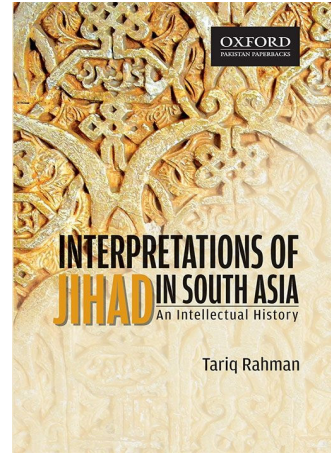


Book Reviews

Tariq Rahman. *Interpretations of Jihad in South Asia: An Intellectual History*. Karachi: Oxford University Press, 2019. Pp. xviii+323. Paperback. ISBN 978-0-19-070183-3. Price: Rs. 625.*

Professor Tariq Rahman is a celebrated Pakistani linguist and authored several books on social linguistics, including *History of English Literature in Pakistan: 1947–1988* (1991); *Language and Politics in Pakistan* (1996); *Language, Ideology and Power: Language-Learning among the Muslims of Pakistan and North India* (2002); and *From Hindi to Urdu: Social and Political History* (2011), all of which published by Oxford University Press. *Interpretations of Jihad in South Asia: An Intellectual History* is his latest work and the international edition was jointly published by Princeton University and De Gruyter in 2018. This consortium was established to introduce high quality research to the world. In 2019, Oxford University Press published its paperback Pakistani edition.



Interpretations of Jihad in South Asia is a valuable contribution to the existing literature on Islam and *jihād*. The words “Intellectual History” in the title of the book reflect a new trend in analytical history. According to the author, the book is not just another theological or jurisprudential interpretation of *jihād*. Instead, it was written to explore intellectual foundations that are the real historical context of theological and jurisprudential interpretations. This context includes the political struggle between modernity and tradition and the genesis and

* This book review is an English translation of Muhammad Khalid Masud, “Janūbī Aishiyā main Jihād kī Ta’bīr kī ‘Ilmiyātī Tārīkh,” review of *Interpretations of Jihad in South Asia: An Intellectual History*, by Tariq Rahman, *Tajziat Online*, March 1, 2019, <https://www.tajziat.com/article/6835>. Ed.

development of the idea of the mutual necessity of establishing an Islamic state and *jihād*. From an intellectual perspective, historians, instead of focusing on social and political events, pay attention to the ideas and theories in the light of which events are observed and understood and which define how to explain and interpret them. The sources of this history include hermeneutics laid down by theologians and jurists. One method of developing the historiography of terrorism, for instance, is to merely state circumstances and events. The other method is to search for the causes and consequences of the circumstances and events being analyzed. Yet another method is to provide evidence for legal, political or other justifications for these events.

Distinguished from these methods, intellectual history entails analyzing ideological and intellectual incontestables found in the background of this justification or otherwise. Some important examples of intellectual history include Montgomery Watt's *Islam and the Integration of Society* (1961); Daniel W. Brown's *Rethinking Tradition in Modern Islamic Thought* (1996); Muhammad Qasim Zaman's *Modern Islamic Thought in a Radical Age: Religions Authority and Internal Criticism* (2012).

This book provides a historical analysis of the interpretations of *jihād* in Islamic tradition that have been debated since the eighteenth century to the modern day. With respect to the importance of historical context, these four centuries are divided into following seven periods: (1) the period of Shāh Walī Allāh and his family; (2) the era of colonial modernists; (3) the period of *jihād* as anti-colonial resistance; (4) the age of Maulānā Mawdūdī; (5) the era of the importation of radical interpretations into Pakistan; (6) climax of radicals in Pakistan; and (7) the period of refuting the radicals. In addition to a bibliography, glossary of terms, and index, three appendixes are also added at the end of the book that provide summaries of Qur'ānic verses, *aḥādīth* (pl. of *ḥadīth*) and their varying interpretations in table format.

In his analysis of interpretations of *jihād*, the author has considered six different aspects; (1) significant interpretations of *jihād*; (2) discussions of the concept of *dār al-ḥarb* with relation to *jihād*; (3) distinctive features of modern and traditional interpretations of *jihād*; (4) interpretations of jihadist groups; (5) historical precedents; and (6) analytical studies of Western thought relating to *jihād*. Chapter two introduces new interpretive devices such as "hermeneutics," used by exegetes and interpreters in the modern period. While describing the objective of these interpretive trends, the author states that hermeneutics is the understanding of the process of extensive

interpretation of a phrase and text. One cannot deny the influence of prejudice and the tradition of historical context on the process of interpretation. However, their meanings are different in this regard. Prejudice means a trend that leads to interpretation of concepts and texts through the lens of a particular ideological perspective. As for the tradition, it is a horizon that keeps history connected. The horizon, in turn, refers to the perspective that is determined through specific ideological incontestables.

