

Unholy Terror: Bosnia, al-Qa'ida, and the Rise of Global Jihad

by John R. Schindler, Zenith Press, 2008, 368 pp.

Marko Attila Hoare

Also under review: Christopher Deliso, *The Coming Balkan Caliphate: The Threat of Radical Islam to Europe and the West*, Praeger Security International, 2007; Shaul Shay, *Islamic Terror and the Balkans*, Transaction Publishers, 2007.

The role of al-Qaeda and the foreign mujahedin in the wars in the former Yugoslavia of the 1990s remains controversial, but the controversy is not over whether the phenomenon was a positive one or not. Reading some of the coverage of the subject, one might be forgiven for thinking that the wars fought in Bosnia and Kosova were merely individual fronts in something much bigger: the global struggle between the warriors and opponents of radical Islam. Yet as is so often the case, it is the smaller, local struggle that is more bitter and protracted than the global one, and that inspires the greater loyalty and commitment. The recently published books by John R. Schindler and Christopher Deliso, *Unholy Terror: Bosnia, al-Qa'ida, and the Rise of Global Jihad* and *The Coming Balkan Caliphate: The Threat of Radical Islam to Europe and the West* respectively, are really books about the Balkans more than about radical Islam; and it is the rights and wrongs of the Balkan conflicts, more than the threat posed by radical Islam, that motivate the authors. Schindler and Deliso share a hostility to Islam and to the politics of Western liberal interventionism which goes far beyond any mere concern with the alleged Islamist threat in the Balkans.

Deliso's thesis of a 'coming Balkan caliphate' embraces Bosnia, Albania, Kosova, Macedonia and Turkey. Deliso's animosity in particular is directed against the Albanians, and he faithfully upholds anti-Albanian stereotypes popular among the Balkan Christian peoples. He writes of 'the opportunism they [the Kosovo Albanians] have shown in siding at various times with the Turks, the Austro-Hungarian Empire, Mussolini, Hitler, and, most recently, NATO' (p. 51), thereby repeating the myth popular among Serbian nationalists, of the Albanians as stooges of repeated foreign invaders, though the Kosova Albanians' record in this regard is absolutely no worse than that of other Balkan peoples. He attributes the emigration of Serbs from Kosova in the decades before 1999 to the fact that they were fleeing

‘from a culturally and socially incompatible land dominated by clan-based Muslim Albanians’ (p. 37). He complains of the high birthrate of the Balkan Muslims, writing ‘it seems that Muslims, already outright majorities in some countries and political “kingmaker” minorities in others, are still expanding and will thus continue to enjoy all of the political, social, and economic benefits that this position entails.’ And while Deliso recognises that the Balkan Muslim birthrate may eventually fall, he fears that ‘these processes take considerable time and may take effect only after it is “too late” for the Christian populations to avoid returning to their Ottoman status – that is, second class citizens in their own countries.’ (p. 113). Deliso also complains about mosques being too noisy, on account of the call to prayer from the minaret: ‘Although it is not terribly politically correct, the term “sonic cleansing” is an apt one to describe the process by which aggressively visible and audible Islam gradually grinds away at non-Muslims, who gradually move out of what become, essentially, ghettos by choice.’ (p. 86)

Deliso makes many sweeping statements about the dangers allegedly posed by the Balkan Muslim peoples, which are then refuted by his own account. Hence, he writes that ‘the most fundamentally surreal dimension of the West’s Balkan misadventures must be that specific policies have directly benefited Islamic fundamentalism, as attested by the Western support for Muslim-dominated secessionist movements and paramilitaries with demonstrable ties to terrorists and mafia groups in Bosnia, Kosovo, Albania, and Macedonia.’ Indeed, it is self-determination and democracy that are themselves apparently to blame for the alleged Balkan Islamist threat: ‘Ironically, the creation of liberal democracies in docile, pro-Western nation-states also enables the rival development of radical Islam within them.’ (p. 143)

However, throughout his book, Deliso mentions that the fundamentalist version of Islam, as put forward by the Wahhabites, was rejected by ordinary Muslims in Bosnia, Kosovo, Albania and Macedonia and by their political leaders, and was out of keeping with their native tradition (e.g. pp. 54-5, 58, 84-5). In one passage, he describes bearded Islamists in the Kosovar town of Pec attacking Albanians holding a candlelit vigil to mourn the American victims of 9/11 (p. 60). Deliso’s account of the aggressive way in which the Wahhabite movement is attempting to penetrate the Balkans, and the lack of receptivity on the part of native Muslims to it, is not uninteresting or uninformative. This is an important subject, and it is a pity that it is drowned in a sea of unsubstantiated propaganda directed against the Balkan Muslims and against Western policy, propaganda which his account of Wahhabite activities actually undermines. For why should self-determination for

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Muslim peoples, or their high birth-rates, be a problem if they anyway popularly reject radical Islam?

