

The Women's Foreign Policy Group

Professor Ayesha Jalal
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2005 Carnegie Scholar

"Striking a Just Balance: The Ethics of War and Peace in South Asian Islam"

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Steve Noerper:

President Alan Goodman asked me to extend his very warmest regards and very much wanted to be here. Unfortunately, he is on travel but we warmly welcome the Women's Foreign Policy Group and in particular today Dr. Ayesha Jalal who will be addressing us on 'Striking a Just Balance: The Ethics of War and Peace in South Asian Islam.' I am honored to be able to help introduce Dr. Ayesha Jalal as a Fletcher Tufts alumnus and it's a great pleasure.

Dr. Jalal is a professor of history at Tufts University and the 2005 Carnegie Corporation of New York Scholar whose research explores the ethical compositions and connotations of jihad with a focus on the Muslim presence in South Asia. She has provided fresh insights in that regard and has been a MacArthur Fellow, a fellow of the Woodrow Wilson Center, and has other distinguished credentials which you've seen on your invitation for today. Her manuscript has gone in for the book project that she is working on *Partisans of Allah: Meanings of Jihad in South Asia* which she has done as part of the Carnegie fellowship.

Patricia Ellis:

Thanks to IIE once again-a great partner of ours. We really appreciate the hospitality and look forward to many more collaborations. It's become a regular relationship and it's really nice to be here because we have so many interests in common.

I am Patricia Ellis, Executive Director of Women's Foreign Policy Group. We promote women's leadership and women's voices in international affairs and we do it in a few key ways: through our international issues programs such as our program today and through our directory.

I just wanted to extend a special welcome to a number of people here from IIE and I also wanted to welcome Susan King from the Carnegie Corporation for their support. They are responsible for our doing this series. They have been great partners of ours and

supporters of the series on the role of Islam. This is the third program we are doing in the series. The first one we did was about European Muslims and freedom of expression. Then we did another program about the difference and similarities between international Islamic law and international public law and now we have the opportunity to hear about jihad and Islam in South Asia with Ayesha Jalal.

We are really lucky to have her here today. She has done so many things and Steve mentioned a few of them. In addition to being a Carnegie scholar, she's been a MacArthur scholar. She's also been a scholar at the Woodrow Wilson Center for International Affairs. She's also been an academic for a number of years and has taught at University of Wisconsin-Madison, Tufts, Harvard, and Columbia. She is a graduate of Wellesley College and got her PhD from Cambridge. Today she will be speaking about the book that she is currently working on. She's really accomplished. Please join me in welcoming Ayesha Jalal.

Ayesha Jalal:

Thank you. Well, thank you Steve and Patricia for very, very generous introductions. First of all, I would like to thank the Women's Foreign Policy Group and also the Institute of International Education for having me here. Needless to say, I am extremely grateful to the Carnegie Corporation for making it possible for me present to my findings. I have completed my manuscript largely because of the very generous grant from Carnegie which enabled me to take a year off from teaching. I'll soon be back to teaching and I'll appreciate it even more.

Audience member:

The students will also appreciate it.

Ayesha Jalal:

I am going to begin with two quotations which will appear on the screen as well and I will elaborate what I am trying to say. "Die now, die now. In this love, die. When you have died in this love, you will receive new life. Be silent, be silent. Silence is the sign of death. It is because of life that you are fleeing from the silent one." That is the first quote. "We drink the wine of martyrdom, swimming in ecstasy. This living is not living. We live by getting our heads cut off. We love to receive the gifts of our religion. When we bequeath gifts, it is of our lives. We became homeless for your religion. Allah, accept our sacrifices." These two sets of pieces are celebrating death in the love of Islam. They are different, not simply in their poetic quality, but in what they really convey about the religious and ethical sentiments of the two composers. The first is, of course, by Jiladah de Rhumi and is a variant of the Sufi dictum: to die before dying in the struggle to be human which is generally known as the greater jihad. The second, by Abdullah Shabana Ali of the Lashkar-e-Taiba, renamed Jama'at ud Dawa, speaks of physical death in arms struggle against the enemies of Islam, the lesser jihad leading to promised rewards in the hereafter.

Both kinds of jihads have animated Muslims in varying measure depending on the specificity of the historical context. To say that Rhumi's conception of death is life

affirming while the other is life denying does, at first sight, seem a trifle unfair to that little known militant who cheerfully embraced martyrdom after slaying 13 Indian soldiers in his quest for eternal life in paradise. A suspension of moral judgment, a great favorite of Sunni Islam would seem to be attempting an alternative given the fact that nobody can second guess the will of God. How do we know something is a jihad or not? It all depends on God's will if it's recognized as one. The ethical dilemma confronting Muslims in the contemporary world, however, does not promote and does not allow us the luxury of postponement which has been the Sunni tendency to postpone moral judgment. If Muslims today are showing signs of reluctance to conduct an open-ended debate on the meanings of jihad, both as Islamic faith and ethics, the reasons are clearly political and not because of presumed rigidities in their religion.

