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ISLAM IN IRAN XI. JIHAD IN ISLAM

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The term jihad (Ar. *jehād* "struggle, striving") occurs (either in its root or derivatives) about forty times in the Qurʾān with the secondary, but dominant, meaning of "regulated warfare with divine sanction." Doctrine concerning jihad in the Qurʾān does not use this word but instead favors the alternate word *qetāl* "fighting." Traditional Islamic exegesis of the Qurʾān divides the doctrine of jihad into four distinct phases, all except the first one dating from the Medinan period of the Prophet Moḥammad's ministry (ca. 622-32). These phases are: (1) nonconfrontation (Qurʾān 15:94-95); (2) defensive fighting (Qurʾān 22:39-40); (3) initiating attack allowed but within strictures (Qurʾān 2:217); (4) unrestricted warfare against all pagans (and perhaps against all unbelievers) at all times (Qurʾān 9:5: schema according to Firestone, chap. 3).

In general, the final phase of the Qurʾānic doctrine of jihad was held to be 9:29: "Fight those who do not believe in Allāh and the Last Day, do not forbid what Allāh and His Apostle have forbidden, and do not profess the true religion, (even if they are) of the People of the Book, till they pay the poll-tax (*jezya*) out of hand and with submission." This limitation of jihad to the period prior to accepting the protection (*ḏemma*) of the Muslims is good for *ahl al-ketāb* "the

People of the Book" (i.e., Jews, Christians, Sabeans, later Zoroastrians and Hindus). However, protection is not accorded to pagans, who have only the choice between conversion to Islam and fighting.

In order for jihad to be legitimate, it has to be sanctioned by an authoritative personality (in Sunni Islam, either the caliph or an imam: in Shiʿite Islam, the Imam or one of his representatives and, later, the ulama), directed against a legitimate target, fought according to the rules laid down by the Qurʾān and tradition, and concluded in a manner according with verse 9:29 cited above. These facts mean that, although there are a great many wars associated with Muslims throughout their history, only a limited number of them constitute jihad. However, because of the spiritual prestige of jihad, it is not unusual for there to be disputes concerning the question of whether or not a given battle or conflict constitutes a legitimate jihad.

There exists a general consensus among Muslims that the Prophet Moḥammad's jihad against the polytheists of Mecca, and other Arab polytheists during his lifetime, was legitimate. Questions begin to arise once the prophetic authority was removed. In the immediate wake of his death, most of the Arab tribes revolted against the authority of Abu Bakr (632-34), and some refused to pay their *zakāt* tax. Abu Bakr's uncompromising attitude towards those who refused this Islamic obligation has made it normative to see the *redda* "apostasy" wars (632-33) as a legitimate jihad as well.

Shortly after the *redda* wars, the Arabs began to attack and conquer most of the regions bordering on Arabia: Iraq, Syria, Egypt, etc. These conquests (from 634 to ca. 740) transformed the Middle East, caused a linguistic shift from Aramaic and Greek to Arabic, a religious transformation from Christianity, Zoroastrianism, and Judaism to Islam (over a period of centuries), and formed the territorial basis for the region bound together by the high Islamic culture. Presumably these conquests were jihad; if so, then they would be the best available example of offensive jihad (other prominent Muslim military advances such as the Ottoman conquests are not usually portrayed in the contemporary sources as jehad). Since the boundaries reached by the early Muslim conquerors were in many cases natural ones (mountain ranges, seas, or deserts) with few exceptions there was no pressing need for offensive jihad during the period in which Muslim law was codified (8th through 11th cents.). In general, beyond this initial period jihad was declared in order to repel an invader, to preempt an invasion, or to conquer an area that had been missed by the first Muslim conquerors.

As the doctrine of jihad coalesced in the middle Islamic period, jurists usually divided the world into either two or three sections: *dār al-Eslām*, the area in which Islam was predominant, and *dār al-ḥarb*, the area where war (jihad) was permitted. Sometimes a third area, *dār al-ṣolḥ*, the area with which there was a peace agreement or truce, was included in this list (Khadduri, pp. 49-73). The laws of jihad make elaborate provisions for those non-Muslims from the *dār al-ḥarb* or the *dār al-ṣolḥ* to travel in Muslim lands with safe-conduct (*amān*), usually for the purposes of commerce or pilgrimage. In essence, laws concerning jihad govern all aspects of the relations between Muslims and non-Muslims, whether there is hostility or peace between the two groups.

