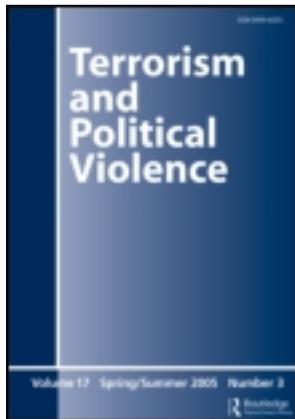


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A Review of: "Thomas Hegghammer. Jihad in Saudi Arabia: Violence and Pan-Islamism Since 1979."

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awakening was largely dictated from above, by the PLO leadership that also equipped its people with weapons to shoot Israelis. While the 1987–1993 Intifada was a popular uprising of people throwing stones in the main, the latter was an orchestrated terror campaign mobilized by the PLO leadership.

Conclusion

Israel's Wars is a concise, useful resource for students and other interested people who wish to understand the causes and conduct of some of Israel's wars from 1948 until now. Bregman's clear language and ability to focus on the most important factors leading to the wars makes the book accessible to the general public. Its index and bibliography are certainly valuable though the latter requires an update. Some of the book's chapters (1, 3, 4, 5, and 8) are recommended for any course on the Arab-Israeli Conflict. For the fourth edition, it is recommended to treat the 1956 War and the War of Attrition as comprehensively as the other wars are treated. The book requires a further edition as, unfortunately, Israel waged another limited war, this time on Gaza in December 2008-January 2009 (Operation Cast Lead). While Israel is justified in protecting its citizens from terror, the out-of-proportion attack on civilians was staggering and has subjected Israel to continued criticism. No doubt, Bregman has his own thoughts about this operation. I hope he will update this most important book for the benefit of more readers interested in the Arab-Israeli Conflict.

Thomas Hegghammer. *Jihad in Saudi Arabia: Violence and Pan-Islamism Since 1979*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2010. 302 pp., \$29.99 paperback. ISBN: 978-0-52173-236-9.

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Thomas Hegghammer explores pan-Islamism and political violence in Saudi Arabia with careful attention to the evolution of jihadism since the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan. One key question the author asks was why, despite many Saudis taking part in international struggles against non-Muslims in Afghanistan, Bosnia, Chechnya, and notably attacks on the United States, it was not until 2003 that Al-Qaeda started a campaign inside Saudi Arabia. He points out that Wahhabism, the conservative interpretation of Islam promoted in the kingdom, does not “dictate” Islamists' activism because it “is not a political doctrine, but a living tradition, interpreted and contested by successive generations of scholars” (p. 5). Instead, Hegghammer argues “that the jihadist movement in Saudi Arabia differs from its counterparts in the Arab republics in being driven primarily by extreme pan-Islamism and not socio-revolutionary ideology” (p. 1). Using rare publications, interviews, and government reports, he analyzes Saudi domestic politics and Al-Qaeda's history in examining the driving forces behind political violence and pan-Islamism.

In the past three decades, the concept of pan-Islamism became a powerful domestic political tool for the kingdom to demonstrate its religious credentials and legitimacy. After the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan and the rise of the Sahwa reform

movement, the Saudi government saw the “promotion of pan-Islamist causes as a useful way to deflect some of the internal domestic dissent” (p. 23). However one sector of the government that was initially “somewhat hesitant” about fighting for Afghanistan was the Saudi religious establishment (p. 28). After the end of the Afghan struggle, some religious scholars used pan-Islamism as a way to implicitly critique the government. In reaction, the government saw the Bosnian War (where Bosnian Muslims and Bosnian Serbs fought) as a way to “regain some pan-Islamist credibility” after the Gulf War saw U.S. soldiers stationed on the land of Mecca (p. 33). As Hegghammer explains, this set into motion events where the kingdom did not interfere with jihad funding and recruitment, enabling Al-Qaeda to develop its ideology and infrastructure.

The author analyzes the Saudi government’s tenuous role in encouraging and repressing organizations involved in promoting, raising money, and recruiting for international jihad. Hegghammer points out that “anti-Americanism and hostility to the Saudi regime were not major motivations, probably because the ideology driving most people was Abdallah Azzam’s classical jihadism” (p. 69). Following the Riyadh bombing in 1995, oppression from authorities increased and crackdowns on the veterans from foreign battles were widespread. This changed due to “liberal” reforms in 1999. Hegghammer explains, “the Saudi security establishment reverted to its ‘normal’ mode of relatively soft and non-intrusive policing of Islamists” (p. 77). In fact, the government was not interested in attacking revenue networks and recruitment for militant groups because “the state still relied on its image as a defender of Islamic causes for political legitimacy, and large parts of the Saudi population still viewed support for Muslim resistance groups as synonymous with solidarity and altruism” (p. 77). At the same time, sheikhs from the al-Shu’aybi school of thought raised several issues including the U.S. military in Saudi Arabia, the need to assist Muslims in Chechnya, and also focused on defending the Taliban. Hegghammer argues that “the strong support for Muslim fighters abroad and for the Taliban was part of an attempt to win domestic political terrain from the Sahwa” (p. 95). Indeed as the author shows, the Saudi government had a complicated role dictated by the domestic politics of Islam.