Ignoring its multiple and shifting meanings in history, jihad and the aftermath of the attacks on American soil has come to signify the opposition between Islam and the West. It's very much a question of identity. Perceptions of the threat posed by Muslims to the established global order have provided a lucrative market for a spate of journalistic work. I hasten to add a very quickly authored works on jihad, mine of course is a rather different sort of work.

The popular notion that while not all Muslims are terrorists or terrorists are Muslims has vitiated the atmosphere and become really the single biggest obstacle to restoring some semblance on this much maligned concept of jihad. Economists of the *Washington Post* conceded that any attempt to "penetrate the mysteries of Islam" invariably begins with a discussion of jihad as propagated by groups such as Al-Qaeda or even Islamic jihad. But as so often happens with code breakers using the wrong combination, such a view of jihad has entailed attacking the idea which to quote him again "is central to the daily life of ordinary Muslims worldwide while the terrorists get away with waging, with wrapping their crimes in religious phraseology." Politically motivated ways of the understanding of Islam only serve to harden the lines of division between Muslims and non-Muslims and have been grist to an overworked terrorist mill. Muslim and even western analysts have tried pointing to the fact that the war on terror is strengthening the very groups that it is trying to eliminate. This is often misconstrued as sympathy for terrorists, rather than a genuine attempt to clear the air for a meaningful dialogue across the great divisions both within and between the two untenable monoliths of Islam and the West. Equating jihad with violence and terror makes a shared travesty of a concept which for all the distortions and misinterpretations throughout history remains the core ethical principle of Islam.

While challenging the arbitrary opposition between the religious and the secular, I think it's very important to retain the analytical distinction between the religious and the secular in order to understand the evolution of Muslim political thought. This enables us both to recover the Qur'anic roots of the term jihad and also to shed light on the later temple uses made of this ethical idea. The idea of jihad as warfare against infidels has been based on a completely arbitrary division of the world between what is called the abode of Islam, Dar-al-Islam and the abode of war, Dar-al-Harb. This was a distinction made by Muslim legists and has no sanction whatsoever in the Qur'an. Yet ever since the inception of Islam, Muslims have contested its exclusive association with "holy war

against infidels.” In fact, once the early wars of Islamic expansion were over by the 10th century, the concept of jihad as armed warfare became far less salient than it had been in the early defense of the incipient Muslim community. An over reliance on legal and theological texts at the expense of mystical, philosophical, and ethical writings gives a one dimensional view of a concept which historically has been deployed to justify peace with non-believers quite as often as war. Even in South Asia’s pre-colonial, Muslim rulers invoked the idea to justify their wars of conquest against not only non-Muslim but also Muslim rivals. It was a discourse on aman, which is protection and is the obverse of jihad which tended to govern relations between the rulers and ruled in India.

India was described as a Dar-al-Islam, an abode of peace, despite the faithful being completely out numbered by non-Muslims. The mogul emperor Achbuhl’s policy of sulih-kuhl, peace for all, was only the most dramatic and prominent manifestation of the desire of Muslim sovereignty to try and accommodate the religious and cultural differences of their subjects. Those who frowned upon these accommodations like Sheyhemsehandi saw better sense in fostering the sort of conception of Islam based on an idea of difference as a demarcator of social difference with non-Muslims, than on Islam as an ethical and humanistic religion for all mankind. Shahboiola, the tarring Muslim intellectual figure of the early 18th century, drew on facets of Sirhindi’s thought while introducing important variations of his own. His location in Delhi undoubtedly colored his perspective on the relationship between politics and ethics. Yet, he was a monster of textual sources which he interpreted with great creativity and also independent reasoning. This has made him the point of reference for all subsequent Muslim thinkers on the subject of jihad in South Asia and earning him, from some admirers, the appellation of the father of Muslim modernism.

Despite the depths of Valiollah’s thought, his pivotal role in privileging the outer husk over the inner kernel of Islam in order to project the view of Islam as a demarcator of difference, tended to strain the main-stream Sunni view points of Sunni orthodoxy and has had very large consequences for Indian-Muslim views on identity and faith from the late 18th century. His invitation to the Afghan war lord, Amishad ah Abali, to invade Delhi, which he did in a devastating raid, symbolized the drowning of Islamic ethics in the maelstroms of 18th century Indian politics.

There were continuities and discontinuities between Valiollah and Saddam Adamadoralhi who translated Valiollah’s idea of jihad into practice. While having some links with intellectual currents in the Arabian Peninsula, the thought of Valiollah’s plan and his admirers like Saddam Adamadoralhi was shaped to an even greater extent by Indian environment in which they lived. The attachment of the label of a hobby to Saddam Biarelvi’s followers was more a function of British insecurities than an accurate characterization of their doctrines and methods. Indian thinkers and practitioners of jihad never abandoned their Sufi mystical inspiration and camaraderie. Saddam and his reform movement was fashioned more by the religious and moral positivism of Valiollah’s thought, it could hardly escape the temple realities in which the jihad that he fought between 1826 and 1831. It could hardly escape temporality.

