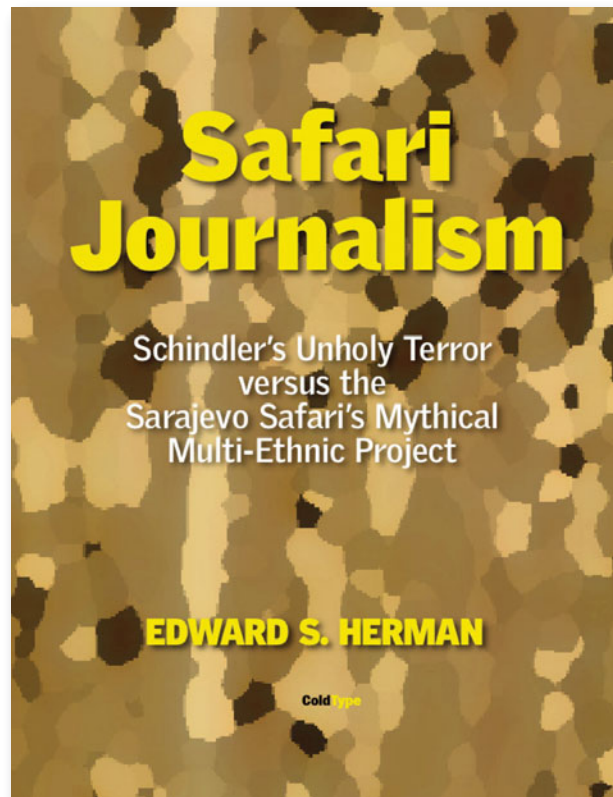


Safari Journalism

Schindler's Unholy Terror
versus the
Sarajevo Safari's Mythical
Multi-Ethnic Project

EDWARD S. HERMAN

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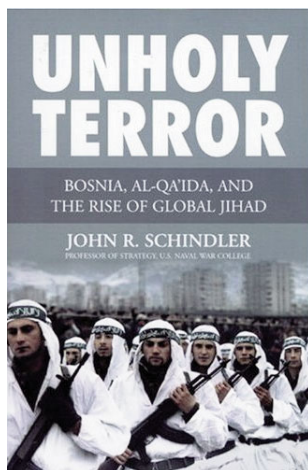


Edward S. Herman is Professor Emeritus of Finance at the Wharton School, University of Pennsylvania, and has written extensively on economics, political economy and the media. Among his books are *Corporate Control*, *Corporate Power*, *The Real Terror Network*, *Triumph of the Market*, *Manufacturing Consent* (with Noam Chomsky) and *Imperial Alibis* (South End Press).

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THE HUMAN CAPACITY for compartmentalization of thought and suppression of inconvenient facts always continues to break new ground in service to evolving political demands. After 9/11, the long U.S. effort to build up al-Qaeda, bin Laden and other Afghan rebel groups (including the Taliban), with Saudi and Pakistani aid, to entice the Soviet Union into Afghanistan, get it bogged down and eventually defeated was finally seen to have backfired. The subsequent turnabout of our progeny after the abrupt U.S. departure from Afghanistan, with al-Qaeda and bin Laden eventually attacking the United States, from a Taliban base, constitutes a model case of “blowback.” But blowback suggests that 9/11 occurred because of U.S. actions to which others were responding; that it was not based on envy or hatred of U.S. freedom on the part of evil men. This is inconvenient, hence its compartmentalization and/or suppression.

A comparable and closely related case involves the Clinton administration’s support of Alija Izetbegovic and the Bosnian Muslims in the conflict between the Muslims, Bosnian Serbs and Croatians in the Bosnian wars between 1992 and the end of 1995 and beyond. In this conflict, the mainstream media of the West, and even a large fraction of the liberal and left journals and intellectuals, quickly got on the Izetbegovic and Bosnian Muslim bandwagon, finding the Bosnian Serbs the aggressors, ethnic cleansers, rapists, and genocidists, and the Bosnian Muslims the innocent victims, and calling for forcible “humanitarian intervention” by the

EDWARD S. HERMAN | SAFARI JOURNALISM

West. This version of history is not only one-sided, error-laden, and frequently reversing reality, it badly misreads the principles, linkages, and true objectives of Izetbegovic and his closest allies. A main theme of John R. Schindler's *Unholy Terror: Bosnia, Al-Qa'ida, And The Rise Of Global Jihad* (Zenith Press, 2007), is that this misreading by the Muslim-managed "unreality community" of Western journalists, and the associated Western propaganda and policies, allowed al-Qaeda to make inroads into Western Europe in a manner paralleling the effects on Afghanistan and Pakistan of the earlier U.S. support of al-Qaeda in Afghanistan.