Deliso manages to overcome such contradictions and construct his bogey of a 'coming Balkan caliphate' through multiple conflation. He conflates nationalism with religious chauvinism; moderate Balkan Muslim national leaders with the radicals operating in their midst; Sunni al-Qaeda with Shiite Iran; al-Qaeda with the regimes of Saudi Arabia, Pakistan and the United Arab Emirates; quiet Saudi Wahhabite proselytising with al-Qaeda terrorism – all these diverse, conflicting elements are thrown together to make a single indeterminate green Islamic stew. Thus, we get passages such as this one, concerning the involvement of the Islamic world in the 'Bosnian jihad' of the 1990s:

According to a former Sudanese intelligence agent, Osama bin Laden's operations in Sudan during the early 1990s involved an 'advisory council' made up of some 43 separate Islamic groups, contraband arms depots, and several terrorist camps. Since the Saudi government preferred to keep its hands clean, supplying mostly money and logistical supplies, Iran would play the key role in importing the fighters and military equipment through the Iranian Revolutionary Guard and the national intelligence service, SAVAMA... Weapons shipments from Iran via Sudan, overseen by intelligence officials of both countries and utilizing al-Qaeda-linked charities like the TWRA, also picked up in 1993 and 1994. (pp. 8-9)

Out of this stew, Deliso draws multiple non-sequiturs, such as this one:

...Alija Izetbegovic's single dream was the creation of an Islamic state in Europe. This vision was honored in December 2001, when he was awarded one million dirham (\$272,480) prize for his services to Islam by the Crown Prince of Dubai. Only two months earlier, however, the terrorist attacks on America had revealed how complicit he and his government had been in allowing al-Qaeda to expand in Europe, through the Bosnian jihad.' (p. 5).

Or this one:

...the Clinton administration was planning for a second war to save yet another allegedly endangered Balkan Muslim population, this time the Albanians of Kosovo, and thus could not openly admit that it had already

made a huge mistake in Bosnia – despite a reality of increasingly spectacular Islamic terrorist attacks against American interests globally, like the June 1996 Khobar Towers bombing in Saudi Arabia and the East Africa embassy bombings of August 1998. (pp. 10-11).

As the reader will note, the various assertions of motive and causality in these two passages are neither substantiated with evidence nor support each other, while the assertion that al-Qaeda attacks in Saudi Arabia, East Africa and New York were the result of the ‘Bosnian jihad’ is completely out of the blue.

Deliso conflates the mainstream Bosnian Army struggle against Serb and Croat forces with the activities of al-Qaeda and the foreign mujahedin to create a single ‘Bosnian jihad,’ ignoring the fact that existing works on the Bosnian Army and the mujahedin, by authors such as Evan Kohlmann, Esad Hecimovic and myself have comprehensively demolished the case for such a conflation. Yet Deliso admits that it was the police of Izetbegovic’s supposedly ‘Islamist’ state that arrested a terrorist cell on 19 October 2005 that had allegedly been planning to blow up the British Embassy in Sarajevo (p. 14). He interviews a military intelligence analyst who tells him that, apart from the US embassy, ‘nearly all diplomatic facilities in Sarajevo lack even the most rudimentary protection against attack... all the others remain vulnerable to truck bombs or determined individuals wearing suicide vests’ (p. 23), making the failure of the Islamists to carry out a single successful terrorist attack against a Western target in the supposed Bosnian centre of world jihad all the more remarkable. Even Deliso’s questionable ‘expert’ witnesses admit that Islamist terrorist training camps ‘mostly don’t exist’ in Bosnia (p. 161). The facts simply do not fit Deliso’s thesis. In scraping the bottom of the barrel to find some that do, he complains that ‘Bosnian President Sulejman Tihić assured a gathering of dignitaries in Qatar that his country considered the American occupation of Iraq illegal,’ something that Deliso attributed to the ‘Islamic factor’ in Bosnian politics (p. 22). But an ‘Islamic factor’ was scarcely a prerequisite to considering the Iraq invasion to be illegal.

Deliso draws upon some highly dubious sources in support of his thesis about the importance of Bosnia in the development of the global jihad. One such is ‘terrorism expert’ Darko Trifunović of Belgrade University, whom Deliso quotes about ten times in support of his argument. The ‘terrorism expert’ Trifunović makes statements such as ‘what the West seems to have forgotten is that long before the [2001] terrorist attacks against America, the Bosnian Serbs were fighting against

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jihad, a literal jihad ordered and funded by Osama bin Laden, in their own country. Former mujahedin have told me that bin Laden personally ordered them to fight Christians in the Balkans – and later, to expand in Europe, especially Italy and Spain. The West is now paying the price for supporting the mujahedin against the Serbs.’ (p. 143) A comment of this kind might raise suspicions as to its author’s objectivity in even the most naive observer – even one who did not already know that Trifunović had been expelled from participation in the 11th European Police Congress after the organisers learned that he was a Srebrenica denier who reduced the figure for the Srebrenica massacre to less than one hundred, and who, in an email correspondence with two Bosnian Muslims posing as a Serb, said of the Srebrenica Muslims that ‘I wish Mladić had killed them all.’

