

BOOK REVIEW: THE CANONS OF JIHAD: TERRORISTS' STRATEGY FOR DEFEATING AMERICA

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This is a selection of ten translated writings on key aspects of jihad. Nine of the writings advocate jihad while one (General S.K. Malik) defends the jihad concept from the historical perspective. The material has been skillfully condensed, in some cases from larger works, so that the major points being advocated by the authors are immediately apparent. Nine of the ten writings are not readily available, the exception being al Qaeda's well-known call of February 23, 1998 for a jihad against "Jews and Crusaders." Hence, the volume would be a very useful text in a graduate course as well as for anyone interested in the ideological underpinnings of the current jihad phenomenon.

In accordance with classic Islamic theory, some of the essays see jihad as being a necessary world – wide phenomenon in order to create Islamic rule over the earth.

This is the view of Hasan al – Banna, who is widely credited as being the father of modern Islamism with his founding of the Muslim Brotherhood in 1928. He writes that "[j]ihad is an obligation on every Muslim and cannot be ignored or evaded." (5) The Quran and Sunnah (life example of the Prophet Muhammad) "are overflowing with noble ideals and they summon the people to jihad, to warfare, to the armed forces, and to all means of land and sea fighting." (6) Thus, "jihad is used to safeguard the mission of spreading Islam. For Islam, even as it ordains jihad, extols peace." (9)

Similar sentiments are echoed by Sayyid Qutb, the 20th century's most influential advocate of jihad. Qutb categorically rejects the idea that jihad is only defensive. Offensive jihad is needed to cleanse the world of jahiliyyah (ignorance). Jewish and Christian societies are characterized by this ignorance because their forms of worship derive from "false and distorted beliefs". (25) Like Banna, the jihad to bring truth to mankind is seen as a way to universal peace. "The peace that Islam desires is that the religion [Islam] has the obedience of all the world's people." (23)

The peace that will be brought about by jihad is defended by General S.K. Malik in his well-known The Qu'ranic Concept of War. "Jihad is a continuous and never - ending struggle waged on all fronts...It aims at attaining the overall mission assigned to the Islamic state [by Allah], and military strategy is one of the means available to it to do so." (112) Thus, "a Muslim should be proud of the fact that, when used, his sword is meant to subdue the forces of tyranny and repression, and to bring peace and justice to mankind." (109) It should be noted that tyranny and repression in the jihadist context is the absence of Islamic rule.

Even where one might expect the jihad concept to be more localized against domestic rulers, it can still be seen as a world – wide necessity. Muhammad al – Salam Faraj, author of The Neglected Obligation, the work that was a major influence on the assassins of Egyptian president Anwar Sadat, saw the need for jihad in a wider context. "Islam fights to make supreme the Word of God in this world, whether it be by attacking or by defending." (41)

Abdullah Azzam, Bin Laden's mentor, was the principal force behind recruiting Arab and Muslim youth to fight the Soviets in Afghanistan. His essay entitled Join the Caravan was

instrumental in reviving an interest in jihad. He argued that as long as a Muslim country was under attack, jihad was an individual obligation on all Muslims.

He wrote: “Jihad has a deep -rooted role that cannot be separated from the constitution of this religion. A religion that does not have jihad cannot become established in any land...” (126)

Abu Musab al Suri was the pseudonym for al Qaeda’s chief theoretician until his capture. He is best known for his massive 1600 page *The Call to Global Islamic Resistance*. He sees massive conspiracies aimed at Muslims. Hence, the U.S. led Crusader – Jewish alliance “has clearly announced its goals: total elimination of the civilizational, religious, political, economic, social and cultural existence of Muslims.” (164) In this quest the U.S. is aided by domestic regional rulers who seek to destroy the community of Muslims (the ummah) “defeat her religion [Islam], kill her sons, and wipe out all elements of civilization.” (166) Suri approves of Bin Laden’s approach to this conspiracy that consists of launching a jihad against the U.S. Bin Laden’s ideas “are the key to solving the problems in the Arab Peninsula and the whole region.” (177)

Al – Suri’s successor was Muhammad Khalil Al – Hakaymah. He adopts ideas from al Suri’s *The Call* that individuals acting alone can be effective in bringing about the enemy’s collapse. He argues that weaker forces can wage successful jihad in asymmetrical warfare and cites as examples the ousting of the Soviets from Afghanistan, and the jihads in Bosnia and Chechnya. He overlooks the fact that (1) the Afghan mujahadeen received billions in outside aid, (2) the Muslim success in Bosnia was due totally to NATO intervention and (3) the Chechens were crushed by the Russians.

The internet has become a popular forum for jihadists to exchange ideas. Two jihadists that have become prominent as a result of their writings on the net are featured. Abu Bakr Naji, a pseudonym, argues that the corruption and “effeminacy” of western societies render them incapable of sustaining long term anti – jihadist military commitments. Thus, committed jihadists can eventually wear down their enemies. He argues that “we need to massacre others”, but once power is seized “control and justice spreads...” (65) His overall goal is universal; it will be achieved by “[u]niting the hearts of the world’s people by means of money and uniting the world through sharia [Islamic law] governance.” (53)

Abu – Ubayd Al – Qurashi, also a pseudonym, has become a well – known internet poster on jihadist websites. He attempts to give a “psychological” profile of President George W. Bush, who is found to be clownish, passive and sadistic. He “is a sick man needing treatment.” Bush compares very unfavorably with Bin Laden, who is “pious, brave, honest, decent, and ready to give whatever is most precious in order to aid his religion and nation...” (145)

My only complaint about this very skillfully edited and informative volume is that it did not contain any writings by Shiites.