Schindler, a professor of strategy at the Naval War College, and a former National Security Agency Balkan intelligence analyst, is certainly no radical critic, and in fact he is a firm believer in U.S. virtue and the central importance of a long "war on terror" on which his country has embarked, which he supports unquestioningly. In that war, the true enemy is seen to be Islamic radicalism, which must be confronted at many levels—though he never suggests that Islamic radicalism and terror are themselves a response to U.S. globalization and intervention and that those fundamentals need changing. These are serious weaknesses in his book, along with an associated tendency to inflate the threat of his chosen targets (notably, Iran as well as the Islamic jihad in general).

But its strength lies in the massive detail that he provides on the importance of Islamic radicalism in the Bosnian wars of 1992-1995 and in the ensuing years and the extent to which Western pundits underrated that phenomenon and helped create a false image of a democratic multi-ethnic tolerant Bosnian Muslim leadership. It is amusing, also, because he is a spokesperson for an important part of the U.S. official and intelligence establishment, whose views are almost diametrically opposed to those of the part of the establishment that passionately supported "humanitarian intervention" in aid of the Bosnian Muslims (and to a lesser extent the Croats) against the demonized Serbs. This latter faction included the Clinton State Department leaders (Madeleine Albright, Richard Holbrooke), Bill Clinton, Al Gore, Anthony Lake, James Hooper, Peter Galbraith and others, and a number of important Republicans including Bob Dole. It also included the pundits, journalists and NGO representatives who gathered in Sarajevo to learn the truth from Izetbegovic and company and to campaign for war—extending from the International Crisis Group members to the journalists and intellectuals on what cynical Bosnian locals called the "Sarajevo safari." Schindler devotes many pages in his book to describing and deriding the performance of the media and pundits, who got on the Bosnia genocide bandwagon very early, swallowed the propaganda that was offered by their favorites, no matter how implausible, and simply refused to check out these claims or look for evidence that would challenge the party line.

EDWARD S. HERMAN | SAFARI JOURNALISM

His view on this serious media failure was in accord with that of Lt. Col. John Sray, a military counter-intelligence officer in Bosnia who contended in his 1995 paper on “Selling the Bosnia Myth to America” that “America has not been so pathetically deceived since Robert McNamara helped to micromanage and escalate the Vietnam War while secretly lacking the intestinal fortitude to state his personal convictions of self-doubt about the enterprise to the President and nation. Popular perceptions pertaining to the Bosnian Muslim government (Bosniacs as they prefer to be called) have been forged by a prolific propaganda machine. A strange combination of three major spin doctors, including public relations (PR) firms in the employ of the Bosniacs, media pundits, and sympathetic elements of the U.S. State Department, have managed to manipulate illusions to further Muslim goals.” Views similar to Sray’s were expressed by numerous other UN and military personnel on the scene, including among others USAF General Charles Boyd, Canadian Major-General and UN commander in Sarajevo Lewis MacKenzie, and UN civilian chief in the Bosnia area in 1995, Philip Corwin, but as Schindler stresses, they could not be heard.

Schindler contends that Izetbegovic and his “Leninist style vanguard of Islamists” were possibly the most important force in producing the Bosnian wars and breakup of the country. The Bosnian Serbs tried to come to an accord with Izetbegovic before any fighting started, in 1990, but “the Muslims expressed no interest’ (63); a power-sharing arrangement with the Serbs negotiated in July 1991 which caused Izetbegovic to say “our positions are very close,” collapsed as “Izetbegovic had hardly left the room when he renounced the request,” and his party soon announced that it “would not participate in any power-sharing arrangement with the Serbs” (71). The last ditch effort to prevent a major war in late February 1992 brought all three parties to Lisbon, where they all signed on to an arrangement with a single state that granted substantial autonomy to ethnic regions. But “No sooner than he had given the go-ahead, then Izetbetgovic changed his mind.” As Schindler says, “The Lisbon debacle was the immediate cause of the war” (74).

