

*Andreas Armborst*

## **Jihadi Violence**

A study of al-Qaeda's media

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## Kriminologische Forschungsberichte

Herausgegeben von Hans-Jörg Albrecht  
und Günther Kaiser

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## Foreword

Many speculations revolve around the goals and motivations of jihadi militancy. *Andreas Armborst'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 Armborst'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*

Director of the Max Planck Institute for  
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*

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