



## The Jihadist Forever War: Islamic State Innovations in Terrorist Propaganda, Recruitment and Organizational Networking

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## BOOK REVIEW

**Incitement: Anwar al-Awlaki's Jihad**, by Alexander Meleagrou-Hitchens, Cambridge, Harvard University Press, 2020, 340 pp., \$35.00 (paperback), ISBN: 9780674979505

**Nexus of Global Jihad: Understanding Cooperation Among Terrorist Actors**, by Assaf Moghadam, New York, Colombia university Press, 2017, 380 pp., \$35.00 (hardback), ISBN: 978-0-231-16537

**Road Warrior: Foreign Fighters in the Army of Jihad**, by Dan Byman, New York, Oxford University Press, 2019, 382 pp., \$29.95 (hardback), ISBN: 9780190646414

**Nexus of Global Jihad: Understanding Cooperation Among Terrorist Actors**, by Assaf Moghadam, New York, Colombia university Press, 2017, 380 pp., \$35.00 (hardback), ISBN: 978-0-231-16537

**ISIS Propaganda: A Full Spectrum Extremist Message**, edited by Stephane J. Baele, Katherine A. Boyd and Travis G. Coan, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2020, 287 pp., \$85.00 (hardback), ISBN: 978-0-19-093245-9

It has been over a year since the last vestige of Islamic State of Iraq and al-Sham's (ISIS) caliphate project in the town of Baghuz was captured by American-backed Syrian-Kurdish paramilitary forces.<sup>1</sup> A culmination of four years of bloody warfare between an international coalition of sixty plus nations and ISIS's global terror network whose size and endurance proved difficult to overcome. Despite the death of some tens of thousands of its fighters and the loss of its transnational state, ISIS remains a potent insurgent-terror movement.

Unprecedented for a modern jihadist group, ISIS's caliphate stretched across parts of Iraq and Syria and included ten provinces scattered over the Muslim world. Once only imagined by jihadists, the caliphate's resurrection became a reality for a brief brutal time. Terror analyst angst over the endurance of the jihadist movement that has been pronounced dead many times yet comes raging back with even more brutal horrific violence.<sup>2</sup>

A resiliency hinted by David Rapoport who suggested that this Islamist fourth wave of modern terror could well persist longer than its three secular predecessors.<sup>3</sup> Rapoport's ominous warning proved prescient. It is within this context of jihadi resilience that we examine five books dealing with ISIS innovation in propaganda, foreign fighter recruitment and organizational networking.

The Islamic State movement carried out these functions in pioneering ways. Nowhere is this truer than in its extensive use of social media to relay its brutal ideological vision. We first will begin with Stephane J. Baele, Katherine A. Boyd and Travis G. Coan's edited volume entitled *ISIS Propaganda: A Full Spectrum Extremist Message*.

The book aims to "provide the first comprehensive overview and detailed analysis of ISIS 'full spectrum' propaganda" and "unpack the cocktail of emotional, theological and ideological appeals" (2) a propaganda strategy Stephen J. Baele argues is unprecedented in quality and quantity but unoriginal in ideas and format. Propaganda is defined "an organized attempt by a political group to shape target's audience of its world view and elicit action" (3). Baele argues that a "full spectrum" communication strategy is *comprehensive, cohesive, and multi-dimensional* (4).

All of which is designed to agitate hatred and promote violence in the service of its totalitarian project. ISIS propaganda combines innovation with continuity and is according to Baele "the ultimate re-articulation of the Salafi jihadist tradition" (6). He describes ISIS propagandists as "strategic plagiarists" who "have a deep appreciation of their own history and that of their predecessors" (6).

A prodigious plagiarism that also extends to its copying of Western-style entertainment and media techniques.

To underscore his point regarding the non-exceptional nature of ISIS propaganda Baele compares the movement to the Nazis and other past totalitarian groups. Like its predecessors ISIS repeats simple ideas dramatizing a Manichean world order designed to strengthen in-group solidarity (its Sunni supporters) and demonize out-group enemies (Muslim *apostates*, Shi'ites, Zionists and Western Crusaders).