A narrative of this jihad which I have provided in my book given as a history of events brings out the tremendous slippage between the theory and the practice, the ethics and the reality. Saddam Biarelvi was constrained not just to seek help from Hindu rulers, financiers, and warriors, but most painfully to fight against fellow Muslims in the north-west frontier. The history of the subcontinents only undisputed jihad that thrust Muslims against Muslims ought to have been a cautionary tale for the future. Yet, it was not the visibilities of jihad as armed struggle that served as a lesson from history, instead what was remembered was the martyrdom of the gallant band of Mujahedeen who sacrificed their lives in the battle of Balacourt fighting the seeks.

Between the jihad of 1826 and 1831 and the aspirations towards jihad in the period leading up to the First World War lay another fascinating phase in the history of Muslim thought and practice in India. The directory of reverberations of Saddam Adamadioralhi's jihad could be heard in the frontier as late as the 1860s and in fact never ceased because that was always a hub of those who were in opposition to the British. Yet it was the crashing of the Great Rebellion of 1857 by superior British military forces and the inauguration of Crown Rodge in 1858 that the Muslim intelligentsia began to take a very different view of jihad. Colonial officials charged Muslims with disloyalty while English authors, as well as Christian missionaries, portrayed Islam as an aggressive religion completely lacking in ethics.

Through his spirited critique of these misconceptions, Saddam Akahn, the great Muslim reformer, pioneered the Indian-Muslim effort to recover the expansive dimensions of jihad as an ethical ideal. Far from repudiating jihad as armed struggle, he underlined its intrinsic importance to faith, Iman, based on creative interpretations of the cannons, as well as Islamic cannons, as well as of Muslim history. Together with his protégé Shirad Valey, he deflected the orientalist critique away from Islamic doctrines to the temple users that had been made by Muslim legists who they argued in framing the Sharia, had actually separated religion- Veen from the world- Bullnia. It was a secularization of Islamic law and not Islam's religious teachings, they both argued, which was the main obstacle to Muslim's accommodating modernity.

The intellectual contribution to redirecting the debate on jihad have continued to influence Muslim circles, especially the liberal circles, even though their loyalism came in for sharp questioning as early as the last decade of the 19th century. The politics of collaboration with the colonial authorities which men like Saddam Akahn propagated, had really ran out of steam by the opening decades of the 20th century in the face of western imperial aggression, especially in parts of the Muslim world.

What survived of their critique of the Orientalists ideas of Islam and the conceptions of Muslims was their critical re-use of critical reason to challenge some of the British precepts of their own community as well as exposing the limitations of the Western liberal rational paradigm in terms of accommodating alternative points of use. One of the first to launch a blistering critique of European expansionism was a man, Kaljimaladeen Alabahn, the mercurial Iranian propagandist, who was reputed to be the fore-runner of Islamic universalism or what is unfortunately called pan-Islamism. The better term is universalism in the age of empire. His anti-colonial thought in politics did not make a

dent on the Indian scene until the emergence of another man called Abuhl Kalam Izahd, an intellectual giant with a popular stance who energized Indian Muslims with his Islamic universalist vision during the course of the First World War. He is best remembered as a secularist, and retrospectively a constructed Indian nationalist, but his credentials as a theorist on jihad have been curiously ignored by his historians of modern South Asia.

Izahd and his compatriots fashioned a discourse on jihad which was completely compatible with the anti-colonial struggle. They sought the authority of the Qur'an to emphasize the need to strike a just balance in propounding in ethics of war and peace in Islam. While seeking an ethical basis in Islam, this strand of thought avoided the pitfalls of Valiollah or Azerhandi by drawing too sharp a line of demarcation with Hindus. This moment of creative accommodation between exterritorial Islamic universalism and territorial Indian nationalism coincided with the advent of Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi, Mahatma Gandhi as the preeminent leader of the amass based anti-colonial movement. Other figures like Bitherun Sindhi who tried translating the theory of the exterritorial dimension of anti-imperialism into practice by seeking the help of Britain's enemies during an international war crisis Russian. He went to Russia. He went to Turkey and was based in Aghansiscolon for a long time. The uncertain allegiance of Patahn tribesmen had direct Saddam Biarelvi's jihad in 1826 and 1831; Sindhi's efforts were hampered by the fickleness of the Ivahn ruling elite, a sobering reminder of the ever elusive nature of Muslim unity.

Muhammad Iqbahl was not unaware of the formidable obstacles in India and beyond that stood in the way of trying to reinvigorate the Muslim Ummah, the worldwide community of Islam. Yet in his poetry and philosophical treaties, he supplied the most subtle invocations of jihad both as an ethical endeavor to be human and as an armed struggle against western imperialist injustice. Iqbal's conversations were a range of Muslim universalist thinkers narrated in his extended poem and possibly his masterpiece, the Ahjamineba, are really indicative of an Islamic philosophical tradition which was rational and able to accommodate ideas from the west which has survived the onslaught of European colonialism. This did not mean there was no need for the poet to awaken Muslims from what he thought was their slumber, as he put it sarcastically in his poem entitled, "Satan's Parliament." This is supposed to be Satan speaking, but it's really Iqbal using that as a poetic device to convey his own ideas about the Sufian ruler who now awaited foreign rule. This was just the opium, just the medicine the east needed. The theological artistry no less defined in the Kavahli the music, Sufi music. There is commotion over the second adulations of Hadge blant, under whose hopeless command is this new fangled cannon. Jihad, in this age, is forbidden for the Muslim. The poet philosopher who gave lyrical expression to the dream of Islamic universalism was, in time, accorded recognition as the spiritual founding father of the nation state of Pakistan.