Jihad is portrayed in both the Sunni and Shiʿite sources as a spiritual exercise leading to redemption. The Sunni authority Moḥammad b. Esmāʿil Boḵāri (d. 870) in his *Ketāb al-ṣaḥiḥ* (IV, p. 263, no. 2782) gives jihad a rank immediately after prayer and filial piety (*birr al-walidayn*). The spiritual value of jihad is legitimate only when one fights for raising the Word of Allāh to the highest (Boḵāri, IV, p. 272, no. 2810). Likewise, the Shiʿite author Moḥammad Kolayni (d. ca. 941) states: “Jihad is the most meritorious [action] after the [sacred religious] obligations” (V, p. 4, no. 5; Ṭusi, VI, p. 105). Jihad is usually said to be incumbent upon those who fulfill six criteria. that is, they must be Muslim, male, adult, sane, free, and able-bodied. Although it is imperative that the community as a whole conduct jihad in order to enjoy these spiritual blessings (*farż kefāya* “communal obligation”) at all times, during an invasion this obligation becomes incumbent upon each and every Muslim (*farż ʿayn* “individual obligation”). Whether this includes women is debatable; most classical scholars follow Boḵāri, who cites a tradition that states that a woman’s jihad is a righteous performance of the *ḥajj* pilgrimage (Boḵāri, IV, p. 264, no. 2784).

Beyond these spiritual aspects, jihad as warfare is governed by a number of regulations in both Sunni and Shiʿite law. Declaration of war must be accompanied by a call to convert to Islam, with the other two options being to surrender and pay the *jezya* tax or to fight. Killing of civilians, including women and children, elderly non-combatants and monks, is strictly prohibited. Excessive forms of warfare, such as indiscriminant killing, desecration of bodies, or wanton destruction are also forbidden. Spoils taken in warfare are divided in accordance with Qurʾān 8:41: “And know that whatever booty you take, the fifth thereof is for Allāh, the Apostle, the near of kin, the orphan, and the wayfarer.” According to Sunni law this fifth goes to

the caliph, while according to Shiʿite law it goes to the rightful Imam (today distributed by the ulama). The religious authorities are responsible for distributing this fifth to others in need. Other laws concerning jihad involve the question of captives. Sunni law affirmed that it was the responsibility of the caliph or the commander in the field to decide what to do with them: they could be held for ransom, sold as slaves, killed, or set free according to his discretion. Laws concerning the ending of jihad are less clear; it seems that this was also up to the discretion of the commander or was decided upon the basis of benefit for the Muslim community.

The most tangled questions concerning jihad focus upon the locus of authority to declare a jihad, and the issue of fighting other Muslims. In general, Sunnis held that the caliph or rightful Imam had the right to declare jihad, but that when an invader invades Muslim lands there is no need for a formal proclamation of jihad as it is *farż ʿayn*. Since the destruction of the Sunni caliphate by the Mongols in 1258, the caliph has had little role in the declaration of jihad (despite occasional attempts by the Ottomans to prove otherwise), and effectively the right to declare jihad has fallen to the ulama. In Shiʿite Islam the right to declare jihad was always vested in the Imam; since the occultation, that right has also devolved upon the *marjaʿ al-taqlid* or the ulama (Kohlberg, pp. 69, 81-82).

The question of against which Muslims jihad is possible is problematic. In a widely cited (both Sunni and Shiʿite) tradition, ʿAli b. Abi Ṭāleb (q.v.) said: "I was ordered to fight those who leave [Islam] (*al-māreqin*), those who broke their oaths (*al-nāketin*), and the unjust ones (*al-qāseṭin*)" (Saraḵsi, V, p. 4). The first group is usually said to be the Kharijites (exemplified by the Battle of Nahrawān in 658), the second, those such as Zobayr, Ṭalḥa, and ʿĀʾeša whom ʿAli fought in the Battle of the Camel in 656, and the final group was the Umayyads (the Battle of Ṣeffin in 657). When the implications of this tradition are considered, there are a wide range of possibilities of waging jihad against heretical Muslims or against corrupt and unjust Muslim rulers. In Shiʿite literature the heretical group is usually referred to as *ahl al-bāgi* "the people of iniquity." This term comes from the well-known tradition associated with the Prophetic Companion ʿAmmār b. Yāser, who was told by Mo-ḥammad that "*al-feʾat al-bāgiya* would kill you" (Kohlberg, p. 73). The term *al-feʾat al-bāgiya* "the iniquitous band," has some importance in Shiʿite jihad discussions, and tends to be used in place of other terms. It indicates non-Shiʿite Muslims against whom Shiʿites fight. They are unbelievers, but are not actual apostates, and

their relatives and property outside the battlefield are not to be harmed because these relatives might be true Muslims (i.e., Shiʿites). However, possessions of the *feʾat al-bāḡiya* or *bogāt* on the battlefield can be looted in the same way as with non-Muslims (Kohlberg, p. 76).

