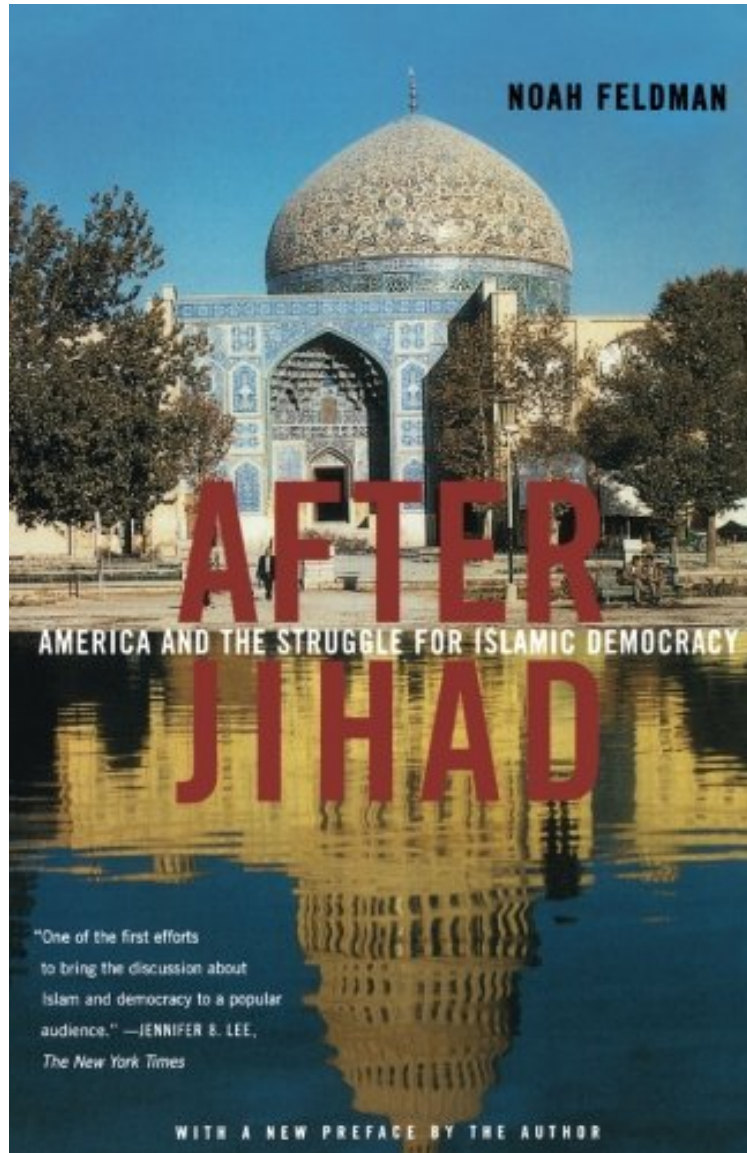


[Download pdf] After Jihad: America and the Struggle for Islamic Democracy

After Jihad: America and the Struggle for Islamic Democracy

Noah Feldman

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Noah Feldman : After Jihad: America and the Struggle for Islamic Democracy before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised After Jihad: America and the Struggle for Islamic Democracy:

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want to report about great part from the NOTES that are missing, only 1/4 of text is accessible. I have tried to find the way to report this to either or the publisher - I wish I could attach the picture to show what my complain is about. But I haven't found any satisfying way to raise this issue yet. 10 of 17 people found the following review helpful. Fantastic and valuable overview of Islam and democracy

