

BOOK REVIEW

Elisabeth Kendall and Ewan Stein,
Twenty-First Century Jihad: Law, Society and Military Action.
(London: I.B. Tauris and Company, 2015), 358.

Asad Ullah Khan*

The book *Twenty-First Century Jihad: Law, Society and Military Action* is a compilation of 19 research articles by different authors edited by Elisabeth Kendall, Senior Research Fellow in Arabic and Islamic Studies, Pembroke College, Oxford University and Ewan Stein who is Lecturer in International Relations at the School of Social and Political Science at the University of Edinburgh.

The book raises the new debate about the future of jihad and relates it to the Arab Spring. The book comprises 18 chapters. While all the chapters view the title from historical, political and methodological perspectives, all the chapters deal with Jihad in the contemporary context and are interconnected. The book challenges a number of assumptions that have been used by eminent scholars and policy makers including the most accepted one by Western scholars, that jihad animates Muslim thought, its association with violence and war, and its legitimacy to wage war against non-Muslims. This book makes an attempt to conceptualise jihad in its true context which is a significant contribution to the existing literature on the subject. Moreover, the writers emphasises that jihad in 21st century cannot be seen in isolation from the 14th century of competing interpretations of the term that preceded it. The book is divided into three major parts.

In chapter one, Reven Firestone portrays the picture of historic concepts of Jihad when it was interpreted as a holy war. He explains the jihad as a theory, and its practice in ancient times. He explains all the categories by quoting different historic events. In the second chapter, the writer, Asma Afsaruddin, looks at the early centuries of Islam through a body of hadith literature, that grew alongside Quranic revelations, and

* The book reviewer is Research Fellow, Institute of Strategic Studies, Islamabad.

which presented competing views over the definition of Jihad. The writer analyses some relevant reports of the two early hadith compilers: The Yemeni scholar Abd al Razzaq al Sanami and the Iranian historian Abd Allah abn Muhammad ibn abi Shaye.

Roberta Denaro, in the third chapter, narrates the development of the concept of martyrdom and explains how it was shaped in the early hadith literature. Mustafa Baig, in chapter four, explains the non-military aspects of jihad in the context of “ kitab al Jihad” which is considered a key book of Islamic jurisprudence and is primarily concerned with Muslim armies entering non-Muslim lands and vice versa. In the chapter five, the refined research by Russell Hopley explores the Almoravid intervention in Andalusia in the late eleventh and early twelfth century, which flexed the concept of jihad to suit political imperatives of that time. He analyses letters written by the leaders and jurists during these centuries. The study of Jihad in the context of Sufism is done in chapter six by Gavin Picken, who relates the Sufi concept of combating the soul and the greater Jihad in classical Islam.

Sami Zubaida, in chapter seven, highlights the roots of sectarian jihad in the Arabian Peninsula and Iraq, quoting their political and historical contingency. The chapter details the sectarian jihad in the context of Saudi-Iran ideological differences. Mansour Alnogaïdan, looks at the phenomenon of jihad in chapter eight, and explains how it became externalised and associated with combating threats to Islamic community, such as, the Israeli occupation of Palestine and the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan.

In chapter nine, Hossam Tammam an analyst of Islamic movements, examines the idea of jihad in reference to the writings of Sayyid Qutb and jihadist groups in the 1970s. He analyses the situation of Egypt in this regard. Endorsing Tammam, Ewan Stein the author of chapter ten, contends that the revolution of January 25, 2011 happened because the Muslim brotherhood in Egypt has been engaged with jihad discourse. This non-violent dimension Jihad of brotherhood was conceived primarily as a mechanism for the islamisation of state and society.

Naeem Jeenah, the author of chapter 11 gives a detailed account of how the Muslim activists in South Africa came to articulate the idea

of jihad within a much broader struggle against Apartheid. Maria Holt incorporated the theme of non-violent Jihad in chapter twelve of the book and she explains the contemporary struggle in Lebanon and Palestinian territories with special reference to women struggle. Holt highlights the positive role of women in the context of jihad. In the last chapter of part two, Lt. Gen Sir Simon Mayall gives the details of ideological confusion regarding the concept of jihad in the context of historical development of Islam and Islamic world, relating this to the Afghan and Iraq war.

In the first chapter of part three, Elisabeth Kendall shows how contemporary jihadists in Yemen use poetry to legitimise their *Jihadi* acts and emotional ideas. Part three deals with Jihad in modern times. This part is an interesting reading as it weaves a link between poetry and jihad, which distinguishes the book from other writings on the subject. In chapter 15, Rana Issa narrows down her research on poetry and on the function of martyrdom poetry in line with jihad in the construction of Palestinian identity. Thomas Riegler, in chapter 16, has come up with a very refined analysis of Western popular culture and the critical role of American movies and TV series in shaping the perceptions of the terrorist threat among the Western societies.

In chapter 17, Eric Germain, highlights the role of novelists in forming the image of Islam in the West. He specifically quotes the positive work of Gottlieb Wilhem Leitner in this regard. Sherman Jackson analyses the book *The Jurisprudence of Jihad* by Al Qaradawi and endorses his argument that Islam is a religion of peace and prefers peaceful coexistence over conflict. In the last chapter of the book, Sheikh Rachid al-Ghannouchi concludes that al-Qaradawi's study is valuable in *Ijtehad* which is a relevant resource for Muslims that opens the space for dialogue, tolerance and coexistence.

The book is of special value for those who want to conduct research on the role of Islam in the contemporary world. It is an addition to the existing literature on the subject and it ascertains as to how the concept of jihad has changed from its roots in Quran. The book also incorporates the views and arguments from prominent Muslim scholars, portraying the true Islamic version of jihad, which is all the way different from the Western perspective.