

Book Reviews

Jihadism transformed: Al-Qaeda and Islamic state's global battle of ideas.

Edited by Simon Staffell and Akil Awan, United Kingdom: C. Hurst & Co. 2016, Pp. 273, ISBN: 978-1-84904-647-3.

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Jihadism Transformed, edited by Simon Staffell, a diplomat, and an expert on extremist ideologies, and Akil Awan, an Associate Professor at the University of London, is a collection of essays by a group of eleven scholars who analyze the global competition between Al-Qaeda and the Islamic State in some areas of the world. This book is the product of a gathering of experts convened by the British Foreign and Commonwealth Office on 12 December 2014 to assess how jihadist narratives had evolved in recent years, in the context of turbulent events in the Middle East.

This book helps understand ISIS from the perspective of its regional affiliates. It is composed of eleven chapters of varying quality, mostly focusing on al-Qaeda and the Islamic state with the exception of Chapter 10 by Christopher Anzalone that analyses how Shiite militants have confronted the perceived Sunni jihadist threat. The authors explain emergence and development of the Islamic groups and the strategies they used to recruit members from the Muslim world especially in Egypt, Tunisia, Yemen, Afghanistan, and Nigeria as well as the West.

The book explains contemporary *jihadism* by referring to three milestones: The twenty-six years old who set fire to himself and triggered the Arab Spring, the death of Osama bin Ladin leaving al-Qaeda devoid of a charismatic leader, and the declaration of Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi as the Caliph of Islamic State in Syria and Iraq. Simon Staffell and Akil Awan point out that “these three events have, in their own ways, fundamentally transformed the jihadist movement. They have caused seismic shifts in practice, in narratives and in worldviews” (p. 2). In the introductory chapter, they provide an overview of the Arab Spring and the impact it had on al-Qaeda and the future Islamic State. Contrary to the expectation of the

death of Islamism, the failure of the Arab spring all over the Middle East and Africa resulted in the revitalization of *jihadism*.

The book also draws attention to the competition between al-Qaeda and IS in local and global contexts. The two groups, though involved in a battle against the West, have been fighting physically and ideologically against each other. In Chapter 2, Nelly Lahoud shows the divergence between the two and argues that IS divorced al-Qaeda because al-Qaeda was pursuing reconciliation as against jihad pursued in full force by IS. "Thus, if AQ's leaders wanted to show that they and their followers were willing to die for the cause, IS's leaders are keen to highlight that they want to kill for the cause" (p. 33). Lahoud contends that the Islamic State's violence is not "whimsical, random or crazed," but ISIS' actions are deliberate "abominable savagery" intended to terrorize. Elisabeth Kendall of Oxford University in her "Al-Qaeda and Islamic State in Yemen" (Ch. 6) gave insights into the contrasting narratives of al-Qaeda and the Islamic State in Yemen. According to her, al-Qaeda is well-rooted in the local environment, using poetry and similar local cultural materials to recruit members. They overran al-Makalla but refrained from instituting shari'ah. Instead, they compromised with local tradition in an attempt to consolidate tribal support. IS was quick to denounce this strategy and accused al-Qaeda of being theologically deviant. The IS, which aimed at obtaining territory and establishing a *shari'ah* state, is not successful in mobilizing the people and is trying to exploit the Sunni-Shiite conflict.

Simon Staffel in Chapter 4 focuses on Egypt, which he argues is crucial to understanding "transitions in Jihadist narratives." Egypt, to be noted, is the country where the Salafi Jihadi narrative originated. Staffel analyzes the rise of IS in Egypt by examining the narratives from the jihadist movement after January 25, 2011, the date when Egypt witnessed the emergence of the democratic movement. In Chapter 5, Jonathan Githens-Mazer explores why the narrative of violence resonates in Tunisian audiences and how violent actors justify their activities when more peaceful outlets exist in Tunisia. Elisabeth Kendall argues in Chapter 6 that AQAP has continued to solidify its prolific presence in Yemen even though the Islamic State has already penetrated Yemen. AQAP in Yemen had created a cultural jihadist narrative in Yemen that resonates while IS has not made much effort to propagandize the Yemeni people.

