

range from discussions of Nasserism and “de-Nasserization” to in-depth discussions of Israeli policy debates leading up to the 1967 Arab-Israeli war and insider accounts of negotiations in 1970 between World Jewish Congress president Nahum Goldmann and Nasser for an Arab-Israeli peace agreement. In the latter, Rouleau was recognized “as an intermediary between Goldmann and Cairo” (p. 193). Chapter 16 provides a concentrated analysis of the policy visions of Goldmann and his efforts to bring about an end to the conflict.

Among the many conversations and interviews described in this book, some of the most interesting are Rouleau’s descriptions of founding Israeli prime minister David Ben-Gurion’s religiously agnostic Zionism (Chapter 3) and his positive character sketch of Israeli defense minister Moshe Dayan, of whose policies he was sharply critical (Chapter 7). As might be expected, the picture of right-wing Israeli prime minister Menachem Begin is more negative, calling him “an ultranationalist fanatic” (p. 263). Rouleau’s comparisons of Begin and Egyptian president Anwar al-Sadat add a personalized dimension to the history of the Egyptian-Israeli negotiations leading to the Camp David Accords in 1978 (Chapter 13). Yasir ‘Arafat is the subject of Chapter 8, based on many encounters between the two men, showing how it was possible for ‘Arafat to survive as the major leader of the Palestinian movement. Rouleau’s descriptions of his conversations with King Husayn of Jordan provide a personalized portrait of the King as well as insights into Israeli-Jordanian negotiations at the time of the suppression of the Palestine Liberation Organization in Jordan in 1970 (Chapter 10). The diversity of this coverage reflects the nature of the book as a collection of studies and accounts rather than an integrated study of politics and personalities.

The practice of journalism has been significantly changed by the development of the Internet and social media. The stories and analyses presented by Rouleau provide an interesting reminder of the importance of individual journalists in the days of pre-Internet journalism. In contrast to the 21st century context of global, electronically

accessible news (and faux news), Rouleau worked in a world where the journalist was a primary medium for informing the public of events and also a major resource for leaders who wanted to present a message quickly. One might ask, for example, if the “savvy political calculations” by Mohamed Hassanein Heikal, editor of *al-Ahram* and confidant of Nasser, that led to inviting Rouleau to interview Nasser in 1963 (p. 8), would have led to a carefully worded tweet rather than an interview, if that communications resource had been available. Nasser was adept at presenting his message in the most effectively available media, and it is highly probable that he would have utilized the Internet as effectively as he used radio and television, as seen in the success of *Sawt al-‘Arab* radio at the time. Nasser’s relationship with Rouleau reflected his awareness of the dynamics of news media in the 1960s.

Rouleau’s presentation and analysis of the news aroused controversy. This book is a good reminder of those controversies. Those people who found Rouleau’s writings helpful and on target will find this book both interesting and useful. However, those people who were outraged by Rouleau’s coverage will continue to be upset by his views as presented in the current volume. In this framework, this book is an important resource for understanding the political dynamics and personalities of the time.

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MODERN HISTORY AND POLITICS

Jihadism Constrained: The Limits of Transnational Jihadism and What It Means for Counterterrorism, by Barak Mendelsohn. Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2019. 176 pages. \$34.

Reviewed by Thomas Hegghammer

How worried should we be about transnational militant Islamism? Over the past two decades perceptions of the threat posed by groups such as al-Qa‘ida and the

Islamic State organization have fluctuated considerably. Largely ignored in the 1990s, al-Qa'ida and its affiliates came to be seen as a defining international security threat in the half-decade after the attacks of September 11, 2001. Then came a period of optimism in the war on terrorism, culminating in the killing of Usama Bin Ladin and the Arab Spring revolutions in 2011, which many interpreted as the death knell of jihadism. But the movement only bounced back stronger, spearheaded by the Islamic State and its thousands of foreign fighters. Now that the Islamic State "caliphate" in Iraq and Syria has been dismantled and jihadi terrorism levels are decreasing, what can we expect and what should we do? Stay calm, Barak Mendelsohn persuasively argues in this new book. The ideology and political strategy of the transnational jihadi movement is simply not suited to produce a force capable of challenging the international order.

Mendelsohn is an international relations scholar who has made a mark as perhaps the leading thinker on the systemic implications of transnational jihadism. His last book, *The al-Qaeda Franchise* (Oxford University Press, 2016), examined the organizational architecture of the al-Qa'ida phenomenon, identifying patterns that more specialized jihadism researchers had missed. *Jihadism Constrained* continues in this vein — that of bridging the two fields of international relations and jihadism studies. It also approaches the topic from an unusual angle: rather than ask how the movement became so big, it asks why it did not grow bigger.