Another of Deliso’s sources is a certain Nebojsa Malic, whom Deliso describes as a ‘native Bosnian political analyst.’ Deliso quotes Malic as saying: ‘Izetbegovic’s vision of Bosnia was not a multi-ethnic democracy, but a multi-caste hierarchy of the kind that existed under the Ottoman Empire, the memories of which were still fresh at his birth in 1925.’ (p. 25) Deliso does not mention that this particular ‘native Bosnian political analyst’ was a signatory of the petition of the ‘International Committee to Defend Slobodan Milošević’ which describes Milošević as a ‘Serbian patriot’ whose ‘crime was to set an example to the world by resisting NATO aggression.’ Malic supported the neo-Nazi Tomislav Nikolić in this year’s Serbian presidential election; after Nikolić’s defeat, he complained that the Serbs had just proven that they ‘don’t have the guts’ to fight over Kosova.

While quoting the most raving Serb bigots as though they were objective experts, Deliso has consulted few genuine scholarly works on the Balkans, and his references to Balkan history contain some real howlers. Thus, he writes: ‘Both Croatia and Muslim Bosnia had served as fascist puppet states for the Nazis, during the Second World War’ (p. 7) – there was, of course, no Bosnian fascist puppet state during World War II. Deliso describes Yugoslavia as a country that had ‘sided with the United States in two world wars’ (p. 41) – unlikely, given that Yugoslavia did not exist until after World War I, whereas in World War II, Yugoslavia signed an alliance with Nazi Germany but was then invaded and occupied by it – all while the US was still neutral.

Deliso’s account of recent events in the Balkans is no more accurate. He describes Izetbegovic’s close ally Hasan Čengić as ‘a veteran of the World War II SS *Handzar* Division who reincarnated the unit while serving as Bosnia’s deputy defense

minister in the early 1990s.’ (p. 8) It is unlikely that Čengić was a veteran of the SS Handzar Division or of World War II – given that he was born in 1957. Nor does Deliso provide any evidence at all to support his assertion that Čengić ‘reincarnated’ the SS Handzar Division in the 1990s. As I have written elsewhere, claims that a ‘Handzar Division,’ named after the SS unit from World War II, was ‘reincarnated’ by Bosnian Muslims in the 1990s appear to rest on a single piece of ‘evidence’: an article by British journalist Robert Fox, published in Britain’s Daily Telegraph on 29 December 1993. Fox’s article is based solely on second-hand information and contains factual inaccuracies. Fox himself did not actually meet anyone who belonged to the alleged ‘Handzar Division,’ but merely reported its existence on the basis of what unnamed UN officials on the ground told him. But even this weak source, which Deliso cites, does not implicate Čengić in the Handzar Division’s alleged ‘reincarnation.’

Deliso’s book is not merely a piece of bad scholarship – although it is undoubtedly that. He engages in the sort of atrocity denial and conspiracy theorising that characterises supporters of the former regime of Slobodan Milošević. Thus, in writing of the Serbian massacre of Albanian civilians at the village of Račak in January 1999, Deliso writes: ‘An alleged Serbian “massacre” at the Kosovo village of Račak, later proved by a UN forensics team to have been a place of legitimate battle, provided the necessary justification for Clinton to start the bombing.’ (p. 43) The nonsense statement ‘proved by a UN forensics team to have been a place of legitimate battle’ is a case of Deliso fluffing his denialist lines.

Schindler’s subject matter is narrower than Deliso’s, being confined essentially to Bosnia. It is less a study of the role of al-Qaeda and the mujahedin in Bosnia and more a diatribe against the Bosnian Muslims and the Bosnian cause. Despite the author’s claim to having had a youthful flirtation with Islam (p. 13), he is clearly hostile to the religion and views the Bosnian war on this basis: ‘Bosnia’s Muslims were really Muslims, and some of them adhered to a faith that was deeply hostile to Western concepts of freedom, democracy, and human rights.’ (p. 19) Furthermore, ‘Muhammad himself endorsed, and practiced, the violent spreading of the faith and considered it the obligation of every Muslim’; consequently, ‘As devout traditionalist Muslims, Izetbegovic and the SDA [Party of Democratic Action] leadership adhered to the ideology of jihad that stands at the center of their faith.’ Schindler considers the term ‘fundamentalist’ meaningless when applied to Islam, because ‘[a]ll truly believing Muslims are, from a Western viewpoint, “fundamentalists”’

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(pp. 116-17). This hostility to Muslims and Islam appears to be the guiding motive behind Schindler's book.

