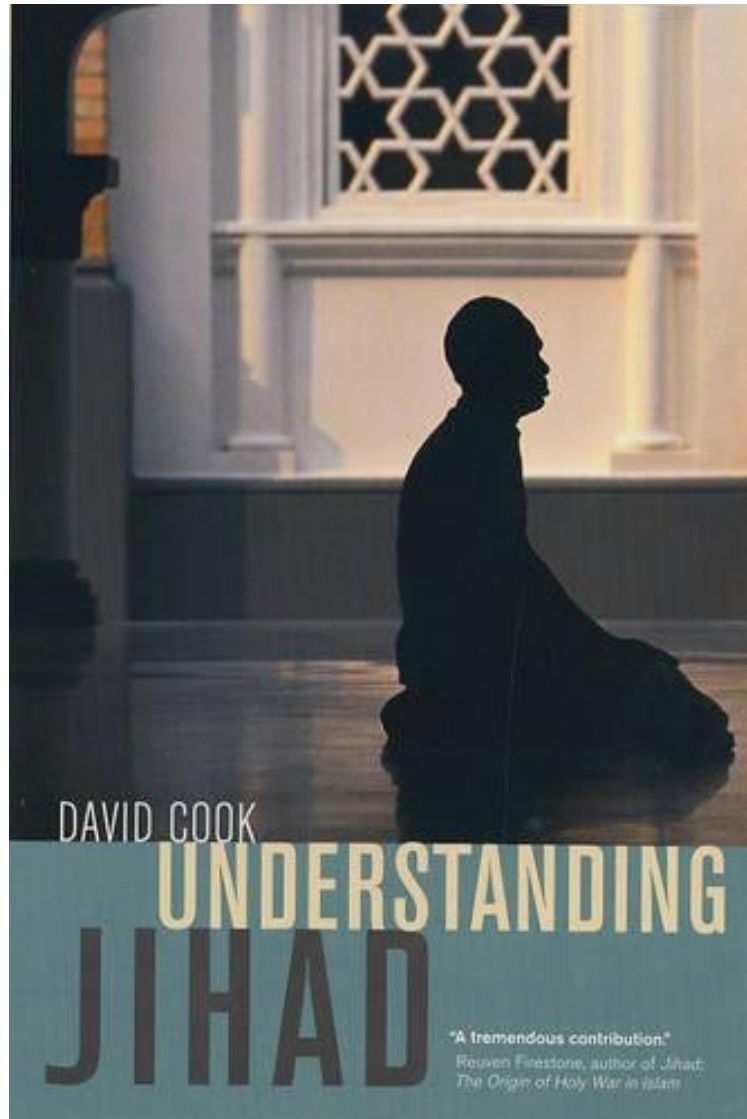


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Understanding Jihad

David Cook

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David Cook : Understanding Jihad before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Understanding Jihad:

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Enlightening book... enables understanding of current events ...By H. M. MinamiEnlightening book... enables understanding of current events and motivations of the Islamic State...41 of 44 people found the following review helpful. What does Jihad mean?By Csar Gonzlez RoucoIt is difficult nowadays to get an objective, nuanced opinion on Islam, neither flattering nor biased against it. If I were to recommend a way to

