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**POLITICAL ISLAM**  
**AMONG THE ALBANIANS**  
**Are the Taliban coming to the Balkans?**

Pristina, June 2005  
2<sup>nd</sup> Edition

**KIPRED**

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Kosovo has been widely characterized as a “cultural mosaic” by observers. While the characterization is still accurate there are a number of forces working against the sustenance of that heritage. This paper explores the possibility that Kosovo’s religious diversity, already under siege for years, may be under further threat despite the arrival of the international community in the summer of 1999. It is suggested here that due to the neglect of rural Kosovo-Albanian communities and the rigid stereotypes many international administrators have about the Islamic faith and its practitioners, an emerging threat of Islamic radicalism may be emerging in the heart of Kosovo.

The tragic irony in this report is one that points to needless neglect on the part of the international community. Primarily due to the failure of the international community to appreciate the diversity of Kosovo-Albanians spiritual heritage, Yugoslav-era policies of cultural homogenization has been continued by a number of faith-based “humanitarian” organizations that have entered Kosovo since 1999.

This paper charts the history of this phenomenon by focusing on the post-World War II period, one in which a Belgrade-directed effort to dilute the influence of the myriad of spiritual centers in Kosovo, resulted in a number of important structural weaknesses to traditional Islam in the region. By linking these past efforts to homogenize Kosovo’s religious practices to the activities of particularly Saudi-funded groups in rural Kosovo today, it is suggested the neglect of Kosovo’s rural communities by the secular aid agencies in operation in Kosovo is leading the usurpation of what remains of Kosovo’s tolerant Islamic traditions. It is argued here that by blindly deferring the care of the educational, housing, and nutritional needs of much of rural Kosovo’s population to organizations that promote a rigid and intolerant teaching of Islam-Wahhabism, UNMIK and the OSCE may be threatening the future stability of the region. In the end, as a result of this neglect, the international community may be permitting the creation of social and cultural enclaves that will replicate much of what happened to the Afghan refugees living in Pakistan during the 1980s: read the Talibanization of Kosovo’s Albanian Muslim population.



## Introduction

“Albanians have been Muslims for more than 500 years and they do not need outsiders [Arabs] to tell them what is the proper way to practice Islam.”

Rexhep Boja, Mufti of Kosovo<sup>1</sup>

The quote above demonstrates how Kosovo’s most senior Sunni Muslim cleric, Rexhep Boja, sees the presence of Arab “non-governmental organizations” (NGOs) in Kosovo. Despite being the beneficiary of hundreds of thousands of aid dollars, much of which went to rebuild devastated buildings of the Islamic Community of Kosovo (*bashkësia islame e Kosovës* [henceforth BIK]) that Boja runs, Kosovo’s Mufti wants “the Arabs” out. Such public distrust and even anger vented towards the Salafi (purist) practices of mostly Saudi citizens working in Kosovo is coming from a man who received his master’s and doctoral degrees in Saudi Arabian universities. Appreciating what is going on here may help address some of the long-term threats to regional stability and better highlight the fundamental mistakes committed by the international community (IC) over the last three and half years in Kosovo.

The following will expose the sources of such tensions that originate not so much from the doctrinal principles that are being evoked by both local Muslims and the ultra-orthodox Saudi and Gulf Arab NGOs, but the questionable manner in which Western powers have compartmentalized their priorities in the region. The narrow-minded approach to Kosovo’s Islamic cultural heritage has left the essential spiritual facet to a human beings’ life unaddressed by the Western-dominated administration ruling over Kosovo today. As a result of this neglect, UNMIK and their patron states have permitted Saudi-based humanitarian agencies, operating under the umbrella of the Saudi Joint Committee for the Relief of Kosovo and Chechnya (SJCRKC), to fill-in the vacuum.

The activities of Saudi relief agencies are not new to the West. A recent report to the Pentagon by a Rand Corporation researcher suggested that the biggest single threat to American interests and long-term security came from within the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. The conclusion, while sensationalist in its final recommendations, based its core argument around the activities of Saudi based and often Saudi funded missionary/humanitarian aid organizations that have spread around the world since the fall of the Soviet Union. It has taken many years, but the Koranic schools in Pakistan that produced the radical Taliban movement have finally attracted the attention of outsiders.<sup>2</sup> In face of this exposure, it is therefore remarkable that nothing has been done to keep such schools from being established in Kosovo. While confused ideas of Islam among those who took over the administration of Kosovo in 1999 may have led to their deferring some tasks to faith-based organizations, the growing popular knowledge of how “radical Islam” emerged in such previously tolerant societies as Afghanistan’s in the last twenty years should have immediately caused UNMIK officials to think again about the role the SJCRKC should play in Kosovo.

At issue is not necessarily “Islam,” therefore, but how Western policies of “conflict resolution” have left “ethno-religious” communities (i.e. Muslims, Orthodox Christians and Catholics) at the mercy of international, “faith-based” organizations that claim to represent their best interests. It is these organizations that have shamelessly exploited the poverty and fragmented social conditions of, in our case here, rural Kosovar Albanians to effect a level of cultural hegemony over targeted communities. As a result of Western policies in Kosovo that have basically deferred addressing rural Kosovo’s post 1998-1999 war social and economic needs to organizations whose basic modus operandi is the religious indoctrination of the population, much of Kosovo’s rural society is being isolated from their fellow country men and the world at large. As a result of such isolation, Kosovo’s rural Muslims are increasingly vulnerable to the subsequent hostility emanating from those very Western governments who neglected to address their initial needs. Ironically, as self-proclaimed Western societies cower before the “the rise of Islamic fundamentalism,” its discriminatory policies towards Kosovo’s rural “Muslim” population may prove to be directly responsible for the production of Europe’s own “Taliban” which in the future may indeed prove hostile to “western values and interests.”

## Defining Albanian Islam

It is important to remember that Albanians have traditionally practiced Islam in ways unique to the region, practices which included the synthesis of a number of local forms of spiritual traditions which ultimately evolved into complicated rituals in which Muslims and local Christians often shared the same spiritual site.<sup>3</sup> While the Yugoslav state would attempt to systematically destroy such cultural fusion in order to better effect central control over its population, as Saudi or US-based organizations have discovered over the last three years, Kosovo’s local traditions remained largely intact in rural areas. In attempts to change these local proclivities, wealthy foreign interests over the last three and a half years (such as faith-based charities) have frequently imposed their paternalistic guidance on Albanians who are assumed to be ignorant of “true” Islamic, Christian or “western values” which require a sharp sectarian division between faiths. As a result, the schools, places of worship, hospitals and community centers erected by the various religious, governmental and non-governmental “charities” over the last three years have become the arenas of competition for the Albanian soul, so to speak. As expected, these “fundamentalist” organizations ignore and often denigrate these local traditions of cultural fusion and, to use the words of UNMIK, “tolerance for the other.” As a result, growing tension and a manifested sectarianism discussed more below, is becoming evident in many sectors of Kosovar society where in the past, Catholics and Muslims, in particular, were living together in harmony. Unless addressed today, such tensions may evolve into a fragmented and exclusivist maze of faith-based sectarian groups that would threaten any long-term hopes for stability in the region,

especially within the Albanian-speaking community.

The central problem arises from the inability of the IC to grasp the complexities of Kosovo's difficult-to-reach rural communities. In addition to failing to appreciate the devastation caused by war, the IC has not understood the highly contested history of Kosovo's religious heritage.<sup>4</sup> Such a history requires greater sensitivity to the subtle differences that exist between the various Sufi traditions that operated in one or two villages, and the more centralized and bureaucratic-minded Islamic institutions that were established during the Yugoslav period. In fact, as discussed further below, these Sufi enclaves in rural Kosovo would bear the brunt of Yugoslav persecution throughout the post-World War II period. Such institutionalized persecution ultimately resulted in a devastating attack in the 1998-1999 war on these Sufi communities with a vast majority of their mosques, schools and community leaders eliminated. In many ways, by allowing faith-based NGOs to have free access to rural Kosovo, the IC has assured little of this past heritage of Sufism will be able to reconstitute itself in postwar Kosovo. As a result, therefore, it will be concluded here that if more is not done to help preserve Kosovo's esoteric Islamic tradition that resisted attempts to centralize and thus homogenize Kosovar's faith over the last ninety years, the ongoing assault on what was once a tolerant, diverse and largely parochial relationship with an individual's faith will give way to the globalizing forces of international Islam as propagated by forces linked to Saudi Arabia.

## **The Yugoslav Project and Sufism in Kosovo, 1945-1999**

That one's religion would become a tool of modern state control should not be new to the reader, as "national churches" have been the tools of states in the molding of social policies in the Balkans for decades. What is not widely known, however, is that the Communist state, which inherited the rich cultural mosaic of the post-Ottoman Balkans, used the homogenizing forces of the state to help subjugate its "dangerous" populations, often articulated as the non-Slavs of the southern regions of the country. This was particularly true in Yugoslavia when it concerned Albanians. The central issue for this section is to highlight the recent history of Kosovo's Islamic communities (in the plural) in order to emphasize a past in which there was great diversity in how an individual's faith was practiced and that this diversity was deemed a threat to Belgrade, very much in the same way as the Saudi organizations today. By appreciating the diversity of how Islam was practiced in Kosovo and the efforts by Belgrade to impose a rigid and centralized "universal doctrine" through state appointed religious officials, we can then proceed to better understand what Saudi NGOs are doing in Kosovo today and perhaps devise an effective strategy to avoid future conflicts.

