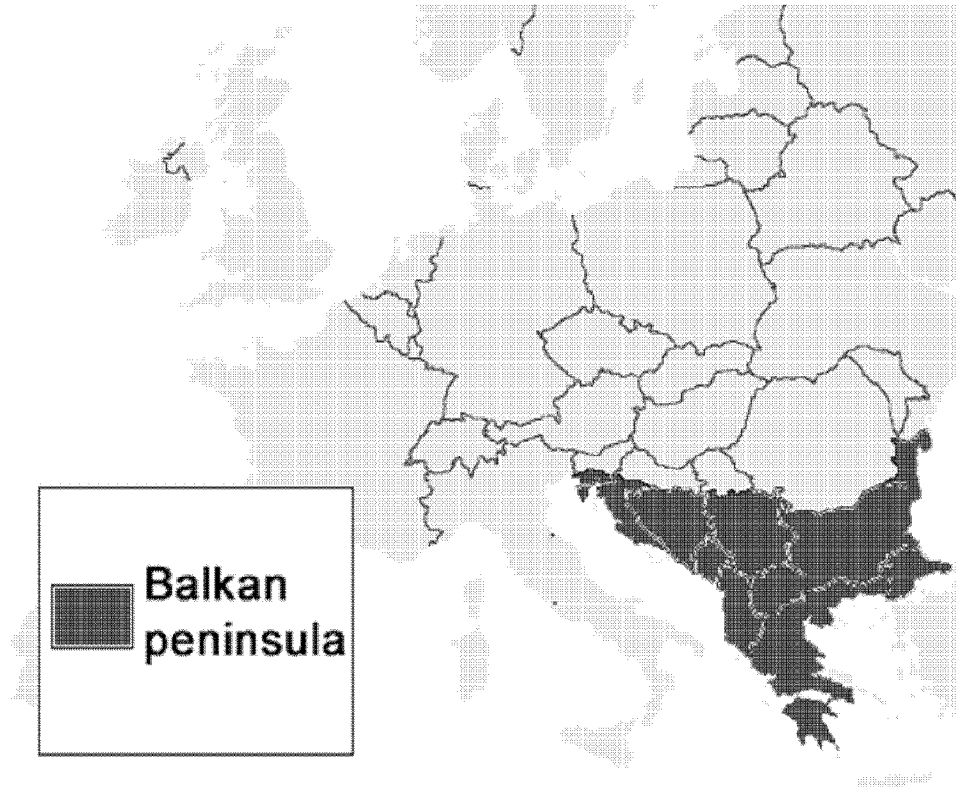


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Balkans

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Counterterrorism Division

Section

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DATE: 02-27-2012
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Ancient Powers in the Balkans- Origins of Divided Identities:

(U) Long on memory and short on forgiveness, the Balkan Peninsula has been a center of inter-tribal, inter-ethnic and inter-continental warfare since the advent of recorded history. Sitting at a crossroads of Europe and Asia, encompassing strategically valuable trade routes, high ground and control of access between the Mediterranean Sea to the Black Sea, the Balkans have been a continuously attractive target for military conquest. The Balkans have known absolute political unification only twice - under Alexander the Great, and under Rome. All conquerors since failed to effect complete control over the region and its people as they began to assert more of their local concept of national identity. Alexander the Great, a Macedonian, and protégé of Aristotle, forcibly brought the many Balkan fiefdoms under his rule by use of dominant military techniques; his conquests ultimately brought Asia its first exposure to Western philosophy and religion and enriched the Balkan region, but brought no unifying identity to the Balkan people. His empire proved fragile and died with him¹; this is also the last time the Balkans would be united under a native Balkan ruler. Ancient Rome absorbed the entirety of the Balkan nations under the height of the Republic, lasting through the final days of the Empire, giving them a united set of roadways, commerce, and a single code of law, though no sense of unified identity as religion and language and even culture was often a mixture of local and transient elements brought in by the trade routes. Theodosius, the last emperor of a united Roman Empire, made Christianity the official religion of the empire, and, nearing his death, divided the empire in AD 395 into two halves for his sons, with the Eastern portion containing the Balkan lands. When the Ostrogoths sacked Rome, the Balkans largely remained under the protection of the Byzantines, though coastlands up through modern day Herzegovina were captured by the barbarian hordes, and the rest suffered constant skirmishes with the Huns at their borders.