In this book, al-Qaeda and the mujahedin play only supporting roles. After the introduction, the first third of the book makes no mention of them; it instead constitutes a polemic against the former regime of Bosnia's Alija Izetbegovic and against the supporters of Bosnia in the West. Indeed, Schindler follows the well trodden revisionist road that was long ago laid down by supporters of the regime of Slobodan Milošević and of the Great Serbian cause – of which the British magazine *Living Marxism* was perhaps the most notorious – of a Western media conspiracy to demonise the Serb side in the war and fabricate Western atrocities. Schindler puts the term 'concentration camps' in quote marks when referring to the Serb camps of Omarska, Manjača and Trnopolje, claiming that all media reports of such camps were 'poorly sourced and based on second- and third-hand information, much of which was flat wrong' (pp. 83-4); and he accuses the Bosnians of staging massacres of their own civilians in order to incriminate the Serbs (pp. 92, 186).

Schindler revises the death-toll of the Srebrenica massacre downward to 'as many as two thousand Muslim men, mostly soldiers' (p. 231) – although, in one of several internal contradictions in this book, he earlier put the figure at about seven thousand (p. 227). He argues that '[w]hile this was unquestionably a war crime, it is difficult to term it genocide' (p. 231) – though it was not so difficult for the International Court of Justice and the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia, both of which formally described the Srebrenica massacre as 'genocide.' Instead, Schindler portrays the Srebrenica massacre as Serb revenge for earlier Muslim attacks on Serb civilians, and employs a gross racial stereotype in the process: 'To Mladić's troops, who like all Bosnians believed in blood feuds and payback, this was simple revenge.' (p. 231).

Schindler describes the siege of Sarajevo as a 'siege manqué' (p. 189) and as a 'faux-siege,' where 'conditions were much more normal than the Western media was willing to portray' (p. 203), despite the Serb besiegers' killing of thousands of people in Sarajevo during the war. Perhaps most tellingly of all, he claims (erroneously): 'Ethnic cleansing, though unpleasant, was no more than the counterinsurgency doctrine learned by three generations of JNA [Yugoslav People's Army] officers, who were trained in hunting down "fifth columnists" and "terrorists" by expelling sympathisers as well as fighters.' (p. 82) He then endorses a CIA report, according to which: 'The Bosnian Serb Army undertook these ethnic cleansing operations

because it believed the Muslim population posed an armed threat or could act as a “Fifth Column” during the war with the Bosnian Government.’ (p. 82).

If the above citations suggest whose side Schindler is on, they do not properly convey the sheer extent of the deception in which he engages. He writes: ‘Milošević wanted Bosnia and Hercegovina to remain in Yugoslavia, but failing that he would settle for a partition that would leave the ethnically Serbian parts under Belgrade’ (p. 63). Anyone who has looked at a map of the areas of Bosnia occupied by Serb forces in the early weeks of the Bosnian war, while they were still under the control of Belgrade and Milošević, knows that this is untrue; they occupied huge areas in eastern and northern Bosnia in which the Muslims and/or Croats were in the majority. Schindler writes that ‘the [Yugoslav] army in the months leading to war in most cases tried to place itself between Serbs and Muslims and defuse tensions’ (p. 66), suggesting he has not read, or has simply ignored, the books by authors such as Norman Cigar, James Gow, Smail Cekic, myself and others that detail the unity of purpose between the JNA and the Bosnian Serb nationalists in the preparations for war.

Schindler writes that ‘Belgrade sought to arm the Serbs in Croatia and Bosnia, fearing that Yugoslavia was headed for dissolution’ (p. 68) – ignoring the fact that Belgrade was itself engineering Yugoslavia’s dissolution, as revealed in sources such as the published diary of Milošević’s close collaborator Borisav Jović, former president of Yugoslavia and of the Socialist Party of Serbia. Schindler then writes: ‘The JNA General Staff was not brought into the plan’ of arming the Serbs in Croatia and Bosnia (p. 68) – again, he has either not read, or has ignored, the memoirs of Veljko Kadijević, the most senior figure in the JNA during the war in Croatia, who describes in detail the JNA’s role in arming Serb forces in Croatia and Bosnia. Schindler continues, ‘Belgrade saw this concept [of arming the Serbs] as defensive, a plan to protect Serbs outside Serbia – and, in extremis, to prevent another genocide against Serbs in Croatia and Bosnia’ (p. 68) – leading one to ask why Belgrade showed so little interest in protecting the substantial Serb populations of cities such as Zagreb and Split, while devoting so much energy to conquering territories such as eastern Slavonia, where Serbs were a small minority.