The often forgotten distinctions between Muslim communities (often identified along Sunni/Shiite terms in other parts of the "Islamic world") demonstrate an inherent

complexity to human interaction which forces us to be weary of using overly simplistic generalizations about Islam and its practitioners.<sup>5</sup> It is easy enough to simply lump all Muslims together, as is usually the case in looking at Kosovo which is almost always called “a Muslim region” by other Europeans. Such crude methods of analysis do little, however, to help us appreciate today’s very real and dynamic tensions within this assumed uniform community.

During the height of Communist Yugoslavia, this same attitude towards Muslims led to efforts to confine legitimate power within “the Islamic community” to a specific group of Muslim leaders (*ulema*) who were designated by Belgrade to represent all of Yugoslavia’s Muslims. The problem with such a measure was that it cynically empowered Bosnian Slav Muslims in order to disseminate a centralized (read Slav-centric) and homogenous Islam throughout the regions where Yugoslavia’s non-Slav populations (Albanians, Turks and Roma) lived. Centralizing Islam to fit a number of state goals – the homogenization of Yugoslav linguistic and cultural identity and the weakening of “minority” communities – often manifested itself in long-term tensions at the institutional and the ethno-national level between Bosnian Slav Muslims and their Albanian, Roma and Turkish counterparts.<sup>6</sup> Indeed, the antagonism that is initiated by the attempt to create a single “Islamic Community” (*Islamska Zajednica*) run by a government appointed *ulema* manifested itself in the creation of a number of local institutions inside Kosovo that have left a legacy in Kosovo little appreciated today.

The central tension lies in the ambition to control Kosovo’s (and Macedonia’s) complicated and diverse religious life under the auspices of a single Islamic mechanism that would report directly to Belgrade. In line with these efforts of “streamlining” the religious life of the population was a coordinated effort to dilute the non-Slav character of Yugoslavia. Through the forced migration of non-Slav Muslims to Turkey (upwards to 300,000 Albanians left during the 1948-1962) and the often violent closure of “unlicensed” mosques and schools (*medrese*) Turkish, Albanian and Roma Muslims faced significant pressures to abandon their centuries-old practices.<sup>7</sup>

From an institutional standpoint, the problem for Belgrade and their Bosnian allies based in Sarajevo was that the “Islamic Community” was not at all coherent. This lack of homogenization should not come as a surprise. Islam had reached the Balkans by way of roaming spiritual leaders (*shaykhs*) who proselytized in rural areas among the Christian Albanian and Slav populations of the late Medieval period. These *shaykhs* were invariably attached to Sufi orders whose “unorthodox” practices often bridged doctrinal gaps between Christianity and Islam by adopting local beliefs into reformulated theology. For this reason, Kosovo was until the 1998-1999 war a unique place to study the diversity of human spirituality that existed in the early modern world, since most of these Sufi orders still practiced in the original village mosques from where they were established in the fifteenth, sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.<sup>8</sup> The practices of these Sufi orders were uniquely local and reflected a spiritual tolerance that acknowledged and often engaged local Christian customs in a complicated fusion of cultural

practices that was largely condemned by the Serb, Greek and Sunni Islamic institutions of the late nineteenth century. By the end of World War II, thanks to the often brutal homogenization of the national territories of Balkan states, it was only in Macedonia and Kosovo that these “unorthodox” practices remained, confounding Yugoslavia’s efforts to better control doctrinal content and the day-to-day experiences of peasant communities.

The central goal of the modern nation-state in the Balkans has been to eliminate certain “contradictions” to the nation, often understood as meaning ethnic minorities and unconventional religious practices. In Tito’s Yugoslavia, that entailed the creation of the *Islamska Zajednica* which would maintain the responsibility of training Yugoslavia’s religious leaders who would then control the religious, doctrinal and cultural content of all Muslim institutions in the country. The creation of this organization was specifically meant to erase the diversity present inside the country as such diversity diluted the ability to control those who worshipped outside state-sanctioned institutions. The first act of the Islamic Community of Yugoslavia, in fact, was to assert complete and unchallenged control over religious practice by banning all unsanctioned Muslim institutions.<sup>9</sup>

In 1952, it prohibited the work of Sufi orders in the country, which included the aggressive policy of closing down “unregistered” mosques. It is instructive that it was the non-Slav and non-Sunni (orthodox) communities that were targeted for this persecution.<sup>10</sup> In large part because this period is better known for the political persecution taking place under the lead of the notorious Serb nationalist Minister of Interior, Aleksander Rankovic, the extent of the persecution of this policy of sanitizing Islam in Yugoslavia has gone unnoticed. As Cornelia Sorabji noted in her dissertation recently, however, the *Islamska Zajednica* actively sought to tighten its hegemony over Islamic life by monopolizing its claim to religious authority and its scholarly and spiritual superiority over “reactionary” forces found in Kosovo and Macedonia.<sup>11</sup> Interestingly, as Sarajevo increased its oppression of, in particular, Albanian Sufi traditions, the notion of what was “a proper religious life” dovetailed to that of what was a proper gauge of one’s political loyalty to the Yugoslav state.<sup>12</sup>

What that means in respect to Kosovo is a concerted effort to indoctrinate Albanian Muslims by *Islamska Zajednica*. The first goal of this campaign was to draw Albanian Muslims away from independent and highly localized Sufi tekkes, either by closing them down or by convincing Albanians of their moral bankruptcy. In addition to the physical removal of these sites, *Islamska Zajednica*-trained Imams (spiritual leaders) fed urban Albanians a daily appetite of a “religious doctrine” that stressed “unity” among Muslims and a dissolution of “ethnic” loyalties that would translate into “a spirit of brotherhood.” While the anthropologist Ger Duijzings does a fine job in highlighting the general problem between Sufi unorthodox practices and Sunni centralizing efforts in a recent study, he fails to appreciate the content of the doctrines themselves that were clearly at the center of the 1952-1962 program.<sup>13</sup> Among those who grew up

attending the mosques of the Rankovic period, at least those operating under the guidance of an *Islamska Zajednica*-approved (read Belgrade approved) Imam, the underlying message was clear. Without exception, the Bosnian Imams who were sent to Kosovo and Macedonia in the 1950s all preached a doctrine of “unity” behind Islam that specifically targeted Catholic (but not Orthodox) Christians as the primary enemies of not only Muslims, but the Yugoslav nation.<sup>14</sup>

This is important, as the central policy of Serbian historians and the Serb-dominated regimes over the last eighty years has actively sought to erase any evidence of a Catholic past in Southern Yugoslav territories. The underlying reason for this is that by eliminating a Catholic past, ethno-national claims to the medieval past would be possible.<sup>15</sup> It must be remembered that the thesis of Kosovo being “Serbia’s heartland” is its historical claim that the medieval state was purely Serbian and Kosovo was an empty land prior to the Slavic invasions of the seventh century.<sup>16</sup> The problem is that there is evidence of a large Catholic community living prior and during the glory years of the Dushan Kingdom, somewhat contradicting nationalist claims made today that Albanians came to Kosovo with the Ottoman invasion.<sup>17</sup> In order to address this contradiction between policy and reality, many efforts were made to eradicate the Catholic community that still lived in the region. One tactic was encouraging animosity between the majority Albanian Muslim population and the Catholic Albanian community.

Albanian informants tell of sermons taking place on a daily basis in Kosovo’s urban mosques that “obsessively” emphasized the Catholic “threat” to Muslims. Importantly, it was the youth who were particularly targeted during this period as older Kosovors reportedly complained about the language being used by the Bosnian Imams to vilify Catholic relatives and neighbors.<sup>18</sup> It was the children educated in state sanctioned medreses, therefore, who were told elaborate stories of Catholic “demonic” practices, the cannibalistic tendencies of priests and the historical treachery of the Church in regards to Muslims AND Albanians. Such an education ultimately left a large impression on many of Kosovo’s young Muslims who, according to many sources interviewed for this project, have been publicly ostracizing Albanian Catholics from their daily lives since the 1960s. The result of this animosity is the large-scale migration of Albanian Catholics from Kosovo and the more-or-less complete segregation of the two “communities” in urban Kosovo.<sup>19</sup>

It is clear from my conversations with those educated during this period that one particular line of argument from the Bosnian Imam was the same throughout Kosovo. It is said that Bosnian and later, Sarajevo-trained Albanian Imams taught that the Serbian Orthodox faith was actually “close” to Islam and that Serbs are much more likely to convert to Islam than Albanian Catholics.<sup>20</sup> The point being that Muslim Albanians should trust their Serb neighbors more than Catholic Albanians, who were so “different” that the likelihood of their ever adopting “the right religion” was nil. That this method of indoctrination was the same in Prizren, Gjakova and Peja throughout the 1950s and early 1960s suggests Sarajevo was formulating and enacting a strategy to

change the loyalties of Albanian Muslims en masse.<sup>21</sup>

It is interesting to note that this strategy was largely successful in communities where the Sarajevo Islamic Community had institutional control, namely in the urban areas of Peja, Gjakova, Mitrovica and Prishtina. It must be stressed, this animosity has no historical foundation as research in the Ottoman period shows Kosovor families often had both Catholic and Muslim members in them.<sup>22</sup> That such tensions did not exist in the pre-Yugoslav era is all the more highlighted when one can see the demographic success of this policy of eliminating the Catholic heritage from Kosovo. The 1921 census conducted by Serbia suggested that 27.8 percent of the Albanian population (which made up 64.1 percent of the entire population) were still identified as Catholic.<sup>23</sup> That Catholics make up only 5 percent of the Albanian population in Kosovo today demonstrates perfectly the extent to which Belgrade targeted Catholics over the century.<sup>24</sup> What is also striking is that while the once large Catholic communities in Peja, Gjakova and Prizren are all but gone, it is the rural Catholic communities living alongside Muslim neighbors that still thrive. I suggest much of this cohabitation reflects the minimal influence Sarajevo's Imams had in rural Kosovo and the preponderance of tolerant Sufi orders.

