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## **WAHHABISM AND ISLAMIC GEOPOLITICS IN THE WESTERN BALKANS**

**Abstract:** *This research work deals with the influence of Wahhabism in the Western Balkans. Wahhabism as a movement, and geopolitical facts, it becomes an instrument of action of certain regional and geopolitical factors, and as such is a very important subject of research. In terms of space-time, is engaged in research work in the last ten years in the Western Balkans. The significance of this research is: learning about the phenomenon of Wahhabism (his teachings, features and expressions) in an attempt to integrate it into the wider social and religious framework, to monitoring its impact on the Western Balkans and in its geo-political contextualization in regional and global scale. The purpose of this research is in recognition of this complex religious phenomenon, enabling the integration of religious groups in the civil societies of the Western Balkans, and contextualize the current geopolitical situation, which is of importance for international relations. Methods of whom are in work activities include: semantic method, a generalization method, the method of observation, interviews, historical and comparative method's.*

**Keywords:** *Wahhabism, geopolitics, the Western Balkans, confessions, religion, international relations.*

## 1. Introduction: Wahhabi approach to Islam

Scientific work that lies ahead will include: access to Wahhabi Islam (its basic teachings, symbols and expression), contextualization in its geopolitical, regional and global scale, and in particular its effect on the region of the Western Balkans.

Wahhabism is a religious sect and a train of thought emerged from the Sunni Islam in today's Saudi Arabia launched by Muhammad ibn Abd al-Wahhab (الوهاب عبد بن محمد) mid-eighteenth century (Esposito, 1998: 36–37). It was created in response to the Shia, Sufi, and modernist interpretations (“turn”), and as an expression of rebellion against the kind of meandering legal interpretation of various upgrades law schools in Sunni Islam. Wahhabism in the earliest days of its beginning had a strong political context: “Wahhabi and his followers will take care of Muhammad ibn Saud, a local leader who is recognized religious frenzy Wahhabism strong cohesive force that could unite the Arab tribes to fight against the Ottoman Empire” (Djuric & Ajzenhamer, 2011: 326). This is a special form of Salafism in Islamic practice, (Moussalli, 2009: 3) of such traditionalism that constantly keeps faithful to its roots of faith as it was recorded in Islam, without any intermediate forms of modernist interpretation or bump on the sacred teachings established by Muhammad (Ungureanu, 2010: 144) It follows that a traditional Wahhabism opinion or motion, a thought process that seeks to keep the individual Muslims and the Muslim nation as a whole develops awareness of his sources (Božović & Simić, 2010: 206).

In essence, Wahhabism is thus: orthodox, reductionist and fundamentalist teachings. Orthodoxy refers to the originality of faith. In the present case, this means a rigid adherence to orthodoxy letters of the Quran – Focus on man, God in the Quran. Reduction or reducing such an interpretation according to which rejected all forms of upgrading, to gain access to or being initial source faith – what is the origin of Islam. Thus, reductionism refers to the rejection of all forms of codified interpretation of Islam, Hadith and other legal texts. Finally, fundamentalist Wahhabism property indicates the efforts of the religious school of thought in Islam that all life flows offices in accordance with the approaches of the Islamic faith who are accommodated Wahhabi religious way of thinking (Stanković, 2010: 114).

When word of Wahhabism, it is a conditional one, saying “the interpretive” which does not have its literature, which does not have its opinions to the methodological approach, a

spiritual flow that really preaches absolute reduction of man as an individual and as a community of Muslims. After Muhammad Ibn 'Abdul-Wahhabis, who wrote the books in the history of Muslim opinion as taught basic interpretive reading of Islam, there is no relevant author who could possibly deepen, expand, reinvent ideas founder of Wahhabism.

The foundation of Wahhabism has written a phenomenological approach to the advent of Islam. Her interpretive flow is literary, alive, were known. The result is that the eternal laws of Mohammed life interpret and they are regarded as the laws of that time and this. They are eternal laws that are choosing to come to the time of Mohammed and the need to define a social, political, economic, legal and other issues realize the extent and, in the manner, as they exercised at the beginning of the seventh century, when Mohammed lived (Potežica, 2007: 205). Any deviation from the norms of the Holy Quran, which were revealed to the holy text, a dirt religion, and desecrating the words of the Prophet, through which Allah I say (Janulatos, 2005: 212).