The book's structure is well organized. There are chapters that analyze the network's "prodigious plagiarism" highlighting the novelty of its *full spectrum* qualities. Also laudatory is the editors' adoption of a multi-disciplinary approach. In total some eight chapters provide the reader with a continuous narrative revealing a sophisticated and organized propaganda machine.

*ISIS Propaganda* has a tripartite structure. The initial section is designed to sketch the *strategic logic* of the network's propaganda and how it ties into the movement's organizational goals. The second part comprises chapters that concentrate on individual components (magazines, videos, social media, and the so-called *forgotten propaganda* sources like books and informatics). The final section has two chapters that deal with counter-propaganda measures and a sketch of future terror threats. For the purposes of brevity, I would like to highlight the books most important findings.

Hororo Ingram in Chapter One analyzes the strategic logic behind ISIS *comprehensive, cohesive, and multi-dimensional* messaging strategy. He argues that the caliphate's communication policy is interwoven with its underlying need to *remain* and *expand* as a revolutionary political-theological movement. Ingram maintains that ISIS developed a *hedging strategy* (32–33) where in times of expansion it promotes its proto-jihadist transnational state and during downturns advocates a guerrilla war strategy.

Its propaganda frames oppressed Sunnis victimized by a demonic *Zionist-Crusader-Apostate-Shi'ite world* which it is *divinely guided* to fight against and is *prophetically destined* to overcome. Within this context propaganda acts as a *force multiplier* exalting and exaggerating the movement's military achievements and a *force nullifier* denigrating any success that its adversaries may have claimed against the jihadi group (25).

Medi Laghmari in Chapter Two provides the historical foundation of ISIS's eclectic ideology. A tradition he argues that borrows ideas from nineteenth century era Saudi extremist preacher Mohammad ibn Abd al-Wahhab, Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood theorist Sayyid Qutb, Palestinian jihadi Abdullah Azzam, and Abu Abdullah al-Mujahir's anti-Shia sectarianism. Laghmari rightly notes that ISIS has a *fusion ideology* (76) that hybridizes various currents within the Salafi-jihadist tradition and that its embrace of Islamic eschatology is one of its more distinguishing characteristics. More on this important insight later.

The third chapter is written by Stephen J. Baele, Katherine A. Boyd and Travis Coan who deal with the movement's multi-lingual magazines communicated in Arabic, English, French, Russian, and Turkish. They effectively illustrate how the network's magazines mimic Anwar al-Awlaki's *Inspire* (84) that served as a model for the caliphate's now defunct English language magazines *Dabiq* and *Rumiyah*.

Integrated within ISIS's *full spectrum*, strategy these magazines target multiple audiences with a multi-lingual format that is centrally directed by different production companies; Al Furqan (Arabic language publications) and al-Hayat Media enterprises (English, French, Russian, and Turkish language magazines).

Irrespective of the tone employed these publications emphasize a *crisis-solution* narrative (91–93) that combines words, symbols, and images exalting the movement's use of the black flag and the sword associated with an Islamic prophetic tradition predestined to overcome a demonic world of disbelief. A didactic narrative where jihadi warfare and the caliphate are a solution to Islam's spiritual and material regression.

In Chapter Four Beale, Boyd, and Coan examine ISIS videos that reinforce a *meta script* (141–142) emphasizing caliphate, utopia, war, punishment, and martyrdom. The network's ultra-violent

beheading and execution videos they argue seek to normalize extreme violence and legitimate ISIS's takfiri ideology that sanctifies violence against *apostate* Muslims. Videos are centrally guided by the network's media enterprises with its volume ebbing and flowing with organization's growth or decline. They also note the quantity of videos produced by the caliphate's core provinces in Iraq and Syria dominates over those produced by its regional Egyptian, Libyan, Afghan, and Nigerian branches.