Throughout the Tito era, rural Kosovar Albanian Muslims resisted the centralizing efforts of Sarajevo and Sufi orders subsequently thrived. In the urban areas, on the other hand, police control and strict enforcement of "licenses" helped shut down unsanctioned mosques and medreses. In response to this persecution from Sarajevo, the orders that survived in rural Kosovo became increasingly active in addressing the centralizing efforts of Sarajevo, eventually attracting many adherents from the urban areas as well.<sup>25</sup> Informants suggest there were secret organizations that mobilized communities to help finance and protect many of these lodges over the decades. The very fact that these communities were able to survive through the Rankovic period is a suggestion of a great deal of collaboration between the institutions and their constituents. This level of rural community activism also reflects the central role these Sufi orders played in the daily lives of most of Kosovo's Albanians, a role Belgrade was desperate to eliminate.<sup>26</sup>

With the shifts of political power in Yugoslavia during the last constitutional phase in 1974, these underground networks surfaced as the association of Sufi (Dervish) orders (*Bashkësia e Rradhëve Dervishë Islame Alijje*, henceforth BRDIA) which was headed by Shaykh Xhemali Shehu of the Rufai tekke based in Prizren. The BRDIA, vilified by the Islamic leaders based in Sarajevo, quickly became a cultural force in Kosovo's public life as locals flocked to these Albanian institutions. BRDIA's publication, *Buletin HU*, an invaluable source for the organization's many efforts to untangle the disastrous and largely divisive practices of the previous twenty-five years, also helped spread the message to tens of thousands of readers in urban Kosovo. By 1984, 126 Sufi lodges throughout Kosovo joined BRDIA, representing 50,000 dervishes, which in 1998, according to a Serb sociologist based in Prishtina until 1999, reached an unlikely mem-

bership of 100,000.<sup>27</sup> These numbers, while speculative, nevertheless give us a sense of the vastness of this phenomenon and the richness of pre-1998-1999 Kosovar Islamic life. Indicative of the concerns held by the state, among the orders that operated in Kosovo until the mid-1990s - the Rufai, Kaderi, Halveti, Sadi, Bektashi, Nakshibendi, Sinani, Mevlevi and Shazili - all were deemed “unIslamic” by Sarajevo.<sup>28</sup>

Again, the influence of these orders on local communities was large and thus feared by Belgrade and Sarajevo. Importantly, this influence was also seen as a threat by the now Kosovo-based BIK that was created in the 1960s to serve as an extension of Sarajevo. Throughout the 1970s and 1980s, members of the BIK openly accused local Sufi *shaykhs* of “stealing” the faithful away from Sunni orthodox mosques and aggressively stigmatized the tekkes in the mainstream press as venues of mysticism and primitivism.<sup>29</sup> Importantly, the efforts to dilute the influence of the Sufi orders had political consequences both inside and outside of Kosovo. It was clear throughout the post World War II period that Sarajevo’s central function was to sanitize the Kosovar Albanian population, which as a whole was seen as a threat by Belgrade.<sup>30</sup> Sarajevo thus openly condemned Kosovo’s Sufi *shaykhs* as threats to “harmony” as well as to Islamic good practices.<sup>31</sup> By March 1979, when the Islamic Community organized a meeting to deal with the “problem,” even openly nationalist Serb journalists got into the act of attacking Albanian Sufi orders by making accusations of drunkenness, thievery, “unpatriotic behavior,” primitiveness and other slurs.<sup>32</sup> The subsequent campaign in Serbia’s media to stigmatize Albanian Sufi’s as the primary problem to the region, clearly linked the long history of Sarajevo’s attempt to eliminate Kosovo’s religious diversity to the lingering nationalist concerns of many in Belgrade.<sup>33</sup>

Again, the source of the fear was the Sufi orders’ organizing role in rural Kosovar society. Sufi *shaykhs* traditionally played the roles of intermediaries in rural communities whenever a dispute arose. Their central spiritual role extended, in other words, to a socio-political one that was deemed essential for the functioning of rural Kosovar society, largely isolated from the rest of Yugoslavia. This role posed a long-term threat to Belgrade’s attempts to assert more control over rural Kosovo. Here lies the crux of Kosovo’s long history of local governance and self-reliance. It did not only reside in the structures claimed by the LDK, but in the spiritual networks maintained by the Sufi orders.<sup>34</sup>

It was for the noted influence of Sufi *shaykhs* and their tekkes on rural society that the war of 1998-1999 took on the “anti-Islamic” undertones that it did. Sufi orders that had for centuries constituted the foundation for Kosovar-Albanian society that was specifically targeted. At the height of the 1998-1999 Serb sweep of Kosovo, it was the Sufi orders, their hundreds of years’ old mosques, medreses and even the *shaykhs* themselves who were eliminated. It was clear that Milosevic, Seslj and the Serbian nationalist elite were keen on forever eliminating the Sufi communities in Kosovo as it was they who helped maintain rural Kosovar society. At the very beginning of the offensive in July 1998, for example, Belgrade’s primary targets were the leaders of the Sufi orders.

Shaykh Mujedin, an important leader of the Dervish community and *shaykh* of the Halveti tekke in Rahovac was murdered by Serb police while praying. Mujedin's death marked the beginning of the end of the Sufi's six hundred year history in Kosovo, and like so much else of the Albanian heritage, the postwar realities has all but assured that they will never come back.<sup>35</sup>

This eradication of such a fundamental element of rural Kosovo is a possible source for the instability in Kosovo's rural communities today. The "religious establishment" of Kosovo since the war is largely distorted by the physical elimination of much of rural Kosovo's historical spiritual base. That this spiritual tradition was far more tolerant of cultural diversity and shared many notions of inter-sectarian cohabitation than the Islam as propagated by the Saudi-based humanitarian agencies trying to dominate Kosovo's spiritual life today gives Western policy-makers all the more reason to be concerned. In the devastation brought on rural Kosovo, little has been done by the IC to address these spiritual voids resulting in long-term problems for the region.

Ironically, at a time when the local Sunni elite, as identified by Rexhep Boja and Sabri Bajgora, could fill in this void, the BIK itself has little of the material resources needed to help rebuild a religious and educational infrastructure. The Saudi-based aid agencies, on the other hand, are more than suitably equipped. Instructively, the efficiency in which the SJCRKC has gone about filling in this void hints at a sophisticated and global agenda something akin to a multinational cooperation seeking a dominant market share. It is reported that the SJCRKC spent four million Saudi Riyals (about \$500,000) to sponsor 388 religious "propagators" (i.e., missionaries) to travel throughout Kosovo in the immediate post war period.<sup>36</sup> What these (what I would call experts in the assessment of post conflict situations) did was identify the communities most likely to be receptive to their "assistance." Based on their survey of rural Kosovo, we today have an elaborate and well-coordinated network of Wahhabi-controlled rural communities whose only connection to the outside world is through Saudi-based NGOs.

The subsequent monopolization of aid to these desperately poor and devastated communities, many of which no longer have adult male members, is paying long-term dividends to Saudi interests. But are Saudi interests the same as Kosovar interests? It is suggested here that they are not. The central issue to investigate in full below, therefore, is the way in which Saudi Wahhabism is rapidly changing Kosovar society. It should be noted that in many ways, Saudi organizations permitted to operate in Kosovo by the IC without much supervision, has displayed the same institutional intolerance towards Kosovo's religious traditions as Belgrade's *Islamska Zajednica* in the 1945-1991 period. That the last of Kosovo's religious heritage is literally being bulldozed over by an organization that has similar hegemonic ambitions as their Yugoslav counterparts should prove to be a sorry indictment of the IC and Europe's strategic miscalculations and virulent anti-Muslim sentiments.

## Understanding the Wahhabi Doctrine

The source of the manifested tensions between the remaining local Muslim leadership embodied in Rexhep Boja today (not of the Sufi tradition) and the “invading Arabs” is a specific theological doctrine that is being exported by Saudi aid agencies. These Saudi organizations, based on the teachings of a doctrine originating in Arabia in the eighteenth century (which happens to be the state ideology of Saudi Arabia today) has actively sought to indoctrinate and disseminate what most people of the Islamic world deem hostile and rigid “fundamentalism.” Ironically, the SJCRKC’s efforts to control the content of the spiritual lives of Albanians, its funded destruction of many historical sites deemed to encourage “idolatry” and other attacks on indigenous forms of religious practice has resulted in some public challenges by those who are as hostile to Sufism as the Saudis. What seems to be unifying Rexhep Boja and what remains of the Sufi tradition in Kosovo is the politicization of Islam by those loyal to Saudi Arabia. What is causing concern among these self-identifying Albanians is the impact Wahhabi doctrine is having on the loyalties of those educated in SJCRKC schools. There is justifiable concern that many of the Wahhabi loyalists inside Kosovo are directing the interests of impressionable young Kosovars to political agendas that go well beyond the practice of Islam as a faith.<sup>37</sup>

In order to better appreciate what we may expect in the future with these local Wahhabi loyalists, it is necessary to look critically at the movement itself. The Wahhabi movement emerged out of the southern Arabian region of Najd in the late eighteenth century led by Muhammad b. ‘Abd al Wahhab who wished to challenge the power circles based in Istanbul and Damascus. The movement was immediately condemned by the Damascus religious and political elite who saw ‘Abd al Wahhab as but another debutant seeking to threaten the established order in the Ottoman Middle East. In particular, the Islamic elite based in Damascus condemned ‘Abd al-Wahhab’s radical doctrine which ascribed *takfir* (unbelief) to all who did not follow his teachings.<sup>38</sup> As the movement grew, its intolerant stance towards others became of great concern to religious leaders in multi-sectarian cities like Aleppo, Damascus, Baghdad, Basra and Jerusalem as any doctrine that preached the aggressive elimination of “unIslamic” practices threatened intercommunal harmony. This threat to eighteenth century stability in the Ottoman Middle East should be understood in a similar fashion in Kosovo today.