A journalist and ideologue, who had opposed the creation of the state until the very last moment, came forward to announce a theory of jihad for the post-colonial predicament of Muslims. Mahdudi, who is the founder of the Jimathialist army, a political party that continues to be important in Pakistan, his thought was not devoid of connections with Iqbahl's philosophy and poetry and really the general orientation of anti-colonial

discourse and politics. Mahdudi is always cited in all the books on jihad that have a presentist view of jihad. He and Siakuthrop are generally seen to be the founding fathers of Islamic fundamentalism or even terrorism. What is frequently ignored in these works is the extent to which Mahdudi was really keeping with a longer history of anti-colonial nationalism. That also explains his appeal to so many people. The transformation that he brought about, he had of course continuities with Iqbal, turned out to be really even more compelling than the continuities. Mahdudhi aspired to temple power at the head of an Islamic state, which he wanted to create in Pakistan.

The beacon of individual freedom which had been celebrated by Iqbahl, both in his poetry and his philosophy, was now extinguished in favor of a darker form of theological absolutism. This shift cleared the way for an ecclesiological justification of jihad, not against non-Muslims but against fellow Muslims who did not conform to Mahdudi's vision of Islam. Mahdudhi's ideas of jihad privileging the temple quest for power over personal ethics had powerful echoes in the Middle East, most notably in Egypt through Thykuthrip, the Muslim brotherhood, also in Saudi Arabia and not to mention among jihadi groups in south Asia that came up after his death.

The decisive transformation in the theory and the practice of jihad in South Asia and beyond was triggered off by the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in 1979 and the nature of the resistance that was built up against it. Pakistan's front-line's status in the jihad against communism with American and Saudi financial ideological backing had large implications. The current tussle between Islam and the West is being played out on a global stage. Yet, its spatial center lies in Pakistan, especially in its north-western frontier. Contemporary ideologues of jihad, whose storm troopers have fought in Afghanistan and Kashmir, find some inspiration in the legacy of Marana Mahdudi. However, they depart from his assertitude that jihad has to be sanctioned and directed by the state upon the advice of its religious guardians; they completely disagree with him on that score. In a dramatic break from Islamic tradition, today's partisans of Allah have no qualms about jihad being declared and waged by non-state actors. This is not to say that they do not revere heroes from the past, Saddam Biarelvi's jihad for instance. He remains an iconic figure in South Asian jihad today. The sacredness of his martyrdom obscured short-comings of his temporal struggle.

The eagerness to become a martyr, or a Shahid, is seen by contemporary militant organizations as sanctifying armed warfare against perceived injustices perpetrated by the enemies of Islam Abuhlshabib Ali's last will and testament. I cited this at the start, urging his mother not to weep for him, not to mention his poem on death before dying undoubtedly has a powerful emotive quality. But an exemplifying, wide-spread desire among militants to become Shahid's martyrs, and not just Ghazi's warriors of the faith, raises a most troubling question about the erosion of an ethics of humanity amidst the brutalization of war. Yet, there were always and still are South Asian Muslim voices who upheld jihad as a spiritual and ethical struggle to be human. Most notable amongst them was Mirzar Azuldahanrahli who once said, "Alas, not all things in life are easy. Even man must struggle to be human". But perhaps his most important statement on jihad was his assertion that giving up one's life in jihad is insufficient repayment for the

debt owed to God, the ultimate law giver and this has never ceased in inspiring Muslims to give up life that was given by him. What was owed was never repaid because man owes so much to God and it is only by leading an ethical struggle, an ethical life and being human to fellow human beings, that man can repay the debt. So, just dying is not good enough because God gave you life and so you give it up, so what? That's his point and it's one of the most sort of important statements on this idea of jihad.

It was this conception of ethics that prevented Ralhipoohl's contemporary from plunging into Saddam Adamadioralhi's jihad. He was probably not unaware of spurious tradition Habis, aimed at discrediting the Harigite, a threat to the early Islamic community where the profit of Islam is said to have declared during the last days quote "during the last days there will appear some young foolish people who will say the best words but their faith will not go beyond their throats." They will have no faith and will go out from them their religion and will leave them as an arrow goes out of the game. So wherever you find them, kill them. For whoever kills them shall have a reward on the day of resurrection. This is an intrinsic part of faith, Iman, which claims to the contrary not withstanding. Jihad has become the Akeva belief. I am drawing a distinction between belief and faith between certain segments of Muslims. It's not about faith. It's what you believe. It's sectarian. It's a question of belief, Akeva. This is most true of the early Habis and its contemporary manifestations in the militant Lashkar-e-Taiba. Now I might point out, the Saddam Adamadioralhi wars in early Habis, so Lashkar-e-Taiba owes its inspiration to Saddam Adamadioralhi and his diconic hero. The Lashkar-e-Taiba faith, Iman, is based on a series of closures internal, as well as external. It is this constricting of the heart and a narrowing of the mind among the would-be partisans of Allah which has reduced this concept of jihad to violent struggle against the infidel whether armed or unarmed innocent men, women, and children.

