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THE POLITICAL RELEVANCE OF THE DOCTRINE OF JIHAD IN SADAT'S EGYPT

Rudolph Peters

It is common knowledge that religion and politics in Islam are closely related, and that in this relationship the prevalent mode has been for the man of the sword to dominate the man of the pen.

Elie Kedourie

Since the beginning of the 1970s the doctrine of jihad has made a comeback in the Islamic world. While in previous decades it appeared to have faded to a mere theory – mainly a topic for academic discussion – occasionally it was allowed to play a marginal role in politics when Islamic dignitaries invoked it to spur on the fighting spirit of Muslim soldiers in the Arab–Israeli wars. However, since the beginning of the 1970s this has changed, and Islamic symbols and idioms have become more central to political discourse as Islamic movements have reappeared on the political scene. As a consequence, the doctrine of jihad has returned to favour.

The following paper deals with the political role of the jihad in Egypt under Anwar Sadat (1970–81). The word jihad has many meanings, usually connected with an effort towards a commendable aim, which is as a rule religious (such as the struggle against Satan or one's own evil inclinations) but need not be so. Ten years ago for instance, jihad for cleanliness of public places and the removal of garbage from the streets was proclaimed by the authorities in Cairo. The term will be discussed here, however, in its sense of fighting and armed struggle, which is its principal meaning in traditional Islamic law. Indeed, it seems appropriate to use the term in this way here,
as the period under consideration was terminated by a violent act that was justified by the doctrine of jihad.

When is violence permissible and against whom? These practical and concrete questions regarding the application of jihad doctrine are the central ones in this paper. The abstract and theoretical aspects of jihad are of minor importance, as hardly any novel points of view have been put forward on the subject during our period. The traditionalists copy the phrases of the classical works on *fiqh*; the modernists emphasize the defensive aspect of jihad, regarding it as *bellum justum* in modern international law; and the fundamentalists view it as a struggle for the expansion of Islam and the realization of Islamic ideals.\(^2\)

After a survey of the growth of Islamic movements in Egypt,\(^3\) two discussions of jihad doctrine will be analysed here. The first is a debate on the application of the rules of jihad to the Camp David Agreement between Egypt and Israel. The other revolves around the question of whether jihad against the Egyptian government is allowable under the present circumstances.

The Arab–Israeli war of 1967 is usually regarded as having been crucial to Islamic revival in the Middle East. It marked not only the defeat of Israel’s Arab neighbours, but also that of two radical Arab nationalist regimes, the result of which was to discredit the secular nationalist and socialist ideologies they espoused. One response was the rise of leftist radicalism, claiming that the defeated regimes had not been radical enough and represented by groups of intellectuals and university students, and by the various Palestinian nationalist organizations. Between 1967 and the October War of 1973 both were repressed: the leftist groups of intellectuals and students were dealt with locally, while King Husayn of Jordan acted as the proxy of the other Arab states in the region in subduing the Palestinian National Movement in 1970 and 1971.

The containment of the left was a corollary of the realignment of forces in the Middle East, another more lasting result of the 1967 defeat. If only for financial reasons, Egypt and Syria had to come to terms with the conservative Arab oil-producing countries, by abandoning their radical stance and bringing their policies more in line with the wishes of their patrons. As a result, a certain Islamization of political vocabulary and symbolism in political discourse took
place, particularly evident in the October War of 1973 (‘Operation Badr’), when religious images and concepts were much more frequently used than they had been in 1967.

Perhaps an even more important aspect of the new state of affairs in the region was the rapprochement between the erstwhile radical regimes and the United States. President Nasser’s acceptance of William Rogers’s plan for a settlement in the Middle East in 1970 anticipated Sadat’s pro-Western policy, which – via the expulsion of the Soviet military advisers, the removal of the pro-Soviet faction in the state-apparatus, and the crack-down on Communist and Nasserist students – ultimately led to the Camp David Agreement in March 1979.

Connected with the establishment of American hegemony in the Middle East was the economic integration of the Arab states, especially Egypt, into the capitalist world market. After 1967, in order to gain the support of the middle and upper classes who had been alienated from the regime by its socialist economic policies, Nasser had inaugurated a policy of producing and importing more consumer goods. Sadat not only continued this policy, but gave it more prominence by announcing his Open Door Policy in 1975. The effect of all this was the rise of a section of the bourgeoisie that profited from the increased import trade of luxury consumer goods and, above all, from the increased economic links with other countries. This group delighted in the ostentatious display of its rapidly-acquired wealth, while the overwhelming majority of Egyptians was obliged to live off extremely meagre public sector salaries, or eke out a scanty livelihood as agricultural wage labourers. Such conspicuous consumption by the newly rich sharpened the social and economic contradictions in society.