The book also attempts to find linkage between the “dawning of democracy” and the “potential to disrupt”. This comes out clearly in the third chapter by Holbrooke who argues that MENA uprisings showed that authoritarian regimes could be dismantled without jihad and that establishing democracy was possible. But al-Qaeda was opposed to democracy and its leader Ayman a-Zawahiri was unable to provide leadership to the youth which gave rise to IS. Thus, al-Zawahiri, who pointed to an aspirational future Caliphate as an end goal foundered, and IS rose successfully luring the militant youth by establishing an Islamic state and proving that it is realizable here and now. Akil Awan points out that “the establishment of IS’s so-called Caliphate has simply followed al-Qaeda’s narrative to its logical and inevitable conclusions, changing abstract utopian aspirations to tangible worldly realities. In the process, IS has resurrected the ailing jihadist narrative for a whole new generation” (199).

Similarly, in the Maghreb region of Northwest Africa, Valentina Bartolucci finds that al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb and IS have always been two different movements with two different ideologies. The comparison drawn by the author is poor and the material she relied upon is also questionable. In Nigeria, the Boko Haram allied itself with ISIS in March 2015 and Virginia Comolli traces this process in Chapter 8. In Chapter 9, Martha Turnbull looks at the evolution of al-Qaeda in Afghanistan while simultaneously experiencing growth in supporters of the Islamic State, thus inevitably decreasing the ideological distance between al-Qaeda and the Taliban. The last chapter by Editor Akil Awan tries to identify why Westerners are joining ISIS or why the narrative of ISIS resonates with Western young Muslims and Muslim converts.

In sum, *Jihadism Transformed* examines the changes in the jihadist narrative globally and its adaptation to the complex local environment in a time of upheaval. The book’s importance stems from the attention it draws to the differences in religious philosophy and goals of the two organizations, ISIS and al-Qaeda, involved in *jihad*. This aspect requires a larger volume and much in-depth analysis than what is provided. Though short, each chapter examines texts from both ISIS and al-Qaeda and provides a rich understudied comparison between ISIS and al-Qaeda. The book should be of value to those interested in the discourse on what the Westerners call Islamism.

Qur'anic guidance for good governance: A contemporary perspective. Edited by Abdullah al-Ahsan and Stephen B. Young, Palgrave Macmillan, 2017, Pp. XII + 227, ISBN: 978-3-319-57872-9.

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The term “good governance” is very popular and found in seminars, conferences, books, and also in the speeches of political leaders regardless of their legitimacy to assume into power. Thus good governance has become a buzzword. However, there is a serious lack of academic work on good governance in Islam. From that perspective, the edited book by Abdullah al-Ahsan and Stephen B. Young is definitely a welcome addition. This book provides a contemporary perspective, as the two editors claim, on studying religious principles of good governance. They contend that though the contemporary social science literature has marginalized religious ideas, a historic role of religion in the organization of societies cannot be neglected. This book encompasses the values and practices derived from the Qur'an that can contribute to governing economic, social, and political life.

The two editors in the introductory chapter lay emphasis on good governance as a crucial factor for the development of human civilization and society. They defined good governance by identifying five major characteristics: accountability, transparency, rule of law, participatory and responsive, equitable, inclusive, efficient, and effective. These principles of good governance have been used to analyze the political, social, economic, and family institutions in the nine chapters contributed by distinguished scholars.

Drawing lessons from history, religion and science, al-Ahsan has developed guidance for good governance and civilizational transformation in Chapter 2. Relying upon historical evidence, he shows that people were inspired by religious ideas that led to greater cooperation leading to the growth and rise of civilization. He believes that religion can play similar or greater role in the contemporary time of turmoil and moral decadence. He ends the chapter urging for new research to further unlock the potential of religious ideas in improving today's world.

Chapter 3 by N. Doran Hunter looks at four basic Qur'anic principles of good governance: *fitrah*, *amanah*, *adalah*, and a moral mind. Man, being a social and political creature (*fitrah*), possesses a moral sense. As a trustee (*amanah*), men are

bound to fulfill moral responsibilities to each other. In their individual and social lives, the activities and thoughts of men should not be devoid of justice (*adalah*). Man should share a moral mind while exhibiting personal and social obligations. In the words of Dr. Hunter, "... human beings are equipped with the necessary tools to govern societies with justice and equity."