Jihad is also foundational within Muslim society because of the confrontation against evil that is implicit in it. One widely cited tradition that indicates this type of confrontation is: "The best type of jihad is a word of truth [or justice] in the presence of the sultan" (Abu Dāwud Sejestāni, IV, p. 122, no. 4344). The great Sufi synthesizer Abu Ḥāmed Ḡazāli (q.v.; d. 1111) in his *magnum opus*, *Eḥyāʾ ʿolum al-din*, included a section on the importance of the principle of *al-amr beʾl-maʿruf waʾl-nahy ʿan al-monkar* "enjoining the right and forbidding the wrong" for jihad (Ḡazāli, II, 314-55; see AMR BE MAʿRUF). According to his analysis, jihad was part of the process of creating a just and ethical society. Without this positive, militant action the believer would be unable to enforce Muslim norms. Thus, by the end of the classical period, jihad was divided into several categories: jihad of the hand or of the sword (militant jihad), jihad of the tongue (speaking truth to power), which sometimes includes jihad of wealth, and jihad of the heart, the Sufi "greater jihad."

Gradually, with the appearance of ascetic groups in early Islam that would later develop into Sufism, a doctrine of non-violent jihad emerged. This doctrine became known as the "greater jihad" (*al-jehād al-akbar*) after the formative tradition: "A number of fighters came to the Messenger of Allāh, and he said: "You have done well in coming from the lesser jihad to the greater jihad." They said: "What is the greater jihad?" He said: "For the servant [of God] to fight his passions" (Bayhaqi, p. 165). By the period of Ḡazāli, the idea of the "greater jihad" had developed into a process by which the believer fought and dominated his soul (in Sufi traditions, usually said to be the locus of evil passions). This idea was developed considerably in the Persian Sufi tradition of Jalāl-al-Din Moḥammad Rumi (d. 1274), who, in his *Maṯnawi-e maʿnawi*, retold the story of the famous fighter Fożayl b. ʿEyāż who gave up his fighting career (*jehād-e aṣḡar* "the smaller jihad") career and spent his time fighting the greater jihad: I threw myself into the Greater Warfare [*jehād-e akbar*] (which consists) in practicing austerities [*riāżat kardan*] and becoming lean.

(One day) there reached my ear the sound of the drums of the holy warriors; for the hard-fighting army was on the march.

My fleshly voice [*nafs*] cried out to me from within:

at morningtide I heard (its voice) with my sensuous ear,

(Saying): ‘Arise! ‘Tis time to fight.

Go devote thyself to fighting the holy war!’

I answered, ‘O wicked perfidious soul, what hast thou to do with the desire to fight? . . .’

Thereupon my soul, mutely eloquent, cried out in guile from within me,

’Here thou art killing me daily, thou art putting my (vital) spirit (on the rack), like the spirits of the infidels.

No one is aware of my plight—how thou art killing me (by keeping me) without sleep and food (Rumi, ed. Barzigar Ḵāleqi, pp. 858-59, ed. and tr. Nicholson, III, pp. 240-41, VI, pp. 227-28).

Many other Sufi writers continued on this vein (Renard, pp. 225-42). A great many of the problematic issues concerning Shiʿite jihad came to the fore in Persia during the Russo-Iranian wars of 1722-23, 1796, 1804-13, and 1826-28 and the *fatwā*s (q.v.) that were issued during that time (see Lambton). Until that time most Shiʿite discussions of jihad had been theoretical; since Shiʿites were rarely in control of a state, and when the Safavids gained control of Persia they arrogated to themselves much of the Imam’s authority without discussing the problems with the ulama. Etan Kohlberg cites one of these *fatwa*s to indicate the position of the ulama, who stated: “It is possible to say that *Jihad* during the Imam’s concealment is more praiseworthy than during his presence” (Kohlberg, p. 83). This type of authority is further amplified by the *fatwa*s issued during the first part of the 20th century (Rajabi, pp. 247-348).

Modern interpretations of jihad have usually been either apologetic or radical and aggressive. The apologetic trend began in India during the 19th century, when Muslims were first exposed to the polemics of Christian missionaries under the protection of the British raj. A number of the missionaries polemicizing against Islam characterized the entire religion as violent and aggressive. In order to counteract this polemic, Muslim apologists sought to highlight the defensive nature of jihad and its spiritual aspects (the greater jihad). The more radical and aggressive interpretations of jihad have been common among radical Muslims, especially since the 1960s. Most of these interpretations have centered around the idea that because of the

unwillingness of Muslim governments to impose the *šariʿa*, they are apostate and jihad against them is necessary. Radical Sunni interpretations of this type usually do not emphasize the role of spiritual jihad. However, the radical Shiʿite interpretation of Ayatollah Ruḥ-Allah Khomeini combines the militant and the spiritual aspects of jihad (*al-jehād al-akbar*; see also Khomeini, 1981, pp. 130, 385-88).

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