

Andreas Armborst

Jihadi Violence

A study of al-Qaeda's media

Schriftenreihe des Max-Planck-Instituts für
ausländisches und internationales Strafrecht

Kriminologische Forschungsberichte

Herausgegeben von Hans-Jörg Albrecht
und Günther Kaiser

Band K 159



Max-Planck-Institut für ausländisches
und internationales Strafrecht

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Duncker & Humblot • Berlin

Bibliografische Information der Deutschen Nationalbibliothek

Die Deutsche Nationalbibliothek verzeichnet diese Publikation in der Deutschen Nationalbibliografie; detaillierte bibliografische Daten sind im Internet über <http://dnb.d-nb.de> abrufbar.

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c/o Max-Planck-Institut für ausländisches und internationales Strafrecht
Günterstalstraße 73, 79100 Freiburg i.Br.

<http://www.mpicc.de>

Vertrieb in Gemeinschaft mit Duncker & Humblot GmbH, Berlin

<http://www.duncker-humblot.de>

Umschlagphoto: dpa Picture - Alliance GmbH

Druck: Stückle Druck und Verlag, Stückle-Straße 1, 77955 Ettenheim

Printed in Germany

ISSN 1861-5937

ISBN 978-3-86113-119-9 (Max-Planck-Institut)

ISBN 978-3-428-14049-7 (Duncker & Humblot)

Gedruckt auf alterungsbeständigem (säurefreiem) Papier
entsprechend ISO 9706

Foreword

Many speculations revolve around the goals and motivations of jihadi militancy. *Andreas Armbrorst's* study reveals the political, social, and theological reasons for violence as they are expressed in the media of al-Qaeda. His empirical analysis of video statements, communiqués, and claims of responsibility points to important differences between jihadi militant doctrines as stated in the ideology of al-Qaeda in the frontier region of Afghanistan and Pakistan, and their implementation on the ground by jihadist groups in Iraq during the 2006-2008 civil war. The jihadi ideology is evidently relevant for jihadi insurgents to signify their action, but there are also examples of their disregard for it when political and strategic imperatives make it difficult for them to adhere to ideological restraints. However, the principal rationale of jihadi violence is the fact that religious fanaticism often outweighs political opportunism and pragmatism. It appears, that jihadists rather chose to fail strategically than to change in their ideology. With this book, the author provides an insightful and comprehensive explanation of the logic of jihadi violence. This logic is deeply imbedded in a comprehensive worldview that al-Qaeda proliferates through its media; a worldview that blends religious, political and journalistic aspects into a militant ideology. The reader of this book will learn about the main differences between political Islam of the Muslim Brotherhood and jihadi fundamentalism of al-Qaeda. What both have in common is that they appeal to the authority of Salafism, though to different degrees and with different accentuation. This triad – Islamism, Jihadism and Salafism – will morph and alter in reaction to the current political upheavals in the Middle East. As such, *Andreas Armbrorst's* book provides an excellent starting point to study the socio-religious developments in Sunni Arab countries against the backdrop of the “Arab Awakening.”

Prof. Dr. Dr. h.c. *Hans-Jörg Albrecht*

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Foreign and International Criminal Law
Freiburg im Breisgau

Preface

Science explains what is happening around us the whole time.
So does *religion*, but science is better
because it comes up with more understandable excuses when it is wrong.

(Terry Pratchett, *Wings*)

I wrote this book within the International Max Planck Research School on Retaliation, Mediation and Punishment (IMPRS REMEP) at the Max Planck Institute for Foreign and International Criminal Law in Freiburg i.Br. I simply could not have written this book with all due rigor and enthusiasm without the excellent conditions this program provides – namely the research facilities, seminars, workshops, supervision, funding, and a marvelous team of international and interdisciplinary doctoral students. I am particularly grateful for the support I received from my supervisors in Freiburg: Prof. Dr. Dr. h.c. *Hans-Jörg Albrecht*, Prof. Dr. *Baldo Blinkert*, Priv. Doz. Dr. *Rita Haverkamp*, and from the coordinator of the research school Dr. *Carolin Hillemanns*. Prof. Dr. Dr. h.c. mult. *Ulrich Sieber* gave me instructive advice in the early phase of the project.

The study benefits tremendously from the close cooperation with the Max Planck Institute for Social Anthropology, which is one of the REMEP partner institutions. On several occasions, such as the annual winter schools, I discussed this study at different stages with Dr. *Bertram Turner*, Prof. Dr. *Günther Schlee*, and Prof. Dr. *Franz* and *Keebet von Benda-Beckmann*. Their expertise in Islamic culture kept my topic in perspective.

Katrin Zippel, *Carolijn Terwindt*, *Csaba Gyoery*, and *Chris Murphy* gave me valuable feedback on the manuscript of the book and thereby improved its readability and intelligibility.

I dedicate this work to my parents *Dagmar* and *Jürgen Armborst*, who supported me along the way.