Heightened social and economic tensions provide a fertile soil for radical movements militating against the established order for a just society. Such tensions are emphasized in the idioms in which radical movements express themselves, whether they derive from secular ideologies like socialism, anarchism, or fascism, or from religious thought. The ideology to which a specific movement subscribes is therefore contingent on the prevailing cultural and political conditions, and it is to these we must look for an explanation of why most of the Egyptian radical movements in the 1970s were inspired by Islam.

One important cause was the tension that existed in Egyptian
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culture. In the wake of reorientation towards the West, Western consumer goods and living styles had invaded certain sections of Egyptian society, via the mass media. In short, Western popular culture was much more in evidence in 1975 than in the preceding quarter of a century, and posed a threat to many people, especially those who lacked the financial means to join in, and thus felt themselves excluded. At the same time, the introduction of Islamic norms and ideals into politics and public life was stimulated by the government, which hoped to use Islam as a weapon against the left and simultaneously to curry favour with the Arab oil states. This contradiction between Western culture and the Islamization of public life and political discourse, in addition to the disparagement of leftist ideas in the wake of the 1967 defeat, and the government’s persistent attack on the evils of ‘atheist ideologies’, created the conditions for the rise of Islamic movements, which sought to reform society in the direction of the Islamic norm.

The first movement of this kind consisted of the Jama‘at Islamiyya (Islamic Groups) at the Egyptian universities. They were founded around 1972 with active support from the government, in the hope of their countering the Communist and Nasserist student organizations then dominating political life at the universities and since 1968 the source of frequently staged protest meetings, demonstrations, and sit-ins against the government. However, though they were backed by the regime, the Jama‘at Islamiyya were not mere instruments with no will of their own. They had their own ideas and objectives, as is evidenced by their falling-out with the government over Sadat’s journey to Jerusalem in 1977.

By then they had acquired a large following among students, as a result of assiduous work and clever organizing which, together with concurrent government backing, had enabled them to take over the student unions in 1976-7. Part of their popularity was due to their ability to provide Islamic solutions to common problems such as transportation for women students, who were being harassed in the overcrowded buses of the Cairo public transport system. The condition in this case, however, was that women must thereafter wear Islamic dress. As an alternative to the expensive private lessons necessary to pass examinations, study groups were organized in mosques. Cheap copies of textbooks were distributed, and efforts made to improve student housing. At the same time the Jama‘at Islamiyya militated at the universities for the application of Islamic
norms such as the separation of the sexes in lecture halls, the banning of film shows and singing, and the establishment of prayer rooms. As a demonstration of their popularity, they organized mass prayer meetings in large squares or in stadiums. Like all Islamic movements, the Jama'at Islamiyya wanted to create a truly religious society. They tried to mainly by peaceful means, which is to say by preaching, by creating a large following, and by themselves attaining influential positions in society.

The year 1977 was a turning-point for the Jama'at Islamiyya. Because of their critical stance towards Egypt's new policy vis-à-vis Israel, the government withdrew its support and began to look against them. It withheld subsidies from the student unions they dominated and tried to rig the unions' elections. Finally, in 1979, all student unions were banned, which deprived the Jama'at Islamiyya of their legal cover, their organization, and their funds. Many of their militants became more radical and in 1979 and 1981 were implicated in sectarian violence in Upper Egypt and Cairo. Their activities came to an end when many of their active members were arrested during Sadat's crack-down on religious groups in September 1981.

A second tendency within the Egyptian Islamic movement is represented by the group supporting the old magazine of the Muslim Brotherhood, al-Da'wa, which was allowed to resume publication in 1976. This group considers itself as the rightful heir of the Muslim Brotherhood of the 1930s and 1940s, and Hasan al-Banna's portrait is prominently featured on the magazine's pages. The social background of its following, however, is totally different. Whereas the membership of the Muslim Brotherhood of old was drawn chiefly from the lower and middle classes, the al-Da'wa group represents the interests of the section of the bourgeoisie that has profited from the Open Door Policy and has close economic ties with the Arab oil countries. This group wants Egypt to forge tighter political and economic links with oil countries, and is therefore against any rapprochement between Egypt and Israel.

It also wants to realize the ideal of the Islamic state by the introduction of Islamic Law, the shari'a, not by the overthrow of the state, but rather by means of press campaigns and lobbying, by legal means, and adherence to the established political conventions. A number of the group were arrested in September 1981 and their organ was banned. However, the group remained in existence and came to an agreement with the opposition Wafd party to join its election
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platform, with the result that the al-Da'wa group is now represented in the People's Assembly.