In Chapter Five Laura Waterford and Laura Smith document ISIS use of social media that seeks to create a *coherent* and *cohesive* social identity and brand following that in 2014 reached on Twitter 90,000 supporters (164). A success that the authors attribute to its powerful message that aims to rally supporters and demonize opponents. By using social media Waterford and Smith argue ISIS has created a vibrant world of chat rooms and diverse message platforms upon which propaganda materials and videos can be shared. Faced with the closure of its Twitter accounts ISIS supporters have moved to encrypted social media forums like Telegram where channels have been notoriously difficult to disrupt and from which much of its efforts to inspire, direct, and virtually guide terrorism emanate. It will be interesting to see how ISIS responds to Telegram's current campaign to crack down on its directed and inspired channels.

Chapter Six by Stephen Beale and Charlie Winter deals with photo reports, literature, informatics, news communiques, and music that glorify *war*, *jihad* and *martyrdom* as a solution to *apostasy* in the Muslim world and as a means to restore *authentic* Islamic governance. Beyond radicalization and polarization, acapella-music (*anashīd*), martyrdom narratives, photo reports, infographics are they argue designed to simplify the movement's message and accentuate through sound, words, and images its propaganda's emotional resonance.

*ISIS Propaganda* is a comprehensive overview of the movements *full spectrum* communication policy that employs videos, magazines, social media, informatics, books, music, poetry, and photo galleries. It provides a useful contribution to the study of terrorist propaganda and would make a fine resource book for a graduate course.

Despite its strong empirical grounding, there are weaknesses in its examination of the Islamic State movement. This is especially true when it argues that the movement has an unoriginal world view. This neglects the innovativeness of IS ideological vision that forced its break with Al Qaeda.

Sectarian and apocalyptic ideas are largely absent from Al Qaeda's ideology and it is these features that drive Islamic State's popularity. Its eclectic fusion of takfiri, Salafi, sectarian, and eschatological traditions is original, and this hybridization has created a new extremist world view that has generated unprecedented controversy within the jihadist movement. It is also an ideological vision in sync with the sectarian animosities raging in the killing fields of Syria, Iraq, and Yemen.

*ISIS Propaganda* however is an important contribution to the burgeoning academic study of jihadis' use of social media and stands in stark contrast to the next book that deals more impressionistically with ISIS communication strategy. Simon Cottee's *ISIS: The Pornography of Violence* begins with a disclaimer that is an example of "ideas-based journalism" (ix) whose ease of publication gives the author immediate gratification. Composed of published essays on ISIS written between 2014 and 2018, its chief intent is to dispel *myths* about ISIS fighters and to write about a "revolutionary political movement with a theological vision" (x).

The book arranges its essays in three sections entitled "ISIS and the Theater of Horror," "The Meaning" and "Appeal of Jihadist Violence" and "How not to think about ISIS" What follows is an overview of the book's main points.

*ISIS: The Pornography of Violence* is refreshingly politically incorrect for it is dismissiveness of liberal views that colonial legacies, poverty, injustice, and Western foreign policy account for the rise and persistence of jihadi movements. Cottee's first section critiques structuralist interpretations of ISIS's rise to power and repudiates arguments that ISIS fighters are *psychologically vulnerable* and are *brainwashed victims*. Instead he argues many ISIS fighters are sadists who revel in cruelty and crave to degrade their victims. Here ISIS propaganda appeals to the barbaric temperament and perversion of its movement's followers.

Cottee refers to ISIS execution and martyrdom videos as new style of violence that emulates Western pornography (3). In short it constitutes a “grotesque theatre of horror” whose exaltation of death and violence gives its perverted followers visceral pleasure. Devoid of any real narrative such *Gonzo porn* videos (4) culminate in what he refers to as a “money shot” (the moment of a victim’s death or the suicide bombers explosion) that aims to intimidate enemies and rally supporters.