Islamic Aggression- The Beginning of Religious Division in the Balkans:

(U) The Byzantine Empire lasted another 1,000 years, though not without constant challenge. The cohesion of the empire was often at odds both with itself, and its neighbors. At various times, Byzantine rulers found themselves fighting the Western-Northern pagan hordes prior to their Christianization, internal bouts over power with the Bulgars and Serbs, and later with their Northern neighbors, the Rus of Kiev with whom they eventually formed a strained alliance and also the Hungarians. But the greatest, continuing adversaries throughout the millennium were the Muslims. From the late 7th century onward, the Byzantines clashed repeatedly with their Arab neighbors who were newly Muslim, and felt the religious imperative to press for new territory. This constant tension, especially while Byzantine rulers were divided in their ability to respond to the Eastern threat, led to the loss of Jerusalem and the holy lands in the 9th century. This eventually saw a temporary healing in the rift between the Catholic and Orthodox churches with the Byzantine Emperor asking the Pope for assistance in forming an army to reclaim lands from the Arab Muslims; thus began the Crusades. The success of the Crusades returned much territory to Western rule, and while the holy lands were ruled separately by Christian knights, they were generally in alliance with the Byzantine crown. This resurgence of the Byzantine Empire lasted until Emperor Manuel I who died too young left an heir on the throne who was both far too young to assume control (only 11) and was unsupported, thus leading to the usurpation of authority by the emperor's cousins,

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and the breakup of confidence in the Byzantine government. Eventually, in 1204, even the Venetians, under the banner of the Fourth Crusade, took advantage of their neighbor's weakness to pillaged Byzantium, then called Constantinople. The Empire never fully recovered, and opened the door to a more local Muslim force, in the nearby ethnic Turks to establish their Ottoman Empire. The fingers of the Ottoman Empire stretched continually into Europe and proved too much for the rising local fiefdoms and petty kings to hold off.

(U) The Kingdom of Serbia, under the rule of King Dusan in the early 1300's was unified and prosperous; however, following his death in 1355 much of the aristocracy broke from the Serbian power significantly diminishing its military capabilities. Dusan's son, Lazar, fought to keep the Serbian Kingdom intact, and while he had some success, the Ottomans were aggressively expanding their control and had already taken portions of Serbian territory. Ultimately the Serbs and the Ottomans met (the Battle of Kosovo) at a battle considered so critical that King Lazar led the Serb army himself, while the Turkish ruler, Murad I, directly led the Ottoman army. In June of 1389, the Serbs gained some initial victories over the Ottomans and killed Murad I, however, the Serb advance was halted, and the battle swung decisively in favor of the Ottomans. King Lazar was captured and beheaded, and the Serbian army was virtually destroyed. Today the Serbs continue to celebrate June 28th, St. Vitus Day (called Vidovdan² by the Serbs), to commemorate the Battle of Kosovo, which saw the death of the Serbian King and the end of the independent and unified Serbians. By 1400, the Ottomans had overrun most of the Balkan Peninsula, bypassing a small territory still held by, and centered at Constantinople.

(U) Constantinople- and the last territory of the Byzantine Empire- fell in 1453 due to careless strategic military errors by its rulers and as a product of schisms among the Christian kings of Europe who provided only token forces to calls for aid³ in order to restrain the advances of a new Eastern invader, the Turkic Saracens. It does nothing to assuage local feeling son this event, that the Emperor at the time, Constantine XI, whose mother was Serbian royalty, was killed. This event remains one of the pivotal flashpoints in history between Christianity and Islam. The Saracens brought Islam by force, and those tribal/clan leaders who would not convert were slaughtered and their children raised Muslim⁴; commoners were often allowed to choose, but a heavy tax was imposed upon those who did not convert "willingly"⁵. The petit-nations where the Ottomans had the most success with this program were Bosnia and Albania. In most other areas, the local population remained largely Christian, even fiercely so, and resented not only their overlords, but their neighbors that did convert. In Albanian, however, conversion was often only clothing-deep, where many families remained Christian behind the closed doors of their homes, though were often too afraid to admit as much to their neighbors⁶. Over time, Bosnian Serbs took on the mantle of Islam as that which separated them from their ethnic Serb Orthodox Christian cousins. The Ottoman Turks ruled over the majority of the Balkan Peninsula with great difficulty for almost 500 years.