The core argument is that the transnational jihadi movement is constrained by three interrelated factors: the power of local identities, the lack of a viable strategic plan, and the movement's proclivity toward infighting. These three mechanisms, he argues, have historically combined to keep the movement fragmented and to prevent the emergence of a transnational organization cohesive and powerful enough to challenge the international system. Contrary to its lofty rhetoric about pan-Islamic unity, the jihadi movement is so fragmented that

it is smaller than the sum of its parts, and governments should therefore be careful not to overstate the threat.

The book is organized in five chapters: one for each of the three constraining mechanisms, bracketed by a historical background chapter and an implications chapter. The first chapter traces the emergence of transnational jihadism from the 1980 to the present day, emphasizing the formative role of the 1980s war in Afghanistan, the 9/11 attacks, the 2003 invasion of Iraq, and the Arab revolutions of 2011. Chapter Two looks at national and tribal identities as obstacles to transnational mobilization. It illustrates the many difficulties that purely transnational groups such as al-Qa'ida Central have had in getting other jihadi groups to abandon their local agendas and allegiances. It describes some of the strategies adopted to overcome the problem, such as propaganda denigrating the nation-state and emphasizing religion as the sole relevant identity marker. It also shows that the jihadi relationship with tribes has been more complex and ambiguous, in part because tribes can be allies in the struggle against the nation-state. Chapter Three examines the weaknesses in jihadi grand strategy. Although not short on master plans, jihadis never solved what Mendelsohn calls the "aggregation problem," that of integrating local successes into positive a systemic outcome. They clung to the same lofty objectives, all the while adopting organizational models, such as franchising, which drew them into the localization trap. The problem was compounded by their religiosity, which fueled unrealistic expectations of divine assistance.

In Chapter Four, Mendelsohn walks us through the myriad conflicts and fissures that have divided the movement: strategic, geographical, interpersonal, theological, and organizational. Jihadis are a particularly quarrelsome bunch, partly because their transnational ambitions run into the problem of preference divergence, and partly because their religious dogma, notably the idea of *takfir* (excommunication), often elevate minor disagreements into existential ones. The final chapter, titled "The Way

Forward,” looks at how the three constraining factors can be exploited for counterterrorism. It proposes three broad approaches: strengthen national and subnational identities, contain local jihadi groups and insurgencies, and deepen existing cleavages within the jihadi movement. The fight should be waged by the immediately concerned nation states, with Western powers limiting their involvement to helping prevent cross-border expansions.

Jihadism Constrained is a very valuable summary of the main strategic lessons from two decades of war on terrorism. It shows us the forest where many studies have been concerned with trees (if not branches and leaves). Short and accessible, it is an excellent primer for students and policy-makers entering the counterterrorism field. A grounded view of the threat and its weak points is crucial, as governments are notoriously prone to overreacting to terrorism. The book’s perhaps main weakness is that the argument is underspecified. It tells us only why the movement has become a major threat, not how it fluctuates on the spectrum below the threshold of major geopolitical success. The policy prescriptions are similarly broad and uncontroversial; for example, limiting US military interventions to precision strikes against select groups has arguably been US policy since the late years of the presidency of George W. Bush. This, of course, is a function of the book’s concise format but leaves this reviewer hoping that Mendelsohn will elaborate on his ideas in future works.

While there is arguably consensus that jihadism is not an existential threat and that Iraq-style invasions are counterproductive, policy-makers today face more specific problem sets — such as calibration, timing, and composition of light counterterrorism instruments — to which the academic literature still has few answers.

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US Democracy Promotion in the Arab World: Beyond Interests vs. Ideals, by Mieczysław P. Boduszyński. Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2019. 240 pages. \$85.

Reviewed by Gregory Aftandilian

With the possible exception of Tunisia, the countries that experienced the so-called Arab Spring have either resorted to authoritarianism or have gone through internal strife and destabilizing civil wars. The question that many scholars have been asking for several years now is whether the United States could have done more to aid the democratic forces in these countries or could have used the political and economic levers at its disposal to move these countries in a democratic direction.

Mieczysław Boduszyński tries to tackle these issues by explaining what these levers were and why they were used to some extent by former president Barack Obama (though not nearly enough as democracy advocates had hoped) and almost not at all by President Donald Trump, who has indulged many authoritarian leaders since he first came to office. Boduszyński, a former State Department official who was a participant in the Middle East policy process during the Arab Spring, does a commendable job not only in integrating the memoirs of former US officials to tell a detailed narrative about these events and the US response but personally interviewing many officials as well as democracy advocates in both the US and in several Arab countries.

The value of the book is the inside look into the intricate policy process that many scholars tend to neglect. US policy-makers often try to balance so-called strategic interests with American ideals. More often than not the former trumps the latter, and that was certainly true of the US response to the Arab Spring — though Boduszyński shows how complex the balancing act really was.

Although he discusses the bureaucratic politics model that students of US foreign policy are familiar with, Boduszyński also emphasizes the role of the individual who sometimes transcends the institutions they