True to his criminology background Cottee speculates that human beings are “hard wired” to kill and may be intoxicated by the killing spectacle and the God like power it evokes (7). Within this perspective ISIS filming of its militants (including children) engaged in face to face killing aims to break the will of its adversaries.

Nowhere is this truer than in the movement’s weaponization of children and its filmed exaltation of the killing prowess of child executioners (24–25). Cottee argues that ISIS’s use of children not only hopes to groom a future generation of sadistic killers but aims to psychologically unnerve its enemies. He evokes the motif of the *monster child* throughout the book. It is a chilling example of the network’s ability to create a “pornography of pain” (26) that marries glossy production values with intimate atrocity.

These themes are repeated in the book’s second part “The Meaning” and “Appeal of Jihadist Violence.” Here Cottee is adamant that we should reject efforts to “humanize” ISIS fighters and present them as “victims.” They are instead willful participants attracted to what he refers to as the movement’s *post modern cool* that honors virility and violence (50–53). Travel to the caliphate allows its members to become part of a counter-cultural utopian movement that permits them to *live heroically* (42).

He speculates that many Western ISIS fighters are alienated and desire to be *born again* Muslims permitting them to cleanse past sins by providing service to the caliphate. This is especially true of Western Muslims with a criminal background eager for the opportunity for moral rejuvenation.

Cottee’s examination of the role of religious ideology in ISIS is inconsistent. Though he rejects Scott Atran’s work that ISIS fighters are attracted to the movement’s *sacred values (xi)*, Cottee does argue that ideology acts as a source of legitimation and is a cause of its violence (67).

Cottee references the Christopher Browning and Daniel Goldhagen dispute over the motivational behavior of German army and police battalions during the Holocaust and whether it was social norms of obedience or anti-Semitism that drove such *ordinary men* to kill (5). Cottee pragmatically argues that social kinship ties and religious ideology reinforce ISIS sadistic behavior.

Despite such ruminations Cottee cautions us not to fuss over the *why* of terrorist violence but to concentrate on the *how*, *when* and *where* terrorism occurs (47). He argues not without some justification that it is impossible for us to fathom terrorist motivations and we should therefore concentrate on more empirically measurable indicators.

In his final section “How Not to Think about ISIS,” he continues with his argument that ISIS fighters are not *brainwashed* by evil outsiders or driven to terrorist violence by Western injustice. Instead they are autonomous moral agents who seek out terrorist movements that pander to their sadism.

Cottee refers to Western fighters who have criminal backgrounds as “punk jihadists” (11, 54) attracted to a revolutionary political movement that satisfies their need for moral rejuvenation while satiating their primal instincts. This conclusion leads him to be dismissive of Western governments’ efforts to prevent the radicalization of potential recruits who are paternalistically referred to as *vulnerable* or *impressionable*. Equally untenable are efforts in the West to counter ISIS propaganda for North American and European governments lack the legitimacy to so. Counter radicalization programs are he argues more likely to backfire and breed resentment.

*ISIS: the Pornography of Violence* must be evaluated on its own impressionistic terms and given that it is a collection of essays written over time inconsistencies are inevitable. Here ISIS execution videos are variously critiqued as being brilliant, horrific, banal, and boring. The book moreover draws unwarranted conclusions based on the behavior and motivations of Western fighters (who are

a minority of ISIS total cadre of militants) and exaggerates the impact of execution videos which is only a fraction of its total propagandistic output.

Cottee speculates wildly on terrorist motivations yet cautions us not to do so. Despite these problems *ISIS: The Pornography of Violence* is a thoughtful read that is realistic about human beings' capacity for cruelty and the eagerness of Western intellectuals to excuse such behavior. It moreover is a cautionary tale of the dangers of Western foreign fighters who undergoing an existential identity crisis can be attracted to a utopian totalitarian project.