For that reason, the Wahhabis represents the other form of revisionism. Wahhabi faith demanded purification of innovation, all of which is not in the Quran and the Prophet Muhammad Sunam, and that includes religious life in credible practice the first three generations after the holy prophet. Wahhabi approach tends to Islamic tradition back to its source, to reject all the upgrades which corrupt and defile the purity of their faith, which is found fertile ground in the climate and environment Muhammad's age (Bonacina, 2015: 193). For the Wahhabis age in which faith is objectified, however, is more than the climate and environment. So, given the fact that the original Islamic teachings relation of man to God individualized and direct, without the intervention of the clergy and the church, according to Wahhabi-prayers must be directed solely to Allah. That is why the (classical) Sunnis and Shiites heretics for them, because in my prayers mention the human beings, and introducing mediation in an address to the Divine. They oppose even the mention of the prophet Mohammed in prayer and the celebration of his birthday, malvid, arguing that the prophets was just a man-mortal. In a word, everything must be directed to God and to God, and with each turn of the road is difficult to apostasy (Shora, 2008: 31). Thus, there is a view that Wahhabism is an absolute and pure monotheism, devoid of all contents of consciousness that hinder believers to reach the divine absolutes embodied in all graceful and compassionate Allah (Delong-Bas, 2007: 11).

Today within Sunni Islam there is division over the place, role and importance of Wahhabism. For one part of the Islamic religious tradition, Wahhabism is the radical Islam, orthodox and oppressively conservative, because it does not maintain the need for co-existence in the modern world, we live traffic and Muslims today. On the other hand, some of the faithful within the Islamic community believes that it is not a kind-of-new movement, especially: one of a kind of “-ism”, but that's just the word on properly faithful natural need to express and practice “untainted” Islam – the kind of the same what are respected and practiced in its original form. For them, the only possible Wahhabism Islam: the rest are upgrades and innovations that desecrate the sanctity of the faith intact. Often emphasizes the importance of Wahhabism in the process of liberation from Ottoman rule and hegemony Turkish dervish Sunnism (who is himself hooked sensory approach under the influence of Persian Islam) and the dominance of the four major schools of jurisprudence in Sunnism (Ménoret, 2005: 44). Accusing the Ottoman Turan's that fall under the influence of Persian innovations, which are entered into Islam from Zoroastrianism and other pagan teachings, Wahhabi reclaim the “true”, and the primordial religion, and to benefit from the tutelage of law schools, which, with its intermediary interpretations, only distort learning hauling it away from the word of God.

## **2. Wahhabism trough Islamic geopolitics on the Western Balkans**

There is now more visible geopolitical importance Wahhabism may have in the Balkans (especially in the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina, and slightly less in Macedonia, Serbia, Montenegro, and even the Republic of Srpska in Bosnia and Herzegovina). It is an open secret that the Islamic religious community in this country under the decisive influence of Turkey (Novaković, 2007: 176 etc). Influence of Wahhabi Islam and their followers had the effect of distancing significant part of the Islamic religious community of those newcomers whose teaching under the direct patronage of Saudian (Moussalli, 2009: 7–8). That this is so indicate and statements from the texts of Iranian publishers who do not have words of praise for Wahhabi contributions in the Federation B&H, both of Sandžak (and one in Serbia and one in Montenegro), but also in the region of Metohija, Kosovo and Western

Macedonia. It is obvious that there is a recomposition of geopolitical influence of three major Islamic forces in Turkey's religious heritage area in Europe (Collon, 1998: 181).