During the struggle between modernity and tradition, modern interpretative trends deny three characteristics of tradition: superstitions, miracles, and stagnancy. This leads to three hermeneutical principles: (1) inevitability of ideological incontestables; (2) generalization; and (3) specification. The idea of *jihād* being defensive came into existence in the light of these principles.

Chapters three, four, and five deal with analysis of gradual changes in the concept of *jihād*. From the thirteenth to sixteenth centuries, Muslim rulers of South Asia presented *jihād* as one of the strongest justifications for the extension of their rule. However, this term remained specific to wars against Hindus. *Jihād* was *farḍ-i kifāyah* and right and duty of Muslim rulers. Until the time of Shāh Walī Allāh, the 'ulamā' did not take up arms. Instead, they called neighbouring Muslim rules for *jihād*. The author has also analyzed the claim that in the family of Shāh Walī Allāh, Shāh 'Abd al-'Azīz and Sayyid Aḥmad Shahīd called for *jihād* in deviation from Walī Allāh's tradition.

Chapter five discusses the question whether Islam spread through sword or peaceful method of *da'wah* and preaching. This question was in fact first raised by William Muir and other European and non-Muslim historians. By highlighting the value of missionary efforts and *da'wah*, Thomas W. Arnold, Shiblī Nau'mānī and a number of historians rejected the idea that Islam spread through sword. Hence, a new interpretation of *jihād* as defensive started to gain momentum. Until the time of Shāh Walī Allāh, both ideologies of *jihād* being defensive and offensive remained in vague. In the special context of the colonial period, three interpretations of *jihād* appeared that were distinct from the traditional vantage point. One was Mirzā Ghulām Aḥmad's interpretation that entailed abrogation of *jihād* in the contemporary period. The second interpretation was of Deobandi and other majority 'ulamā' for whom *jihād* was to fight against the colonists, an idea that was popular among non-Muslims as well. Some proponents of these opinions used to emphasize individual armed struggle. The third opinion was of Sir Sayyid Aḥmad Khān and his school of thought that considered *jihād* to be defensive even in historical Islam.

Moreover, they emphasized the progress of Muslims through their integration into the modern British system, instead of waging defensive *jihād*. Sir Sayyid highlighted the need for developing modern theology and introduced new hermeneutics of Qur'ānic exegesis for that purpose. Scholarly discussion of the abrogated and abrogating verses of the Qur'ān required re-evaluation of the principles of abrogation in traditional interpretation. According to the hermeneutics of Walī Allāhī school, abrogated verses were reduced to five only. 'Ubaid Allāh Sindhī and his disciples were not convinced of accepting even five verses as abrogated. The discussion of the principles of abrogation, with reference to *jihād*, also highlighted that Qur'ānic injunctions that were specific to a certain time and space could not be generalized. According to Sūrat al-Tawbah, it is not permitted to wage war against those non-Muslims with whom Muslims have entered a truce. However, in the Muslim world the concept of war against the colonial rule gradually gained popularity and in contrast to Sir Sayyid's interpretation of *jihad*, the Egyptian reformer Jamāl al-Dīn Afghānī's modern interpretation of *jihād* that considered *jihād* necessary for the restoration of the global caliphate gained popularity in South Asia.

Chapters six and seven present an overview of five movements of resistance and Islamic revival that include the *Farā'idī* movement of Bengal; the *Mujāhidīn* movement in Northern India; the Silk Letters movement; the Caliphate movement; and the *Jamā'at-i Islāmī*. These movements were primarily against British colonialism. Chapter seven is named as "the Age of Mawdūdī" and highlights the interpretation of "*jihād* for the establishment of an Islamic state" as well as the emergence of the most effective movement on the basis of this interpretation. The objectives of these five movements were different. In this context different interpretations and justifications of *jihād* emerged. Some called it a war against mischief and disturbance of the public peace, which was bloodier than homicide, hence the necessity of fighting against it. Others considered it war against Christians and Jews and argued that Arab polytheists were eliminated in the early days of Islam. The war, therefore, now has to be fought against Jews and Christians and shall end by either eliminating or conquering them. As *jihād* was declared compulsory to re-establish the caliphate after the end of the Ottoman Empire, *jihād* was similarly waged to get independence and establish Islamic states, after the world wars. In earlier periods of the anti-colonial struggle, seeking support from external powers was justified. Ṭīpū Sulṭān sought help from France and *jihādī* relations were established with Germany and Russia in the Silk Letters movement. These

movements transformed the concept of *jihād* from traditional warfare into non-state, individual, guerilla wars and armed struggles for revolution and sought justification for them in the thought of Ibn Taymiyyah and Shāh Walī Allāh.

