherö on the Balkan Peninsula (de Blij 2006). Like previous artificial cartographic divisions of the Balkans, Yugoslavia was a mélange of numerous bitter rival ethnic groups and religions and thus was destined for likely failure. However, a series of repressive dictatorial regimes held the country together for decades longer than would otherwise have been possible. The degree to which the various inhabitants of this region harbored resentment and antipathy for one another is demonstrated best during the World War II Nazi occupation of the Balkans. Despite a shared enemy, Serbs, Croats and communists in the region each formed separate resistance movements to fight the Germans (Stossinger 2008). They ended up fighting each other almost as much as the invading force (Stossinger 2008). Centuries of warring had not created an environment conducive to the õforgive and forgetö mindset.

Josip õTitoö Broz, the leader of the communist resistance movement, took power as unquestioned dictator of Yugoslavia in 1945 (Stossinger 2008). As is the case with most dictators, he ruled with an õiron fistö style of government and law enforcement (Murphy 2010). He required loyalty to his regime above all, deeming nationalism a crime punishable by death. (Stossinger 2008). For this reason, he dealt with those peoples promoting autonomy in a particularly ruthless manner (Stossinger 2008). In what would prove to be one of the few bright spots of this regime, the governmental repression left Yugoslavia with lower crime rates as well as a temporary reduction in inter-ethnic skirmishes (UNODC 2008). It appears that only the greater threat of immediate violence was able to subdue the simmering antediluvian sectarian conflicts.

After Titoøs death in 1980, the fractious nature of Yugoslavia could not be contained. Other dubious, yet charismatic leaders followed in Titoøs footsteps, with Slobodan Milosevic being the most noteworthy and nefarious. Milosevic became a staunch advocate of the elevation of Serbia and its people within Yugoslavia, not so subtly condoning atrocities in the name of greater Serbian nationalism (Stossinger 2008). His attempt to establish Serbia and its peoples with primacy among the Yugoslavian provinces and ethnicities caused the country to erupt in violence. In this region where tempers ran high, the centuries old tally of grievances ascribed to neighboring ethnicities was far too lengthy for there to be any hope of a swift and non-violent resolution, once ethnic tensions and hostilities had been unleashed.

Recent Past – Epochs of War

The fragile union in Yugoslavia began to dissolve when the equality of the autonomy of the provinces was challenged. The long anticipated splintering of the Balkans started in the 1991 with the secession of Slovenia and Croatia. Farthest from the Serbian controlled Yugoslavian government, Slovenia gained its independence in about a month, few casualties and little military involvement (Duffy 2002).

Slovenia⌀s relatively peaceful achievement of freedom became somewhat of a novelty as more areas in this region began to challenge Yugoslavian governmental control. Croatia⌀s path to freedom was significantly more costly, lasting roughly a year, the considerable military engagement increased the loss and destruction as a result (Duffy 2002).[8] As the war in Croatia was coming to an end in 1992, the war in Bosnia came into full force. Atrocities perpetrated during the 1990s, in what was previously Yugoslavia, were among the most heinous committed since World War II.

The war in Bosnia was a brutal one, with three ethnicities all vying for dominance in one country. There was a slight Muslim majority in the region but there were also large populations of Croats and Serbs, neither of whom wanted to see a Bosniak (Muslim) led government, for fear of mistreatment or retribution for the violent act they had committed. There were massive resettlements and depopulations of entire areas within Bosnia as peoples were violently forced to vacate their homes, or chose to do so to increase their safety by moving to an area where they would be part of the ethnic majority (Joseph 2005). Bosnia became one of the more egregious examples of the ethnic cleansing that accompanied the quest for ethnic autonomy in the history of the Balkans. Sadly, it was not simply a matter of forced expulsions, which resulted in thousands of internally displaced persons (IDPs) and refugees, but also several incidents of mass murder, with the events in Srebnica being perhaps the most infamous (Stossinger 2008). Despite a reluctance to get involved in the chaotic Balkans, the war crimes perpetrated by Serbians in Bosnia forced the hand of President Clinton and the United States, as well as the United Nations, to provide military and humanitarian   aid to the Bosniaks (Stossinger 2008). The subsequent dispute in Kosovo between the ethnic majority Albanians and minority Serbians also saw intervention by the NATO and the United States. Though Serbian actions in Bosnia were certainly deplorable, the Albanian majority in Kosovo ethnically cleansed the Serbian minority in much the same way. In March 2004, riots of some 50,000 ethnic Albanians in Kosovo left hundreds of Serbs dead while thousands more forcibly removed from their homes (Joseph 2005). Perhaps because of distrust of the Serbians based on their prior atrocities in Bosnia, the US aided the Kosovo Albanians, thereby ultimately assisting those ultimately shown to be the aggressor.