Once the dominant influence of Turkish dervish Sunnism, a kind of mixture of liberal Sunnism and Sufism, (Nasr, 2012: 296) is now compromised of Saudi Arabian entry to areas of central and western Balkans (Jasavić, 2011). The role of Iran and the direction of his confessional – Shi'a, remains modest for now, but it is a logistical support resistance of Wahhabization entire space. In fact, Iran's interest to maintain a moderate Sufi Sunnism for the primary in the Balkans, for two reasons. First, that the dervish through Sunnism strengthened presence of Sufism, and through it in a more distant perspective and the Shi'a (acting in this field and most likely across cultures). Another reason supporting predominantly Sufi–Sunnism in the Balkans lies in the fact that the less rigid and Sufi dervish sensitive (backed by the liberal law school of hanifeian). Shi'a Islam could maintain contact with other religions in that area, especially with the Orthodox, which has a special religious and geopolitical points of contact (Janulatos, 2005: 230–232; Jevtić, 2005: 73).

And yet, at some future time, the influence of Shiism on the Balkans will remain negligible. When it comes to dominating the Turkish–Sufi through dervishes–Sunnism character which prevails hanifeian, liberal law school (the dominant in balkanian Islam), it should be noted that their conflict with Wahhabi Sunni–Islam to access a look at the place where the two constantly clash Sunnism and this is the place and role of Islam in the modern world (Damjanović, Britvić & Vuković, 2006: 65-66). We should not lose sight of the fact that the Turkish Sunni Islam inherited the legacy of the acceptance of modernity and modernization, (Serdarević, 1968: 23) and to accept (albeit reluctantly) secularism. The Ottoman Sunnism made a step toward political Kemalism young Turkish Republic. He has a special place and importance on the Balkans, the Islamic islands of Orthodox–Christian area, where secularization has taken hold as the European tradition, and its proximity to the West, because of socialistic regimes, which are generally “under control religion”, not giving it a chance take off and show its potential spiritual–development spreading fundamentalism. On the other hand, a significant number of even the leaders of Islamic communities this conflict is real. For them, the invention of the enemies of Islam Wahhabism, an attempt to take on the faithful admirers of authentic Islam slur cast. For a part of the “main stream Sunni” Wahhabism is nothing more than just an expression of desire for the purity of Islam, which

has contributed to the deterioration including not only the liberal West and the modernist teachings but also Shiite Islam, directly or through “Sufi-imaginings” (Schett, 2012). Finally, but not least, the Wahhabi–supporters in the Balkans are primarily Saudi Arabian, and their satellites in the Middle East and the Arabian Basin west coast of the Persian Gulf, but also from Pakistan (Copley, 2005). In Wahhabism they see a way to expand its influence in the Balkans, and to contain two competing influences of Islamic directions: Turkey and Iran (Dérens, 2009: 6). Saudi Arabian influence has two important advantages in that game: one is money, and other solid and unbroken alliance with the leading powers of the West, with whom he associated with important financial transactions in terms of trade in oil (Price, 2012). Its extreme expression of Al–Qaeda, it is sufficient instrumental in the latest clashes in Libya and Syria (Milosavljević, 2006: 536).

I find western, primarily Protestant forces in selfism of vahhabii world view of a monotheistic judeo-protestantic chiliasm of Old Testament Biblical tradition that the eschatological doctrine-approached the two religions, two lifestyles and two civilizations – remains a subject for future research on this topic. Is Saudi Wahhabism allowed – instrumental version of Islam, the eternally volatile (and West unreliable) field of the Western Balkans, it remains to be seen... (Potežica, 2007: 215).

### **3. Wahhabi-Movement in the Western Balkans – between extremism and stabilization**

Head of Military Security Agency of Serbia (VBA) in an interview within one political talk-show on Belgrade’s television (Stojanović, 2011), when it comes to Islamic extremism, said the following: “... I had communication with the Minister of Defense on every day bases and the connection to the database, so when we received the warning from Kosovo, I have informed the Minister of Defense (Serbia, ed. Z. M), and he did the same to Mr. Jefferson the South Wing Commander of NATO, (for example, an information, let’s say it clear): Terrorists has set off Patriarchate in the city off Peć to burn – said by me to the minister, and he says the commander of the Southern Wing of the Alliance Pact, and him to the command of KFOR in Kosovo, and they obstruct and prevent. This is the first time I’m talking this to you... Thanks to the work of the Military Security Agency for having saved many of our cultural, religious and other facilities. I am afraid that the Gračanica and Peć