Like an arrow that has left the bow and gone wide off the mark, jihad in the modern world has become a weapon, a political weapon with which to threaten believers and non-believers alike. Only retrieving this arrow and straightening out its jagged edges, not to mention its twisted feathers, can Muslims aspire to achieve those very high ethical ideals which are the embodiment of Iman, faith based on submission to God which is Islam. Until then, the Dorian of poetry or Arab in the subcontinent isn't likely to stir from the grave to assert that things in life can be easier for those who try repaying their debt to God by respecting the rights and dignity of fellow human beings in respect of the ideological or religious denominations.

Patricia Ellis:

Could you elaborate a little bit more on what you see as the differences and similarities between jihad in the Middle East and jihad in South Asia? India has the second largest Muslim population in the world and there have been so many conflicts between India and Pakistan, but is there a big difference between the practice and the general orientation of the Muslims in India versus those in Pakistan? Could you talk a bit about the youth in South Asia so we understand where they are coming from in terms of the religion and jihad?

Ayesha Jalal:

First of all in terms of jihad, the point of my talk and my book is to show that the ideas of jihad have been temporarily specific. They change over time and this is not just a question of the usual view which is to say that there's a gap between the normative theory and the practice. That's not what I am saying because the normative theory itself changes and that's what I am suggesting. You have to modify the concept according to the circumstance. So, the similarities between the Middle East and South Asia today are quite evident in the fact that Mahdudi is the great intellectual and theorist of jihad. The scholar originality lay in advocating jihad against fellow Muslims who were living in a stage of Jihalia which is a pre-Islamic concept, the age of ignorance which effectively means those who do not lead an Islamic life. It's an incorrect translation in the age of ignorance. Qutb adopted it and also advocated violent overthrow of the Egyptian government.

Perhaps most importantly, you must not forget that the old idea of authoritative centers in the old Middle East and dependent peripheries in South Asia or South East Asia has been completely knocked overboard in this age of globalization, in this age of technology. Perhaps most importantly, let's not forget that Osama Bin Laden is raging a jihad from the north western parts that I was talking about today. It's the key link. The South Asian intellectual legacy of jihad is very interesting, and very varied. People need to carry out some of the works in different contexts but I do think the South Asian contribution here is very important which is why I focused on that so I think that's one part of your question.

The India/Pakistan difference, it's important to acknowledge that the concept of jihad that's so worrying us in this age, in this period is really quite new. This is a conception which insisted that jihad could only be waged with the sanction of the state and with the approval of religious scholars. When Pakistan declared or others offered support for the jihad in Kashmir in 1948, he gave a fatwa, an opinion saying that this was an illegal jihad. Why? Not because he was being pacifist, far from it. His argument was based on the Sharia. Pakistan could not support the jihad in Kashmir so long as it maintained diplomatic relations with India. So it followed that it should break diplomatic relations with India and lend its full support. That is what would be correct under Islamic law.

The emphasis again is on the state. Modern day jihadists say that the non-state actors can declare which is a complete break with Islamic tradition. Even the legist tradition which I was critiquing or implying has been critiqued by Muslim international scholars for secularizing the law rather than keeping, even though they call it a divine law. The point here again is context in which India claims to be a secular democratic state. Pakistan in the first few decades actually was opposed to Mahdudi's conception. They offered support to the jihad but never actually declared a jihad against India and then break relations with India.

The real space for these jihadist groups comes about in '79 under the military regime of Zia ul-Haq when he actually changes the model of the Pakistan army to behith which is unity in creation of jihad and piety. The founder of Pakistan gave the slogan unity, faith, and discipline. This was altered for critical circumstances and for the military regimes

which have survived. It has to be admitted that they were spending provided by the United States and Saudi Arabia for this jihad. They have also promoted sectarianism within Pakistan. Pakistan has seen many wars between militant groups who were fighting a jihad against the Russians, Soviets, or Indians, but they are fighting a jihad against themselves.

The temporary specific users of jihad have to be underlined. The difference again is the fact that the Pakistani state, the Pakistan army in particular and its intelligence agencies had reason and still have some reason to support the jihad in Kashmir, if not anywhere else. That's the main difference between conceptions of jihad between India and Pakistan. jihad is very potent as an armed struggle but there are many other conceptions of jihad as a struggle to be human, as a struggle to be a Muslim. It just means to struggle. The idea of war and peace has been temporarily specific. I hope that answers your question about India and Pakistan.

The last one about the youth is an extraordinary variation but contrary to the perception here in the West, in America, and in Britain, it's the madrasas, or the religious seminaries, that are producing these boys. My studies and my examination of the subject suggests that while some madrasas have provided recruits for the jihad in Afghanistan and subsequently Kashmir, the bigger problem is that many of them come from government schools. I have long belabored the point that there is a need for curriculum reform in Pakistan and again, it's connected with the with the state's own view. So, I think that has to change and they are youth who are not necessarily inclined in this way but also economists fight about this all the time what is propelling jihad. Is it economics?

