

practical work — the need for a ripe context, public buy-in, and the possible failures.

***Islamic Radicalism and Global Jihad.* By Devin R. Springer, James L. Regens and David N. Edger. Washington, DC: Georgetown University Press, 2009. xvi + 320 pp. \$ 49.95 cloth, \$ 26.95 paper**

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In the years since the Al-Qa'ida terrorist attacks on the United States and the war on terror undertaken by the George W. Bush administration, the literature about Islamic radicalism and terrorism has grown exponentially, although with mixed results and quality. On the one hand, we find works aiming at reconstructing the history and the evolution of Al-Qa'ida (or, more generally, of Islamic fundamentalism), and the path which led to the terrorist escalation of the early 2000s. On the other hand, there are essays with a narrower focus, portraying the situation in a specific moment or country, or dealing with particular issues related to the international jihad and the struggle against it.

Islamic Radicalism and Global Jihad undoubtedly belongs in the first category, since it tries to provide a detailed analysis of Al-Qa'ida and the global jihad movement, from its philosophical and ideological premises to its organizational, strategic, and tactical features (although with some more detailed insights about recent developments and the current situation in Iraq). Clearly, the authors (a researcher in bio-security working on jihadist media; a professor of occupational and environmental health, psychiatry and behavioral sciences; and a former CIA employee now working as an academic) did not simply want to work out a descriptive book, but tried to provide American authorities and the scholarly community with a blueprint that could prove helpful to better understand the phenomenon of jihadism and counter it more effectively.

After an introduction devoted to the history and the evolution of the international jihadist movement, the first chapter of the book deals with the philosophical foundations of this phenomenon. The main contexts (Palestine, Iran, Algeria, Egypt, etc.) in which the jihadist movement

developed are thus synthetically described, as well as the ideologies of its “intellectual fathers,” from medieval and modern thinkers such as Ibn-Taymiyyah and Rashid Rida, to contemporary terrorist leaders such as Abd-al-Salam al-Farag and Ayman al-Zawahiri.

The second chapter outlines the “strategic vision” of the movement through the analysis of several strands of jihadist thought, with a particular attention for the confrontation between the “far enemy” strategy (supported by Al-Qa’ida leaders such as al-Zawahiri), which is more international in scope and focused on the struggle against the West and Israel, and the “near enemy” one (proposed by several religious nationalist groups) focused on the struggle against secular governments within Islamic countries.

The more detailed portion of the book appears later, as the authors devote themselves to the organizational dynamics of jihad. After reviewing the literature on terrorist networks, the authors conclude that Al-Qa’ida evolved from a hierarchical model of organization to a decentralized one. This evolution was marked off by the emergence of several branches that are almost independent from each other (functionally, geographically, and financially) but inspired by the same global jihad ideology, spread mainly over the Internet. This subject is further developed in the fourth chapter of the book, focused on recruitment and training, in which the main steps of the “recruitment cycle” (from spotting and assessing a prospective militant to full membership in a jihadist group) are outlined, as well as the main motivations for radicalization. Training models (from the large-scale training camps active in pre-war Afghanistan to clandestine training carried out in hostile contexts) also are discussed.

The next portion of the book is focused on the various types of tactical operations (mass-casualty operations, abductions and executions, beheadings, economic targeting operations), with an accompanying analysis of some “hot” issues such as debates within the jihadist networks about avoiding civilian casualties, using weapons of mass destruction, and carrying out martyrdom operations.

The work concludes with a chapter outlining four different patterns of jihadist militant (religious fundamentalist, geopolitical strategist, national insurgent, and hard-core terrorist) organizations, which, according to the authors, have to be dealt with in different ways; and a conclusion including some recommendations to Western authorities grappling with the specter of Islamic terrorism. These recommendations focus especially on the need to understand both the jihadists’ vulnerabilities and our own, and to more effectively use national security resources.

As a whole, the book undoubtedly is a precious resource of knowledge, both for academics and officials dealing with international terrorism. It is particularly effective in avoiding both the broad and scarcely operable descriptions that characterize too many works in this area of scholarship and the journalistic features of many others, carrying out a rigorous and detailed, but never trivial, analysis of the jihadist phenomenon. The only exception is probably the introductory chapter, in which the short paragraphs dealing with Islamist homelands and thinkers often prove too synthetic and sketchy.

One necessary criticism of the book, however, is its apparent over-reliance on sources written almost exclusively in English. In the bibliography of the book I counted only three titles in Arabic; the language of the Internet sources used is not always specified, but several seem to be English translations. On the whole, though, this book constitutes an excellent high-level handbook, and I recommend it wholeheartedly.

***The Religious Left and Church-State Relations.* By Steven H. Shiffrin. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2009. xi + 241 pp. \$35.00, cloth**

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This is a confident, clearly argued, and fascinating book. It is also breathtakingly efficient: thrifty readers can get an outrageous return on a fourteen-page investment (Introduction, Overview of Part I, and Conclusion). Even misers will emerge the richer from reading all 136 pages (the remaining 100+ pages are endnotes). What Shiffrin promises — and very nearly delivers — are decisive reasons for thinking that “the religious Left’s position on church-state relations is superior to and more politically attractive than that of the religious Right or the secular Left” (2). He contends that the United States Constitution’s religion clauses have pluralistic foundations, that the Supreme Court has oversimplified these values by stressing religious equality, that tight relations between church and state are inimical to religion, that the fulcrum of church-state relations will shift from judicial to electoral contests, and that the Religious Left can make winning public