Patriarchate were burned same it happened with the Virgin of Ljeviška Church in Prizren. I consider it my pride, and being proud on Military Security Agency". It could not be done without many years of our service and operational presence in Kosovo and Metohija. So, for the first time since the war in that southern Serbian province in year 1999th there was a serious cooperation between the Southern Wing of NATO Headquarter stationed in Naples with the Serbian authorities on the issue of curbing Islamic extremism in the Western Balkans. "In an early May 2004, the Minister (of Defense) Mr. (Prvoslav, ed. Z. M) Davinić told me: 'Mr. Colonel, I have to announce you the bad news, I thought at that very moment, as any Head of Security Service, that it must have happened some diversion, or terrorism, as usual kind of dread every manager in this sector in the army facing with'. But, then he told me that the Prime Minister (of the Government of Monte Negro) Mr. Đukanović visited him and implicitly insisted that he as the Minister (of Serbia and Montenegro) to asks me to leave the position of Chief of VBA (Military Security Agency), because of what he said for me: 'His statement of the penetration of Radical Islam by Wahhabi movement from Montenegro through the area of the Valley of the Lim River (in Serbia) and thus he insulted Muslims in Montenegro, mentioning for himself that he most holds the Majority in the Parliament of Montenegro over the Muslim and Albanian parties and that the statement harms and threatens for his policy to be deprived of their support and there is possibility that his Government would fall'." And then, in an interview with Mr. Davinić, he openly threatened that "if the Government falls in Podgorica, there will be no peace in Belgrade". After that I said: "Mr. Minister, the two Governments will not fall because of one colonel".

In those examples, in a different relationship of the two countries (Serbia and Montenegro) with the Wahhabi-style movement we see the dominance of the political will of the parties and political elites in relation to the stubborn facts of reality and truth that were presented in the reports of the Security Services. There is a simple question: How is it possible that one and the same Wahhabi-style movement in the two countries so close that they were members of the community in a single state, similar by its nature, is treated in one country as the stabilizing factor, and the other as a factor of insecurity and risk? In the first example, which refers to reports by the Military Security Agency (VBA) sent in connection with the situation in Kosovo, the political elite was pleased, because it fit into the noble effort to preserve the cultural and civilization values of the Serbian people. In the second example, VBA statements were not very well received, and if it was not due to the objections on the

content and quality of information, but due to the fact that the public became familiar with the data for which the political elite believes that they should not be known to anyone but to them. It is certainly true that in the political conflicts in which actors are struggling over the public policy, doing the secret policy at the same time, and that leads to the secession of one country, which itself is an act and a testimony of how far can the political will can go, but at the same time, the proof of how the politicians may underestimate the content of the information. However, one should keep in mind that security services can often place in public an information turn attention to the situation on the ground.

Along speaking, Wahabi as a factor of instability occur not only in Serbia, as a minority group, but also as state entity such as Bosnia and Herzegovina, where Muslims make up (relative) majority (Türbedar, 2011). Some commentators believe that there is a serious problem in B&H regarding to the radical Islamist threat. Attack on U.S. Embassy in Sarajevo cannot be seen in isolation from other incidents when one takes into account a series of similar incidents in Central Bosnia (Bugojno Police Station where one was killed by one and injured six police officers, incidents in Upper Maoč, Brčko, Vitez, Konjic ...). They are situated in a “more terrorist cells for potential attacks in the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina, and these cells exhibit a tendency to work through several NGOs, charities and private companies with extremists in Kosovo, Sandžak and those in Vienna, Austria” (Nasr, 2012: 287). Correlation between Bosnian Wahhabi with those from the Middle East to strengthen the early 90-ies of the last century, but now where they received financial aid (money) and “spiritual guidance” (Michaletos & Dželetović, 2011). Although there have been many efforts by international actors to tackle the issue of Wahhabism, all risk assessment must take into account the correlation in the activities of Wahhabi who opted for extremism and a regional and even geopolitical risk than those who are not. First of all, the extremist Wahhabism seeks to act through cells by extremists linked to the multi-ethnic communities in Europe. That's why they need a well-coordinated effort that should be taking place in several countries simultaneously.