Religious Tension in the Balkans Fester- Rise of Anti-Semitism:

(U) By 1492 King Ferdinand and Queen Isabella had just retaken Spain from the Muslim Moors. To secure their domain, they issued an order of expulsion, requiring all

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Jews, who had as a rule previously supported the Moors, to either convert to Christianity or to leave Spain and its territories. An estimated 250,000 Jews were forced out of Spain (with an additional 100,000 Jews expelled from Portugal after an agreement between Spain and Portugal). Some escaped to Turkey where the Sultan received them openly, while others escaped to northern Africa. Tens of thousands of Jews relocated to territories held by the Ottomans by the early 1500's and were generally well received in the beginning. The Balkan cities of Thessaloniki and Sarajevo, where tens of thousands of Jews lived, were some of the largest Jewish communities in Europe. However, by the 16th century, their open reception turned to resentment due to their large minority numbers and economic success. By the latter part of the 16th century, significant anti-Semitic feelings became prevalent throughout the Balkans, and ethnic tensions steadily increased. By 1923 fewer than 10,000 Jews lived in all of Bosnia.

(U) By 1908, Bosnia had been reclaimed by the West in the form of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, and during the Balkan Wars of 1912-1913, much of the rest of the Balkans slipped away from the declining Ottomans. However, this restive region did not appreciate its Austro-Hungarian emancipators, either, as local Balkans regarded the Hapsburgs as foreign invaders, interested in serving Vienna's interests at the expense of their own. Such powerful nationalistic fervor was growing throughout Europe and the rest of the world, which proved itself to be the powder keg that ignited World War I when a Serbian nationalist⁷ assassinated the Arch-Duke Ferdinand during a trip to Sarajevo. Various alliances brought the Balkan states into a mixture of allegiances to both the Central and Allied Powers; the Central Powers eventually won control of most of the Balkans, though this proved to be a non-factor in the resolution of The Great War. In 1922, when the Ottoman Empire dissolved into the Turkish Republic, this ended Asian control over the Balkan states⁸.

(U) The resolution of World War I led directly to the resumption of hostilities as World War II, only with slight changes in allegiances and new brands of nationalistic fervor. Anti-Jewish sentiment was a convenient and uniting cause for many people in the former Central Powers states and in the Middle East, where Mein Kampf has ever since been one of the top-selling books. The Balkans, caught in between Germany and her Islamic friends, generally felt sympathetic to this view. Modern Balkan social and political developments stem directly from the involvement of a critical figure in the then-British-controlled Holy Lands, The Grand Mufti of Jerusalem, Mohamed Amin al-Husseini. Husseini was an uncompromising anti-Jewish zealot; he came to power in 1922 on the heels of the fall of the Ottoman Empire and was an untiring proponent for the reestablishment of an Islamic power state⁹. Al-Husseini's seat, a compromise gift of the British authorities¹⁰, combined two previous seats- one political, one religious- giving al-Husseini authority to speak for all Palestinians. In 1937, he aligned his Arab Higher Committee with Nazi Germany, whose mutual anti-Jewish rhetoric made them easy friends. Al-Husseini's influence quickly spread to the Balkans, where in 1941, he raised several thousand Bosnian Muslim recruits for the 13th Division of the Nazi SS Waffen Brigades. This division was known as the Hanjar¹¹ (*Arabic: saber*) Troopers, who burned countless Serbian churches and villages and slaughtered approximately ninety percent (90%) of the Jewish population in the Balkans¹². Al-Husseini spent the duration

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of the war in Berlin as Hitler's special, honored guest, though he would conduct occasional inspections of the Hanjar Brigades and various Nazi concentration camps. After the war, he escaped to Egypt as an indicted though never-prosecuted war criminal¹³. Despite the participation of the Hanjar Brigades in the Nazi war effort, the Balkans ultimately came under Allied control, with Greek, Albanian and Serb partisans leading the fight against local Nazi elements- the Bosnian regulars (SS Hanjars) and Croatian irregulars (Ustasi).

Recent Conflicts in the Balkans

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(U) The Communist powers took root in the Balkans after the war, first under Soviet influence, though this mantle was later tossed aside in favor of Chinese patronage (Albania) and independent status (Yugoslavia). Greece and secular Turkey became part of NATO, despite their long-standing enmity towards one another, stemming from thousands of years' of Balkan conflicts over not only their own lands, but the island of Crete. Still, the Balkans remained largely under Communist control of one alignment or another, which also kept ethnic and religious feuds from emerging, as each community had a common enemy in the authoritarian state. The fall of Communism in the region saw the flaring up of these long-standing rivalries and hatreds. Yugoslav dictator, Josip Broz Tito died in May 1980; following his death, the Presidency of Yugoslavia rotated between the regional representatives to the combined national presidency. From May 1980 until the official collapse of the Socialist Republic of Yugoslavia in June of 1992, 15 heads of state led Yugoslavia.