This withdrawal from the Lisbon agreement was carried out with the encouragement of the U.S. Ambassador, Warren Zimmerman, and Schindler and other informed commentators contend that Izetbegovic’s refusal to negotiate was based on his conviction and understanding that he would be able to enlist the United States and NATO to achieve his political ends via war. What his SDA (Party of Democratic Action) wanted, according to party ideologist Dzermaludin Latic, was at least 45 percent of Bosnia plus Sandzak (a region in Serbia itself!), an objective “Sarajevo had no chance of achieving without major American military help” (202). General Philippe Morillon, commander of UN forces in Bosnia, told the

EDWARD S. HERMAN | SAFARI JOURNALISM

Yugoslav Tribunal that “The aim of the Presidency of Bosnia, from the very outset was to ensure the intervention of the international forces for their own benefit and [that is] why they never were inclined to engage in talks.” Canadian General and first UN commander in Sarajevo Lewis MacKenzie, while harshly critical of the Serbs, on leaving his post in Sarajevo said that 19 ceasefires were broken by the Muslims, “because their policy was, and is, to force the West to intervene.”

They succeeded, suggesting that Izetbegovic and his U.S. supporters, not the Serbs, were mainly responsible for the wars that ensued. The answer of the Safari apologists is that the Serbs had gained territory by preliminary fighting and could not be allowed to obtain any fruits of “aggression” (such as the United States can obtain in Iraq or Israel on the West Bank); but those aggression fruits had followed the Muslim refusal to settle before fighting, they were not large, and the bases of a proper settlement that Izetbegovic rejected had satisfied Portuguese diplomat Jose Cutilheiro, and later Cyrus Vance and Lord David Owen—all Western officials and none of them friends of Serbia. This should embarrass the Safari brigade members, whose campaign for war paralleled the Izetbegovic-US refusal to settle peaceably and assured many dead and vast numbers of refugees as part of Izetbegovic’s (failed) struggle for more land.

Schindler contends, and gives supportive evidence, that Izetbegovic and his party not only violated more cease fires and other agreements than the Serbs or Croats, but that he was willing to kill or see killed Muslim civilians to score political points (given that with Safari and U.S. official aid these killings would always be attributed to the Serbs), and that the atrocities against enemy civilians and prisoners carried out by his forces, which included 4,000 or more mujahadin, were ruthless and on a large scale.

At the center of Schindler’s analysis is his detailed showing that Izetbegovic was an Islamic fundamentalist, who at no time favored a multi-ethnic tolerant state, but always kept this hidden from the gullible and bamboozled Western pundits, who were eager to believe and careful not to look too closely—he is particularly harsh on Susan Sontag, who “had no detectable insight into the problems of the Balkans,” but “offered increasingly hysterical pronouncements, denouncing Europe as ‘worthless’ for not fighting on behalf of the Muslims.” Schindler traces Izetbegovic’s beliefs from his service to the Nazis in the Handschar Division of the Waffen-SS, through his membership in the Young Muslims, to his *Islamic Declaration*, to his many trips to, indications of friendship with, and material support from, the Saudis and Khomeini’s Iran, to his welcoming of the thousands of mujahadin fighters into Bosnia from 1992 onward, and to his numerous actions

EDWARD S. HERMAN | SAFARI JOURNALISM

injurious to non-Muslims and Muslims of too secular a tendency. But he always had words and gestures for the likes of Sontag, David Rieff, Ed Vulliamy, Christopher Hitchens, and Bernard-Henri Levy that convinced them that he was a democrat. Rieff states that Izetbegovic's Bosnian Muslims, "for all their mixed signals, stood for a citizen state," but Rieff ignored the bothersome parts of the "mixed signals" and swallowed the elements consistent with his own biases as the significant truth (*Slaughterhouse* [Simon & Schuster, 1995], p. 12). He acknowledges Izetbegovic's steady effort to get the Great Powers to fight his war for him, but he fails to see that that is no route to a "citizen state." He fails to cite by name and analyse the Islamic Declaration, whose substance contradicts his basic theme, and whose very subtitle is "a program for the Islamization of Muslims."