From the case study it can be concluded:

1. The incident in Sarajevo was not isolated.
2. There is a project for the establishment Wahhabi Green Corridor in the Balkans, with the establishment of Sandžak State and merge it with the Bosniaks.

3. They used the so-called. “Soft Power” approach in solving human and minority rights by conventions, recruiting people in the movement and the giving of alms to the citizens of Muslim faith for financial and social needs, making a “good image” for themselves.

This image was improved through land purchase and businesses with the help of individuals and organizations from the Middle East who are taking over economic resources. They use so-called Soft Power in the approach which means that they use propaganda in the media (Trifunović, Stojaković & Vračar, 2011), especially on Internet sites and forums, and then try and try to correlate the interested individuals in the Balkans and Muslim communities living in other European countries (in Austria). Because of the Soft Power involves the establishment of specific socio-political forces, and because they believe that they will be able to create a “Green Corridor” in the future and for doing it, they “recruit Albanians from Kosovo and Metohija, which has been neglected by the American security services.” (Jevtić, 2007)

Certainly, the foregoing views on the Wahhabi movement are suggesting that they represent a security threat in the Balkans, especially in Serbia and Bosnia. However, Wahhabi-style movement, when regarded in a way of their history, does not represent the threat, nor by the number of people involved, not by an ideology, but it could turn bad under the other conditions, such as: 1) certain degree of connection with international terrorism of Islamic origin, 2) certain quality of interference of foreign powers, and 3) by the existence of their links to organized criminal groups (OCG).

On the other hand, one should do much more to prevent adverse effects of Wahhabi in the Western Balkans. Obviously, the Wahhabi-style movement, if there is a lack of these conditions, cannot be considered a religious extremist element that could destabilize the current level of understanding and cooperation in the region. On the contrary, this Islamist movement could be presented as a factor that enriches the culture and civilization of the Muslim population in the region of the Western Balkans. Reduced risk of potential extremism to terrorism is created due to the fact that the establishment of Wahhabi movement takes place under the watchful eye of the security services of the secularized regimes in the Western Balkan countries working to prevent the destabilizing factors in this part of the world (Zorić, 2007: 166). It is necessary to prevent the realization of a scenario in which the Wahhabi movement in the “second phase should become destabilizing factor for ethnic consensus in the region and factor of persecution of Muslims by Muslims” (Michaletos & Dželetović, 2011), not just a factor of persecution of Christians, as it has happened in the wars of the early 90’s of XX century in the region of Southeast Europe.

There are those who warn that it could be even more dangerous localized threat of possible terrorist actions escalate into large-scale civil conflict within the (false) state constructs involved which conflicting religious community of Muslims and Christians: conflicts in Kosovo and Metohija in the South of Central Serbia, in Western Macedonia, Montenegro and the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina (Morrison, 2008). This scenario would be extremely dangerous in proportion to the bygone civil war and geopolitical legacy of the former Yugoslavia, that has left more devastating effect in the present geopolitical circumstances, when more widespread action of Turkey, Iran and Saudi Arabia in the region (Vascotto, 2024). In comparison to that conflict, the potential new conflict between the Christians – the Muslims, could be increased with the activities of Wahhabi inspired Muslims against other Muslims. It would become even more complex by introducing into the conflicts other interest groups and regional geopolitical factors within the Islamic world.