‘Abd al-Wahhab himself devoted much of his energies in refuting the charges levied against him, in particular claims that he was seeking to transcend the four schools of Sunni law.<sup>39</sup> There was indeed, much confusion pertaining to the articles of Wahhabi belief.<sup>40</sup> This mystery was largely due to the fact that ‘Abd al-Wahhab’s works were little known outside Arabia until recently.<sup>41</sup> On the basis of this ignorance, Islamic scholars have perpetuated the anti-Wahhabi polemic, blindly denouncing the Wahhabi movement’s concomitant ideology of making an absolute demarcation between its expanding polity and all its surroundings.<sup>42</sup> Such interpreted rigidities, even today, do not sit

well with the religiously diverse Middle East. Of course, the expressed nervousness about Wahhabi chauvinistic attitudes towards others has translated to the general distrust Westerners have of the movement as well.

Importantly, the fact that Wahhabi polemic is so often misquoted by “outsiders” is used by followers to great effect. As will be seen below, the adopted “offensive defense” strategy taken by members of the Wahhabi movement mobilizes a “siege-mentality” among loyalists that results in an intensified distrust and subsequent violent antagonism towards outsiders. Such antagonism is twisted in the teachings of the movement in places like Kosovo and a heightened sense of loyalty to the movement becomes manifest in everything a member does. This rigid and stubborn defensiveness is key to appreciating the impact of Wahhabism in Kosovo today as the possibility for dialogue is being all but shut down by the self-imposed sense of persecution.

The social and political dimension of Wahhabi ideology that is key to appreciating its goals in Kosovo today is the setting of strict limits of exclusivity to a particular *‘asabiyya* (group) identity. The central role of the practitioner of ‘Abd al-Wahhab’s doctrine is that any thing that is external to the expanding social, political and geographical territory of the *‘asabiyya* (the Wahhabi group) is a legitimate target for subjugation. *Kufr* [unbelief] is an attribute of others and, in the accentuated Wahhabi form, of otherness pure and simple. Such a doctrine, according to the writings of prominent Wahhabis since the nineteenth century, makes conquest and subjugation under the banner of the misunderstood term *jihad* incumbent upon the member.<sup>43</sup> This interactive position with the outside world is both seen as the political act of an expanding polity and as a legal-religious obligation.

Key to ‘Abd al-Wahhab’s doctrine is that this exterior of *kufr* comprises not only idolatrous religions, nor is it confined to non-Islamic monotheism, but describes non-Wahhabi fellow Muslims as well. ‘Abd al-Wahhab himself emphasized this, justifying the distinction on the analogy of Muhammad the prophet having fought “the believers of the one God” during the early years of Islam.<sup>44</sup> The hallowed principle of Sunni Islam, according to which all those who profess the *shahada* [ritual act of belief] are Muslims, is therefore rejected by Wahhabis in favor of the necessity of struggling against all other Muslims who fail to accept Wahhabi teachings.<sup>45</sup> In the writings of Sulayman b. Abdallah b. Muhammad b. ‘Abd al-Wahhab, a prominent and influential descendant of the movement’s founder, Wahhabism not only bans any alliance with the *kuffar* [unbelievers], but also their employment, consultation, trust, visiting, advice, friendship, emulation, cordiality and affability towards them.<sup>46</sup> This means in today’s context, that Saudi-based “humanitarian” agencies are actually projecting a doctrine of complete communal isolation that not only sees Christians and Pagans as the undesirable other, but also other Muslims who do not subscribe to their interpretive principles. Worse still, the underlying assumption of their superior values means they are compelled to actively destroy all other forms of spiritual expression, again, not only Christian, but “local” Muslim ones as well. By giving free reign to these organizations,

the IC has invited disaster for Kosovo's traditionally tolerant and idiosyncratic local traditions. It is these communities, until 1999, firmly embedded in Sufi traditions, that are now forced to adopt rigid and one could say, extremist views of the world in order to receive the generous "assistance" from the only relief agency operating in their village.

What this means in the present world is that Saudi Arabia is using this rigid and confrontational doctrine to legitimize its aggressive expansionist campaign of indoctrination in the former Soviet Union (Central Asia and Caucuses), Southeast Asia, Afghanistan and Europe. Armed with billions of petrol dollars, the assault on traditional Balkan Islam, which, as outlined above, was based on tolerance and syncretism, is beginning to cause significant, if yet unseen splits in Kosovo's religious community. That a state so closely tied to the United States is actively promoting this confrontational doctrine's expansion in rural areas is an indication of just how uninformed and narrow-minded early planners were in regards to postwar preparations. That UNMIK and the various European and US government agencies, even after September 11, continue to allow these determined organizations to monopolize the "assistance" to these rural communities that have little capacity to resist reflects the pervasive ignorance Western policy makers have of the region and about Islam.

The reasons why Wahhabis are so eager to destroy what they deem to be outside the realm of acceptable practice is linked to the political assumptions of their place in the larger scheme of the world. To Wahhabis of the present age, the rhetorical and practical scope of their doctrine is clearly exportable. The issue many of those who oppose Saudi policies within the Islamic world is the question of what do these "impure" practices and traditions do to the health of Islam. Most would argue they are good for Islam as they reflect the global diversity of the faith's reach. To the early Wahhabis, on the other hand, local traditions acted to fragment religious authority in the world, militating against the emergence of a political authority which is assumed to be sustained in the modern world by the Saudi-Wahhabi alliance.<sup>47</sup> Therefore, what we have in the beginning of the twenty-first century is a modern state that assumes its divine duty is the spreading of Wahhabi Islam to the rest of the world and the elimination of all other "impure" manifestations.

Indeed, monitoring Saudi activities in Central Asia, Africa, the Balkans and in neighboring Arab states, it is clear that it is actively seeking to use the powers of technology and its vast economic wealth to project an expansionist and intolerant doctrine into the world's impoverished regions. Al-Qa'ida is but a militant manifestation of these underlying currents in the world. In the very heart of Prishtina on any given night, at the headquarters of the SJCRKC in Dardanija neighborhood, "training" sessions for women are accompanied by lectures on the superiority of Arab culture and the need to return to the exemplary behavior of the first Muslims. According to an informant who occasionally attends these gatherings, a young woman from Drenica (assumed by the dialect she uses), now a student in the School of Theology in Sarajevo, tries to convince her fellow Albanians that among other things, Skanderbeg was a traitor to Islam, that

the fundamentals to Albanian legal history, the Kanun of Lek Dukagjin, are not indigenous but were handed down by Arabs who infiltrated the Balkans hundreds of years ago and that in order to be true Muslims, they must adopt the lifestyle of those Muslims living in the seventh century. This curious mode of engaging people who for all intents and purposes disagree with what they are hearing, fits perfectly the very methodological precepts drawn in the fundamental doctrinal texts of the Wahhabi movement.<sup>48</sup> The issue is not historical “facts” but an underlying theme of overwhelming submission to what is basically an ethno-centric chauvinism disguised in a universalistic religious veneer. Wahabbism demands subjection in principal to its authority, which is unambiguously centered in the Royal House of Sa’ud, out of which all culture worthy of preservation emanates. This doctrine puts forward a model whose task is to subject local societies like Kosovo’s with Arab customs, authorities, devotions and other particularities to Najd.<sup>49</sup> Any hope of membership to this exclusive commonwealth must begin with buying into the notion that Albanian culture and history is either defunct of value or its best aspects are to be subsumed into a history that is exclusively linked to Arabia.

Such is the import of the abstraction from contemporary reality which marks all fundamentalism: an absence is constructed, which is then filled by interpretations provided by those with the means of enforcing an interpretation. In Kosovo’s villages, it is the SJCRKC that has the means because it gives out the food, jobs and hope for a better material life. In Prishtina, the freedom to walk out and find a sewing course elsewhere is still there so there are few women who are persuaded by this approach. This is the fundamental difference between the world in which most members of the IC experience Kosovo and the realities of the vast majority of the region’s population. Wahhabi tactics today is to assure there is a rhetorical door left open for the social and political contexts of fundamentalist doctrine to weave themselves into the contemporary realities of Kosovo’s desperately poor population. It works well in situations like refugee camps and war-torn rural areas, not in places where there are options for people to take.

It is important to point out that this phenomenon is not unique to Islam and indeed, the faith of Islam as practiced by the vast majority in the world does not explicitly promote such behavior. On the contrary, what first the Islamic Community of the Yugoslav government and now the Saudis are trying to do is to homogenize the inherent diversity of Islam in order to control its vast social resources. By using the powers of technology, the unmatched financial capacities of the state and the frustrating ignorance of the Western world, the SJCRKC and other Saudi-funded “humanitarian” organizations are effectively establishing a firm hold on Kosovo’s ever-growing rural population by default.