I think it is both economics and ideology because most of the people that I have seen in terms of the recruiting patterns are generally speaking school drop-outs who don't have much of an opportunity but at the same time, they are extremely motivated by a very nefarious ideology which has been projected by these militant groups that have been allowed to operate for several years. Now there has been a crack down but the crack down in the first instance was against sectarian groups who were a threat to the Pakistani military and its economic revival program. Many other groups like Lashkar-e-Taiba, renamed the Gemini Odaba, were not banned and are still not banned even though America has called it a terrorist group. Pakistan has refused to do that. Why? Because Gemini Odaba is useful in the Kashmir jihad and what is more, it has also been very successful in doing a terrific job in the earthquake relief. There's lots of potential there. My work shows that jihad can again take a turn. That is has constantly taken turns.

QUESTION:

I'm interested in knowing where women's movements are in various concepts of jihad.

Ayesha Jalal:

Well, obviously jihad insofar as it is an ethical struggle to be human, women are very intrinsic to it. The mystical in South Asian Islam has had very many prominent Muslim women. In an armed struggle where do women fit in? Obviously the profiteers accorded as saying that the best form of jihad for a woman is the Hajj, the pilgrimage, because it's

tiring and exhausting. You need lots of patience for that ordeal in order to perform the Hajj. But women's conception of jihad has also altered in the more recent times because I've been going through the publications of these groups and you see women's pages where women are urging mothers to give their sons. So there is a rather troubling dimension to this urge to die which is why I started with that.

My point here is there is this Sufi dictum which says to die before you die. You die in order to be a better human being to your fellow human beings. That's a life-affirming ethic, where this ethics which says that we want to fight the enemies of Islam in this world and then be granted eternal paradise is a deeply problematic idea. So there are segments of women who are attracted and who support these jihadist groups. There have been instances of women certainly in the past of the Middle East. Also in South Asia, there have been fewer armed women who have been involved in this armed struggle. I think that there is the ethos of places like Pakistan that did change in the '80s on this idea on the notion of jihad. So, women have been part and parcel in all of that. So I am not sure whether you are referring to the Islamic basis of women's role that is actually restricted to the idea of as an armed struggle to the Hajj. Where as, if it is an ethical struggle to be human, then of course women are foremost in that.

QUESTION:

What are they saying about jihad?

Ayesha Jalal:

I need to take it out of my last book, *Self and Sovereignty*, where I had made the point that religion is used very loosely and that we need to make the distinction between religion as a demarcator of difference: where you want to say that so-and-so is a Hindu, so-and-so is a Muslim, and so-and-so is a Christian. It doesn't tell you anything about somebody's faith. I made a distinction between religion as a demarcator of difference and religion as faith. My entire last book was about religion as a demarcator of difference because I had not explained faith. I then began thinking that I should write something on faith. I stumbled and realized that jihad was intrinsic to the whole idea of faith. I came to jihad not out of struggle, but came to it by looking at conceptions of faith, Iman. And I have done my work on the Qur'an and I can tell you that while there are nations the Qur'an has to be read very carefully and there's historical specificity of the verses but it is always linked by and large with the idea of faith. So these issues are being debated.

The problem with the difference between Islam and Christianity is that there is no established church. There is a sectarian division between Shiites and Sunnis. Shiites have different ideas, so in a sense the crisis of the authority that people speak of comes out of the fact that there is no citadel from whom one can and everybody is trying to be that citadel. So why is it that the likes of Lashkar-e-Taiba or Al-Qaeda are first of all I think that they have acquired strength because of certain historical reasons and I think that the fact that state support was being provided. The jihad against the Soviets was a good thing; it was a good cause with a lot of money coming into it. Now, they are suffering the repercussions of that. It was a business, it's an industry and without taking

away from its ideological justification which I've spent years studying and putting out, there is a very strong economic dimension to it. Why were there people with their fists up in the air after 9/11 when the Taliban lost support? It was because it cut off their life, their livelihood as well. They had a lot invested in this. But this has been debated. It has been advocated by the likes of the Lashkar-e-Taiba's leader who denies it. I went and interviewed him. He says this is all a part of the past and a lot a defamation of the Laskar-e-Laskar, but he is quoted as saying that suicide bombing is best kind of jihad.

What I am trying to get at is that the contestation continues and the problem is that you do need more democratic societies because in a country like Pakistan, to speak against jihad in Kashmir, you run the double risk of being declared anti-national and anti-Islam as well. What you need now is more of a debate. Some of the debate is going on but the more Islam is in the public's fair, the more these issues are debated not because the problem is the ulema, who claim to be the only interpreters of Islam. My work suggests that they have been contested throughout history and they are to be continued to be contested. So, I think that that answers your question.

The armed struggle gets more attention but I can tell you that there is poetry that encompasses the mystical writings. More focus has been because it's a more dramatic moment. Saddam Adamabioralhi's jihad which I do study but there's a lot there that's really gone at the same time and there's those who don't agree with it and they are not just collaborators. There's an extraordinary pragmatism. You can only find a jihad armed struggle if success is assured. So for the most part, the war gives even in 1857, at the time of the rebellion, couldn't agree whether this jihad was legitimate. Muslims themselves have never agreed on the jihad. That in itself is indicative of the debate.