By Tim F. Martin *After Jihad* by Noah Feldman is focused on answering one crucial question facing American foreign policymakers today; can democracy flourish in Muslim countries? Feldman wrote that the attacks of Al-Qaeda and others are the "last, desperate gasp" of a tendency towards violence that has lost widespread support in Islamic lands. Many Muslims stand ready to embrace democracy; it is only their governments and to some extent Western policy that stands in the way. Violent jihad has failed, with revolutionary states having only been achieved in Iran, Sudan, and Afghanistan and the only other places where such jihadists enjoy any real popular support is in areas seen as fighting wars of liberation (such as in Chechnya and Kashmir). Washington policymakers have shied away from pressing for democratic reforms in the Muslim world for a variety of reasons, notably for a need to rely on existing Muslim allies in the war on terror, the risks of instability that democratization may pose, particularly as it might affect oil prices, and the fear that free and fair elections in several countries will bring to power violent, anti-American Islamist groups. The author argued that this sort of thinking is flawed, that support of dictators may be of benefit in the short-term but is not beneficial in the long-term. In addition, Islam and democracy are both more flexible than is generally thought; that they are what he called "mobile ideas," ideas that can appeal to and be adapted by diverse peoples living in very different countries and societies. Any fear that Islamists may rise to power is realized when those groups are repressed, as reversing the democratic success of Islamic groups in Algeria for instance produced a civil war and similar actions could serve to alienate Islamic groups in Morocco, Pakistan, and Turkey, groups that worked within the system but repression of which runs the risk of turning them into a violent opposition. Feldman divided the book into three parts. In part one he sought to show how Islam and democracy are much more compatible than many think. He felt it was a false dichotomy to say that the only options in the Muslim world are either a secular state or an Islamist state; a range of options are possible; a pure Islamist state relying only on classical Islamic law is only one possibility, and even if it did rely on shari'a law could still be considered democratic if shari'a law was chosen by the majority in that country and the basic rights of non-Muslims were respected. Too often to stay in power and gain the support of secular people in their own country and of the West autocrats have emphasized that they are the only alternative to Islamist rule, and again, this is a false dichotomy. Even if Islamists do come to power there is reason to show - by the example of Iran - that many people after a few cycles of Islamic government might start to look for something more secular. Also, Islamic groups are not by definition anti-American (the Northern Alliance in Afghanistan was very pro-American for instance and even Islamic groups in Turkey have been more concerned with meeting EU requirements for membership and infrastructure improvements, not exactly anti-Western activity). Potential democratic readings already exist in the Qur'an. Both Islam and democracy share a universal belief in the principle of basic human equality, a very good starting point. The first rulers of the Islamic community adopted the title "caliph" (Arabic khalifa), which means a delegate or replacement (whether for the dead Prophet or a stand-in for God), with the Qur'an strongly implying that the caliph was to be selected by the people, that the people retain some power to displace the caliph, that he governed with the consent of the Muslim community, that he administered but did not create Islamic law (and thus was bound by that same law), and he was compelled by the Qur'an to engage in consultation (shura), though admittedly the Qur'an was rather vague on the exact nature of shura. Feldman answered a number of objections to any synthesis of Islam and democracy. Among them, the necessity of the separate of church and state (there is no separation of church and state in the United Kingdom), the problem of a state-sanctioned imposition or support of Islamic values (Western governments endorse values by awarding medals, proclaiming holidays, and sponsoring the arts and have laws governing many aspects of family life; broadly this is the same as might exist in any Islamic democracy), the role of non-Muslims in a Muslim state (Jews and Christians held prominent positions in many places and eras, from Medina in the Prophet's lifetime to medieval Muslim Granada and beyond), and the harshness of punishments for hudud, crimes such as theft, which requires the thief loses his hand (in reality these punishments are rarely meted out and the standard of proof is often too high to reach; hudud standards for adultery requires four eyewitnesses in good standing of the act itself, difficult to produce). In part two, he evaluated how Islam and democracy are interacting in many nations in the Muslim world, surveying the various types of regime found in Islamic lands. For those worried that civil society - vital to democracy - does not exist in the Muslim world they need only look at the web of social services and charitable institutions provided in Egypt (and increasingly in Pakistan), not by the government but by Islamic organizations. Islam he felt was unfairly blamed for the mixed success of democracy in Pakistan; it had arguably more to do with poverty, the vast disparity of wealth, low literacy rates, a too-powerful military, and other factors. In part three Feldman argued that the United States (and the West) must change their policies towards the Muslim world, that it should encourage rather than impede democracy, that this would serve long term American interests, promote peace in the Middle East, and that it is simply the right thing to do. 4 of 5 people found the following review helpful. Rosy Prediction on Prospects for Islamic Democracy