Maulānā Mawdūdī was the most influential intellectual of the twentieth century. His interpretation of *jihād* was different from traditional thought. He considered it a means to revolution but was convinced of adopting political struggle in order to bring about revolution. Mawdūdī's concept of the Islamic state further crystallized after the creation of Pakistan. He opted to exert political pressure once he realized he would not succeed in elections. However, Mawdūdī was a proponent of change through the state and political struggle. He presented the objective of the political dominance of Islam by implementing two principles of ideological interpretation of *jihād*: the sovereignty of Allah and the *sharī'ah* as fundamental law of the land.

Three different opinions emerged on this topic from his debates with contemporaries: (a) *Jihād* is against unbelief (*kufir*) (p. 188); (b) It is against the government of unbelievers not unbelief itself; and (c) It is purely defensive. For Maulānā Mawdūdī, non-observant Muslim rules are also oppressive and against Islam (*tāghūt*). Therefore, if Muslims are capable of it, *jihād* should be undertaken against such rulers (p. 188). In the opinion of Vali Raza Nasr, Maulānā Mawdūdī gave Muslims a new identity by connecting *jihād* with the revival of Islam and propagated a new interpretation of *jihād* called global *jihād* (warfare), in response to the continued domination of the West (p. 195).

This concept of global warfare gained popularity among *jihādī* movements that continued in Kashmir, Palestine, and Chechnya against the oppression of Muslims in these areas. These movements took this idea a step forward and declared *jihād* without the need for the permission of the *imām* and sanctioned the killing of civilians and suicide attacks. By this, theological discussions of *takfir* (declaring someone excluded from the fold of Islam), *khurūj* (revolt), and terrorism became part of the interpretation of *jihād*. Disagreements in these discussions led to confusion. In Pakistan, due to this situation the need for a new national narrative emerged. In the last three chapters, the author presents an exhaustive analysis of the steps that several 'ulamā' and institutions have taken to formulate this narrative and convert disagreements in the interpretation of *jihād* into peaceful coexistence.

In the last chapter, the author provides a summary of the traditional interpretations of *jihād*, in which both defensive and aggressive forms of *jihād* were justified. After independence, the discussion of reviewing the

question of war and peace in the interpretation of *jihād* started with respect to relations with non-Muslim population in the new nation-states and with other non-Muslim states. *Jihādī* groups declared pacts of permanent peace with non-Muslims legally impossible, citing *āyāt al-sayf*, the “Verse of the Sword” and *aḥādīth al-sayf*, “The Prophetic Traditions of the Sword”. Others considered the rulings in these verses and traditions to be conditional, which resulted in the development of three trends in the interpretation of *jihād*. The first trend stressed the conventional interpretation of *jihād*, relying on the exegesis of Ibn Kathīr. In South Asia, the revivalist interpretation of *jihād* or global warfare for the revival of Islam gained popularity. The third trend was emphatically convinced of the interpretation of militant *jihād*. Contrary to this, proponents of modernist thought considered international treaties and the peace ideology a fundamental principle regarding the new world order and accepted peace as a foundational principle with respect to the Qur’ānic injunctions of *jihād*.

Previous works have looked at *jihād* in historical, *fiqhī*, and legal perspectives. In the past few years, however, when questions of the relationship between global warfare and international law surfaced, they resulted in publication of several detailed studies and analyses such as *Fiqh al-Jihād* (2015) by Yūsuf al-Qaraḍāwī, a comprehensive study of the topic in Islamic law. When the subject of *jihād* widened in the twenty-first century, new approaches and questions emerged. This, in turn, led to further debates and research on *jihād*’s history, concepts, religiosities, interpretations, motives, and the need for its understanding in the contemporary period. Among recent publications, Richard Bonney’s *Jihād: From Qur’ān to bin Laden* (2004) and Michael Bonner’s *Jihad in Islamic History: Doctrines and Practice* (2006) on the history of the idea of *jihād* and Ayesha Jalal’s *Partisans of Allah: Jihad in South Asia* (2008); Asma Afsaruddin’s *Striving in the Path of God: Jihād and Martyrdom in Islamic Thought* (2013); and Samina Yasmeen’s *Jihad and Dawah: Evolving Narratives of Lashkar-e-Taiba and Jamat ud Dawah* (2017) on the activities of *jihād* are noteworthy for their contributions.