Roads of the Wahabi movement does not depend on some imaginary plants, because they came to Serbia not from Bosnia, but from Montenegro. Here we are facing with the word of the smuggling and importation channels of Wahhabis from a potentially destabilizing factor into the actual intent of Islamic forces to destabilize the Balkans. However, no matter what are the motives, the consequences could be devastating. Members of the Wahhabi movement were placed on this site: Prizren in Southern Metohija, then in Montenegro and Novi Pazar region (Serbia), Skopje and Tetovo in Western Macedonia, Southern parts of Bulgaria and in limited numbers in Albania, and even less in Croatia. In Europe, they are located in Vienna, as well as in Munich, Cologne, Milan and Malmo, and in many small towns in Germany, Holland, Italy and Sweden. Their decentralized hierarchy letting them to seek to communicate over the Internet, so that is why they targeted a group of collaborators from younger age. Slavism affected their digital skills, rigorist ethics letting them to be drawn into militancy and fundamentalism or fanaticism. They try not to be exposed to public attention in European cities and now their interaction with other radical Islamist networks did not reach a high level of integration, and in addition they collaborate with other ethnic minorities, such as the Turkish speaking Arab groups. For now, the goals and mission of Wahabi in Serbia and Bosnia, is not to any great extent compromised by their links to terrorist groups and individuals. The most striking in of their stigmatism is that they reject some of the social values and norms, and reacting by requiring changes in the current situation, in accordance with their teachings. Through rigorist acting they impose their own

views about Islam, clashing with the majority of Turkish Islamic community of Sunnis. So, they see that their own territorial space has yet to be created in order to achieve their goals and at the same time they create plans that have already been established in Saudi Arabia, where does the applicable authentic Islamic codes coming from. Eventually their connection with the most extreme Islamist organization Al-Qaeda is only possible in the way that they choose their most prominent members of the family, highly educated staff, PhDs, engineers, only if their activities fit into a project that could be conditionally called “Islamic United States” (Bojanić, 2010: 354). Another condition under which the Wahhabi-style movement could become extreme and violent, is the possible interference of the foreign powers that have their own regional and global interests within the Security System of the Political Communities to which they belong. Could it be assessed, for example, that the U.S. are systematically trying to accomplish themselves in the Western Balkans as a similar impact in the Middle East and support the migration Wahhabi groups? Here we ask a logical question: Why the Wahabi movement is directed by the rule from the countries in which the U.S. has higher influence, towards the countries in which U.S. influence is less? It is important not to repeat the mistakes of the conflict in Kosovo and Metohija in order to avoid that the United States and the International Community to respond “typical ad hoc manner and ignore the proverb: that it takes two for tango,” (Joksimovich, 1999: 176) which means that for the conflict cannot be accused only one side. It would be irresponsible to view them as just a small group of Islamic fanatics who are useful to US allies and can therefore be easily controlled (European Parliament, 2017) It is positive that the opinion of the United States is now significantly changed upon the issue of the danger of Wahhabi extremist activity in the Western Balkans and in most of Europe.

Now it is very difficult to defend a view that Islamic Radicalism must pander for Serbian Hegemony in the Balkans. How does the view changes, having in mind the contributions and, in particular, incompetence and indifference of “local politicians” in the Western Balkans to analyze the real situation on the ground, when political actions exclusively confined to the adoption or implementation of only the so-called political support for Corps of Minority Rights of minority communities?

The third condition under which the Wahhabi-style movement could turn into an extreme (links to Organized Crime Groups) is related to the fight against organized crime and corruption. Corruption corrodes largely Party System and Public Policy. How to explain

that certain Wahhabi-style group enjoyed the hospitality of a political elite doing it in order to obtain certain services or political concessions, and that for the neighboring territory belonging to the other political elite, the attitude is diametrically different? It should be noted that organized crime has become so powerful in some regional states that parts of the state apparatus were rented as appropriate to criminals. Why there would be created a possibility that parts of the state apparatus in the weak Balkan states, seeking slavishly for money, for example, be put into operation by Wahhabi or similar movements, although they were not violent at the beginning?