Some inhabitants of former Yugoslavia are adept at playing the role of victim, using past injustices and mistreatment to justify their own current acts of retaliation and injustice. The prolonged conflict and a distorted sense of nationalist pride desperation drive the peoples inhabiting this region to use the resources at their disposal to their own advantage or to the detriment of rival groups, including manipulating international sympathy and support. The actions of the Kosovars are the most outstanding recent example of manipulation of international aid. õIn the five years since a NATO air campaign forced out Serbian troops and allowed the province's Albanian refugees to return, human-rights workers have documented chronic Albanian abuse o f minorities, especially of Serbs dispersed south of the flashpoint town of Mitrovicaö(Joseph 2005).

Current Status

The peace in the Balkans is a highly tenuous one at the moment. In 1995, Bosnia was partitioned into several regions by the Dayton peace agreement (de Blij 2006). Although not codified for specific ethnic groups (Serbs, Bosniaks and Croats), those divisions essentially became separate ethnic enclaves (Deliso 2007). Peace and prosperity hinges on the ability of

those ethno-centric regions to collaborate. Thus far it has not been entirely successful. US intelligence suggests that these differences will further solidify along ethnic lines as the fall election draws near and increasing tensions within the already strained Bosnian political scene (Blair 2010). Kosovo has also attained a temporary peace. The NATO peacekeeping delegation is largely responsible for ensuring that the terms of peace agreements are enforced and the region does not relapse into a state of war (Blair 2010). Though the overt fighting has been temporarily abandoned in most provinces in this region, the competition for jobs, resources, land and otherwise has remained.

In a land where ethnic strife and conflict, if not outright war has been a way of life for as long as any of its inhabitants can remember, skepticism regarding the permanence of the current peace is understandable. Since there are lingering doubts about the future of the region even by the inhabitants themselves, economic recovery and progress is slow, with limited reason for optimism.

The ethnic warfare in former Yugoslavia has taken its toll on many of the economies in the region. According to the CIA Factbook, Kosovo has one of the worst economies in Europe with its yearly GNI around 2,500 USD (CIA Factbook). It also has one of the highest unemployment rates at 40% of the population, a statistic that õencourages outward migration and black market activity.ö (CIA Factbook) Bosniaøs production during the years of civil war was cut by almost 80% (CIA Factbook). Industry has spent the last decade trying to recover from that economic hole. Though GDP had risen 5% until the recent global economic downturn, unemployment is still high and hovers around 40% (CIA Factbook). The continued animosity between the ethnic groups makes it more difficult to implement economic policies that can be agreed upon by all parties, thus prolonging economic stagnation (CIA Factbook).
Given the doubts about the permanence of peace shared by the Balkans inhabitants, potential foreign investors logically are wary of making any significant investments in the region. In theory, if the stability of the peace were not in question, the economies of the Balkans would likely see a faster rebound from the crippled war era economies. The instability of governments due to a combination of limited funding and pervasive corruption has also contributed to the lower level of foreign investment (UNODC 2008).[2]

As unpromising as the prospects for economic improvement and growth in Bosnia and Kosovo are, the prospects for those governments to be functional and free of corruption are no better. The governments in the Balkans are largely considered corrupt and ineffective institutions (UNODC 2008).[1] The United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime reports show that the Balkans leads the world in crime victim surveys in the categories of bribes and consumer fraud (UNODC 2008). UN studies reveal that standardized indicators for effectiveness of Rule of Law are low in this region.(UNODC 2008) The effectiveness of the government is likely hampered by its long ties to organized crime, dating back to the communist era (Murphy 2010)