In the backdrop to domestic debates about foreign jihad and the protection of the Taliban, Al-Qaeda began to articulate a particular ideology, namely one of global jihad in contrast to classical jihadism. Unlike the earlier involvement in Afghanistan to force infidels out of Muslim land, some jihadists sought an anti-American jihad and now had the transnational networks to carry out the fight. Usama Bin Laden led an initially ideologically divided Al-Qaeda and by the late 1990s argued “the occupation of the Arabian Peninsula was not like the occupation of any other Muslim territory, because Saudi Arabia holds a unique position in the Islamic world” (p. 104). Hegghammer notes that some in the Al-Qaeda leadership saw a battle over American presence as “an important cause in its own right and as a means to topple the Saudi government” (p. 107). By May 1996, Bin Laden moved from Sudan to Afghanistan where Al-Qaeda’s training and infrastructure expanded. That same year, he “declared a jihad against the Americans on the Arabian Peninsula and began in earnest to build an Al-Qaeda network in the kingdom” (p. 113). Despite vague mention of “foiled attacks” unknown to the public, there were no reported attacks in Saudi Arabia from July 1996 until February 2000. Nonetheless, Hegghammer concludes that the territory in Afghanistan allowed Al-Qaeda to build “an elaborate training infrastructure in which recruits were socialised and indoctrinated into

the global jihadist ideology,” despite its controversial agenda among jihadists (p. 129).

The author explores “Al-Qaeda on the Arabian Peninsula” (QAP) and recruitment for Al-Qaeda to explain why Al-Qaeda failed to launch a successful campaign in the kingdom. In May 2003, Bin Laden launched the mujahidin in Saudi Arabia, which Hegghammer points out “returned to the original cause of his global jihadist project, namely the eviction of US forces from Saudi Arabia” (p. 161). Hegghammer argues that despite preparation for the anticipated assault from Americans after the September 11, 2001 attacks, “Al-Qaeda had misjudged not only the power, but also the nature of the US intervention” (p. 162). Bin Laden lost access to territory to operate in, and international efforts meant “Saudi Arabia’s usefulness as a source of money and recruits had decreased” (p. 163). Though the Internet gave the QAP some recruits as well as an important mouthpiece for writings and propaganda, suicide bombings in the kingdom were more controversial to the Islamists than in earlier jihads. The May 2003 attack in Saudi Arabia was “followed by a seemingly endless series of shoot-outs and attacks” that by late 2006 had “petered out” (p. 199). This was due to several changes in the Saudi government, including “a total overhaul of the Saudi security establishment” and ideological differences between the classical jihadists and global jihadists that hurt recruitment (pp. 217, 224). In the end, Hegghammer concludes, “the QAP experiment was a disaster for Al-Qaeda” because it “destroyed” its fundraising, recruitment, and divided potential supporters over ideology (p. 226).

Jihad in Saudi Arabia contains several important analyses and has many new revelations for scholarship in Saudi politics, international terrorism, and political Islam. Hegghammer argues the reason for little militant activity in Saudi Arabia before May 2003 was that the “classical jihadists did not have the intention and the global jihadists did not have the capability” (p. 229). He argues that Saudi jihadism is primarily pan-Islamist, but it also “has had a comparatively strong classical jihadist movement since the mid-1980s” (p. 230). The historical context for this was explained with a Wahhabi imperative that “encourages believers to actively distance themselves from non-Muslims and their world” (p. 231). With little tourism to the kingdom, he notes, “of the almost 800 Saudi militants studied in this book, only a handful ever met a Westerner” (p. 231). He points out that the key to dealing with threats like Al-Qaeda is in “addressing the symbols of Muslim suffering” which should have more urgency than “political and economic reform in the Arab world” (p. 234). Yet, one area that could have been explored would be the funding from and ties to Western Europe that Saudi, and other expatriates had reportedly been involved with. This would have expanded analysis of the debates between the global and classical jihadists, and shed light on the transnational aspect of jihadists.

Camille Tawil. *Brothers in Arms: The Story of al-Qa’ida and the Arab Jihadists*. Trans. Robin Bray. London: Saqi, 2010. 208 pp., \$18.95 paperback. ISBN: 978-0-86356-480-2.

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