By Eagle Eye Feldman propounds a solution to a crucial problem of U.S. policy toward the Middle East: the fact that almost all the Arab regimes we support have scant legitimacy in the

eyes of their people. The thrust of his argument is that things are so bad now that the U.S. doesn't have much to lose in supporting Arab democracies, even those that would be anti-American. As it stands, he believes that Arab governments are able to stifle freedom of thought and speech and manipulate public opinion against Israel and the U.S., to deflect attention away from their own fragile legitimacy. Why not, he proposes, just withdraw U.S. support for these regimes and truly support open political systems. Even if Islamists take over, the necessities of rule and the realities of power would force them to moderate their rhetoric. Arabs would have a channel to vent their political frustrations, and would no longer have any reason to attack the U.S. to get at their own regimes, as was the case in 9/11. Feldman also assumes that in open political systems, Arabs would pay more attention to their own local concerns and that the Palestinian-Israeli dispute would become less important. Feldman's internal logic is consistent and he argues well, but how realistic are his assumptions? Are Islam and democracy as compatible as he believes? His views are important because he was among the drafters of the interim Iraqi constitution.

A lucid and compelling case for a new American stance toward the Islamic world. What comes after jihad? Outside the headlines, believing Muslims are increasingly calling for democratic politics in their undemocratic countries. But can Islam and democracy successfully be combined? Surveying the intellectual and geopolitical terrain of the contemporary Muslim world, Noah Feldman proposes that Islamic democracy is indeed viable and desirable, and that the West, particularly the United States, should work to bring it about, not suppress it. Encouraging democracy among Muslims threatens America's autocratic Muslim allies, and raises the specter of a new security threat to the West if fundamentalists are elected. But in the long term, the greater threat lies in continuing to support repressive regimes that have lost the confidence of their citizens. By siding with Islamic democrats rather than the regimes that repress them, the United States can bind them to the democratic principles they say they support, reducing anti-Americanism and promoting a durable peace in the Middle East. After Jihad gives the context for understanding how the many Muslims who reject religious violence see the world after the globalization of democracy. It is also an argument about how American self-interest can be understood to include a foreign policy consistent with the deeply held democratic values that make America what it is. At a time when the encounter with Islam has become the dominant issue of U.S. foreign policy, After Jihad provides a road map for making democracy work in a region where the need for it is especially urgent.

From Publishers Weekly Feldman is careful to distinguish his first book from some of the spate of recent works with the word "jihad" in the title, which contend that anti-Western, violent brands of Islam are growing in strength and bravado. Feldman argues, on the contrary, that September 11 and more recent sporadic attacks mark "the last, desperate gasp of a tendency to violence that has lost most of its popular support." Violent jihad, or struggle, he asserts, has lost its luster in the Muslim world except in cases of self-defense, and most Muslims find both Islamic ideals and democratic values appealing. The question then becomes, "Would democratically elected Islamic governments be good or bad for Western interests?" His answer is that we shouldn't fear the worst. Feldman, a professor at New York University's School of Law with a doctorate in Islamic thought from Oxford, notes that both Islam and democracy are based on human equality and are highly flexible, and disputes claims that they are incompatible. About a third of the book is taken up with overviews of Islam and democratic development in specific countries and regions, such as Iran and Indonesia; these chapters cover well-hashed territory, but make useful summaries for nonexperts. Diehard proponents of a separation between mosque and state may remain unconvinced that elected Islamic governments would support such liberal notions as women's rights or religious freedom. But the strength of Feldman's work lies in his consistent and simple reminder that the emergence of democracy in some countries will not necessarily bring about Islamist rule, and that suppressing it would itself be downright undemocratic. Copyright 2003 Reed Business Information, Inc. From Library Journal An NYU law professor with a doctoral degree in Islamic studies considers whether Islamic nations can also be democratic. Copyright 2002 Reed Business Information, Inc. From Booklist Feldman, an NYU professor with a doctorate in Islamic thought, wonders if democracy "can be made to flourish in the lands where Islam prevails?" The answer, according to the author, is a resounding yes. Furthermore, he argues convincingly that the West in general and the U.S. in particular must encourage democratic growth even at the expense of existing relations with autocratic Islamic regimes viewed as our traditional allies. Attempting to prove that democratic ideals are not necessarily incompatible with Islamic thought and culture, he delves into the fascinating history and religion of a largely misunderstood region. Certain to spur debate, this thought-provoking discourse couldn't be published at a more appropriate time. Margaret Flanagan Copyright American Library Association. All rights reserved