The prolonged poor economic environment and high unemployment rates have led some to pursue a life in organized crime, which the UN sees as õa logical response to the unique set of historical circumstances of this region. (UNODC 2008). Eastern Europe has relatively low rates of traditional crime (murder, robbery, and assault), which may be a legacy of the communist era when such crimes were seen as threat to national unity and order, and were thus met with quick and brutal punishment (Murphy 2010). It was also during this time that some experts believe organized crime got its start in Eastern Europe (UNODC 2008). During the reign of oppressive regimes, power and wealth is traditionally consolidated in the hands of a few individuals. The vast majority of citizens have neither the resources nor influence to obtain the items they want

from the government-controlled market. With tight restrictions in place, there was an opportunity for a õblack marketö for goods and services not available under the communist regime in Yugoslavia. Hence, the rise of organized crime to meet the demand.

The recent wars in the former Yugoslavia presented an another opportunity for organized crime in the Balkans. Individuals were able to exploit the socio-political climate and use it to their own benefit (UNODC 2008). While the majority of production was shut down because of fighting, there was still a demand for goods, particularly illicit goods. The international community placed an arms embargo on Bosnia during its civil war, yet all three ethnic groups managed to get a hold of weapons (Murphy 2010). Arms sales were a big source of income for organized crime groups during the war. Many of these groups were able to acquire considerable money, power and influence through their illicit dealings during this time period. Notably, there is the perception in the Balkans that õsome people due to their political connections, are above the law.ö(UNODC 2008)

In some areas of Eastern Europe organized crime is now prevalent at all levels of society (UNODC 2008). In addition to arms sales, organized crime in this region is heavily involved in the trafficking of illicit goods and people for exploitation (OCTA 2009). Bribery and extortion are also organized crime activities common in this region. The attempts to limit the role of organized crime are impeded by the pervasiveness of the problem and the influence and ties of organized crime groups with government personnel and agencies. For this reason, Europol and other law enforcement organizations have expressed concern that the crackdown on organized crime in this region has not been effective (OCTA 2009). Through a combination of influence, money and effective intimidation tactics, organized crime has continued to thrive in this region.

Organized Crime and Terrorism: Symbiotic Relationship?

The Balkans are an ideal location for terrorism as well as organized crime black market activities. Both of these illegal activities thrive on an ability to find a market (people who are willing to engage buying/selling of goods or ideas) and an ability to evade detection by the law (Mace 2007). The presence of organized crime and the established black market in this region can provide terrorists with necessary supplies as well as a place to sell goods to raise funding (Mace 2007). Organized crime contributes to the inefficiency of government which also encourages terrorist organizations to take root here. The inefficiency of government and law enforcement institutions allows for more criminal acts to take place here without detection or proper prosecution. [11] The Balkans and Eastern Europe serve as the gateway to Europe for many people and goods entering the continent (de Blij 2006). Due to the weak central governments and lack of funding, the border security in the region tends to be more lax as compared to other areas in the world (Klidev 2006). This makes the Balkans a viable location for purchase and sale of illicit goods, including weapons, and transit for terrorists and their recruiters.

The terrorist legacy in the Balkans truly begins with the civil war in Bosnia in the early 1990s. Following the end of the jihad against the Soviets in Afghanistan, many of the Arab-Afghan fighters were left in a precarious position. In an attempt to put an end to continued jihad, in 1993, the Pakistani government ordered the closure of mujahedeen offices and promised deportation of any foreign fighters who remained in the country (Kohlmann 2004). As returning to their countries of origin was not an option for many of these foreign fighters because of their prior activities, a search began for a new cause or safe haven (Kohlmann 2004). Though the majority of these Arab-Afghans had not heard of Bosnia, its Muslim population and internal

strife made it a seemingly ideal choice for foreign mujahedeen seeking refuge and afforded them a degree of anonymity (Kohlmann 2004).[12]

As conflict in Bosnia heated up, the foreign fighters entered with the intention of exploiting the war torn region for potential recruits as well as a means carry on jihad. These foreign fighters provided the Bosnian Muslims with weaponry, as they were the only group to truly suffer from the international arms embargo (Murphy 2010).[13] This was the first failure on the part of fundamentalists and terrorist recruiters, the misunderstanding of the nature of the Bosnian war. The foreign fighters erroneously assumed that this would engender the overwhelming support and loyalty of the Bosniaks for their global jihad. The foreign jihadists viewed the battle in overly simplistic terms, specifically as a religious conflict (Kohlmann 2004). While it is true the Croatians, Bosniaks and Serbs all had different religious affiliations, that was only part of the issue. The Bosniaks accepted some help from the foreign terrorists during wartime but upon learning the true intent of their presence in Bosnia following the war, they attempted to extradite most of the foreign mujahedeen (Klidev 2006).