Freiburg i.Br., August 2013

Andreas Armborst

Contents

Foreword	V
Preface.....	VII
Contents	IX
List of Figures	XI
List of Tables	XI
List of Abbreviations.....	XII
1. Introduction: Aim and outline of the study	1
A Models, concepts, and theories	7
2. Modeling terrorism and political violence.....	7
2.1 Three criminological anomalies of terrorism.....	9
2.2 Challenges for impartial research on crime and terrorism.....	12
2.3 Terrorism: Political violence or political label?	16
2.3.1 Terrorism as political discretion.....	17
2.3.2 Terrorism as political violence	18
2.3.3 The continuum of political violence.....	21
2.4 Summary.....	25
3. Modeling jihadism.....	29
3.1 Islamic activism.....	30
3.1.1 Islamism/political Islam	33
3.1.2 Islamic nationalism.....	35
3.1.3 Islamic fundamentalism/Salafism	37
3.2 Jihad in the book: The dogmatic dimension of jihadism	42
3.2.1 Origins of the jihad-dogma.....	43
3.2.2 Contentious aspects of jihad.....	44
3.3 Jihad in action: The military history of jihad.....	47
3.4 Summary.....	51
B Empirical part	53
4. Methodology	53
4.1 Research in the social sciences	53
4.2 Research methods for analyzing jihadi media	55
4.2.1 Discourse analysis	57
4.2.2 Frame analysis.....	59
4.2.3 Content analysis	62
4.3 Research design and method of the study.....	64
4.3.1 Sampling and data acquisition.....	65
4.3.2 Coding procedure	68

4.3.3	Data analysis.....	69
4.3.4	Automated concept mapping using Leximancer	71
5.	The ideology of jihadism	75
6.	Mapping AQ's ideology: Frames, narratives, themes, and issues in jihadi media	79
6.1	The socio-political analysis of jihadism	82
6.1.1	Apostasy	84
6.1.1.1	Grievances	85
6.1.1.2	Religious supremacy	88
6.1.1.3	Types of apostasy.....	93
6.1.1.4	Conclusions and thematic links	99
6.1.2	Global conflict.....	103
6.1.2.1	Grievances	104
6.1.2.2	Points of conflict.....	106
6.1.2.3	War of ideas	108
6.1.2.4	Conclusions and thematic links	112
6.1.3	Rejection of secular governance.....	113
6.1.3.1	Theological rejection of democracy.....	114
6.1.3.2	Political-strategic rejections of democracy.....	116
6.1.3.3	General grievances about secular governance	118
6.1.3.4	Conclusions and thematic links	122
6.2	The goals of AQ	123
6.2.1	Truce conditions.....	123
6.2.2	Programmatic goals.....	125
6.2.3	Conclusions and thematic links	126
6.3	The means: Doctrines and strategies of jihad	129
6.3.1	Instrumentality of force	130
6.3.1.1	Strategic instrumentality	130
6.3.1.2	Religious instrumentality.....	134
6.3.1.3	Conclusions and thematic links	137
6.3.2	Justifications for violence.....	142
6.3.2.1	Political justifications.....	142
6.3.2.2	Theological justifications.....	145
6.3.2.3	Conclusions and thematic links	152
6.3.3	Appeals and advice.....	153
7.	Jihadism in Iraq.....	159
7.1	The conflict in Iraq	159
7.1.1	External factors of the conflict	162
7.1.1.1	Iran	162
7.1.1.2	Jihadi ideology	164
7.2	Jihadi ideology in action: Claims of responsibility of AQI and AAS	171
7.2.1	Assassinations	175
7.2.2	Abductions and hostage taking.....	176
7.2.3	Battles and military campaigns	178
7.2.4	Commando operations and hit and run tactics	180
7.3	Ideological alignment of AQ central and AAS/AQI.....	182
7.3.1	Religious aspects of jihadi violence	184
7.3.2	Strategic aspects of jihadi violence	186

7.3.3 Ideological transfer and lessons learned.....	191
7.4 Conclusion.....	193
8. Summary, conclusions, and outlook.....	195
Bibliography.....	203
Annex.....	217
1. Automated concept mapping using Leximancer.....	217
2. Sample transcript: <i>AJZ</i> July 27, 2006.....	225
3. Text segments from AQ statements.....	227
4. Text segments from the claims of responsibility of AAS and AQI.....	259
5. Humor, sarcasm, and irony in jihadi media.....	265

List of Figures

Figure 1: Thirteen definitional features of Jihadism	50
Figure 2: Sampling stages and sources for AQ statements.....	68
Figure 3: Proportion of thematic categories in relation to total word count	77
Figure 4: Frames, narratives, themes and issues in AQ's ideology	81
Figure 5: The Iraqi insurgency 2003-2009.....	164
Figure 6: A claim of responsibility from AAS.....	173
Figure 7: Computer and user generated seed word list.....	221
Figure 8: Leximancer concept map for 31 AQ statements.....	224

List of Tables

Table 1: Similarities in the criminological study of terrorism vs. common crime	13
Table 2: Continuum of political violence.....	23
Table 3: Five forms of Sunni Islamic activism.....	32
Table 4: Text intersection of two themes in the apostasy narrative.....	92
Table 5: Theme relations matrix.....	100
Table 6: Grievances as political justifications for violence.....	144