Alexander Meleagrou-Hitchens's superb *Incitement: Anwar al-Awlaki's Jihad* also deals with Western jihadi fighters. In the book's introduction, Meleagrou-Hitchens calls the American-Yemeni Al Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP) preacher "the pied piper of Western jihad" (2) who through translation of jihadi literature and original works offered "the most comprehensive presentation of Salafi jihadist ideology to a English speaking audience" (3). He was someone moreover who spoke to the struggles of Anglo-American Muslims. Al-Awlaki's prominence among American and British jihadists is hard to deny. Meleagrou-Hitchens notes that Awlaki's audiotaped lectures, influence and ideas can be traced to a third of all jihadist terrorism criminal cases in America between 2009 and 2016 (2).

Inspired by Awlaki's argument that the West is at war with Islam, his disciples have plotted and committed terrorist acts on American soil. Among his acolytes were Major Nidal Hassan who in 2009 killed fourteen of his fellow soldiers at a Fort Hood, Texas military base, British Nigerian Umar Farouk Abdulmutallab, the so-called underwear bomber, who failed to ignite AQAP designed explosives on a 2009 Christmas Day passenger jet flight bound for Detroit, Tamerlan, and Dzhokhar Tzarnaev who in 2013 set off pressure cooker bombs during the Boston Marathon that killed three people, and husband and wife jihadis Sayed Rizwan Farook and Tashfeen Malik who in 2015 killed fourteen people at an employee Christmas party event in San Bernardino, California before they were shot dead by police.

Meleagrou-Hitchens argues that al-Awlaki was a pivotal force in advocating *lone-actor* jihad in the West and that his influence endures beyond his 2011 death in an American air strike in Yemen. He moreover is one of the few Al Qaeda ideologues that the Islamic State has adopted and one can clearly see the influence of Awlaki's English language magazine *Inspire* in the development (both format and tone) of ISIS publications *Dabiq* and *Rumiyah* (274).

*Incitement* is not a biography but instead is a distillation of al-Awlaki's key political-theological ideas. A world-view that incited Westerners to engage in jihad in defense of a global Muslim community (*umma*) under siege from the cultural battering ram of Western secularism and a post 9/11 war on jihadi terror groups. Meleagrou-Hitchens examines al-Awlaki's life, ideas, and actions from the prism of social movement theory (SMT). Using this theoretical frame, he identifies al-Awlaki as a "movement entrepreneur" (8) who exploited American counter-terror measures against Al Qaeda in the post 9/11 era to frame the collective identity of Western Muslims and mobilize them to pursue jihadist violence. By framing the *war on terror* as a war against the globe's 1 billion Muslims, Awlaki hoped to fortify Muslim solidarity, enrage supporters, and direct their resentments into terrorist violence.

*Incitement* addresses three questions. These are: (1) *what forces* influenced Awlaki's transformation into a jihadist?; (2) *what methods* did he employ to the jihadist movement appealing to Western Muslims?; and (3) *how Awlaki crafted his message* to incite his followers to plot and commit terroristic acts (14).

Organizationally the first four chapters examine Awlaki's life in America, the United Kingdom, and Yemen, sketches his commitment to activist Salafism as a student and preacher in America, and his transformation into a Salafi jihadist ideologue who by 2010 achieved great prominence within Al Qaeda's Yemeni affiliate. Having sketched the core ideological foundations of Awlaki's jihadist ideas, Chapters Five through Seven trace his connections to Fort Hood shooter Nidal Hassan, underwear bomber Umar Farouk Abdulmutallab, and American convert Zachary Chesser who regularly participated in Awlaki chat rooms and social media forums. Its final chapters discuss Awlaki's impact on the

Islamic State's English language publications and the role of his ideas in the network's inspiration of and virtual guidance of *lone actor jihad*.