Vulliamy does cite the Islamic Declaration, claiming it was "a tortured attempt to propose that the Muslim faith was compatible with modern political systems" (*Seasons in Hell*, St. Martin's Press, 1994, p. 66); whereas Izetbegovic stated very clearly that "There is neither peace nor coexistence between the 'Islamic religion' and non-Islamic social and political institutions. Having the right to govern its own world, Islam clearly excludes the right and possibility of putting a foreign ideology into practice on its territory. There is thus no principle of secular government and the State must express and support the moral principles of religion." (Alija Izetbegovic, *Islamic Declaration: A Programme for the Islamization of Muslims and of Muslim Peoples* ("Islamska deklaracija"), no translator listed, 1970, 1990, p. 30, as posted to the website of the Balkan Repository Project, http://www.balkan-archive.org.yu/politics/papers/Islamic_Declaration_1990_reprint_English.pdf.)

Vulliamy carefully avoids actually quoting from the *Islamic Declaration*. In her long chapter on Bosnia in *A Problem from Hell* (Basic Books, 2002), Samantha Power never mentions the book; while Rieff quotes from it, not by name, but through the mouth of a Serb, then failing to explain why it is not meaningful. Vulliamy explains Izetbegovic's serial rejection of peace plans from Lisbon onward as a result of his devotion to a "multi-ethnic republic," and his belief that any kind of partition would be "impossible without ethnic cleansing" (*Seasons in Hell*, 67-68)—when in fact he wanted a more favorable partition, with war and ethnic cleansing flowing predictably from his declaration of independence, and as described below, he did a thorough job of removing Serbs from the Sarajevo area.

Izetbegovic never repudiated his *Islamic Declaration*, and Schindler makes a compelling case that Izetbegovic, while two-faced and evasive, was fundamentally opposed to a democracy and a multi-ethnic state and strove persistently to create an Islamic state run on the Islamic principles put in place by Khomeini in Iran. He shows in detail how much he depended on Saudi and Iranian financial aid, advice, and training, and how protective he was of the thousands of mujahadin

EDWARD S. HERMAN | SAFARI JOURNALISM

who came into Bosnia to help fight his wars and in the interest of an Islamic state. Thousands of Bosnian passports were issued to these “foreign fighters,” including one to Osama bin Laden, who was several times seen as a visitor in Izetbegovic’s office.

During and after the war, Sarajevo was subjected to a steady ethnic cleansing—of Serbs by the Muslims—by daily harassment, and regular killings, including numerous murders carried out by Bosnian Muslim private armies, the most deadly “murderous gang” run by one Caco. “SDA [Izetbegovic’s party] gangs did the lion’s share of the work—killing, raping, robbing and looting, designed to produce an all-Muslim Sarajevo, and Caco’s brigade was the most energetic” (Schindler, 104). “It took Izetbegovic a half year to shut down Caco’s gang” after he had been advised of the killings, and he was well aware of Bosnian Muslim managed “concentration camps” in the Sarajevo vicinity (he mentioned them by name in private meetings). Under the 1995 Dayton Agreement the Serb parts of Sarajevo were included in the Federation (a combined Muslim-Croat entity), which caused a further Serb exodus from Sarajevo, with Serb numbers dropping from the prewar 160,000 to under 20,000 shortly after Dayton. Schindler has many pages describing this exodus and the brutal and systematic ethnic cleansing of Serbs in Sarajevo and its neighborhoods, which contradicts so clearly the Safari party line on Izetbegovic’s “multi-ethnic project” (Vulliamy) and aim of a “citizen state” (Rieff).

But eye aversion, selectivity, and the reiteration of inflated party line charges were central to the Safari project. Massive conflicting evidence was ignored. Naser Oric, the killer commander of the Muslim forces in Srebrenica, who as Schindler points out killed over a thousand Serb civilians in the Srebrenica area, and proudly showed Western journalists videos of beheaded Serbs and bragged about one case where he slaughtered 114 Serbs, does not appear in the index of Vulliamy’s, Rieff’s or Samantha Power’s books. Schindler also provides several dramatic illustrations of slaughters of Croatians and Serbs carried out by Bosnian Muslim mujahadin fighters, but these also fail to make it into the Safari books—only Serb actions (and related photos) are admissible.