Abdul Rashid Moten, in chapter 4, analyses the Islamic principles and values related to governance and illuminates a framework of good governance in the light of *al-Siyasah al-Shari'ah*. Then he discusses the issue of Islamic governance in the cases of Turkey and Malaysia. To him, Turkey represents a secular state while Malaysia, though not Islamic, is a non-secular state. He points out the role of governments of Turkey and Malaysia in the education, economic, social, and institutional development with the spirit of Islam. In his concluding remarks, he defines good governance as, "...proclaiming and establishing the supremacy and sovereignty of Allah and His laws, enforcement of those laws, establishing worship unto him... and enjoining righteous and moral conducts and prohibiting evil conducts, abomination, and all sorts of vices and immoralities...". He urges Muslims to follow the instructions of the Qur'an and the Sunnah for their material and spiritual development.

In Chapter 5, Dr. Young examines performance of American financial enterprises like Enron, Bear Stearns, and Lehman Brothers. He argues that these large institutions collapsed mainly as a result of the notorious failure of free market capitalism. He offers a kind of moral capitalism as a shield to protect finance and economy from such collapses. To this end, as he argues, the leaders of the enterprises should follow the Qur'anic principles of *Khilafah*, *amanah*, and *shura*, and depend on *ijtihad* to manage capitalist enterprise prudently. Economist Dr. Muhammad Arif Zakaullah, in Chapter 6, highlights the issue of economic governance from the political economy perspective. In the quest for maximizing profits, it is often seen that private business involves in damaging the environment through pollution and barely pay any attention to public or social interest. Hence, economic governance came to the fore for protecting the interests of society. The Islamic concept of *maslaha* or public interest guides the economic governance in the civilization of Islam. *Maslaha* demands promotion of good and prevention of bad from the society.

Dr. Zaleha Kamaruddin, in chapter 7, presents Qur'anic guidance as a mechanism for social transformation with special emphasis on family governance. The Islamic concept of trust (*amanah*) determines the individual's relationship with the family, society, State, and government and the humanity at large. Family, the smallest unit of society, must fulfill *amanah* with *adalah* (justice). *Shura*, consultation among family members, is another component of good family governance. Through *shura*, family members can cooperate with the man who is the head of the family so that he can fulfill the trust entrusted upon him.

Chapter 8, contributed by Dr. Syed Serajul Islam, is concerned with sustainable development in Islam and international law. He highlighted six Islamic concepts to understand sustainability. These are: *amanah* (trust); *khalifah* (stewardship); *adl* (justice); *mizan* (balance); *wassat* (middle path); and *rahmah* (mercy). He argues that environmental degradation is a threat to the sustainable development. It is not just a scientific problem; it is a moral inner crisis of the soul. He concludes, only following Qur'an and Prophetic traditions, men can recalibrate their relationship to the earth, its environment and all of Allah's creation. In chapter 9, Prof. al-Ahsan analyses the role of the OIC in conflict resolution in Muslim societies. He reviews PLO-Jordan conflict, Bangladesh-Pakistan conflict, and Iran-Iraq conflict, and highlights the "wrong" attempts by OIC in resolving these conflicts. He believes that Turkey and Malaysia, two leading members of OIC, should pursue a policy of empowering the OIC in addressing questions of conflict resolution and security based on Qur'anic principles and maintain freedom of expression in a transparent manner. In the concluding chapter 10, Professor Abdullah al-Ahsan and Dr. Stephen B. Young state that decades of mis-governance resulted in the lack of trust between the ruling elites and common people. Muslim youths have lost hope in OIC considering the passive role of OIC in resolving intra-Muslim conflicts as one of the major bankruptcies of contemporary Muslim society.

Through this book, the editors and the authors have succeeded, to a great extent, to convey the message of good governance from Qur'anic principles. All the papers have been written by leading Islamic scholars in a coherent and clear manner. However, it would have been better if the authors worked jointly as a team to write this book in two parts. First part would be the theoretical underpinning of good governance from both contemporary and Islamic

perspective. The second part would be for the empirical or case study of various Muslim and non-Muslim states in their successful implementation of good governance. This would take care of the repetitions of Islamic concepts like *tawhid*, *amanah*, *khilafah* and the like which are found in almost all the chapters. Nevertheless, it is very readable book with a great deal of information. It will surely serve the purpose of a good reference for all governments and specialists with an interest in establishing good governance.

Lastly, Palgrave Macmillan deserves thanks for printing the book with simple cover design and providing an index that helps a reader find his way around the book. They ought to have noticed that the book contains no preface and no acknowledgement. The high cost of the book is also a barrier to its wider circulation. The publisher should think of a low-cost edition to help those who are searching for ways to circumvent the high cost of useful books like the *Qur'anic Guidance for Good Governance*.