Though *Incitement* is sophisticated and complex work, its most salient observations are easily observable. First, Awlaki's appeal was facilitated by his ability as a storyteller who used narratives about the Prophet's life (*sira*) and made them relevant to the struggles of Western Muslims. Second, his role as an Islamic preacher in the U.S. and the U.K. added theological legitimacy to his later support for terrorist violence. Third, Awlaki's commitment to activist Salafism and his lack of rigorous theological training facilitated his evolution into an Al Qaeda jihadi ideologue. Fourth, Awlaki was a master manipulator who sought to exploit Western Muslim anxieties about living in a *hedonistic* West at war with Islam. Within this context, Awlaki railed against a *gray zone* of moderate Islam preached by some Western Muslims (246). Fifth, he was able to incite Nidal Hassan, Umar Farouk Abdulmutallab, and Zachary Chesser into committing terrorism by convincing them that jihadist violence was their pathway to spiritual redemption. Sixth, Awlaki's takfiri ideas and his emphasis on Islamic eschatology that Muslims were Divinely ordained to be the victorious group (*al-faifa al-mansura*) facilitated ISIS appropriation of his views.

*Incitement* makes a significant contribution to the study of al-Awlaki's prominence within the global jihadist movement. This is especially true of Meleagrou-Hitchens's argument about Awlaki's appeal to the Islamic State. Awlaki's emphasis on *al-wala wal-bara* (loyalty and renunciation) (244–246) led him to justify violence against Muslim *apostates* and his support for the caliphate's restoration fit well within ISIS ideology.

That said I do think that it would have been helpful to examine Awlaki's family life and some of the initial influences that shaped his path to Salafi activism. I am also not sure that the case study of Zachary Chesser who was stopped by the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) from joining Al Qaeda's Somali affiliate serves the book as well as perhaps an examination of the Boston Marathon bombers for the links between the Tzarnaev brothers and Awlaki's *Inspire* magazine are very clear.

Anwar al-Awlaki's influence on jihadi fighter mobilization is also featured in Daniel Byman's, *Road Warrior: Foreign Fighters in the Armies of Jihad*. The Georgetown University professor uses the Syrian jihad's unprecedented wave of foreign fighters (some 40,000) as a gateway to examine the history of foreign fighters in the global jihadist movement. (2) The book uses individual profiles of jihadists who fought in foreign conflict zones as a starting point to analyze foreign fighter involvement in jihadist insurgencies in Bosnia, Chechnya, Somalia, Iraq, and Syria.

The book aims to provide an "analytic history" of the contributions of foreign fighters to these various wars" (6). *Road Warriors* tie individual stories associated with each conflict to a broader narrative. Byman's focus here is on a "subset of Muslims" who embrace the Salafi jihadist world view that exhorts believers that they have a sacred duty to defend an endangered umma. (7) He argues that foreign fighters are a significant threat for they radicalize and train other jihadists, engage in attacks and are an accelerant to conflicts (8–9). Among the more notable jihadist fighters and conflicts he examines are Abdullah Azzam (Afghanistan), Abed al-Ramman al-Dawsary (Bosnia), Afghan veteran Khattab (Chechnya), Abu Musab al-Zarqawi and Abu Myyb al Masri (Iraq), Omar Hammami (Somalia), Anwar al-Awlaki (Yemen) and British Islamic State fighter (Mohammad Emwazi a.k.a. Jihadi John) in Syria.

*Road Warrior* arrives at some conclusions about foreign fighter impacts. These are: (1) foreign fighters failed badly in Bosnia, Chechnya, Somalia, and Iraq and had a marginal impact in Afghanistan; (2) the divergent interests of foreign fighters and local rebels foster divisions that weaken jihadist insurgencies; (3) the religious zealotry of foreign fighters and their extreme violence alienate the local population depriving the insurgency of needed support; (4) Saudi charities and extremist preachers played a critical role in the migration of foreign fighters in Afghanistan, Bosnia, Chechnya, and their spread of Saudi Wahhabi ideas have radicalized the local population; (5) foreign fighters have tactical value as suicide bombers, trainers, and recruiters and; (6) foreign fighter ideologues (Abdullah Azzam and Anwar al-Awlaki) and the doctrines they developed facilitated the radicalization and mobilization of foreign fighters.