The latest attack on the U.S. embassy in Sarajevo has just served as a public call for all parties to be included in the process of preventing the Wahhabi issue and realization of qualitative effects on the stabilization of the situation in the Balkan region. Potential conflagration Wahhabi extremism is the Balkans, and pointing out this danger to Islamic religious communities in Bosnia and Herzegovina (Bojanić, 2010: 369). The danger of the radical Islamist threat in Southeast Europe can be removed only if all establish a new consensus on security between: Europe, United States and the Balkan states. The nature of accession to the European Union is not a simple concept and unilaterally imposed. Regional Initiatives are important to the Western Balkan countries if they want to achieve the state's regulatory function in society based on the principle of partnership within the Government Agencies and NGO's to determine the activity in the field of protection of minority rights, or rather the space between the requirements of the EU and the impact of competitive influence of the policy and national traditions. Methods of geopolitical insight into political and religious phenomena, such as Wahhabism, are indispensable in the field of research into the regional security regime, not only in the Balkan region but also in the wider Mediterranean and European space (Tsailas, 2022).

#### **4. Conclusion**

In the Western Balkans, two Islamic confessions intersect: Sunni Islam and Shiite Islam. In addition, in geopolitical terms, three major powers of the Islamic world are present: Turkey, Saudi Arabia and Iran. The Turkish version of Islam is by far the most common in the Balkans. It follows the most widespread, Hanafi, school of legal thought in Sunni Islam. In

addition, the Turkish version of Islam seeks to reconcile Sunni Islam with traditions that have Salafi roots. From a Wahhabi perspective, such Islam leans towards Shiism. The Wahhabi movement, which originated in the center of Saudi Arabia, as a striving for “pure Sunnism”, seeks to “purify Islam from Salafi deviations” through Wahhabism. Iranian influence, although weak, seeks to introduce Salafi traditions among Muslim believers in the Balkans; and, through culture and education, to achieve interfaith dialogue with the majority population of Orthodox Christians. Wahhabis act as a “religious police” in the Western Balkans: in Albania, western Macedonia, the Raška region (Serbia and Montenegro), Kosovo and Metohija, and central Bosnia. They enter communities with the majority Muslim population and teach believers “the true faith from the time of Muhammad, freed from the burdens of various legal schools”. The conflict between Turkey and Saudi Arabia in the Western Balkans has acquired a double dimension: confessional and geopolitical.

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## **VEHABIZAM I ISLAMSKA GEOPOLITIKA**

### **NA ZAPADNOM BALKANU**

#### **Rezime:**

*Na Zapadnom Balkanu ukrštaju se dve islamske konfesije: sunitski islam i šiitski islam. Osim toga, u geopolitičkom smislu prisutne su tri velike sile islamskog sveta: Turska, Saudijska Arabija i Iran. Turska verzija islama je daleko najčešća na Balkanu. Ona prati najrašireniju, hanefijsku, školu pravne misli u sunitskom islamu. Pored toga, turska verzija islama nastoji da pomiri sunitski islam sa tradicijama koje imaju selefijske korene. Iz vehabijske perspektive, takav islam naginje šiizmu. Vehabijski pokret, koji je nastao u centru Saudijske Arabije, kao težnja ka „čistom sunizmu“, nastoji da kroz vehabizam „pročisti islam od selefijskih devijacija“. Iranski uticaj, iako slab, nastoji da uvede selefijske tradicije među muslimanske vernike na Balkanu; i kroz kulturu i obrazovanje ostvari međureligijski dijalog sa većinskim stanovništvom pravoslavnih hrišćana. Vehabije pokušavaju da deluju kao „verska policija“ na Zapadnom Balkanu: u Albaniji, zapadnoj Makedoniji, Raškoj oblasti (Srbija i Crna Gora), Kosovu i Metohiji i centralnoj Bosni. Oni ulaze u zajednice sa većinskim muslimanskim stanovništvom i uče vernike „pravoj veri iz vremena Muhameda, oslobođene tereta raznih pravnih škola“. Sukob između Turske i Saudijske Arabije na Zapadnom Balkanu dobio je dvostruku dimenziju: konfesionalnu i geopolitičku.*

*Ključne reči: vehabizam, geopolitika, Zapadni Balkan, konfesija, religija, međunarodni odnosi.*