



The Legacy of Jihad

The Fate Of A Key Text Made in Berlin And Istanbul

Reviewed by

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Professor of medicine Andrew G. Bostom has compiled in *The Legacy of Jihad* primary and secondary sources on jihad and non-Muslims (*ahl adh-dhimma*) under Islamic rule. Ibn Warraq (a pseudonym) says in his foreword that the author have had translated from Arabic the works of commentators on Islamic manuscripts. Ibn Warraq stresses that dealing with jihad could turn out to be hard for reasons of political correctness, fear of playing into the hands of racists to the detriment of the West's Muslim minorities, commercial motives, feelings of postcolonial guilt, just plain fear and intellectual terrorism. Bostom oversaw the translations on jihad of secondary sources from French, and he has included Shiite and Sunni, classical and modern works. And Ibn Warraq raises the question why Middle East historians didn't do this job of compiling jihad sources from all periods.

Historians of the Middle East have often researched the doctrine of jihad. Bernard Lewis worked the topic several times. He devoted a chapter in his source book, *A Middle East Mosaic* (Random House, 2000), to "war." Rudolf Peters added a chapter about it to his pioneering *Jihad in Classical and Modern Islam* (Wiener, 1996, 2005). Germans have dealt with the topic often. And this is the problem with Bostom's work: it does not reflect the complex history of the subject.

Bostom has put together eight chapters on jihad, starting with a survey of conquests and the imposition of Islamic rule. Then he offers sources from the Qur'an and Hadith, classical writings by Muslim theologians and jurists, and academic overviews from the last century. Chapters five to eight are devoted to jihad in the seventh to eleventh centuries in different world regions; jihad and slavery; and, finally, Muslim and non-Muslim chronicles of jihad campaigns. Four appendices with sources and a bibliography make this book a compendium. The author's choice of sources magnifies jihad; in fact, Islam appears to be nothing but jihad.

Made in Berlin And Istanbul

Bostom includes in his book a document from World War I (p. 221), a "1915 Ottoman Fatwa." He says this text is believed to be an excerpt from a fatwa by Shaikh Shawish, titled *al-jihad*, and that the English translation was provided by the "American Agency and Consulate, Cairo, Egypt, March 10, 1915." Bostom explains that the Jewish community of Alexandria was worried about this pamphlet and handed it over to the Americans in Egypt.

The *Shaikh of Islam* issued his jihad fatwa on November 11, 1914, in Istanbul. There was no previous fatwa of similar ranking. The text in Bostom's book is a commentary circulated by Abd al-Aziz ash-Shawish in March 1915. It is not a "1915 Ottoman Fatwa." A fatwa would have been written in typical question-and-answer style. Shawish, although educated at al-Azhar University and Dar al-Ulum in Cairo, was in no position to issue an Ottoman fatwa. But he was in the inner circle of the Ottoman war minister, Enver Pasha. Shawish lived until 1914 in Istanbul, then in Berlin, where he worked in the propaganda department of the Foreign Office, which had been founded for one reason only: to incite jihad against the British, French and Russians in their colonial hinterland. What appears in Bostom's book as Islamic jihad text was made in Berlin and Istanbul.

How To Wage Jihad

Henry I. Morgenthau (Doubleday, 1918) remembers a similar Arabic document. It was circulated around the same time that the Shaikh of Islam issued his jihad fatwa, after the Ottoman sultan-caliph himself declared jihad in Istanbul on November 11, 1914. Morgenthau's document is broader, but the hard core is the same, especially regarding the little and great jihad, war "by mouth and heart" (hatred of the infidel), and how to wage holy war by three methods: personal deeds with cutting instruments, collective bands to slay infidels (for the Ottomans, this included local Greeks, Armenians and Jews) and jointly by army campaigns.

Berlin had enlisted a dozen foreign nationals like Shawish to spread millions of jihad pamphlets in the languages of Islam throughout Africa and Asia, where they were to be read to Muslims in mosques. Morgenthau, the U.S. ambassador in Istanbul from 1913 to 1916, reported that a pamphlet, printed in Arabic and distributed secretly, instructed Muslims on how to carry out the 1914 Ottoman fatwa.

A Changed Doctrine Of Jihad

In Bostom's case, the interpreter was not familiar with jihad doctrine. He translated the concepts of *al-jihad al-asghar* and *al-jihad al-akbar*, which the Prophet Muhammad used according to tradition, as "lesser war" and "greater war," respectively. Originally, little jihad generally meant the duty to spread Islam by use of arms and the killing of enemies. The great jihad refers to an individual's spiritual struggle with his own soul to overcome base instincts. However, we find in both pamphlets a Turkish redefinition. Now the great jihad is a holy war for the Ottoman Empire, and the little jihad is a holy war in a single country beyond it.

The pamphlet in Bostom's book is also directed against the Egyptian rulers acting on the advice of the infidel English. Cairo had declared itself neutral in the Sinussi jihad against the Italians in Tripoli. "This shall never be forgiven them. However," the text continues, "our Egyptian brethren have helped us to a certain degree financially and morally in the last two wars, and in spite of their unbelieving rulers, forwarded their collections on our behalf to the Capital of the Caliphate." This indicates an Ottoman author in Enver Pasha's circle such as Shawish.