Schindler portrays the ‘Muslim’ (i.e. Bosnian) side as being the one that was initiating preparations for war, while the JNA was merely responding (p. 72). In order to make a case for this blatant falsehood and the arguments that flow from it, Schindler simply avoids mentioning almost all the acts of aggression carried out

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by the JNA in the first weeks of the war: the conquest of Zvornik, Foča, Višegrad, Kupres, Dobož, Derвента, Brčko and other towns; and the shelling of Mostar and Sarajevo. He consequently portrays the Bosnian military's action as coming out of the blue, enabling him to portray it as the aggressor – not very convincing to anyone who knows the history of the war, but enough to deceive an uninformed reader. Having failed to mention all these coordinated Serbian acts of conquest, he then describes 'two unprovoked Muslim attacks on the JNA that fatally poisoned relations between the army and the SDA': the Bosnian attack on the JNA in Sarajevo on 3 May and in Tuzla on 15 May. Well, yes, the attacks were 'unprovoked' if you do not consider a military assault on your country, the conquest of many of your towns and massive atrocities against your civilian population to count as a 'provocation.' Schindler claims the attack on the JNA in Sarajevo 'caused lasting bitterness among the Serbs,' and describes the attack on the JNA in Tuzla as a 'killing spree' and a 'massacre' (pp. 80-1). Yet the JNA was a military target, and attacking a military target was, presumably, a reasonable thing to do in war. By contrast, Schindler does not mention the Serb and JNA massacres of Muslim civilians that had been taking place all over Bosnia, or whether they might have 'caused lasting bitterness' among the Muslims. Similarly, Schindler mentions attacks on Serb civilians carried out by Naser Orić, the Bosnian Army commander in Srebrenica, between May and December 1992, claiming that it was '[s]mall wonder that the Bosnian Serbs thirsted for revenge against the Muslims of Srebrenica' (p. 228). But he does not mention the Serb attacks on Muslim civilians all across East Bosnia that preceded Orić's actions.

While whitewashing the role of the Milošević regime and Yugoslav army in engineering the war, Schindler suppresses or misrepresents evidence in order to make his case: that Izetbegovic and his fellow SDA politicians were radical Islamists. He therefore makes claims against the Bosnian leadership that anyone with a cursory knowledge of the subject knows to be untrue. This involves attempting to portray Izetbegovic and his SDA as being unwilling to share power with the Bosnian Serbs. He claims that following the fall of the Communist regime in Bosnia in 1990 and the emergence of free political parties, the Serb nationalist leader Radovan Karadzic offered Izetbegovic and his party a coalition, but that the 'Muslims expressed no interest' (p. 63). In fact, Izetbegovic and the SDA did indeed form a coalition with the Karadzic's Serb nationalists, and with the Croat nationalists, that resulted in posts in the Bosnian government, presidency and administration being equally divided between the three groups of nationalists, with key posts going to the Serbs – including the command of the Bosnian Territorial

Defence. Schindler then misrepresents the plan negotiated between Karadzic and the dissident Muslim politician Adil Zulfikarpašić in August 1991 as a 'power-sharing plan' (p. 71), omitting to mention that Serbs and Muslims already shared power in Bosnia, and that the plan was in fact aimed at keeping Bosnia within Milošević's Serbian-dominated rump Yugoslavia. Schindler, indeed, argues that Izetbegovic and his party wished to deny the Bosnian Serbs full citizenship – but produces no evidence to back up his claim, other than an unsupported assertion by the Belgrade historian Aleksa Djilas (p. 64).

Schindler relies on extremely dubious source material to make his case against Izetbegovic and the SDA. One eyewitness whom Schindler quotes approvingly several times is Fikret Abdic (pp. 198, 203, 217). Abdic is certainly very liberal in his denunciation of Izetbegovic, but Schindler fails to mention that Abdic is a convicted war-criminal who staged an armed rebellion against his own democratically elected government, and fought against it on the side of Serb forces invading from outside Bosnia, from Serb-occupied Croatia. Another eyewitness in support of Schindler's case against Izetbegovic is Aleksandar Vasiljević, head of Yugoslav military intelligence (p. 72-3) – Schindler takes everything he says about Izetbegovic at face value. A third is the former US State Department official George Kenney (p. 86), who resigned in protest at US inaction over Bosnia, but then changed sides, becoming one of the most vocal enemies of the Izetbegovic regime. Schindler does not mention the extent of Kenney's conversion, or the fact that Kenney wrote to Milošević, while the latter was in prison in The Hague, to assure him that he considered him innocent of all charges against him, and that he considered his trial to be a 'show trial.'