The difference with past efforts to homogenize the region is that these Saudi agencies will shift the center of power away from the region. In other words, a future Kosovar identity will not be one easily controlled by political forces based in Prishtina or even in the region. The central theme of Wahhabi doctrine is the universalistic claim of faith, one that does not recognize the local and emphasizes only the global reach of its doc-

trine. That the center of this doctrine of “universal” Islam is Riyadh, means that in ten years time when war breaks out somewhere in the “Islamic world,” local Albanian loyalties will be challenged. Militancy may become manifest in Kosovo in much the same way that the “Taliban’s” world vision was created out of the ashes of Afghan society that was resurrected by Saudi money in the refugee camps of Pakistan. As much as the devastating wars in post-Soviet Afghanistan was fought between those who practiced an “impure” Islam (the Northern Alliance) and those who practiced the Wahhabi doctrine (Taliban) the same is likely to happen in the Balkans. What I observe in Kosovo today is the potential foundation of a new Lebanon or worse still, the creation of a powerful rural-based Taliban-like self-identifying group that will not tolerate religious and doctrinal difference.

## Identifying Crisis

Unfortunately, the relationship between UNMIK and the population it is mandated to govern has been ignored in the post-September 11, 2001 world, resulting in some major tensions that are being allowed to fester. As I have noted in the past, European and US policy-makers have historically demonstrated a tendency to neglect the social dynamics of societies like Kosovo in order to satisfy larger political interests, which often means nothing more than a desire for “stability.”<sup>50</sup> As it concerns Kosovo, UNMIK’s failed administration of Kosovo’s postwar needs has resulted in the introduction of new political and social forces that are, ironically, detrimental to Europe’s long-term stability. In the war-torn areas of Kosovo today, where according to recent World Bank data, more than 50% of all Kosovars are living in poverty, secular NGOs and UNMIK have failed to address local needs. In their stead, evangelical faith-based charities have been conspicuously active to fill in this void. These organizations, linked to political forces that are not beholden to local interests, are introducing new patterns of association that demand loyalties to be directed beyond the region.

Most troubling, many of these foreign organizations have capitalized on the ill-feeling produced by the international communities’ negligent behavior by linking anti-western ideologies with local concerns of being isolated from the rest of Europe. Thriving in Kosovo’s devastated rural areas organizations operating under the umbrella of the SJCRC have not only monopolized the provisioning of food and health supplies to the population, but their education as well. In this sense, the conditions in rural Kosovo resemble those observed along the Afghan border in the 1980s and early 1990s when large numbers of orphaned and single mother families were also dependent on Saudi “charity.” Indeed, the mechanics of the “Taliban” [literally meaning the students] phenomenon in Pakistan would find many parallels in rural Kosovo, parallels that should be a cause for alarm among policy makers as the SJCRC extends its influence in the region.

Far too little attention has been paid to the kind of assistance, including education that religious organizations are providing Kosovo's children over the last three years. The Islamic Endowment Foundation (IEF), operating under the umbrella of the SJCRKC, openly admits to supporting more than 30 specialized Koranic schools in Kosovo's rural areas, all built after 1999.<sup>51</sup> Locals, when asked about these schools, have complained that they are teaching little more than the memorization of the Koran to community teenagers and therefore do not improve the prospects of Kosovo's needy rural population.<sup>52</sup>

Unfortunately, there seems to have been little interest within the IC in regards to what rural Kosovo is experiencing in respect to their lack of basic services. Therefore, little attention has been paid to the 98 primary and secondary schools built by the SJCRKC throughout rural Kosovo as well.<sup>53</sup> These schools, meant to funnel promising students to the larger Koranic schools run by the IEF, are helping create a new generation of Albanian Muslim whose increasing sense of persecution and neglect is translating into a generation of young men and women whose loyalties are not with Kosovo and sustain a volatile intolerance to anyone who contradicts their training.

Such a possible well of resentment has recently been manifested in a letter written by a student of the Institute for Islamic Education in Prishtina. Armend Podvorica, in an open letter to *Koha Ditore*, condemned the position taken by Rexhep Boja as it concerns the activities of Wahhabi groups in Kosovo. Podvorica's reaction speaks of a particular sensitivity towards opposition to the growing influence of Saudi-based organizations that has been shown above to reflect an underlying strategy of adherents to Wahhabism to garner a sense of community. More importantly, by responding to Boja's criticism, Podvorica revealed the underlying Wahhabi intolerance towards, in particular, Kosovo's Islamic heritage. In the process of defending Wahhabi doctrine as "a purist form" of faith, Podvorica goes on to explain how Kosovar Albanians, despite 500 years of an Islamic tradition, are not yet real Muslims.<sup>54</sup>

Revealingly, in Podvorica's words Kosovars never learned the "true" Islam. Instead, they inherited the "bastardized" form from Turkey [sic] which "has nothing to do with religion." Podvorica goes on to challenge Rexhep Boja's stated concerns with extremism by qualifying the acts of "these Muslims" (interestingly, implying Boja is not one) who are running schools and "are well respected in Arabia." That "they follow the authentic path" is supposed to assuage any concerns readers of *Koha Ditore* may have about the legitimacy of Wahhabi doctrine and immediately dilute Boja's public concern. As Podvorica's pious Arab Muslims are distinguished from what he is clearly identifying as Boja's "bastardized" Islamic tradition, Podvorica exhibits a tell-tale sign of doctrinal rigidity that fails to accommodate the interpretations of other Muslims, let alone talk to them. This rigidity may spell disaster for Kosovo in the future.

Podvorica's letter highlights the underlying fissures that are occurring in Kosovo's back roads today. Podvorica crudely demarcates a border which separates the faithful and the true followers from those who are not. This method of differentiation could quickly

translate into uglier kinds of exchanges. Indeed, there have already been a number of incidents where Wahhabi-trained Albanians have disrupted community meetings by attacking everyone who did not subscribe to their doctrine. It was clear to witnesses attending a meeting on birth-control in Prizren in 2002 that this outburst was a form of intimidation that I suggest will translate soon enough to acts of public “punishment” of those who deviate from the “true path.” This rhetorical method of confrontation used by Podvorica and his colleagues is well-known in Arab city slums where Wahhabi organizations have been trying to take over neighborhoods from other Muslim groups by accusing opponents of betraying Islam. It has happened in Pakistan, Tajikistan, Nigeria, any number of Arab city neighborhoods and it will happen in Kosovo if nothing is done to give these rural children alternative sources of education. That Boja’s opposition to the Wahabbi doctrine is being interpreted by Podvorica and other Albanians under the Wahhabi spell as a threat to Islam and a “betrayal” is key to understanding how Kosovo’s future will look if the IC continues to ignore rural Kosovo.

There is concern that Boja’s or other Albanians’ challenges to Wahhabi doctrine are being interpreted as a gesture of hostility that needs to be aggressively confronted by Wahhabi loyalists. A perception of hostility towards Wahhabi adherents, clearly causing Podvorica to react with accusations of Boja’s (and Kosovo’s) “bastardized Islamic traditions,” is being linked to other forms of hostility towards Wahhabism that are transmitted on the international news programs every night. This has been manifested in a form of institutional competition between the “established” local religious community, the BIK, and the “Arabs.” As late as 27 April 2003, officials from the BIK have outwardly challenged Wahhabi teachings in Kosova.<sup>55</sup> While statements from head Imam Sabri Bajgora may attempt to assert order in an Islamic community ill-defined by decades of institutional oppression and the 1998-1999 war, there lays some important tensions that cannot be addressed without UNMIK and EU intervention. The sense of being unwelcome by Europe, the sense of being persecuted for being “a true Muslim” and indeed, blamed for events taking place in other parts of the globe is a common theme among self-identified Albanian Muslims today. Simply, as rural communities in Kosovo have become more or less dependent on the SJCRC for their basic needs and are sensing little or no sympathy from the international community, they are increasingly vulnerable to specific worldviews that are inherently hostile to Europe and the West as a whole.

Clearly with Podvorica’s recent letter, such attitudes are not only directed at the outside world. While touring these regions over the last year, it is evident that as a result of nearly three years of being under Saudi care, the young men of these communities have begun to manifest a greater intolerance towards the inherent cultural and sectarian diversity of their country. This reflects Wahhabi’s rigid notion of what constitutes an Islamic community and an interpretation of Kosovo’s Islamic past as being somehow “illegitimate” is spreading among the vulnerable youth of rural communities.

Tellingly, the forced segregation of the sexes and a focus on young male education based on little more than the memorization of the Koran has attracted little or no attention from the international community. When the improvement of Kosovo's educational standards and the promotion of the education of girls are under the umbrella of UNMIK "competencies," it is indeed tragic that rural Kosovo is in such a state. Perhaps even more damning and incomprehensible in face of the events of September 11 is that international indifference has allowed for this monopolization of Kosovo's spiritual life by Saudi agencies to take on even deeper roots within the very governing institutions of the region.