Abu Jihad's Grand Design

A few words on the context of Bostom's document. If one considers Berlin's switch from a peacetime to a wartime policy against the British, French and Russians and their Islamic lands, one sees a *jihad made in Germany*. It was a concerted German-Ottoman action in five stages: Max von Oppenheim's design to revolutionize Islamic lands; agitation for jihad by the Foreign Office's apparatus in Berlin and Istanbul; the Ottoman fatwa; Shaikh Salih's commentary on the fatwa; and jihad by armies, sending envoys to Islamic lands and distributing pamphlets. It was a new weapon to globalize an ideology of hatred. Let us look briefly into the five elements of the German-designed jihad.

Oppenheim served as an archaeologist and diplomat in the Middle East for 20 years. He suggested to the kaiser in 1898 the advantage to declaring jihad against German enemies via the sultan-caliph. After World War I began, the Germans indeed requested that Enver Pasha proclaim jihad. The kaiser also asked him to enter the war: the sultan should call for jihad in Asia, India, Egypt and Africa. Some scholars even expected "Islamic fanatics fighting for Germany."

Oppenheim, the German "Abu Jihad," designed a 136-page master plan in October 1914: "Revolutionizing the Islamic Territories of Our Enemies." The emperor confirmed his idea to have the sultan-caliph incite Muslims to jihad. This was the plot: The sultan leads a jihad against the British, French and Russians. Berlin delivers money, experts and material. Jihad fighters are Muslims in British India, French North Africa and Russians in Asia.

The call to fight goes out in several languages according to psychological factors. Berlin creates an *Oriental News Department* in the Foreign Office. Fomenting revolution among Muslims in India is key to victory. Expeditions are to be sent to Karbala (Iraq), Iran and Afghanistan to trigger uprisings. Germans provide intelligence to Muslims, while the Turks incite them against their foreign masters. Islam, concluded Oppenheim, will be "one of our sharpest weapons."

Imperial Propaganda Centers

Oppenheim became the head of the Oriental News Department, employing native Muslims and establishing 75 propaganda centers in the Ottoman Empire. Some called his jihad strategy *war by revolution*, but it was an asymmetrical war waged by incitement to jihad in anti-imperial uprisings. It was a double strategy with the colonial hinterland supporting the front by uniting troops in the wide lands of Islam. Of course, it raised questions. Was the Ottoman sultan the accepted caliph to all Muslims? Was it then permitted to fight on the side of certain infidels against selected infidels and "their" Muslims?

As Oppenheim had suggested, a fatwa answered this. The Shaikh of Islam affirmed this in his jihad fatwa. To summarize: His Majesty the Padishah of Islam orders a jihad as a general mobilization and individual duty for all Muslims according to the Qur'an. Since Russia, England and France are now hostile to the Islamic caliphate, it is also incumbent upon all Muslims ruled by these governments to proclaim jihad against them and to actually attack them. The protection of the Ottoman Empire depends on all Muslims hastening to partake in the jihad; if some refrain, they are committing a sin and deserve divine wrath. For Muslims of enemy countries, it is forbidden to fight against Islamic troops, even if the enemy forces them. Otherwise they deserve hellfire for murder. It is a great sin for Muslims under the rule of England, France, Russia, Serbia, Montenegro and their allies to fight against Germany and Austria, which are the allies (see details in a book I edited, *Germany and the Middle East*, Wiener, 2004).

Haqiqat Al-Jihad or The Truth Of Jihad

According to this fatwa, the sultan-caliph was the sovereign of all Muslims. It was permitted to fight with infidels against infidels and their Muslims. The latter had not only no right to fight back; they had to turn against their foreign overlords. Enver's confident Shaikh Salih al-Sharif al-Tunisi confirmed this new jihad doctrine. Enver asked him to travel to Berlin to popularize jihad (he did the same with Shawish). For this purpose Shaikh Salih wrote a commentary in November 1914. His *haqiqat al-jihad* (the truth of jihad) was published soon afterward in Berlin. It was a blueprint for other pamphlets, like the one in Bostom's book. What did it mean? A coalition jihad was possible, on the side of allied infidels or just against certain other infidels. Jihad was now even an individual duty for all Muslims. Peace between Islam and Europe is possible if there is no foreign occupation of Islamic lands.

In the end, the execution of the jihad was disappointing for Oppenheim, although perhaps not for the Ottomans, who turned it against Armenians. The majority of Muslims beyond the Ottoman Empire ignored the jihad, although Germans spent a lot of money for jihad expeditions and propaganda such as the weekly Al-Jihad. Nevertheless, it was not by mere chance that Hasan al-Banna founded the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt after World War I. As Oppenheim's successor concluded, the seeds of Islamic uprisings had been planted. One day there would be an accumulation of people ready to turn against their rulers. It took about 60 years after World War I for the first Islamic revolution to start. Jihad was one of its key concepts.

Returning to Bostom's book, the chain of events goes like this: Oppenheim points the kaiser to the Ottoman jihad potential in 1898. The diplomat draws up the jihad plot in October 1914 as a concerted, but very secret, German-Ottoman action. He works in Berlin and Istanbul and incites jihad even beyond the Ottoman Empire. As planned, the sultan-caliph proclaims a selected jihad, and the Shaikh of Islam legitimizes it in a fatwa in November. Shaikh Salih in his commentary changes the doctrine as a blueprint for pamphlets by Shawish. An American diplomat in Cairo gets a copy, as Morgenthau did in Istanbul. From there it goes to Washington's archives and enters Bostom's book as an "Islamic" source. Here is one reason that Middle East historians rarely arrange source material as Bostom has - history in each period is complex enough. Which scholar feels at home in all periods? Such courage can lead to results that offer texts without context.

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