BOOK REVIEWS

Rüdiger Lohlker (ed.), New Approaches to the Analysis of Jihadism: Online and Offline (Studying Jihadism 1) (Vienna: Vienna University Press, 2012). 224 pp. + 34 figures. ISBN 978-3-89971-900-0. EUR 31.90.

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Jihadism has been an important issue in public discussions since 9/11. Internet media have been used as means of communication, propaganda, recruitment, and even training purposes. In this volume, the processes of interaction on Jihadi internet sides are analysed. Particular attention is paid to the mechanisms of the spread of propaganda via the internet by diverse technical means. The process of transformation of 'Islamic knowledge' into 'Jihadi knowledge', the rhetorics of videos, the development of South Asian Jihadi organisations and some conceptual issues are discussed.

The volume, which is made up by eight articles and a substantial and very valuable bibliography, is the result of an ongoing research project at the University of Vienna, Austria. The project 'Jihadism online' aims at a multi-dimensional analysis of the online presence of the transnational activity often called 'Jihadism'.

"Virtual Jihad: A Real Danger," a short overview by Philipp Holtmann (researcher at the Stiftung Wissenschaft und Politik, Berlin, Germany) introduces the field of Jihadist online campaigns.

"Jihadi Salafist Creed: Abu Muhammad al-Maqdisi's Imperatives of Faith" by Orhan Elmaz (Assistant Professor of Islamic Studies, Oriental Institute, University of Vienna, Austria) demonstrates how a close reading of Jihadi ideo-theological texts discovers the slight shifts Jihadi authors use when moving from mainstream Islamic ways of thinking to Jihadist ones. Understanding these shifts is necessary to understand the strategies Jihadists use to claim their 'Islamic legitimacy'.

"From Kalashnikov to Keyboard: Pakistan's Jihadiscapes and the Transformation of Lashkar-e Tayba" by Thomas K. Gugler (researcher at the research project 'Jihadism Online', University of Vienna), analyses the development of militant groups in Pakistan, the state where modern transnational Jihadism was born in the city of Peshawar. He is focussing on the organisation Lashkar-e Tayba and its diverse manifestations, offline and online. Understanding the specifics of the South Asian dimensions of Jihadism is indispensable for a thorough analysis of the future of Jihadism.

"Virtual Leadership" by Philipp Holtmann analyses the emergence of specific forms of virtual Jihadi leadership on the web, distinguishing three levels of leadership:

hierarchical, mutual and discursive. The online communication of Jihadists is described as being structured by a multi-layered interaction of rituals.

"Forgotten Swamp Revisited" by the editor of this volume, Rüdiger Lohlker (Professor of Islamic Studies, Oriental Institute, University of Vienna) clarifies some basic categories currently used in the study of Jihadism stressing the importance of a religious studies approach. Since the religious dimensions of Jihadism are often seen and misunderstood as mere varieties of ideology this approach mus be added to the toolbox of Jihadism studies.

"YouTube Jihad" by Bouchra Oualla (researcher at the research project 'Jihadism Online', University of Vienna) stresses the importance of videos on popular platforms like YouTube as an essential medium for Jihadi propaganda. Oualla meticulously analyses one particular video following the rhetorical strategies used by the producers of these videos. This aspect of online communications is still not thoroughly understood; so Oualla lays the foundations for a new approach in Jihadi studies.

"Worldwide Online Jihad versus the Gaming Industry Reloaded: Ventures of the Web" by Nico Prucha (researcher at the research project 'Jihadism Online', University of Vienna) deals with the ways Jihadis are operating online compared with the strategies of the gaming industry.

"Jihad via Bluetooth: Al-Qa'ida's Mobile Phone Campaign," also by Nico Prucha and the last article of this fascinating volume, describes the ways Jihadis use modern devices for mobile phones to disseminate their 'worldview' via Bluetooth etc. Both of Prucha's contributions are providing new insights into Jihadism online as a media phenomenon.

In sum, this fascinating volume should be required reading for a serious study of contemporary extremist movements in the Muslim world. Without sensationalising, it lays the groundwork and sets the standards for Jihadism studies in the future. It is hoped that this book will find a circle of readers that goes beyond the usual military staff colleges and Islamic studies industry in the West by reaching out also to relevant institutions throughout the Muslim world – that is to say, where it would actually matter most.

Thomas K. Gugler, Mission Medina: Dacwat-e Islāmī und Tabliġī Ğamācat (Kultur, Recht und Politik in muslimischen Gesellschaften 18) (Würzburg, Germany: Ergon Verlag, 2011). 348 pp. + 63 coloured figures. ISBN 978-3-89913-793-4. EUR 45.00 [in German].

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Thomas K. Gugler, the author of this detailed study which is also his PhD thesis, is