QUESTION:

We Americans or the Western world have so little understanding about how we educate the western world. Nobody really understands. What you spoke today, in depth, I've never heard before, I've never studied. As far we're concerned, the fear is that jihad is going to attack us. If we don't move in there, they're coming here. But what you are saying is that's not the case.

Ayesha Jalal:

I don't deny that there is jihad as armed struggle. You do have non-state actors proclaiming jihad against the United States or against whomever. That actually is completely out of sync with the Islamic tradition. So to constantly conflict the two is a mere problem for one. I might also point out in the work of my many colleagues in this academy, there are many American scholars who have been saying similar sorts of things. Perhaps they haven't put in as much time to look at all the variations of this issue and do not know the specificities all the time, but what I have suggested in my work is that what America needs to acknowledge is that there is a very strong anti-colonial, anti-imperial dimension to this. That is why this idea has taken off. It's precisely this hatred; it's political. These people want to get legitimacy by using the idea of jihad. But I can assure you that first of all it is not consistent with the views of many legists, Muslim legists themselves. Secondly, to allow them to get around with this idea of jihad does

mean that they are hijacking into the Western media. The reason why and one of the points I make in my work is that this so-called Muslim-ambivalence, Muslim-silence. If you want to probe the reasons of this silence its not that Muslims actually want the US attacked, the fact of the matter is that the ambivalence stems from a common core of anti-colonialism. That's a long history.

QUESTION:

On this reaction from anti-colonialism; it's not against modernization. I think if you compare other people in history, it was a period of kind of a terrorist group who had political assassinations. They had their leader who led them and said they would end up going to a paradise. That ideology died because there wasn't anything wider that the population was really behind that they would believe. Now these people are succeeding, in a certain way, because it does create this anti-colonial regime. Because all the miserable regimes are supported by the West and that it has replaced Britain and France's colonial ruler of this century. There are whole wider political feelings under which these movements are coming in and they are the ones saying, "Ok we are the ones putting our lives out there for you." Then there is this dimension where you know the other ones doing this sort of thing so even when you have a free election its Hamas who gets elected. So it's not so simple now, to say this is a matter just of isolating one fact.

Ayesha Jalal:

I do think they want to have something to complain about. What is taught in these madrasas? Two things: first of all, to refute the beliefs of all other sects of Al-Qaeda. Secondly, to oppose anything that is even vaguely related or can be called Westernization, the western dominance. So liberalization is being attack, why? Not for its inherent or what it's doing, but because it's seen to be part of American domination, the capitalist domination, western domination. That's what comes through and here's where it's been gouged in waged users of Islamic tradition because certainly there is no sanction in Islam for non-state actors to reach jihad. It does not exist.

I'll give you an anecdote. As I said, I went to meet the leader of the Lashkar-e-Taiba, with my head covered and only with my eyes showing. I did it because first, I wanted to see the man's depths, how deep he was and in the course of this very interesting discussion where I disagreed with him, I asked him, I said, you know you are doing excellent work for the earthquake relief. I said that you have to change with the times, yes America used you, the government used you, but now the times have changed. So why don't you call this a jihad. This is a jihad. This really is a jihad, its doing relief work. I said this. He kind of got stumped for a moment. He looked at his others sheepishly. But the fact is that he was set up by the intelligence agencies. It was very lucrative and he's doing good work but you have to redirect the debate and it does require a lot more. It needs political solutions. It can be done. There is real will and the real debate will come forward.

The nation-state has a lot to answer. The fact is that the nation-states of the Muslim world have for reasons of their own allowed these little spaces where hatred was accepted. Saudi Arabia is a case and point. Where is this hatred coming from? This Ali

Hadis is very a variant of habits, of the Saudi type. The Saudis gave oil. They gave money and they gave ideology. So, those things need to be addressed. But as far as the Saudi tradition is concerned, it is much richer the whole idea at least.

QUESTION:

I think I can ask this because we are fueling this kind of scholarship. I read all the first nominations. There were 187 in your class and I think about 60 of them were about jihad, I mean about defining it. It was amazing how many wanted to get into that. My question is this though; its always scary the more we learn how much of government didn't understand the cultural, scientific, economic, historic implications of what they were doing so we've had lots of things as you've just described have had implications. What I'm wondering is if, on the other side of this, we'll go through another period of learning but who knows if anyone in power will take those learnings and make different decisions. Is this kind of debate though going, you mentioned that the armed jihadis are often drop-outs or people with economic need going to not always, but is this kind of debate, is your scholarship affecting the kind of debate in the Muslim world about what this means? Is it raising the questions that there are different interpretations?

Ayesha Jalal:

So far I haven't really published it, but I have spoken about it and there are lots of people who are persuaded by this. The general sense since we have stirred around there, has been most recent in Pakistan itself where people are beginning to talk about this. I have been on television to discuss these issues.

QUESTION:

On Pakistani TV?