Rural Kosovo's dependency on religious funding has been assured through the formal alliance with some elements of the Kosovo provisional government, most conspicuously the Ministry of Health and Saudi organizations which in the past, provided essential drugs and medical equipment to these same rural communities. The ethnic Bosnian and the currently suspended Minister of Health, Numan Balic, a native of neighboring Novi Pazar (Sandjak), has been known for years to have "fundamentalist" leanings for which he was actually exiled from Sandjak in the early 1990s. Settling in Albania, Balic made his links with among others, an Albanian from Skopje, who has since changed his name to Muhammad Jusufi. Jusufi, Numan's "political advisor" while heading the Ministry of Health, has long ties with Saudi Arabia. During the 1998-1999 wars, Jusufi was the coordinator for Saudi aid agencies in Albania and no doubt through the influence of these agencies, took up his new role in Kosovo alongside Numan. Numan's colorful history as a political leader in his adopted home is key to understanding the complicated links between Saudi Wahabbism and the undercurrent of religious sectarianism beginning to surface in Kosovo. Balic and Jusufi, two non-Kosovars, can be seen as central figures in the effort to integrate Wahhabi proselytizing institutions into Kosovo's political and cultural mainstream.<sup>56</sup>

One of the impediments to dealing with such issues is an internationally imposed policy that has sought to implement certain ideals in local societies with little or no flexibility to adjust them when it becomes clear they are counterproductive to the overall mission. Despite evidence of Balic's underlying hostility to "Western" forces in the Balkans, as noted in conversations with a broad range of staff in the Ministry of Health (MoH) and the international staff supervising the MoH's daily activities, UNMIK is seemingly trapped in its policy of "multiculturalism," ultimately hampering local governing bodies', including the provisional government of Kosovo's efforts to discipline Balic for failures as Health Minister that go well beyond his associations with Saudi Arabia. In the end, the largely ignored inter-linking of Saudi religious organizations, the Bosnian government and Numan Balic's Ministry has been broken after a long and ugly political fight between the provisional government of Kosova, Balic and UNMIK which all too often intervened to protect Balic from being disciplined for his questionable policies. While Balic was removed from his position on 4 March 2003 under order of the Prime Minister (Steiner's office is delaying his formal removal out of fear of the political consequences), the complicated web of interests that were allowed to shape

the health system in Kosova may still provide the wedge needed for Saudi influence to remain paramount in many parts of rural Kosova, let alone keep Balic in the position of Kosova's Minister of Health, despite a long record of incompetence and mismanagement.

## Local Efforts to Address the Growing Power of the SJCRKC

In an attempt to thwart what many on the ground see as an effort by the SJCRKC to indoctrinate Kosovo's rural population and take over some of Kosovo's key institutions, new political lines are being drawn in Kosovar society. Unfortunately for the long-term stability of the region, these political divisions reflect more than ever, the rural/urban divide that has historically divided the Kosovo population. As a result, there appears to be a heightened sense of persecution among those who have become reliant on SJCRKC assistance and indeed, a small segment of the population who have adopted Salafi doctrines. "Political Islam" as it has emerged in other parts of the world, therefore, while still at its infancy in Kosovo, is transforming to fit local concerns. One can follow in the BIK's journal *Takvimi*, for example, the occasional debate over the merits of establishing an Islamic party in order to address these problems of rural poverty and administrative neglect. Indeed, advocates for the creation of an Islamic Party reveal a growing sense of political power in Kosovar society, one that is becoming more interventionist when it comes to influencing cultural mores and the education of society as well as a more aggressive political stance vis-à-vis the outside world.

The powerful impact Saudi-funded schools have on the perceptions of rural communities vis-à-vis the outside world has not only created tensions within the Muslim community over doctrine, but it has also challenged the traditional harmony between Christian and Muslim Albanians. A visible division has emerged in which radical elements of the Albanian Muslim community, taking their cue from their Arab benefactors, are going so far as to challenging Albanian nationalist sentiments seen as too closely linked to a "Christian heritage." In addition to declaring the Albanian national hero Skanderbeg a "non-believer" (he resisted Ottoman forces in the fifteenth century), Saudi Salafi groups have also expressed open hostility to the presence of Americans and other Western "corrupting" Christian influences in Kosovo. Linking Catholic Albanians to Western interests and rural Kosovo's continued impoverishment has shown increasing success in some regions and is a continuation of a strategy adapted by Sarajevo during the Tito era.<sup>57</sup>

Again, this has at times produced a vociferous challenge from many Albanians both within established Muslim institutions and the emphatically secular political parties, in particular in respect to the attacks being levied by Salafi groups on Americans, who are seen by Albanians as their saviors. These open debates point out that there is plenty of suspicion about the motivations of faith-based charity groups in general and open attacks on "Arab Muhajadin" groups in particular have been noted. Being easily iden-

tifiable today by their long beards and simple dress codes, the presence of these strongly religious individuals often results in immediate assumptions that they are linked to Saudi extremists. This hostility towards “Arab imperialism” could easily be harnessed by UNMIK and other institutions, in the process this intervention would assure that rural populations did not feel it had to take the path the Afghans did in the 1980s. In perhaps the most clear cut example of how Albanians feel about the growing public profile of Saudi funded organizations, the news agency Kosovapress, considered to be the media arm of the second largest political party of Kosovo, issued in late December 1999 the following commentary.

“For more than a century civilized countries have separated religion from the state. [However], we now see attempts not only in Kosovo but everywhere Albanians live to introduce religion into public schools...Supplemental courses for children have been set up by foreign Islamic organizations who hide behind assistance programs. Some radio stations now offer nightly broadcasts in Arabic, which nobody understands and which lead many to ask, are we in an Arab country? It is time for Albanian mosques to be separated from Arab connections and for Islam to be developed on the basis of Albanian culture and customs.”<sup>58</sup>

This statement most succinctly highlights the nature of the concerns many urban Kosovar Albanians have with their Islamic legacy. Despite these concerns and increasing sensitivity to “Islamic fundamentalism” after September 11, Saudi influences continue to increase their presence in rural areas, often with the complaisant approval of the international community who has less and less money to offer. The key, again, is the economic assistance Saudi-funded organizations can provide to generally forgotten villages far off the main roads and well beyond the interests of international organizations. As Saudi-funded orphanages and primary schools address the serious shortage of rural education and social services, a “captured” audience has been assured for its underlying proselytizing message that directly contradicts the very rhetoric of “tolerance” promoted by UNMIK. The children who benefit from the economic assistance that no other European or international organization is willing to give, leads to their dependence on such organizations in all aspects of their cultural, social and economic lives. This dependency has rendered them vulnerable to the long-term strategies of Salafi/Wahhabi organizations based in Saudi Arabia and may well result in their future hostility towards their fellow Kosovars, the rest of Europe and the West in general.

### **Albania: A Model for Kosovo?**

Interestingly for Albania proper, events appeared to be going in the direction Kosovo is taking immediately after the fall of the Communist regime. Much as they are doing now in Kosovo, representatives from Iran and Saudi Arabia rushed to the impoverished Albania in 1991 in the hope of indoctrinating what was seen as a vulnerable population. Armed with assistance packages and often unstated, long-term intentions of redi-

recting young Albanians to a particular brand of Islamic practice, then President Sali Berisha openly welcomed these organizations, hoping for an economic windfall from the wealthy oil producing countries on the Arabian Peninsula and Iran.

The results from this virtual invasion of Muslim (and Christian) charities were immediate in Albania. According to a study conducted in the two universities of Tirana in 1994, three-fourths of the students asked stated they believed in God while only one-fourth of the professors who were instructing them claimed to be believers.<sup>59</sup> This “rebirth” of faith may have reflected a rebirth in religious institutions and a surge of attendance to religious-based schools that followed the 1990 opening of the country to foreign donors. A consequence of this invasion, however, is not necessarily a rigid orthodoxy. Interestingly, largely as a consequence of the perception that Albanians were in need of religious reintegration, the region has been a point of intense rivalry between competing “Islamic” traditions in the very schools built for religious indoctrination.

The best example of this may again be found in Albania with the emergence of a Turkish charity group that has monopolized the education of urban Albanian Muslims since the early 1990s. A self-made maverick named Fethullah Gülen (1938-) and his vast economic, pedagogical and spiritual empire has been very successful in exporting his “Turkish” type of Islam to Albania. Gülen’s “secular” private schools, *dershanes*, have emerged throughout Albania since 1991, serving as an effective counter weight to more radical Arab organizations filtering into the country at the time.<sup>60</sup> From the very beginning, generous scholarship programs to poor families, a world-class English language education and promises of a university education in Turkey attracted thousands to these schools. While the message of these schools is strongly religious, former students confirm that Gülen’s message is decidedly more “liberal” than his more orthodox rivals from the Arab world. This is supported in Gülen’s writings and pronouncements, which suggests “Arab” literalism (better known as Wahhabism) is not the Islam of the modern era and is openly condemned in his schools. This challenge to Wahhabi values is clearly playing an important role in how Islam is reintegrated into the lives of Albanians in Albania and has more or less rendered Arab funded schools marginal. As a result of this failure to have an impact on Albania, Arab charities have redirected their money and attention to Kosovo since 1999. The difference between Kosovo and Albania may be that while Gulf Arab organizations have been dominant in Kosovo, Gülen’s charity has built only one school in all of Kosovo.

It is important, therefore, to stress that Albanians are not destined to take the “Taliban” route as is suggested to be occurring in many communities in Kosovo today. Indeed, it appears Muslims in Albania have successfully thwarted the penetration of Wahhabi extremism in their communities by openly accepting a far more “liberal” brand of Islam imported from Turkey or attending the many other secular and “Christian” schools built in the country. Unlike rural Kosovo today, parents in Albania had a wide range of choices to send their children for an education and more important still, there

was no single source of much desired material assistance. This variety proves key. Armed with doctrinal and sectarian alternatives, local Muslims in the Albanian-speaking regions of the Balkans prove, when given a choice, effective in staving off the indoctrinating efforts of outside interests.

## Conclusion

This brief report sought to expose the questionable manner in which Western powers have compartmentalized their priorities in the region and how Saudi-based humanitarian agencies have filled-in the vacuum. At issue is how Western policies of “conflict resolution” have left “ethno-religious” communities (i.e. Muslims, Orthodox Christians and Catholics) at the mercy of international, “faith-based” organizations that in turn, shamelessly exploit the poverty and fragmented social conditions of, in our case here, Albanians. As a result of the successful penetration of these communities by faith-based organizations, Kosovo’s Muslims are increasingly vulnerable to the subsequent hostility emanating from those very Western governments who neglected to address their initial needs. Ironically, as self-proclaimed Western societies cower before the “the rise of Islamic fundamentalism,” its discriminatory policies towards Kosovo’s rural “Muslim” population may prove to be directly responsible for the production of Europe’s own “Taliban” which in the future may indeed prove hostile to “western values and interests.” This message should not only serve as an invitation for an immediate reversal of policies in Kosovo in respect to funding rural development, but also as a warning to the international community preparing to intervene in Iraq.