So dubious, indeed, is Schindler's source material, that it is difficult to believe that he is using it innocently, or that he is attempting to convince anybody but the most naive of the merits of his case. He claims that Bosnian Prime Minister Haris Silajdžić declared an 'Islamic holy war' on Bosnian TV in July 1995 (p. 200) – his source for this is the Belgrade news agency SRNA. He claims that the Bosnian Army murdered the Bosnian Croat commander Vlado Šantić (p. 214) – his source for this is the Bosnian Croat newspaper *Dnevni list*, which is linked the nationalist Croat Democratic Union. He tells of mujahedin snuff videos, in which Bosnian Army commander Sakib Mahmuljin allegedly boasts of having sent a gift of twenty-eight severed Christian heads to Izetbegovic and twenty-eight more to Iran, and of Serb prisoners being made by the mujahedin to kiss the severed heads of other Serbs that were nailed to trees (pp. 166-67) – but Schindler has not actually seen any of

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these videos; his only source is one Croatian and one Serbian newspaper article. Schindler even endorses the view of the intelligence services of Franjo Tudjman's Croatia concerning the alleged Islamic threat, arguing that 'the unheeded warnings from the Croatian intelligence services about the unwisdom of entering an alliance with radical Islam and the likes of al-Qaeda had been prescient.' (p. 215).

Schindler describes Osama bin Laden as having been one of Izetbegovic's 'friends' (p. 239), though he has no evidence for this. He cites several sources in support of his claim that bin Laden was in Bosnia during the war; the one he describes as 'most credible' being the German journalist Renate Flottau, who claims to have met bin Laden in the foyer of Izetbegovic's office in the early 1990s (p. 123). Izetbegovic's staff told Flottau that bin Laden was 'here every day and we don't know how to make him go away' (p. 124). As I mentioned in my own book on the Bosnian Army, Izetbegovic himself never ruled out the possibility that he may have met bin Laden, but stated that he had no recollection of having done so; he pointed out that he met thousands of foreign Muslim visitors during the war. Izetbegovic was, of course, visited by many people during the war who were certainly not his 'friends,' and many who were not Muslims, but Schindler jumps from providing evidence that bin Laden may have visited Izetbegovic to claiming that bin Laden was Izetbegovic's 'friend.' Other evidence that he produces on this score is similar in character: e.g. the claim of one of Izetbegovic's domestic opponents, the Social Democrat Sejfidin Tokić, who 'attested that photos exist of Izetbegovic and bin Laden together' (p. 125) – photos which, needless to say, Schindler has not seen. Most of Schindler's case against Izetbegovic and the SDA is based upon this sort of unsubstantiated rumour. Like Deliso, Schindler claims that Bosnian Muslim radicals during the war established a military unit named the 'Handzar Division,' named after the Nazi SS division of the same name that had existed during World War II. And like Deliso, he bases this claim on the solitary, tendentious newspaper article by Robert Fox.

One of the more amusing of Schindler's blunders concerns the scientific calculation of the figure for Bosnian war-dead carried out by Mirsad Tokaca's Research and Documentation Centre in Sarajevo, which placed it at about one hundred thousand. Schindler seems to endorse this figure wholeheartedly, seeing it as proof that earlier estimates of Bosnian war-dead had been 'grossly exaggerated,' and complaining that Tokaca's result 'got minimal attention in Bosnia or abroad' (p. 317). The reason this is amusing is that Tokaca's figures disprove several of the figures for Serb dead at the hands of Bosnian forces that Schindler himself cites. Thus, Schindler claims that

‘more than 3,000 Bosnian Serbs, some soldiers but at least 1,300 unarmed civilians, had been killed by Muslim forces based in Srebrenica’ (p. 228). Yet according to Tokaca’s calculation, only 849 Serb civilians were killed in the whole of Podrinje – the region that includes Srebrenica, and where Oric’s alleged crimes occurred – in the whole of the war. Likewise, with regard to the Serb victims of the Sarajevo Muslim warlord Mušan Topalović-Caco, Schindler claims: ‘By the war’s end, it was clear that at least two thousand Sarajevo Serbs had fallen victim to Caco’s gang, though the civic association representing the city’s Serbs claimed the true figure was closer to five thousand’ (p. 105). Yet according to Tokaca’s figures, only 1,091 Serb civilians were killed in the whole of the Sarajevo region during the war, and this includes those killed by the Serb siege. Schindler claims that ‘at least 1,500 Croatian civilians were killed in the fighting’ between Muslims and Croats (p. 99), yet according to Tokaca’s figures, in the two regions of Bosnia encompassed by the Muslim-Croat conflict, Central Bosnia and Neretva, only 786 Croat civilians were killed during the entire war, including those killed by Serb forces. So when Schindler writes that Tokaca’s figures ‘got minimal attention in Bosnia or abroad,’ he is probably referring to himself.

Schindler claims that the SDA had ‘helped establish the beginnings of an Islamist statelet in Europe’ (p. 253), but scrapes the bottom of the barrel to find evidence for this. He admits that ‘Izetbegovic and the party leadership, for all their waxing Koranic to improve public morality, were careful to never speak openly about their plan for implementing a fully Islamic society.’ (p. 196) But if Schindler is unable to find evidence for Izetbegovic’s alleged Islamist plans in what he said, neither is he able to find it in what he and his party did. He mentions an SDA election poster of 2000, entitled ‘Beautiful like Sarajevo girls,’ showing three female faces – ‘two in Western makeup, one in hijab,’ and notes: ‘This was the SDA’s new Bosnia, forged in a terrible war, and it had many wondering which worldview – Western and secular or Islamist and radical – the party really stood for.’ (p. 274). Yet an election poster that shows two Western-style women coexisting with a woman in hijab cannot by any stretch of the imagination be taken as evidence of a radical Islamic world-view.