Ayesha Jalal:

Well, it was actually different. It was British but the Pakistani channel that did do it in Pakistan as well- PTV prime. There is more of a willingness to do so. But it's not a new point that jihad is not an armed struggle but what is wrong with the work is the historical depth and the fact that it is so temporally specific, it changes.

QUESTION:

But that's my point though. Is that understood in the Islamic world?

Ayesha Jalal:

I don't think as much.

QUESTION:

Do you understand history or do you buy whatever is the current?

Ayesha Jalal:

I would be more willing to speak once my book is out. Obviously, I don't want to spill all the beans before my book is out but I am with you.

Patricia Ellis:

You raised a question about the debate within and you're saying so much of this is being driven by outside the world in the sense that there is an enemy that allows a lot of people to unite behind that and the enemy is not going away, so what does that mean in terms of the internal debate? In other words, is it just going to be focused on the terrible things that the replacement of the British colonialist and the Soviets, the Americans and the rest of their friends or is it going on simultaneously within the debate? But isn't this outside force so strong that it's really taking precedence over the internal?

Ayesha Jalal:

Well, yes. The fact is that anti-colonial or anti-imperial sentiment is going to be there but whether this means the notions of jihad — perpetual jihad against infidels — are going to be corrected. More people are going to be aware, and more people are aware. But they will have opposition to the U.S. This empire hasn't faced opposition. The question is that America has to be bold enough to face the opposition and the people will oppose it. Nobody wants to be dominated. Nobody wants to see a power that's as strong as the U.S. so that's going to happen. The problem is when you go and kill innocent people when you carry out these attacks as happened in this wonderful city. Those are the issues on which the Muslims have to take a stand. The reason why there is so much talk about the silence and ambivalence of moderate Muslims is that the practice suggests is precisely political and not because there is something curious about Islam. I think the sooner we begin to see this as a Muslim problem rather than an Islamic problem, then the better it will be for all of us because you put people on the defensive and that also plays into the hands of that over active terrorist appeal that we are supposedly trying to disable.

These are the multiple reasons and I just want to say one thing, you said that our country was not aware, that the United States government was not aware. I think the US government is very well aware. I think the government is very well informed about everything. I certainly believe that they are very well informed about South Asia. They are very well informed about Pakistan. They know exactly what was going on. There are certain things that cannot be done for policy. There are certain reasons. There is the law of unintended consequences but I do think that is there. In international politics you pursue an objective for immediate goal and if there are problems, then you deal with them later.

QUESTION:

Have there been any more movements like in Ireland where the IRA had a political party and they moved out of an armed struggle or not?

Ayesha Jalal:

I think they all have that. I can just rattle off political parties like Islami which is the political wing of Harakut ul-Mujahedeen. Lashkar-e-Taiba it goes under different names. They just change the names. The question is that there is a distinction.

QUESTION:

That's not a way out in a second sense, to ban the political side of Islam?

Ayesha Jalal:

No. Let me be more specific. Let's talk about Kashmir. There has been a very strong militancy there. Lashkar-e-Taiba, they are all involved. Now, the huliati group that was created is the political thing but they do have relations with the militant groups. One of the first demands of the huliati group was that they be allowed to speak to the militants in Pakistan so that when they were going to do something within the agreement, they could carry the militants with them. In that sense, there is a similarity to the Irish situation but I don't think that the huliati has as much influence on certain groups that are lured by the Pakistani intelligence agencies. It has to be in Pakistan and Pakistan has to be squared in this somehow or the other.

QUESTION:

How important is the role of the state?

Ayesha Jalal:

I would say that the state is very important in this.

Audience member:

That it wasn't the separation of the political from the military but it was the economic development in Ireland that fueled the peace. There is no one in Ireland who would say otherwise.

Ayesha Jalal:

Well, I think some of these sorts of things are happening and the U.S. has been on the right track as far as India and Pakistan are concerned. I have been seeing it for years, twenty years and I can say that in the last five years America has played a positive role in the sub-continent and piety. Let economics talk. India and Pakistan, they have come a long way. I am not saying things are ok. Again, the economic dimension is fueling some kind of departure between the two countries.

QUESTION:

What role does China play in all of this?

Ayesha Jalal:

Very good question. It's a very, very important role. China is heavily invested in Pakistan- 12 billion dollars. China is extremely important. Let's talk about the nuclear deal that America is trying to get through and a lot of the establishment is trying to get through the US government. It's great for Pakistan. Pakistan's entire program has been China-based so if India can do business with America legally, then Pakistan can do it with China. It opens the link. China is extremely important for Pakistan. There is also opening up but China is playing a crucial role in the economic terms. However, China is, of course, totally opposed to these jihadists and because of changes; it's now investing in a major way in Pakistan. It's building the port in the south which is extremely important for Pakistan. Another port is being built too. So, China's everywhere.

Patricia Ellis:

Ayesha, this has been amazing and congratulations on this work. To put things in the historical perspective which is so lacking for all of us because we really get to hear about today and maybe about what's happening tomorrow, maybe what happened yesterday. We just need to learn so much more of this and obviously your book is going to have an impact. It's really exciting. So, all the best to you and thank you all for showing your support.