Despite the large amount of financial and military assistance some terrorist organizations have given to the Balkan states during the war and in the subsequent years, terrorist recruiting efforts in the region have been largely ineffective (Woehrel 2005). This failure came about because of three key reasons. First, though Bosnia's war renewed ethnic and religious identification for many individuals, the brand of Islam practiced in the Balkans is very different than the Wahabbist strain that Arab-Afghan fighters followed (Deliso 2007).[14] Second, is the significant amount of aid provided by Western countries. Many Muslims in the Balkans, particularly Bosniaks, remember the aid and military support that United States and others supplied during their war (Woehrel 2005). They are not quick to forget the intervention on their behalf by the international community, nor eager to incite undue ire from the world's sole remaining super power. Lastly, the continued presence of peacekeeping forces in the region help to reduce some of the terrorist efforts. The peacekeeping forces have deterred and disrupted various terrorist activities in the Balkans, particularly Kosovo (Blair 2010). These forces have more experience dealing with rogue entities and individuals. They are well equipped and trained, and thus they are more effective in their battle against terrorism than the local law enforcement.

The greatest source of concern regarding terrorism in the Balkans relates to the continued presence of non-native fighters in the region. These individuals have the motivation and drive to carry out operations in Europe and beyond (Blair 2010).   They have acquired citizenship and in some cases have made an effort to assimilate to the European lifestyle so as not to draw attention to their presence (Kohlmann 2004). Terrorist organizations like al Qaeda see a benefit to having a stronghold in Europe beyond recruiting purposes. However, it should be noted that even if the recruiting efforts of these terrorist organizations are only marginally successful, that may still be enough to have severe repercussions for the United States and the West.   A small group of Caucasian European operatives would likely be able to move about Europe with greater ease than a Middle Eastern national (Kohlmann 2004). Further, this area could play a secondary role as a potential launching point, or rest area for terrorists from Asia moving westward (Deliso 2007).

In addition to a transition area or potential launching point, this region is used by terrorists to raise funds for their respective causes. Attempts were made to use the Balkans as a place to secure funding through money laundering, US intelligence worked with the Albanian government to monitor some of 300 companies in Tirana suspected of money laundering or other

terrorist connections (Archick 2003). The Albaniansø response to confirmed or reasonable suspicion of terrorist funding link has been to freeze the assets of the company and individuals responsible for providing the monetary aid (Archick 2003). Even several Islamic charities allegedly collecting funds to supply aid and help rebuild the region were actually fronts for terrorist or militarist organizations (Klidev 2006). Most notably, the Benevolence International Foundation, was shut down in 2002 for its link to al Qaeda (Archick 2003).

Moving Forward

The United States and European nations need to engage with one another if they are to succeed in eliminating any continued terrorist presence on the Balkan Peninsula. Since the support of the United States in this region is important to the countries of Balkans, there has been a significant crack down on terrorist activity in the region since 9/11(Klidev 2006). Some countries with large Muslim populations, such as Bosnia and Albania, have made an attempt to curry favor with the Untied States by assisting its anti-terror operations in the Balkans (Klidev 2006). Unfortunately, õstate institutions in general are largely underfunded, underresourced, and lack sufficiently trained personnel.ö (Klidev 2006). Even with improved efficiency of law enforcement agencies, if high unemployment rates persist with the younger population, the allure of crime and terrorism will likely grow unless initiatives are undertaken to create greater economic opportunity for the at risk population (UNODC 2008).