Azzam's doctrine that jihad is a compulsory obligation when Muslim land and peoples are endangered by foreign powers remains a powerful gravitational force. His "Jihad and the Rifle Alone" (21–25) Byman argues played a pivotal role in the development of transnational jihadist insurgency and its foreign fighter migrations that have exacerbated wars across the Muslim world. Azzam's concept of jihad continues to provide one of the ideological foundations of Al Qaeda's global insurgent network. Byman rightly argues the al-Awlaki ideas continue to have resonance for many Anglo-American fighters when he discusses his impact on British fighters in Syria and their role in the development of virtually guided terror attacks targeting the West (231).

Discussing the Syrian civil war Byman argues that globalization, ease of travel, and the internet have facilitated foreign fighter migration to the conflict. He theorizes that the sectarian fault lines raging throughout the Mideast combined with the Islamic State's caliphate catalyzed the influx of tens of thousands of Sunni jihadists into the Syrian conflict. *Road Warriors* concludes its examination of foreign fighters by constructing a useful life cycle of their involvement in armed conflicts and the critical nodes that authorities could use to stop these fighters (266).

Though it draws sound conclusions about foreign jihadist impacts on armed conflicts, the book uneasily navigates between skeletal biographical sketches and generic analysis. The case histories are unevenly developed and chronologically disjointed. Having discussed the impact of British fighters in the Syrian civil war Byman shifts gears and analyzes the roles Amer Azizi and Anwar al-Awlaki had in facilitating pre-ISIS terrorism in Europe and the United States. In short, there are too many case histories and conflicts discussed, and as a result, the analysis at times lacks depth. That said it would be of use to a general reader and could serve as a nice text in an undergraduate course.

We conclude with Assaf Moghadam *Nexus of Global Jihad: Understanding Cooperation Among Terrorist Actors* which makes a significant contribution to the field of intra-terrorist cooperation. An analyst for an Israeli think tank Moghadam seeks to fill a theoretical void regarding the forces that lead terrorist actors (organized groups, entrepreneurs, and networks) to cooperate. His aim is to create a dynamic and holistic typology for understanding *how* and *why* terrorist actors cooperate (5). Underscoring the importance of this venture, Moghadam reminds us that the 9/11 attacks evolved over years of contact between a terrorist entrepreneur Khalid Sheik Mohammad and an organized group Al Qaeda (1).

*Nexus of Global Jihad* argues that terrorist cooperation has increased over time stimulated by jihadi ideology, the growth of armed conflicts across the Muslim world, and the spread of the internet (3). Moghadam posits these structural forces have fostered a diverse and fractured global jihadist movement comprised of organized groups, terrorist entrepreneurs, and loose informal networks.

All of whom Moghadam asserts have incentives to coordinate their activities to advance common ideological goals, enhance recruitment, boost logistical capacity, demonstrate strategic reach, and increase operational lethality. The scale and duration of cooperative relations between terrorist actors however varies significantly. He argues that *high end cooperation* (mergers and strategic partnerships) result from a convergence of ideological goals, personal trust between terrorist actors and mutual operational needs (107–111).

These factors *Nexus of Global Jihad* contends produce stable long-term alliances whose highest stage leads to organizational integration. Al Qaeda, for example, evolved from a merger of Bin Laden's and Aymen al-Zawahiri's terrorist networks. *Low end cooperation* in contrast involves short-term logistical and transactional exchanges between ideologically divergent groups, cells, and networks (111–118). Moghadam argues that *low end* cooperation between Al Qaeda and Hezbollah was shaped by philosophical differences and the lack of personal trust between these two groups. Such *low-end* cooperative relationships involve infrequent opportunistic contacts and are largely transitory.