try and achieve that, I would suggest reading several good books on the matter, including this among them, for in my opinion it is quite complete and fairly assessed. This work aims to answer the following question: Which is the meaning of jihad? Holy war or spiritual striving to improve oneself? Pursuant to the author, during the first several centuries of Islam the interpretation of jihad was unabashedly aggressive and expansive, and the conquest achieved by Islam in the VII and VIII centuries C.A. have been seen by Muslims as one of the incontrovertible proofs of Islam, so that nowadays they are unwilling to confront the fact that such conquest were basically as unjustified as European colonial conquests. The so-called "greater jihad" (i.e., the one with an ascetic and pacific meaning) seems a patently apologetic device not well attested in the hadith literature, which was adduced in order to overcome a resistance to the acceptance and legitimacy of jihad. Cook also points out a reasonable outsider must conclude that radical Islam is indeed a legitimate expression of Islam, yet the fact that the majority of contemporary Muslims do not actively participate in militant jihad demonstrates a decisive rejection of which the radical Muslims are keenly aware. The reality is that jihad during the past two centuries has been a dismal failure, with the possible exception of the expulsion of the Soviet Union from Afghanistan. Besides, it also represents a danger to Muslims, for it is all too easy to turn it against them. All that (and much more that I do not mention in this summary) is developed in 235 pages (footnotes included), the book being divided in the following chapters: 1. Qur'an and Conquest; 2. The "Greater Jihad" and the "Lesser Jihad"; 3. The Crystallization of Jihad Theory: Crusade and Counter-crusade, 4. Jihad during the Nineteenth Century: Renewal and Resistance; 5. Radical Islam and Contemporary Jihad Theory; 6. Globalist Radical Islam and Martyrdom Operations; Afterword; Appendix: Some Translated Documents (e.g. A Communiqu' from Qa'Idat Al-Jihad concerning the Testaments of the Heroes and the Legality of the Washington and New York Operations, April 24, 2002). Nevertheless, although the content is very interesting, the book often happens to be a tough reading; therefore I have rated the book as a 4 star book (content: 5 stars; pleasure of reading: 3 to 1). Other books that I would recommend to read would be the following: ASSESSMENTS OF ISLAM: 1) The best, impartial, wise: "Islam. History, present, future" by Hans Kng (written in German, already available in Spanish, English translation coming in 2007). 2) Harsh but well argued: "Muslims in the West: Redefining the Separation of Church State" by Sami Awad Aldeeb Abu-Sahlieh. 3) Moderate Islam at its best: "The Great Theft : Wrestling Islam from the Extremists" by Khaled M. Abou El Fadl. 4) Autobiography of a courageous woman: "Infidel" by Ayaan Hirsi Ali. She is a controversial thinker with a very interesting life. HISTORY: 1) General: "The Venture of Islam", by Marshall G. S. Hodgson (nowadays a classic included in any bibliography on Islam). 2) Turks: "The Turks in World History" by Carter Vaughn Findley. 3) Political theory: "God's Rule : Government and Islam" by Patricia Crone. 4) Jihad: it also seems interesting although I have not read it yet: "Jihad in Islamic History: Doctrines and Practice" by Michael Bonner. 4 of 4 people found the following review helpful. The Recent Standard on Islamic War Theory(ies) By Geoffrey W. Dennis I once bought Ephraim Karsh's "Islamic Imperialism," hoping to learn about Islamic political theory of war, but it turned out to be yet another history of Muslim conquests. "Understanding Jihad" is the book I wanted. A comprehensive, exhaustively footnoted history of ideas, rather than events. In the absence of English translations of seminal Islamic works, such as the 8th century "Katib al Jihad" by Al Mubarak, this gives the western reader the widest access to Islamic thought on warfare published to date. The author is coolly analytical and carefully parses the sources, from the Quran, through the many Hadith, following the Sunna right through to modern times. He shows the evolution of the term Jihad and its variant meaning to different Muslim theorists, jurists, and activists. Most startling is his historical mapping of the popular modern distinction between "Lesser jihad" (religious militarism) and "Greater jihad" (struggle for self-mastery), showing it to have emerged only in the 10th-11th centuries in a Sufi context, and that the two have largely been seen as complimentary projects, rather than one negating the other. On rare occasions, the author drops into an emphatic tone that makes one want to test that particular claim, but all-in-all, this is a learned brief on the subject, majestic in its citation, and largely compelling in its arguments.

Jihad is one of the most loaded and misunderstood terms in the news today. Contrary to popular understanding, the term does not mean "holy war." Nor does it simply refer to the inner spiritual struggle. This book, judiciously balanced, accessibly written, and highly relevant to today's events, unravels the tangled historical, intellectual, and political meanings of jihad. Looking closely at a range of sources from sacred Islamic texts to modern interpretations, Understanding Jihad opens a critically important perspective on the role of Islam in the contemporary world. As David Cook traces the practical and theoretical meanings of jihad, he cites from scriptural, legal, and newly translated texts to give readers a taste of the often ambiguous information that is used to construct Islamic doctrine. He looks closely at the life and teaching of the Prophet Muhammad and at the ramifications of the great Islamic conquests in 634 to 732 A.D. He sheds light on legal developments relevant to fighting and warfare, and places the internal, spiritual jihad within the larger context of Islamic religion. He describes some of the conflicts that occur in radical groups and shows how the more mainstream supporters of these groups have come to understand and justify violence. He has also included a special appendix of relevant documents including materials related to the September 11 attacks and published manifestoes issued by Osama bin Laden and Palestinian suicide-martyrs.

Stands out in its ability to extend readers awareness of the breadth of Muslim writing about the topic.