(U) Following Tito's death, ethnic nationalism became the cause du jour; ethnic hegemonial attitudes would prove to be the bane of a pan- (Yugo-) Slavic nation. Beginning on April 24, 1987, a rising Serbian politician, Slobodan Milosevic, began to rouse public ethnic Serb anger toward other ethnic groups, when he traveled to Kosovo to meet with officials in the town of Kosovo Polje to proscriptively defuse the local ethnic tensions. During the meeting, police brutally fended off a throng of 15,000 Serbs and Montenegrins who came to see the firebrand Milosevic¹⁴. Less than six months later, Milosevic coerced the sitting president¹⁵ to resign allowing Milosevic to become president. On June 28th, 1989, 600 years to the day after the Battle of Kosovo, Serbian President Slobodan Milosevic delivered a monumental speech to a large gathering. Milosevic referenced armed conflict, and highlighted the message inscribed on Serbian Orthodox cross, a historic symbol of Serbian power, "Samo Sloga Srbina Spasava," meaning "Only unity will save the Serbs." Immediately following the speech, the crowd erupted in enthusiasm, and shouted responses such as "Kosovo is Serb!" and "We love Slobodan, because he hates the Muslims!" Additionally, many Serbs described Slobodan as "Little Lazar"¹⁶. This set the stage for what would become the Kosovo Civil War of 2000-2001.

(U) By early 1991 Bosnian Croats and Bosnian Muslims began organizing themselves into militias and arming themselves, while the Bosnian Serbs, with heavy reliance on the Yugoslav Army, also began arming themselves and forming militias. While there were almost immediately minor acts of violence, it was not until the international community recognized the independence of Bosnia I Herzegovina in April

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of 1992 that the violence escalated into a fully-embroiled civil war. Bosnian Serbs began to be very aggressive in seizing power throughout the country, attacking villages under the control of Bosnian Croats or Muslims. Most towns seized by the Bosnian Serbs were undefended and contained no legitimate military targets. Atrocities were committed for seemingly no reason. Revenge¹⁷ for injustices committed hundreds of years ago or exacting punishment for past betrayals were very common justifications. [REDACTED]

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[REDACTED] Vicious atrocities were openly committed by all sides in this very personal war.

