

## Book Review: German Jihad: On the Internationalization of Islamist Terrorism

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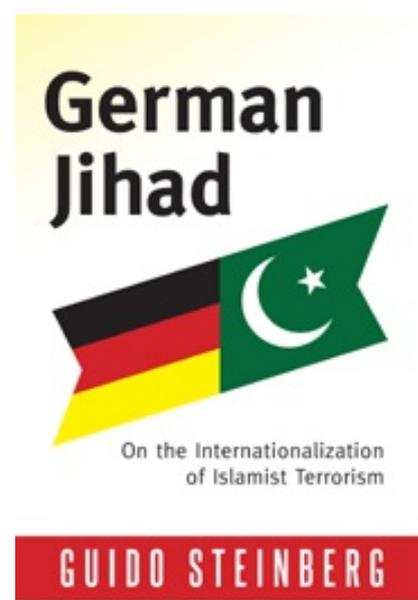
**Guido Steinberg** argues that since 2007, the German jihadist scene has become Europe's most dynamic, characterized by an extreme anti-Americanism, impressive international networks, and spectacularly effective propaganda. In **German Jihad**, Steinberg interprets the expanding German scene as part of a greater internationalization of jihadist ideology and strategy, swelling the movement's membership since 9/11. **Samaya Borom** has nothing but praise for this work at the forefront of terrorism studies.



**German Jihad: On the Internationalization of Islamist Terrorism.**  
**Guido Steinberg. Columbia University Press. July 2013.**

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An astonishing three out of four pilots responsible for the 9/11 attacks came from a terror cell in Hamburg, Germany. Though jihadists were active in Europe before 2001, relatively little research had occurred on the movement as it was perceived to have a domestic socio-political agenda, rather than a global agenda. The attacks on the United States shifted the perception of Al-Qaeda as an exclusively Arab organisation concerned with domestic struggles to one that was seen as transnational with a global outlook. It soon became apparent that cells were working within Europe, and since 2007 Germany is considered to be one of the hotspots of the jihadist movement, resulting in serious domestic and international implications – not only in areas of law enforcement and security but socially, culturally and politically.



The central premise of [Guido Steinberg's](#) book, *German Jihad: On the Internationalization of Islamist Terrorism* is that the internationalization of the current jihadist movement only began after the events of September 11, 2001 and, that, since then, the movement has matured, internationalised, and profoundly altered its characteristics. He argues that as a movement, it is no longer solely concerned with domestic (traditionally Arab) matters and sees instead an opportunity to attack those states that had traditionally been outside of their purview and indeed outside of their domestic reach. This ideological shift resulted in recruits being radicalised in their own countries first before proceeding to reach outwards for training and further instructions.



Since the attacks on the world trade centre, terrorism research – particularly that on the rise of jihadism in the west – has increased markedly from pre 9/11 levels. Works such as Russell Burman's *Freedom or Terror: Europe Faces Jihad* or Peter Neumann's *Joining al-Qaeda: Jihadist Recruitment in Europe* provide a much needed overview for those interested in European terrorism. Steinberg's contribution to the field of terrorism studies however goes further than a general overview, as his focus is almost exclusively on Germany, or German nationals and their involvement in jihad. By specialising in this niche field, Steinberg is able to bring a unique perspective to the motivations behind the growing jihadist movement in Germany, and how these nationals link into the wider global jihadist movement. The book is thorough both in its research and in its focus on Germany as a key player in the cultivation of European jihadists. This no doubt stems from the fact that the author is one of Europe's leading terrorism experts and was an advisor to the Federal Chancellery in Berlin on international terrorism issues.

Steinberg's introductory chapter, 'Unlikely Internationalists: Putting German Jihadism into Perspective' provides an overview into the beginnings of the internationalisation process, starting with the 1990s alliance between Osama Bin Laden and current al-Qaeda leader Ayman Al-Zawahiri and moving towards Germany's involvement in Afghanistan in late 2001. It sets the pace for the second chapter 'Two Hamburg Cells: A History of Jihadist Terrorism in Germany' which details Al-Qaeda's presence in Germany itself as early as 1998. Given that the group was only created ten years beforehand, the fact that a leading operative was arrested in Munich is significant and Steinberg carefully draws out the relationship between jihadist groups in Germany and their significant counterparts internationally.

The book offers key insights into the internationalization of German jihadism and pays particular attention in providing case studies as evidence of the growing movement. In Chapter three, provocatively titled 'A Second 9/11: The Sauerland Plot' Steinberg introduces the reader to the story of three young German men who went on to hatch a terrorist plot against the German state of Rhineland-Palatinate after extensive training with the Uzbek IJU in North Waziristan in Pakistan. It follows their metamorphosis from young disaffected German nationals to jihadists researching potential bombing targets. Steinberg plots their movements from several countries including Germany, Turkey, Syria and Afghanistan to illustrate the international nature of the movement.

The same level of detail is paid in additional chapters of the books, including Chapter seven, 'The German Taliban Mujahideen', in which Steinberg details how propaganda and communique by the group left an indelible impression on the German public shortly before the elections in 2009. Chapter 9, 'Germans in the Taliban Stalingrad: Fighting the Kunduz Insurgency', highlights the growing issue of trans-terrorism where German nationals are deployed willingly to Afghanistan to join the jihadist movement. Given the recent Al-Shabaab attacks on the Westgate Mall in Kenya that involved nationals flying in from outside the country to participate, the internationalisation of the movement is worrying and clearly deserves more attention and research in the field. Steinberg is clearly at the forefront with this contribution.

Steinberg's *German Jihad: On the Internationalization of Islamist Terrorism* is an impressive piece of research that distinguishes itself from the plethora of terrorism research currently available. The ability to focus so comprehensively on the German connection in highlighting the internationalisation of Islamist terrorism is remarkable – and illustrates how the tendrils of terrorism reach far and wide.

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