Likewise, concerning the unproven allegation that Izetbegovic collaborated with the Nazis during World War II, Schindler writes: ‘Even out of office, the SDA founder continued to deny allegations that he had been a Nazi collaborator as a young man and had served in the Bosnian Muslim 13th Handzar Division of the Waffen-SS. Though no evidence emerged to tie him directly to the Nazis, it was nevertheless significant, observed a Sarajevo pundit, that Izetbegovic continued to

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feel the need to publicly deny rumours that had existed for many years.’ (p. 276) – an argument so feeble that it defies comment. Schindler admits that Bosnia engaged in a ‘modest participation in the American-led war on Islamist terrorism’ but complains that this provoked ‘open resentment among Bosnian Muslims,’ and that ‘local newspapers regularly carried attacks on America and its leader “the state terrorist Bush.”’ (p. 293). Damning evidence indeed – most of Christian Europe was probably ‘Islamist’ by this standard.

Most instances of supposed ‘Islamist terrorism’ in the post-Dayton period that Schindler cites in his book turn out simply to be cases of former mujahedin attacking Croat or Serb civilians, above all refugees trying to return to their former homes (pp. 263-64), much as Serbs and Croats likewise attacked returning refugees from other communities – though Schindler does not mention the latter. Schindler explains away the absence of genuine Islamist terrorism in Bosnia by claiming that ‘most mujahedin were wary of targeting US or Western interests in Bosnia – anywhere else was fair game – because they appreciated that NATO gave them a de facto safe haven after Dayton.’ (p. 266). So Bosnia was free of Islamist terrorism because the type of Islamist terrorists based there did not like to attack Western targets. It therefore perhaps did not matter so much that, according to Schindler, ‘the Muslim police underperformed when it came to tracking down wanted holy warriors.’ (p. 262). Yet Schindler, like Deliso, mentions the Bosnian police arresting on 19 October 2005 an armed terrorist cell that was planning to attack the British Embassy (p. 318) – somehow the police of the ‘Islamist statelet’ had managed to overcome their reluctance to act against Islamists and staved off an attack against a Western target.

There are so many factual errors and internal contradictions in Schindler’s book that it is impossible to list them all, so what follows are just some examples. Schindler claims that ‘reliable analysis concludes that between five thousand and six thousand Islamic fighters came to Bosnia during the war’ (p. 162) – having previously written that ‘there were probably four thousand foreign Islamists who fought for Sarajevo during the civil war’ (p. 119). He claims that the Bosnian Serbs ‘made up most of the agricultural population in Bosnia, and therefore controlled a disproportionate share of the land to be cleared of non-Serbs,’ which is simply rubbish – more agricultural land in Bosnia was owned by Muslims than by Serbs before 1992. Schindler claims that ‘Ustasha’ means ‘uprising’ (p. 33), when in fact it means ‘insurgent.’ He claims that Džafer Kulenović was made vice-president of the ‘Independent State of Croatia’ in November 1941 (p. 33); in fact, he was made

deputy prime-minister. Schindler claims that during World War II ‘the Serbs of Bosnia and Croatia were also the only Yugoslav nation exposed to actual genocide’ (p. 60) – he is either unaware, or chooses to ignore, the work by two leading Yugoslav historians of the World War II genocide, the Serb Vladimir Dedijer and the Croat Antun Miletic, entitled *Genocide of the Muslims, 1941-1945: Collected documents and testimony* (Svjetlost, Sarajevo, 1990), which provides evidence of the wartime Serb Chetnik genocide of the Muslims.

Schindler claims that ‘alone among Bosnia’s peoples they [the Muslims] had made no real contribution to Allied victory, and their collaboration with the Nazis had been unsurpassed’ – another fabrication, since nearly a quarter of all Bosnian Partisans had been Muslims; their readiness to join the Partisans compared favourably with that of the Bosnian Croats; their contribution to the anti-Nazi struggle was, for a nationality of their size, a significant one; and their readiness to speak out against Nazi crimes in 1941, and protect the victims of genocide, was virtually unparalleled in Nazi-occupied Europe. Schindler claims that the senior Bosnian Muslim Communist Osman Karabegović was expelled from the League of Communists of Yugoslavia in 1972 for Muslim ‘exclusivism’ and ‘nationalism’ (p. 43); this is the opposite of the truth – Karabegović was expelled because he was too much of a Yugoslav centralist; he would later become one of the most prominent Bosnian Muslims to support Milošević. The text ‘Virtuous Muslim State,’ published in Tuzla in 1993, was not the ‘SDA’s manifesto,’ as Schindler claims (p. 95), but merely a proposal put forward by a senior SDA member from Tuzla. Schindler writes of the Bosnian Serb JNA officer Jovan Divjak, that he ‘sided with Izetbegovic and the SDA when war broke out. It was a decision he would regret.’ (p. 102). This is again untrue: Divjak never supported the SDA; he supported his country – Bosnia – in the war, and would never regret having done so. Nor is it true that the anti-nationalist Bosnian Serb journalist Gojko Beric had been ‘an ardent supporter of the SDA’ during the war (p. 310).