In modern studies, the diversity of interpretations of *jihād* signifies the fragmentation of authority, which in fact refers to the dilution and dissipation of religious authority and disagreements on its definition (pp. 259–60). Zaman in his seminal work *Modern Islamic Thought in a Radical Age* reviewed these disagreements in the context of religious leadership and concluded that this was not a question of fragmentation or dissipation of religious authority. Instead, this was a debate on the principles of text (*matn*) and its continuity (*tawātur*) in Islamic tradition

(p. 260). Aziz al-Azmeh in *Islams and Modernities* (1993) considers it a phenomenon of diversity in Islam that resulted in “as many Islams as there are situations that sustain it” (p. 261). For Shahab Ahmad, this is a new socio-religious phenomenon that is called “being Islamic.” Hence, through a multiplicity of interpretations, Muslims, individually and collectively, prefer to keep themselves attached to the text of Islam in rapidly changing circumstances, instead of being away from Islam. To understand their method of interpretation, Ahmad identifies three degrees of textual interpretation; Pre-text, Text, and Con-Text. The Pre-Text is related to the world of the unseen, reason, mystical intuitions, and other similar traditions. These are not the Text, but they contribute to the formation of the Text. The Text is revelation, hence carrying certainty. As for the Con-Text, it is the history and the process of meaning-making which Muslims engage in. Therefore, “Islamic interpretations” refer to the process of meaning-making that involves all three degrees of the Text. In the light of this interpretation, the Islamic construction of violence means every act of Muslims, including violent behaviour, which is related to Islam.

When, why, and which interpretation gains acceptance? By analyzing different interpretations of *jihād* in detail, the author concludes that one answer to this question is that there are some historical occurrences for which these interpretations are presented as justification. In our opinion, this study of Tariq Rahman, among the recent studies on *jihād*, is very important from two perspectives.

First, the role that the topic of *jihād* has played in broadening human thought requires that its epistemologies be discussed as well. The fine details and depth with which this book analyzes the epistemologies of *jihād* in the subcontinent from its historical, linguistic, and conceptual perspective, has contributed significantly to the understanding of *jihād*. Apart from studying violence and terrorism as social and religious behaviours, it is necessary to study these constructs as epistemological and conceptual problems.

Second, the book raises the question of how and up to what extent these interpretations impact human behaviour? However, by stating that this question is not the subject of this book, the author called for answers to this question on intellectual basis. Interpretations do not gain popularity and acceptance by themselves. Rather, they require favourable social circumstances, which convert the new interpretation into reality by making it part of the daily routine and this ultimately leads to its wider acceptance. *Jihādī* movements gain legitimacy through

narratives and make them part of one's habit and attitude through training and perseverance.

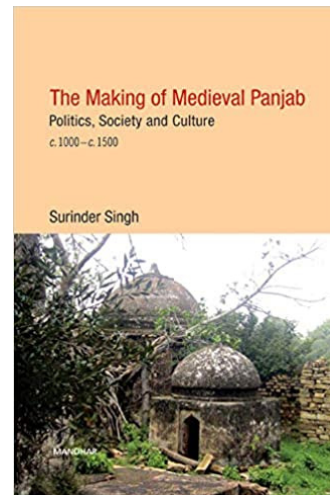
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Surinder Singh. *The Making of Medieval Panjab: Politics, Society and Culture c. 1000-c. 1500*. New York and London: Routledge, 2019/Delhi: Manohar, 2020. Pp. 636. Hardbound. ISBN: 978-0-367-43745-9. Price: Indian Rs. 2495.

As we move back in time, there is an increasing shortage of sources for writing history of South Asia. There is no dearth of sources for the British period, while the Mughal times are not as fortunate. Still less is the evidence for the pre-Mughal period. The difficulties become more pronounced if we narrow down to the region of Punjab. This problem is reflected in a limited scholarly interest in the period extending from the eleventh to the fifteenth century. So far, there were only two books on the subject: *Panjab under the Sultans 1000-1526 A.D.* by Bakhshish Singh Nijjar (1968) and *History of the Punjab (A.D. 1000-1526)*, edited by Fauja Singh (1972). These books, written about half a century back, were conceived in the traditional style, whereas new approaches have emerged in the craft of history during the recent decades. Moreover, several new interpretations pertaining to medieval South Asia in general have appeared. In such a situation, Surinder Singh's recent book *The Making of Medieval Panjab: Politics, Society and Culture c. 1000-c. 1500* deserves a warm welcome.

For the major part of his career, Surinder Singh taught at the Panjab University, Chandigarh. He figures among the few serious scholars of the



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