Increased international cooperation and aid would be a major benefit to this region (Woehrel 2005). This aid should be targeted to the countries with the greatest likelihood of continued terrorist influence; Bosnia, Kosovo, and Albania theoretically being the most susceptible to Islamic fundamentalist terror groups because of the potent mix of economic strife, organized crime connections and a common religion. Financial aid should focus on the rebuilding economic infrastructure. The US and European nations should continue to subsidize economic revitalization programs (Woehrel 2005). This could be done in the form of direct government transfers as well as private investment, which could be further encouraged through tax policies and incentives. Investment in education in the war-ravaged areas is also particularly important if the next generations are to have opportunities to join the global economy. The opportunity presented by education has the additional benefit of reducing the draw of terrorism amongst an otherwise at risk youth population. Finally, aid to facilitate economic opportunity and growth would benefit all ethnic groups, and make the participation in crime or terrorism less appealing to many otherwise desperate individuals.

The aid from western countries should continue to come in the form of training and resources. Until recently, the Balkans were unfamiliar with the non-state actor threat. Most nations did not even have laws set up to deal with denaturalization and extradition (Klidev 2006). The knowledge and experience of western countriesø law enforcement and security forces would be a significant asset to the Balkans while they are building their law enforcement agencies and specialized crime task forces. Some effort has been made to increase security, particularly in Bosnia, which founded the State Investigative and Protection Agency in 2004 intended to tackle some of the more extraordinary levels of the countryøs crime (Woehrel 2005). However its efforts are hampered by lack of properly trained staff and funding (Woehrel 2005). These efforts need to be redoubled specifically, in the area of improved training methods and supplies for the new agencies so that they have a greater chance for success. (Woehrel 2005). The endemic problem of organized crime in the Balkans does not have a quick fix, however

progress needs to be made or otherwise terrorists have ready business partners and increased coverage for their activities.

Western countries have begrudgingly found, cross-border intelligence sharing is the currently the most efficacious means to combat the international terrorist network in the Balkans (Woehrel 2005). The fierce nationalism that predominates much of the Balkans must be put aside in counter-terrorist efforts. Agencies like Bosnia's State Border Service, which has grown exponentially in recent years, must adjust its methods to effectively investigate and disrupt terrorist operations within different ethnic enclaves as well with neighboring states. Despite the systemic corruption, a series of oppressive and inept governments, established influential organized crime syndicates, economic stagnation, and centuries old prejudices along religious and ethnic lines, the terrorists have not been able to achieve their aims in the Balkans. This is attributable, in part, to the more secularized version of Islam that is practiced in this region and also that many Muslims in the Balkans have not forgotten the aid and military assistance provided by the United States and the West in the recent wars and their aftermaths (Woehrel 2005). So the blind hatred for the United States and the West for historical and religious reasons does not resonant as effectively with the local populace. Nonetheless the terrorists, particularly Islamic terrorists, have not abandoned their plans for the region, including trying to develop a network of western looking non- Arabic looking people who can move about the Western world more easily and with less scrutiny (Kohlmann 2004). There is every reason to expect the terrorists will continue their efforts to increase their operations and activities in this region (Blair 2010). As recently as summer 2010, they have seen some marginal success with several Bosnian born and bred individuals with links to international terror organizations bombing a police station in Bugojno, Bosnia (Jones 2010).

To the extent the US and the West loose focus on the threat of terrorist operations coming out the Balkans, they do so at their own peril. Although the United States and Western Europe are naturally reluctant to get drawn into the endless ethnic conflicts in the Balkans, they cannot afford to let the threat of terrorism get lost in the melee of the region. The fact that jihadists' efforts have not been particularly successful to date should not provide comfort or a false sense of security to the US and the West because many of the conditions that are conducive to the growth of terrorist operations and recruiting persist. Time will tell whether the US and West will make the necessary commitments in resources and efforts to meet this challenge.

Endnotes

[1] The majority of the suggested allocations for congressional funds in the Annual Threat Assessment are counter-terrorist related.

[2] The countries currently comprising the Balkan Peninsula are: Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Serbia, Montenegro, Albania, Macedonia and Kosovo.

[3] Usama Bin Laden's master plan for Bosnia was õto establish a base of operations in Europe against al Qaeda's true enemy, the United States.ö

[4] Although numerous nations make up the Balkans, this article focuses on those countries with the most recent unrest, Bosnia and Kosovo.

