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WIVES AND WORK

Islamic Law and Ethics Before Modernity

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Women in the Ottoman Empire

*A Social and
Political History*

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POLITICS FOR JIHADI WOMEN

Lashker-e-Taiba and Jamaat ud Dawah
as a case study

Samina Yasmeen

Introduction

Literature on jihad has traditionally focused on the activities of Muslim militant groups with a clear gender bias: a jihadi is assumed to be a male with willingness to engage in conflict in the name of Islam. This ignores the significant contribution made by women in jihad both as supporters of jihad and active participants in implementing the jihad project. The focus on jihadi women who joined the so-called Islamic State has shifted this trend to some extent. But even then the analyses remain limited to the manner in which women have promoted and implemented the jihad project designed and developed by men. Such a conception of jihadi activism ignores the agency of women who support, or are actively involved in, jihad in the contemporary world. It fails to appreciate that their participation may also reflect certain views on what is meant by politics, the role of the state, rights of citizens and appropriate foreign policies of a state.

Against this backdrop, this chapter aims to go beyond the male-specific conception of the jihadi project to explore how Muslim women affiliated with jihadi groups approach the idea of politics. This is done with reference to women affiliated with Lashker-e-Taiba (LeT) and Jamaat ud Dawah (JUD) in Pakistan. Based on analysis of books, pamphlets and magazines published by LeT and JuD, it argues that the notion of citizenship and politics among these women expanded from an original focus on the family and social as 'political' to a broader conception of what constitutes the political for women. They presented an integrated picture of politics that encompassed family, societal, economic and political spheres, and asserted their citizenship right to analyse and prescribe appropriate domestic and foreign policy for Pakistan. In doing so, they assumed the identity of 'purposive beings', committed to guiding others to the best – the ideal – for Pakistan. The argument is developed in three parts: the first part focuses on the concept of citizenship and the areas that require exploration if we are to understand views of women affiliated with jihadi organizations. The second part discusses the initial focus on the family and social ties as being political for women of LeT and JuD. The final part discusses how these women presented an integrated view of political, economic and social dynamics in

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WOMEN IN JIHAD

A historical perspective on Western women in the Islamic State (IS)

Seran de Leede

Introduction

Since the proclamation of the Caliphate by Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi on 29 June 2014, hundreds of women and teenaged girls from all over the world travelled or attempted to travel to Syria and Iraq to join the self-styled Islamic State (IS). From the Netherlands, over eighty women have travelled to IS-controlled territory since 2012.¹ From the United Kingdom and France, these numbers are even higher, respectively around 145 and 200 women and teenaged girls.² Studies of the roles of (predominantly) Western women in IS so far show that these women mostly played supportive or facilitative roles as mothers and wives, as propagandists, and as recruiters. Some women have been involved in educative, administrative, logistical, social, and medical positions. On a smaller scale, women in IS have been involved in operational positions, including those that are related to the planning or execution of attacks.³

The involvement of women in IS has generated increased attention for women's roles in jihad, particularly as proselytisers and (potential) militant operatives. Yet, it often remains poorly understood how to interpret women's supportive and facilitative capabilities in waging jihad and, as a consequence, how to assess women's relevance for jihad. This chapter aims to provide a deeper understanding of women's roles in jihad and how they can be interpreted. It commences with a brief discussion of jihadist doctrine regarding women's 'permissible' role in jihad with the purpose of pointing out the controversy within jihadist ideology concerning the militant position of women in jihad. Drawing from the author's ICCT Policy Brief 'Women in Jihad, a Historical Perspective',⁴ it offers historical illustrations of women's roles in different jihadist groups (or groups that claim to wage jihad) to explore the different roles women have played in jihadism in the past. Building on this historical context, it zooms in on women's roles in IS as identified in existing research, before elaborating on how these roles can be interpreted and understood in the conclusion.

Controversy around the permissibility of female combatants in Jihad

The classical Islamic literature does not provide for one particular reading of what are 'permissible' roles for women in jihad. Overall, as described by Farhani Qazi in her exploration of the early female warriors of Islam, women during the early Islamic battles of the seventh