When all the rumours, unsubstantiated allegations and outright falsehoods are taken away, Schindler’s case against Izetbegovic and the SDA evaporates. We are left with a picture of a secular Bosnia-Herzegovina under an SDA regime that was undoubtedly highly corrupt and frequently brutal to its political opponents, but that supported the US-led ‘War on Terror,’ arrested Islamist terrorist suspects and was essentially free of genuine Islamist terrorist outrages on its soil – certainly more free than the US, Britain, Spain or Turkey. The most that can be said for Schindler’s portrayal of Bosnia as a centre of global jihad is that, yes, some of the

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foreign mujahedin who fought in Bosnia would subsequently go on to engage in acts of terrorism and jihad elsewhere, some with the dubious benefit derived from possession of Bosnian passports – scarcely a free pass throughout the Western world, as anyone in the West who has Bosnian friends knows. In other words, none of the evidence presented here suggests that the global Islamist jihad would look significantly different today had the Bosnian war never taken place.

One other malevolent error of which both Deliso and Schindler are guilty is their portrayal of the Clinton Administration as being hawkishly pro-Muslim and anti-Serb. You would not know, from reading either of these books, that Clinton had enforced the arms embargo against Bosnia for the best part of the war; that he had come under massive fire from Congress for his unwillingness either to break the arms embargo or to carry out air-strikes against Serb forces; that he had forced the Bosnian Army to halt its victorious advance against Serb forces in the autumn of 1995, leaving half of Bosnia in Serb-rebel hands; that the Clinton-imposed Dayton Accords engineered the recognition of the ‘Republika Srpska’ incorporating nearly half of Bosnia, with a much smaller share of territory going to the Muslims; and that after Dayton, the Clinton Administration avoided arresting the Serb war criminals Radovan Karadžić and Ratko Mladić. Authors incapable of properly analysing Islamism are equally incapable of analysing US foreign policy.

After reading two such inaccurate, unscholarly, poorly researched and politically motivated works of propaganda, it actually comes as a relief to read a book that is merely very bad. Shaul Shay, unlike Deliso and Schindler, has no Balkan agenda or axe to grind; he is a former Israeli intelligence officer, and he genuinely comes at the Balkans from the perspective of someone primarily interested in radical Islam and the Islamic countries, rather than vice versa. His book contains some rather endearingly naive sentences, such as ‘Yugoslavia is [sic] a mountainous country in the northern Balkans’ (p. 19) and ‘Bosnia-Herzegovina is a mountainous country in the Balkan [sic] that is divided into two historical geographic regions – the Bosnia region in the north and the Herzegovina region in the south’ (p. 39); he elsewhere describes Bosnia as having ‘a Muslim majority and a Serb minority’ (p. 24).

Shay’s run-of-the-mill-first-year-undergraduate-quality potted history of the Balkans repeats some of the historical and other factual errors made by Deliso and Schindler, in particular at the expense of the Bosnian Muslims, and there are numerous misspellings of names (Alija becomes ‘Ilia,’ Čengić become ‘Kengic,’ Vojvodina becomes ‘Wivodena’), and so on. Having gone into the errors of Deliso

and Schindler in detail, I'm not going to bore the reader further by listing Shay's; his are by far the most innocent of the three. In fact, he appears to be the sort of person that books of the Deliso-Schindler variety might be written to target. If one simply ignores everything Shay's book has to say about Balkan politics, then one can glean a few nuggets of information from it concerning the politics of radical Islam globally and of the Muslim states of the Middle East. But this is not enough to recommend this book when there are much better treatments of these topics available.

Radical Islam is a genuine problem facing Europe, and although it is actually less of a danger in the Balkans outside of Turkey than it is in Western Europe, this does not mean it is not a problem facing the Balkans as well. We need objective, scholarly analyses of the activities of Wahhabites and other radical Muslims in the Balkans if we are to understand and confront the problem. Unfortunately, this will not happen so long as writers simply use the issue to make propaganda to fight Balkan wars that, ultimately, have little to do with radical Islam.

Marko Attila Hoare is an Advisory Editor of Democratiya. Formerly a Research Fellow in the Faculty of History, University of Cambridge, he is now a Senior Research Fellow at Kingston University, London. His latest book is *The History of Bosnia: From the Middle Ages to the Present Day* (Saqi).