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~~(S)~~//NF The ongoing question over the [REDACTED]
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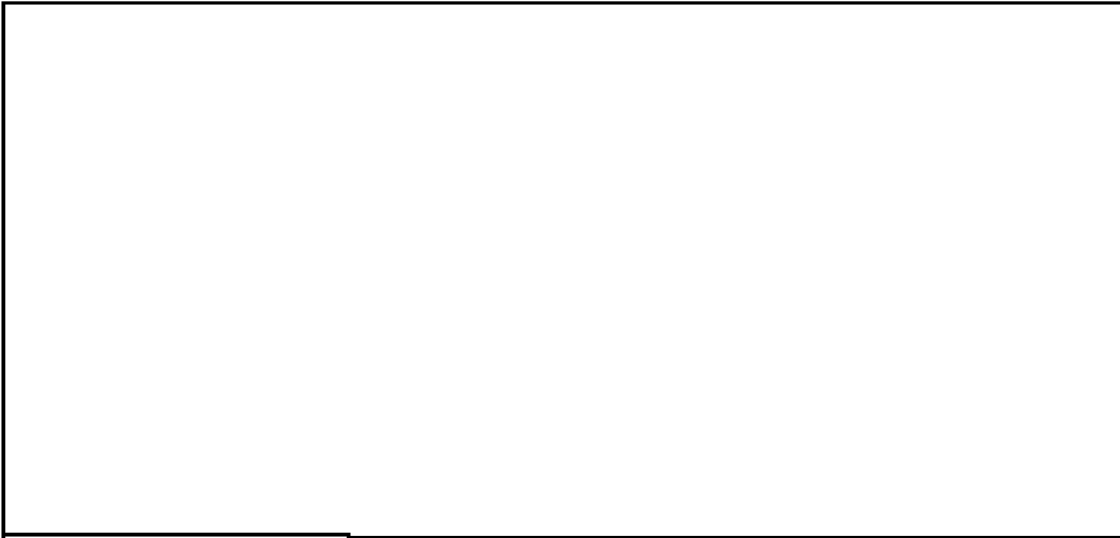
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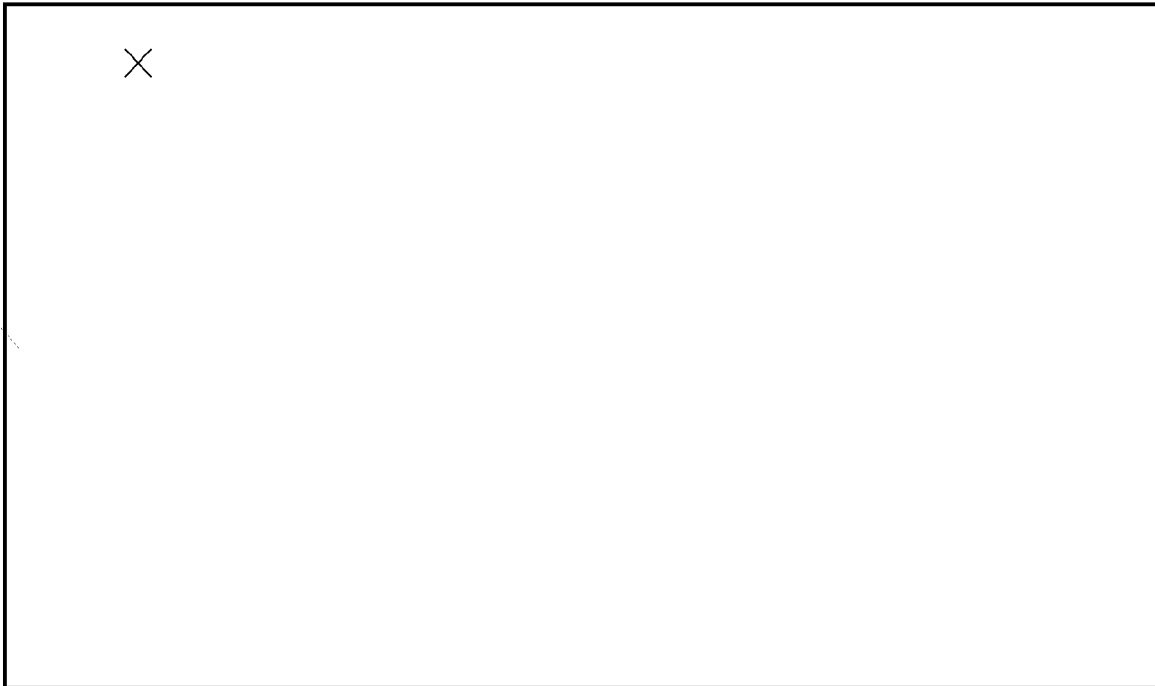
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[redacted] Already extant in Albania was a very well-established series
of organized crime networks; many of these criminals [redacted]
[redacted]



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Conclusion- the Fragility of Peace in the Balkans:

(U) Tension, strife, battle and death have ostensibly been a part of the Balkans since tribes began to claim territories. It is a region filled with diverse ethnic and religious groups who have fought over power, land, and perceived ethnic superiority for millennia. The people of the Balkans can rival perhaps any other regional people for memory of their own (often-slanted) histories and certainly tie more emotional importance to those memories than almost anyone else, leading to a sometimes eager willingness to wage war and commit atrocities in the name of events more than six hundred years past. With such an infused history of instability, competitiveness and the many cross-continental dynamics and local inter-ethnic relationships associated with the Balkans make this area a continuing flashpoint of tension around the world. Muslim nations and their apologists see the area as belonging exclusively the Ummah and the mandate of Allah insisting that they reclaim all hegemony over it. Orthodox Christian leaders see the region as theirs to reclaim, and Western governments want to see secular authority in place that at least is not beholden to singular religious parties. The Wahhabis stake much on the reputation of the Balkans as territory for the Ummah, making it a point of pride, conviction, and divine mission.

The region is home to some of the most aggressive and prolific smuggling networks, operating in drugs, money, weapons and slaves. This presents a challenge to emerging democracies trying to obtain or maintain legitimacy and order and an outlet for Wahhabi terrorists to tap into for their own dark purposes.

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¹ (U) Alexander the Great died 323 BC, his empire then divided into three kingdoms (dynasties), with the Balkans falling under the Antigonid Dynasty, which was the shortest lived of them all, later wholly subsumed into the Roman Empire.

² (U) The celebration of Vidovdan is a contentious affair in modern-day Kosovo, with Serbian officials, including the Prince and Princess, visiting to mark the date.

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³ (U) The Fall of Constantinople is a remaining aggravation to many Europeans who see this point in history as one of the greatest failures of Christian Europe, as a result, many Europeans harbor a lingering resentment toward Muslims for their campaign in this part of the continent, for both political and religious reasons. The refusal to come to the aid of Constantinople stemmed in large part due to the rivalry between the Catholic and Orthodox churches.

