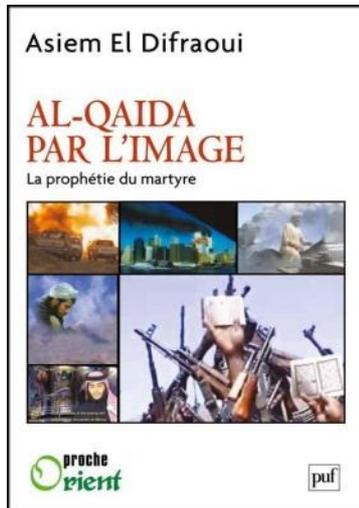


The Jihad of Images

Al-Qaeda's prophecy of martyrdom

Asiem EL DIFRAOUI



The book is the first in-depth analysis of what is certainly the most important propaganda phenomenon of the beginning of the 21st century. Following *Al Qaeda in Its Own Words* by Gilles Kepel and Jean Pierre Milelli, *The Jihad of Images* analyses the unique visual communication strategy of contemporary Jihadism, its symbolism, and the dangerous mythology of martyrdom it has created. A salvation myth that has infected young Muslims all around the world - including the West.

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THE AUTHOR

Asiem El Difraoui is a political scientist and an award winning documentary filmmaker and producer. He holds a Ph.D and an M. Phil from Sciences Po. in Paris and a BA Honours in Politics and Economics from the University of London. The author is currently a Senior Fellow at the Institute of Media and Communications Policy in Berlin. He previously worked in the Middle East Department of Germany's top think tank, the German Institute for International and Security Affairs. El Difraoui has won a number of prestigious international awards for political documentaries and reportages: among them the New York Film and Television Festival, the Al Jazeera Documentary Award, the "Creative Excellency Award" from the U.S. International Film & Video Festival and as a co-producer of "Tahrir 2011", a UNESCO award at the Mostra in Venice. He has published widely on the political role of new media in the "Arab Spring".

THE BOOK

Without the creation of a highly complex propaganda strategy with videos as its most efficient weapons, Al-Qaeda and its Jihadi allies might already have ceased to exist. *The Jihad of Images* not only retraces the history of Al-Qaeda's propaganda from its beginnings and the war against the Soviets in Afghanistan - thus offering a unique insight into the history of the Jihadi movement - it also analyses in detail the symbolism of Al-Qaeda's revolutionary visual language in Islamic terms and the different genres of propaganda videos. Most importantly, the author illustrates that through its video production, Al-Qaeda hijacks the mythology of Islam and its symbols to create its own eschatological myth of martyrdom, presented as the sole path to salvation. This myth includes a cosmology in which leaders such as Osama bin Laden become prophets in Max Weber's sense of the word, and the so-called "martyrs", saints. In this way, Al-Qaeda qualifies as a sect. Yet despite its failure to mobilise the Muslim masses, Al-Qaeda, through its videos, has nevertheless succeeded in creating a culture of Jihad that is recognized by a considerable number of Muslims today and could inspire future generations. The research for this book was not only based on the screening of hundreds of Jihadi films but also on impressive field work including rare interviews with: leading Jihadi propagandists, Jihadi sympathisers, captives of jihadi groups as well as those engaged in the fight against global Jihad and its propaganda - from Afghanistan and Iraq to the United Kingdom and the United States.



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