That said, the paint on the canvas has yet to dry. Indeed, throughout the history of Islam in the Balkans, Albanians have demonstrated a wide range of proclivities. Kosovar Albanians are not destined to be the next Taliban. As I stated in a lecture given to the Woodrow Wilson Center last November on this topic, it is ironic that it was the Albanian Muhammad Ali, governor of Egypt, who crushed the Wahhabi uprising in Arabia in the 1840s. It is ironic in as much that today, it is Albanians who are under siege from the very sentiments that had been halted by Albanian troops in the 1840s. While many in Kosovo, like those in Albania, continue to resist the sectarian implications of the religious activities of various “charity” organizations, others concede that the arrival of these proselytizing organizations are creating internal conflicts as people are drawn by promises of money, jobs, education and indeed a new identity. Unless immediate attention is paid to providing an alternative for rural communities in Kosovo, the spectacle of outside powers manipulating internal sectarian differences, as in Lebanon in the 1970s and 1980s and among Afghan refugees in Pakistan, is a distinct possibility. It would be yet another tragic demonstration of western shortsightedness that its failure to provide a few million dollars to rebuild the lives of hundreds of thousands of human beings would result in decades of conflict and instability. The eco-

conomic stinginess and the cultural chauvinism that produces this neglect may come back to haunt Europe, ending any illusion that things have been made right in the Balkans over the last three years.

## **Suggestions for Successfully Turning Back the Trends Noted Above:**

### 1) Pro-active studies.

It is suggested that the IC could help develop a new department at Prishtina University that studies the ethnic and cultural diversity of Kosovo's past. The present leadership of the university (a member of the PDK) and its departments, as well as the LDK minister of education (an economist), have publicly displayed their disdain for "tradition," folklore etc. This parochial chauvinism will result in the loss, forever, of a culture that fused Serb, Turkish, Albanian, Roma, Vlach and other linguistic, spiritual, and material traditions. A concerted effort to celebrate Kosovo's diverse past can dilute the strident segregationist logic that exists today in Serbian and Albanian communities vis-à-vis each other. That requires helping to preserve the cultural heritage of Kosovo and uncovering that which has been erased for the last eighty years. In particular, I am referring to the Sufi Muslim traditions and Albanian Catholic history, largely covered over by concrete and academic silence. The gesture of the study of Kosovo's diversity, much like the new curricula developed in the United States that emphasizes that country's racial, ethnic and religious diversity, will perform more towards the task of "reconciliation" than empowering political leaders who come from a different, segregationist era. Such an endeavor, however, requires providing an adequate working environment for outside scholars, and Kosovo's new generation, to be free of the intellectual hegemony currently on display in Prishtina University.

2) Imposing an immediate regulatory regime to control all Faith-based "Charity" organizations, this includes Christian as well as Muslim organizations.

3) Installing a rigorous screening process of incoming individuals through Kosovo's borders. It is clear to this author that Saudi-based agencies use Turkish Airlines' flights from Istanbul as a convenient method of infiltrating individuals who would otherwise be deemed dangerous to European border officials. It should have attracted security personnel's attention long ago that none of the tell-tale Wahhabi personnel working in Kosovo arrive using European Airlines like Swiss or Austrian. Turkish Airlines and its transfer services to Prishtina three times a week, provide a perfect route for infiltration, not only for Kosovo, but possibly the entire region. Unless professional and thorough background checks are made on all individuals coming in who fit a particular profile, Kosovo will not be able to deal with this long-term problem.

4) Immediate investment in rural schools. This includes the building of more schools, the retraining of teachers and provisions to grant scholarships to large numbers of students to commute to larger schools. Rural Kosovo, as in the past, is being completely isolated by the fact that development money is being funneled into towns. That Saudi funded schools are the only source of an “education” and provide the only hope for rural society is grounds for shame among UNMIK staff. For all the billions dumped in Kosovo, that an educational system and rural Kosovo in general has been neglected speaks of bad management and a kind of arrogance that will come back to haunt Europe in the near future. Giving rural Albanians a viable option will eliminate the attraction of Saudi-funded schools, as was proven in Albania.

5) The strengthening of local religious organizations. Failing to help redevelop the old traditions will have long-term consequences for Kosovar society. Men like Numan Balic cannot be allowed to dictate the religious content of Kosovar society. UNMIK and the IC must get directly involved in helping resurrect the old patterns of faith. That also means not deferring questions of Islam to Rexhep Boja of the BIK, for that would only replicate what Belgrade attempted to do for over fifty years. Kosovo’s religious diversity and indigenous traditions deserves celebration, not eradication, the IC can invest a little money to assure this continues.

6) The promotion of the republication of many of the religious texts written by Albanians in particular, will help dilute Wahhabi claims. This is a gesture of the IC’s intent on defending Kosovo’s Islamic heritage. If Albanian Muslims cannot read the vast array of alternatives that exist, they will never be persuaded to deviate from the Wahhabi doctrine being buried into their heads today.

7) A strong effort to resurrect Catholic traditions in Kosovo. There are a number of known ancient sites that were purposefully destroyed or covered over with concrete during the Yugoslav period. Encouraging the development of a revitalized interest in Kosovo’s history that does not conform to Yugoslavia’s virulent anti-Catholic Albanian position will help enlighten the world and strengthen a sense of community among Kosovars. This is not intended to rekindle nationalist claims, for this can be harnessed by a thoughtful and generous display of IC’ appreciation for past misdeeds and attempts to reconfigure Kosovo’s history to what it really was, a multi-ethnic, diverse and heterogeneous society, not one which destroys all evidence of a fused Islamic, Catholic and Orthodox heritage.

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> Quoted in Andras Riedlmayer, “Kosovo: The Destruction of Cultural Heritage,” in [www.justiceforall.org](http://www.justiceforall.org), 1999.

<sup>2</sup> John Esposito almost twenty years ago urged his readers to not dissociate the ability of “traditional” societies such as that found in Saudi Arabia to proselytize using the very tools of modernity assumed to be the exclusive tool of Western capitalist societies. John L. Esposito, *Islam and Politics* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1984), 212.

<sup>3</sup> These joint pilgrimages have been noted for centuries in Kosova and are the central topic of research for the Dutch anthropologist now based in London, Ger Duijzings. See his “Pilgrimage, Politics and Ethnicity: Joint Pilgrimages of Muslims and Christians and Conflicts over Ambiguous Sanctuaries in Yugoslavia and Albania,” in Mart Bax and Adrianus Koster (eds.), *Power and Prayer: Religious and Political Processes in the Past and Present*. (Amsterdam: VU University Press, 1993): 79-90.

<sup>4</sup> For one of the better representations of the unique Albanian Islamic heritage, see Robert Elsie, *History of Albanian Literature*, (Boulder: Social Science Monographs, 1995) vol. 1, 85-118, 195-208.

<sup>5</sup> For a sophisticated explanation of the nuances to these categories in the Balkans, see H.T. Norris, *Islam in the Balkans: Religion and Society between Europe and the Arab World* (London: Hurst, 1993), 82-137.

<sup>6</sup> Indeed, Sorabji has noted often that Bosnian Muslims have adopted most of the xenophobic rhetoric towards Albanians—they are “lazy, ungrateful, undisciplined and not proper Muslims”—as Serbs. See Cornelia Sorabji, “Ethnic War in Bosnia?” *Radical Philosophy*, 63 (1993), 34.

<sup>7</sup> On Yugoslavia’s forced migration policy see Isa Blumi, “Whatever Happened to the Albanians? Some Clues to a Twentieth-Century European Mystery” in *European Encounters, 1945-2000: Migrants, Migration and European Societies since 1945*. Eds. Ohliger, Schonwalder, Triadafilopoulos [London: Ashcroft, 2003], 231-268 and on closure of mosques in the 1950s see Isa Blumi, “Albanians in Macedonia: Has the Rain Come?” *International Journal of Albanian Studies* [Fall, 1997]: 32-56.

<sup>8</sup> On how these Sufi orders have persisted until 1998 in Kosova to play a leading spiritual role in the daily lives of Kosovars see Haki Kasumi, *Bashkësitë fetare në Kosovë 1945-1980* (Pristinë: Instituti I Historisë së Kosovës, 1988), 65 and for a more general history of their settlement into the Balkans, see Alexandre Popovic, *Les derviches balkaniques hier et aujourd’hui*. (Istanbul: ISIS, 1994). Nathalie Clayer has provided the most thorough study of Sufism in Albania and is helpful for a better understanding of how they practiced over the centuries: *Mystiques, État et société: Les Halvetis dans l’aire balkanique de la fin du XV<sup>e</sup> siècle à nos jours* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1994).

<sup>9</sup> Alexandre Popovic, *L’Islam balkanique: les musulmans du sud-est européen dans la période post-ottomane* (Berlin, 1986), 347-357.

<sup>10</sup> Fejzulah Hadzibajric, “Tesavuf, tarikati i tekije në podruçju Starjesinstva IZ BiH danas,” *Glasnik vrhovnog islamskog starjesinstva u SFRJ*, XLII/3 (1979): 271-277, see in par-

ticalar 273 and *Glasnik Vrbovnog Islamskog Starjesinstva* (1952), 199.

<sup>11</sup> Cornelia Sorabji, “Muslim Identity and Islamic Faith in Socialist Sarajevo,” PhD dissertation (Cambridge University, 1989), 163.

<sup>12</sup> *Glasnik Vrbovnog Islamskog Starjesinstva*, (1962), 185-186.