⁴ (U) This is the first era of Islamic militancy in the Balkans. The forced conversion of the mainly Christian population to Islam is a highly charged subject, inciting anger or pride in many Balkan people on both side of the modern equation. The conversions took effect in areas solidly under Ottoman control, like Bosnia and Albania, whereas the Northern Balkan regions remained Christian. Many Europeans regard Balkan Muslims as those who sold out their heritage to preserve themselves, hence leading to some of the virulent sentiments between the Serbs, and Bosniaks. Croats (Catholics) and Serbs (Orthodox) also remember their grievances between the Catholic and Orthodox churches. These remaining sentiments were a leading cause of the civil war at the fall of Yugoslavia.

⁵ (U) Ethnic Serbs who converted over to Islam have since the fall of the Ottoman Empire been labeled and segregated. In Bulgaria and Macedonia they are called Pomaks (collaborators). In some areas they are called Torbeshes or Poturs. The governments of Bulgaria and Macedonia refuse to grant them a status as a separate ethnic group, instead seeing them as Serbs who happen to be Muslim. In Bosnia, the ethnic Serb Muslims are called Bosniaks, in an effort to separate them from the Christian Serbs.

⁶ (U) Today, ethnic Albanians largely regard religion as a curiosity of little personal concern. Few know whether they are nominal Sunni or Shia Muslims, and there is an active campaign in place in Albania where many people are converting to Christianity.

⁷ (U) One of the earliest campus-based radicals, the assassin was a member of an underground ultra-nationalist student group called The Black Hand.

⁸ (U) The fall of the last Islamic caliphate remains a sore point to the pride of many Muslims; Islamic militants often cite a mandate from the Qu'ran to establish a caliphate to fulfill their Islamic duties.

⁹ (U) The Al-Ikhwan al-Muslimoon (Muslim Brotherhood) movement began in Turkey in 1925, but caught more traction in Egypt in part due to the post-World War II efforts of al-Husseini.

¹⁰ (U) The British were interested in quelling anti-British rioting that al-Husseini had been behind; he ushered in an era of violence against Jews in the region. The Brits felt no compunction against this newly-zealous anti-Semitism.

¹¹ (U) Also spelled Handzar or Handschar.

¹² (U) This is the second era of Islamic militancy in the Balkans. Heinrich Himmler was so impressed with the Hanjar Troopers, that he established the Mullah Military School in Dresden for the single purpose of recruiting and training more Bosnian Muslims into Nazi SS troopers.

¹³ (U) Al-Husseini later founded the PLO with Ahmed Shukairi, and passed his mantle to his nephew and greatest protégé, Mohamed Abdel-Raouf Arafat as-Qudra al-Husseini, aka Yasser Arafat.

¹⁴ (U) Milosevic not only promised retribution against the police, but further stated, "No one has the right to beat you! No one will ever beat you again!"

¹⁵ (U) Ivan Stambolic, whom Milosevic later had murdered.

¹⁶ (U) Comparing him to King Lazar at the battle of 1389.

¹⁷ (U) The concept of meting out revenge for injustices (whether real or perceived) committed in past generations is a widespread cultural principle within the Balkans.

¹⁸ ~~(S)~~ It is important to note that the French found themselves highly sympathetic to the Serbian cause, much as a continuation of the outrage over the Saracen sacking of Constantinople in 1453 and its subsequent effect on Europe.

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¹⁹ (U) [REDACTED]

²⁰ ~~(S)~~ [REDACTED]

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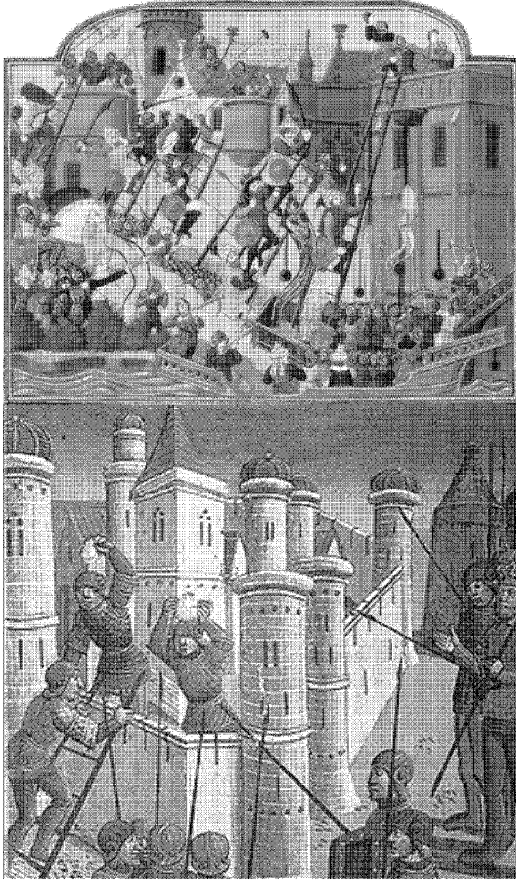
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Balkan Ethnicities:



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Siege of Constantinople:



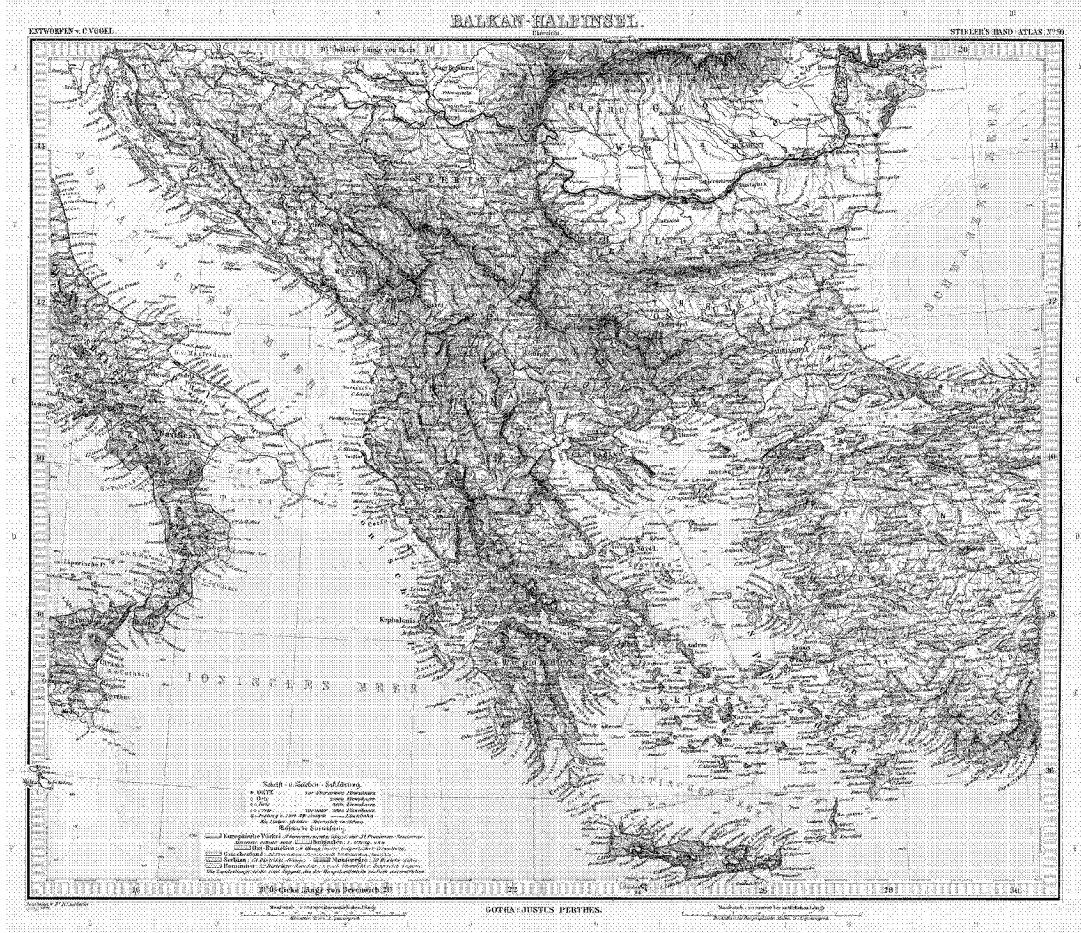
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Balkans c.1891:



Al-Husseini Mtg w/ Hitler:

Al-Husseini Instruction to a Hanjar Trooper:

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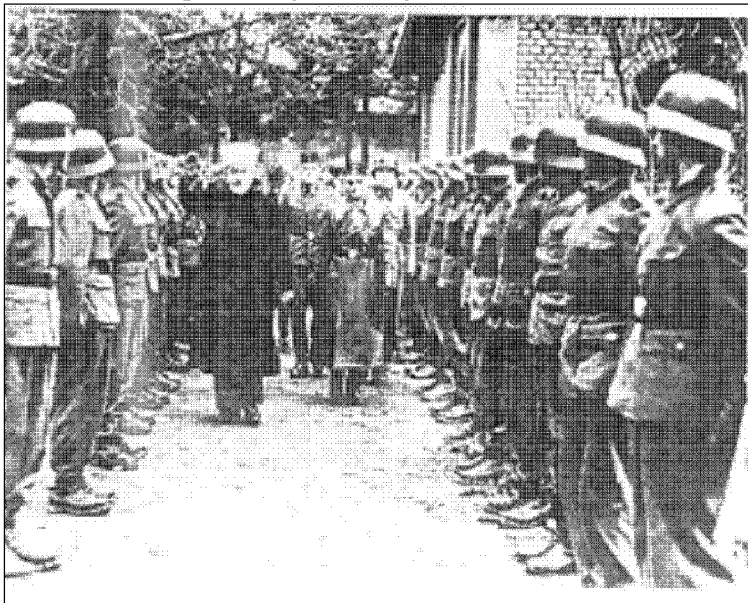
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Al-Husseini Inspection of the Hanjar Division:



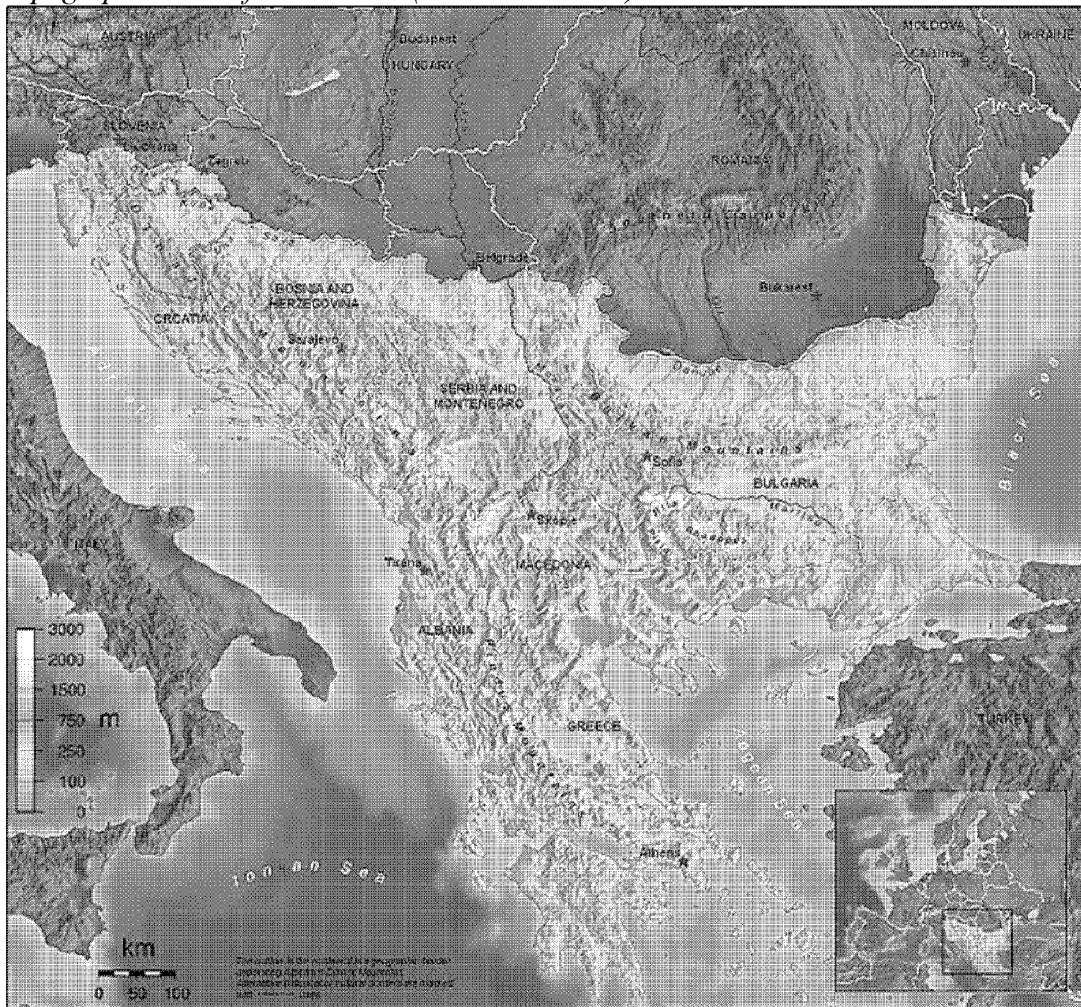
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Topographic View of the Balkans (2004 Boundaries)



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