Moghadam spends the first four chapters developing his typology and his final five chapters identifying pre and post 9/11 case studies that flow from his theoretical design. He argues that substate terrorist actors (entrepreneurs, groups, and networks) are driven to survive and thrive. Abetted by jihadi ideological resilience, armed conflicts in the Muslim world, and the explosion of social media, these actors connect at different nodes. Terrorist cooperation between entrepreneurs, cells, organizations, and groups is fluid, complex, and dynamic. Moghadam's typology attempts to capture these complex interactions.

His study argues that *networked cooperation* between cells, entrepreneurs, and organized groups has increased dramatically (55). These actors connect on multiple levels with the scale and duration of these connections shaped by ideological convergence, operational needs, opportunism, and personal trust. These factors moreover change overtime altering relations between terrorist actors.

Moghadam argues that the *European Sharia4* movement was a consequence of cooperation between British terrorist entrepreneur Anjem Choudary and Belgian militants (235–252). The proliferation of the Sharia4 movement across Europe with Belgian, Dutch, Italian, and German groups demonstrate the potency of *networked cooperation* that can have lethal consequences. Once formed Sharia4 Belgium became a major hub for the recruitment of hundreds of jihadi fighters for the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria (ISIS). It is one of many European networks instrumental in the mobilization of over 5000 European fighters for the Islamic State's caliphate including extremists that launched horrific terrorist operations in Paris and Brussels that between 2015 and 2016 killed over a hundred fifty people.

*Nexus of Global Jihad* provides important insights. First, the genesis of the 9/11 project was the consequence of planning done by two terrorist entrepreneurs Ramzi Yousef and Khalid Sheik Mohammad whose 1995 *Bojinka plot* sought to blow up American passenger jets flying between Asia and the United States. Second, the decade long relationship between Khalid Sheik Mohammad (KSM) and Al Qaeda culminated in KSM's merger into bin Laden's organization facilitating the 9/11 operation. Third, the roots of Al Qaeda and Hezbollah's *low-end* tactical and operational cooperation can be traced to Ayman al-Zawahiri's early outreach to the Lebanese Shi'ite guerilla movement. Fourth, Al Qaeda's in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP) is the network's most loyal affiliate whose *high-end cooperation* with its parent organization was facilitated by personal connections, ideological fidelity, and operational integration. Fifth, *low end cooperation* between Al Qaeda and Iran was driven exclusively by tactical and transactional motives, and since the 1990s relations between them have become strained and volatile. Sixth, *networked cooperation* between entrepreneurs, organized groups, and cells have increased over time fueled by the proliferation of social media forums and chat rooms. Seventh, the Islamic State has capitalized on loosely grouped European networks formed by terrorist entrepreneurs to launch deadly terror operations across the continent. Eighth, to better combat *networked cooperation* between terrorist actors counter-terrorist agencies must form their own transnational networks.

Though I would like to see more discussion about how ISIS developed its provinces through absorption of local jihadi groups in Egypt, Nigeria, and Afghanistan, the book insightfully blends its typology with good case illustrations. It would make for a good text in a graduate course dealing with terrorism. Collectively the books reviewed here suggest that the jihadist *forever war* shows little sign of dissipating and if anything may radicalize.

## Notes

1. Aaron Zelin, "A Year Since Baghuz: The Islamic State Neither Defeated or Resurging (Yet)," *The Washington Institute for Near East Policy* (15 March 2020), <https://www.washingtoninstitute.org/policy-analysis/view/a-year-since-baghuz-the-islamic-state-is-neither-defeated-nor-resurging-yet> (accessed March 25, 2020).
2. Mohammad Hafez, "The Curse of Cain: Why Fratricidal Jihadis Fail to Learn from Their Mistakes," *CTC Sentinel* 10, no. 10 (December 2017): 1–7. <https://ctc.usma.edu/the-curse-of-cain-why-fratricidal-jihadis-fail-to-learn-from-their-mistakes/>.
3. David C. Rapoport, "Four Waves of Modern Terrorism," in *Attacking Terrorism: Elements of a Grand Strategy*, edited by A. K. Cronin and J. M. Ludes (Washington, DC: Georgetown University Press, 2004), 46–73.

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