<sup>13</sup> Ger Duijzings, *Religion and the Politics of Identity in Kosovo*. (New York: Columbia University Press, 2000).

<sup>14</sup> Stephen Schwartz, *Kosovo: Background to a War* (London: Anthem Press, 2000), 87-101.

<sup>15</sup> Numerous residents of Peja, Gjakova and Prizren tell of building projects in the 1940s and 1950s that leveled Medieval Catholic monuments, including graveyards and as late as 1982 in Peja, archeological sites that produced artifacts which dated before the rise of the Nemanjid dynasties lionized by Serb nationalists since the 1890s.

<sup>16</sup> At present, the most vocal of these neo-fascist claimants to a Kosovo without Albanians is Dusan T. Batakovic, a prominent member of the University of Belgrade. See for instance, *Kosovo i Metohija. Istorija i Ideologija*, (Belgrade: Hriscanska Misao, 1998).

<sup>17</sup> This is made clear in Noel Malcolm, *Kosovo: A Short History* (New York: New York University Press, 1998), 41-57.

<sup>18</sup> Personal Correspondence, Peja, January 2003. Interestingly, as a result perhaps, a popular saying among older Kosovar Muslims today reflects a general animosity towards Bosnian/Slav Muslims. “Squeeze a Bosniak and you get Seven Shki (Serbs).”

<sup>19</sup> Peja’s nominally Muslim majority is notorious about keeping Catholics out of their lives. The biggest sin a child can commit among Peja’s Muslim community, for instance, is to marry a Catholic, an act akin to tainting the blood of the family forever. Personal correspondence, Peja, January 2003.

<sup>20</sup> Personal Correspondence, Peja, January 2003.

<sup>21</sup> As confirmed by conversations with elder members of the Catholic community of Gjakova and Prizren now living in New York, September 1997 and Muslims living in Klinina and Prizren August 1999.

<sup>22</sup> See Isa Blumi, “Contesting the Edges of the Ottoman Empire: Rethinking Ethnic and Sectarian Boundaries in the Malësore, 1878-1912.” in *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, 35/2 (May 2003): 237-256.

<sup>23</sup> For census data see “Jugoslavija 1918-1988, statisticki godisnjak” (1989).

<sup>24</sup> The largest flows of Catholics out of Kosova took place immediately after World War I, World War II and during the Rankovic period. That said, well into the 1980s, a disproportionate number of Kosovar migrants to Western Europe and North America were Catholics. For a history of the Catholic Church in Albanian-populated Macedonia and Kosova, see Gjini Gasper, *The Shkup-Prizren Diocese through the Centuries* (Prizren: Drita, 2000).

<sup>25</sup> This process has been observed by Alexandre Popovic, “The contemporary situation of the Muslim mystic orders in Yugoslavia,” in Ernest Gellner (ed.), *Islamic Dilemmas: Reformers, Nationalists and Industrialization: The Southern Shore of the Mediterranean*. (Berlin: Mouton, 1985), 247.

<sup>26</sup> This was revealed in a report provided by a Serb journalist who explored a particularly bloody episode of repression by Belgrade. L. Bulatovic, *Prizrenski proces* (Novi Sad,

1988), 91-93.

<sup>27</sup> *Buletin HU* 1984, 12 and Sladjana Djuric, *Osveta I Kazna. Sociolosko istrazivanje krvne osvete na Kosovu I Metobiji* (Nish: Prosveta, 1998), 107.

<sup>28</sup> *Buletin HU* (1978) vol. 2, 6.

<sup>29</sup> See Sharifi Ahmeti's article in *Glasnik Vrhovnog Islamskog Starjesinstva*, 1979, 283-287.

<sup>30</sup> Among others, see Dusan Batakovic, *The Kosovo Chronicles* (Belgrade: Plato, 1992).

<sup>31</sup> *Glasnik Vrhovnog Islamskog Starjesinstva*, (1975), 296.

<sup>32</sup> The entire meeting and its contents are covered in the special issue of *Glasnik Vrhovnog Islamskog Starjesinstva*, no. 3 (1979).

<sup>33</sup> Some authors stand out in their virulent and sensationalist depictions of Albanian "savagery" and "primitiveness." Dejan Lucic's remarkably open racism had a wide readership in Serbia and his book entitled *Tajne albanske mafije* (Secrets of the Albanian Mafia) published in 1988 complimented the equally derogatory work of Bulatovic and others in the Milosevic era.

<sup>34</sup> Djuric has noted this 1998, *Osveta i Kazna*, 109. See also *Buletin HU* 1978 (4), 12.

<sup>35</sup> See Amnesty International, *A Human Rights Crisis in Kosovo Province. Document Series B: Tragic events continue, No. 3 Orabovac, July-August 1998. EUR 70/58/98*, pages 4-6.

<sup>36</sup> Consult the Official Saudi information website for news on activities of various Saudi "charities" in Kosovo: [www.saudinf.com](http://www.saudinf.com).

<sup>37</sup> The latest manifestation of that came in reaction to my recent research on the subject which was subsequently misquoted in an UPI news service report. Rexhep Boja's reiteration of his concern about Wahhabi influence in Kosova was accompanied by a quote from an UNMIK official who again, demonstrated the IC's utter ignorance of the situation on the ground in Kosova. See "Edhe një rrezik për Kosovën: Wahabitë," *Koha Ditore* (4 January 2003).

<sup>38</sup> See M.Sh. Alusi, *Tarikh Najd*, ed. M. B. Athari, (Cairo AH 1343/AD 1924), 50ff and Al Jabarti, *Min Akhbhar al-Hijaz wa Najd fi Tarikh al-Jabarti*, ed. M.A. Ghalib, (n.p. 1975), 97.

<sup>39</sup> H. Khalaf al-Shaykh Khaz 'al, *Hayat al-Shaykh Muhammad b. 'Abd al-Wahhab* (Beirut, 1968), 119ff.

<sup>40</sup> Ibn Bishr, *Unwan al-Majd fi Tarikh Najd*, 2 vols, (Riyadh: AH 1385, 1388/AD 1965, 1968) vol.1, 18 and M.A. Khan, "A Diplomat's Report on Wahhabism in Arabia," *Islamic Studies*, 1 (1968): 32-48.

<sup>41</sup> M. Kurd 'Ali, *Al-Qadim wa 'l-Hadith*. (Cairo, 1925), 157.

<sup>42</sup> M.R. Rida, *Al-Wahhabiyya wa 'l-Hijaz*. (Cairo: AH 1344/AD 1925), 34.

<sup>43</sup> W. Sharara, *Al-Ahl wa 'l-Ghanima: Muqanwimat al-Siyasa fi 'l-Mamlaka al-'Arabiyya al-Su'udiyya*. (Beirut, 1981), 124.

<sup>44</sup> *Majmu'at al-Tawhid*, (Saudi Arabia, n.d.), 52 and passim.

<sup>45</sup> *Majmu'at al-Tawhid*, 284.

<sup>46</sup> *Majmu'at al-Tawhid*, 121-122 and cf. 251ff.

<sup>47</sup> Sharara, *Al-Ahl wa 'l-Ghanima*, 91.

<sup>48</sup> Sulayman b. 'Abdillah b. Muhammad b. 'Abd al-Wahhab, *Taysir al-'Aziz al-Hamid fil Sharh Kitab al-Tawhid* (Damascus, n.d.) is a detailed commentary of these doctrines.

<sup>49</sup> Sharara, *Al-Ahl wa'l-Ghanima*, 101.

<sup>50</sup> Isa Blumi, “Kosova: From the Brink—and Back Again” *Current History* (November, 2001): 15-20.

<sup>51</sup> Consult the Official Saudi information website for news on activities of various Saudi “charities” in Kosovo: [www.saudinf.com](http://www.saudinf.com).

<sup>52</sup> Personal Conversations held throughout Drenica region 2000-2003 period.

<sup>53</sup> See Isa Blumi, “Indoctrinating Albanians: The Dynamics of Islamic Aid in the Balkans” *ISIM Newsletter* [March 2003]: 9.

<sup>54</sup> Armend Podvorica, “Besimi i denjë nuk është ekstremizëm,” *Koha Ditore* (7 January 2003), 11.

<sup>55</sup> Arbana Xharra, “Nisma e Bashkësisë Islame nxit reagime të fuqishme në shkolla,” *Koha Ditore*, 27 April 2003, 1 and 4.

<sup>56</sup> For more details, consult Isa Blumi, “The Islamist Challenge in Kosova.” *Current History* [March 2003]: 124-128.

<sup>57</sup> This can be noted in the effort by BIK to assert “religious” training into schools, a counter offensive directed at Wahhabi penetration but perhaps damaging any hope of maintaining a secular, multi-faith community together. See Arbana Xharra, “Nisma e Bashkësisë Islame nxit reagime të fuqishme në shkolla,” *Koha Ditore*, 27 April 2003, 1 and 4.

<sup>58</sup> Consult [www.kosovapress.com](http://www.kosovapress.com) archives, 29 December 1999.

<sup>59</sup> Adem Tomo, “Attitudes towards religion and the religious motivations of students and intellectuals.” Appearing in the first volume of “Social-pedagogical reflections,” published by a group of authors in Tetovë, Macedonia, (1996), 15-22.

<sup>60</sup> For two recent studies on the topic see: Bekim Agai, “Fethullah Gülen and his Movement’s Islamic Ethic of Education,” *Critique: Critical Middle Eastern Studies* 11 (1) (Spring 2002): 27-47 and Bayram Balci, “Fethullah Gülen’in neo-nurcu okullari,” *Toplum ve Bilim* (Summer 2002): 93, 251-283.

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