For all of these analysts the Bosnian conflict was a case of Serb “genocide,” which Rieff claimed was “all but completed” in 1994. The Safari members have never dealt retrospectively with the findings of the establishment researchers Ewa Tabeau, Jakub Bijak and Mirsad Tokaca, the first two working for the Prosecutor’s Office of the ICTY, Tokaca funded by the Norwegian government, that only some 100,000 people were killed in Bosnia 1992-1995, on all sides, and that the total civilian toll on all sides was in the order of 65,000. The Bosnian civilian toll was under 50,000. During this same time frame several hundred thousand

EDWARD S. HERMAN | SAFARI JOURNALISM

Iraqis died from the “sanctions of mass destruction,” but the Safari brigades were not interested. In fact, in Samantha Power’s book on genocide, *A Problem From Hell*, neither Iraq, Vietnam, Indonesia nor East Timor show up in her index—but she has this long chapter on Bosnia where “genocide” had allegedly taken place! (Power claimed that Bosnian deaths numbered 200,000, but she offered no breakdown as between Muslim, Serb and Croat deaths, nor does she distinguish between deaths of soldiers and civilians. She mentions at one point that George Kenney resigned from the State Department in protest at an insufficiently aggressive policy, but she fails to mention that later on he changed his mind and in April 1995 gave an estimate of Bosnian deaths on all sides in the order of 25,000-60,000.)

And in her study of Bosnia, in addition to failing to mention Naser Oric, Samantha Power has no index reference to the muhajadin presence and behavior, nor the I, nor bin Laden’s visits to Izetbegovic, nor the fact that the planner of 9/11 and two of the 19 suicide plane bombers had trained and fought in Bosnia.

It is amusing to see how now, while an al-Qaeda connection is the ultimate proof of villainy in the U.S. polity and media, the awkward fact of Clinton, Holbrooke and the humanitarian interventionists’ supporting the Muslim cause in the Bosnian war, which caused them to accept and even positively encourage an al-Qaeda presence and embedding in Bosnia, is unmentionable. This is that convenient compartmentalization of thought in accord with which aid to and alliance with villains at one point in time can be ignored when we turn against the villains later and want to pretend adherence to a higher morality. This is further illustrated in the work of Samantha Power where, in her recent book, *Chasing the Flame* (Penguin, 2008), she finally does mention both al-Qaeda and Osama bin Laden, but solely in reference to Afghanistan, Indonesia and Iraq, not Bosnia, to which she devoted so much space in her *A Problem From Hell*. This helps keep that old crusade and safari clean even as we now devote attention to the formerly neglected villains.

There are two other ironies here. One is that the Safari propagandists and Bosnia Genocide Lobby almost surely contributed to the ethnic cleansing and killings in Bosnia, 1992-1995, as their one-sided and frenetic campaigning helped Izetbegovic and the Clinton administration fend off a political settlement from Lisbon onward. Their demonization frenzy also contributed to the moral environment that made the Kosovo war and occupation feasible. We may recall, also, that the Kosovo war was carried out, according to Bill Clinton, to create a “tolerant, multi-ethnic democracy” in that province, which was in fact turned into the ethnic cleansing as well as drug and women-trade capital of Europe. The ethnic cleansing in NATO-occupied Kosovo, the greatest in the Balkan wars in proportionate terms, and extending to the Roma as well as Serbs, was explained by

EDWARD S. HERMAN | SAFARI JOURNALISM

David Rieff on the grounds of “revenge.” Enemies cleanse because of blood lust, greed, and plans for a “greater” (Serbia? Russia? Iran?). Friends and clients are only motivated by the desire for revenge for earlier crimes of enemies.

The further irony is that Yugoslavia, and Bosnia itself, had been a relatively tolerant and multi-ethnic state and province before the 1992-1995 wars, but that was what Izetbegovic didn't like and got rid of, with UN-Clinton-Sontag-Rieff (etc.) help. But not only was that “promising multicultural society that was the prewar Bosnia” destroyed, in its place we have a corruption ridden, poor, failed state still splintered badly with ethnic rivalries, and, after having provided a European entry point for al-Qaeda, with al-Qaeda remnants and friendly associates still present in various niches in Bosnia. But the United States and other NATO powers have been working steadily since 1995 to get them out, just as this country struggles belatedly to remove its progeny from Afghanistan and Pakistan.

True patriots do not like to be reminded of these outstanding cases of U.S. encouraged, provoked, and supported inter-communal warfare, ethnic cleansing, and killing, based in good part on short-sightedness and self-deception, and followed by painful blowback. Meanwhile, its intellectual supporters continue to prosper and bring their “unreality community” perspectives to the latest developments and empire-supportive fads (Islamofascism, surge success, “patrolling the commons” [Samantha Power's latest]) that will provide the basis for further rounds of blowback.



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