[5] Slavs, Huns, Illyrians and numerous other invading forces have all attempted to conquer this area at some point in history.

[6] It seems that war is one of the few unifying factors in this region. õIn the excitement of sudden invasion, desperate resistance, capture and destruction of cities, men seemed to lose their distinctive personal or racial flavor, and become alike in the mad democracy of battle.ö

[7] Time of Turkish rule especially impeded development of Serbs and to a degree, Albanians. This resentment still lingers today and reason enough for retribution.

[8] As Serbia had already lost Slovenia to secession within the same year they were reluctant to let another state go as easily for fear of further break up of the Serbian dominated state they had worked to create.

[9] Albanian businessmen cite corruption as the major investment deterrent.

[10] The corruption barometer is 4.5 times higher than Western European counterparts

[11] Terrorist activities are better suited to these lawless environment or areas like the Balkans where these institutions are underfunded, as it more likely the organization and its activities go unnoticed.

[12] Shaykh Abu Abdel Aziz, the first commander-in-chief of Arab-Afghans in Bosnia admitted prior to the outbreak of fighting few knew where it was õwe were unable to understand where Bosnia was, was it in America or in the Southern Hemisphere or in Asia?ö

[13] Serbia was still giving arms to Serbs and Croatia supplying aid and weaponry to the Croats.

[14] Misguided fighters thought there may be hope for an Islamic state in Europe in very early stages.

References

Archick, Kristin and Paul Gallis. Europe and Counterterrorism. Nova Science Publishers. Hauppauge, NY; 2003.

Blair, Dennis C. US õIntelligence Community Annual Threat Assessmentö Senate Committee on Intelligence. 2010. http://www.dni.gov/testimonies/20100202_testimony.pdf

CIA World Factbook. https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/region/region_eur.html

de Blij, H.J. and Peter O. Muller, The World Today *Concepts and Regions in Geography*. J. Wiley and Sons Inc. Hoboken, NJ: 2006

Deliso, Christopher. The Coming Balkan Caliphate: The Threat of Radical Islam to Europe and the West. Praeger Security International. Westport, CT; 2007.

Duffy, Gavan and Nicole Lindstrom. õConflicting Identities: Solidary Incentives in the Serbo-Croatian Warö *Journal of Peace Research*, Vol. 39, No. 1 (Jan., 2002), pp. 69-90 Sage Publications, Ltd. Europol. OCTA 2009: *EU Organised Crime Threat Assessment*

Jones, Matthew ed. õBlast at Bosnia Police Headquarters Kills One Officerö Reuters. 2010. http://in.reuters.com/article/idINIndia-49691220100627

Joseph, Edward P. õBack to the Balkans.ö Foreign Affairs, Vol. 84, No. 1 (Jan. - Feb., 2005), pp. 111-122, Council on Foreign Relations
 http://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/60433/edward-p-joseph/back-to-the-balkans

Kaplan, Robert D. Balkan Ghosts *A Journey Through History*. St. Martinøs Press. New York; 2005

Klidev, Ardas V. Terrorism *Country by Country*. Nova Science Publishers Inc. New York; 2006

Kohlmann, Evan, Al-Qaidaøs Jihad in Europe *The Afghan-Bosnian Network*. Berg Publishers. New York; 2004.

Mace, Robyn R. õSupply Chains, Illicit Markets, and Terrorism: Understanding Organizations and Strategiesö Understanding and Responding to Terrorism. NATO Security through Science. IOS Press. Washington DC; 2007.

Murphy, Richard. Personal Interview on Balkan History and Politics 20 April 2010. DESECON. Defence and Security Consultants

Roucek, Joseph S. õThe Geopolitics of the Balkansö *The American Journal of Economics and Sociology*, Vol. 5, No. 3 (Apr., 1946), pp. 365-377
American Journal of Economics and Sociology, Inc.

Schevill, Ferdinand. The History of the Balkans. Dorset Press; 1991

Stossinger, John G. Why Nations Go to War. Thomson Wadsworth. Belmont, CA; 2008.

Woehrel, Steven. õIslamic Terrorism and the Balkansö CRS Report for Congress. Congressional Research Service RL33012, 26 July 2005

UNODC United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime. March 2008.