Both the al-Da'wa group and the Jama'at Islamiyya operated legally. As they were committed to the Islamization of state and society by peaceful means, they represented the reformist trend in the Islamic movement. The revolutionary trend consisted of a number of radical organizations that did not eschew the use of violence as a means of realizing their aims. They justified this by the doctrine of takfir, the view that in spite of all appearances, the rulers or even society as a whole is godless (kafir), an idea whose origins can be traced back to heretical sects in the early centuries of Islam and has recently been revived among the Muslim Brothers detained in the Egyptian prisons and detention camps. The members of these organizations were mainly students and young university graduates with rural backgrounds. Entangled in the contradictions between their conservative background and university life in the big cities, they would frequent mosques and religious gatherings, where they could easily be recruited by the leaders and older members of these organizations.

There have been, and probably still are, several of these groups. But as they work clandestinely it is difficult to keep track of and get information about them. However, three of them have attained notoriety, being implicated in bloody incidents, after which their membership and leaders were tried and sentenced. In April 1974, a group led by Salih Sirriyya, a young Palestinian with a doctorate in science, carried out an attack on the Military Academy in Heliopolis, as the first stage in a planned coup d'état. The organization, named Munazzamat al-Tahrir al-Islami, but later commonly referred to as the Military Academy Organization (Munazzamat al-Fanniyya al-Dhariyya), was started in 1971 when Sirriyya came to Egypt. The plan—an act of violence—ghadba lillah (an outcry for the sake of God)—was to topple the government and establish a true Islamic state. The attempt was foiled, however, and the members of the group arrested and brought to trial.

Three years later, in July 1977, the members of another group, calling itself ‘The Association of Muslims’ (Jama'at al-Muslimin), but better known as Jama'at al-Takfir wa-l-Hijra, were arrested for having kidnapped and assassinated the minister of Awqaf, Muhammad Husayn al-Dhahabi. This organization was also established around 1971. Its leader, Mustafa Shukri, an agricultural engineer, had
recruited members both in Upper Egypt and in Cairo and Alexandria. There is a curious contradiction between the basic tenets of the movement and the violent acts that marked its end. As had many other groups, it considered all outsiders as unbelievers (takfir). However, as it realized it did not yet have the strength to fight the prevailing unbelief, it saw its duty as separation from society (hijra) and building a genuine Islamic community. After the growth of this community and the attainment of a position of strength, it would wage the struggle against the rest of society with the object of establishing a totally Islamic society and state. It was a typical long-term strategy. However, when in the beginning of 1980 a number of the organization’s members were arrested, many others pressed for immediate action to free their imprisoned brethren. They kidnapped al-Dhahabi—in their view a prominent representative of the corrupt establishment of official ulema—and demanded that the government set their comrades free, publish their statements widely in the media, and pay them a large sum of money. When these demands were not met, they killed their hostage.

The last of these three groups is the Jihad Organization (Tanzim al-Jihad), which was responsible for President Sadat’s assassination. This group only recently established itself in Upper Egypt and Cairo and was not fully organized before 1980. It prepared for a coup d’etat, which in its opinion would almost automatically be followed by a popular revolt. There were some soldiers among the organization’s members and one of them, Khalid al-Islambuli, was directly responsible for the murder of Sadat in October 1981.

In many countries of the Islamic world it is common practice for governments to seek endorsement of important or controversial policies by the official ulema, in order to show that these policies conform to or, at least, do not run counter to the prescriptions of Islam. This is exactly what Sadat did when he prevailed upon the Al-Azhar University and the religious institutions connected with it to issue statements on the legality according to the shari‘a of the Camp David Agreement of March 1979. Apparently, it took some time to convince them to endorse this new policy—in the past they had often issued declarations to the effect that war against Israel was obligatory and that the conclusion of a peace treaty forbidden— for the fatwa was not drafted before 9 May 1979. For reasons unknown, this fatwa seems not to have been published. On 10 May, however,
a declaration by the Azhar sheikhs was published in both al-Ahram and al-Akhbar, summarizing the arguments of this fatwa. Eight days later it was followed by an elucidation by the minister of Awqaf, ‘Abd al-Mun‘im Nimr, in response to criticism by ulema in other Arab countries. Much later, on 16 November 1979, the state mufti (Mufti l-Diyar al-Misriyya) issued a fatwa on the subject. The discussion here is based on the declarations of the Azhar sheikhs and the minister of Awqaf published on 10 and 18 May 1979.

The official ulema’s arguments in support of the agreement derive from the classical doctrine which teaches that the head of an Islamic (al-imam) may conclude an armistice with the enemy whenever he deems one to be in the interest of Muslims. However, they do not refer to the duration of the armistice, which, according to most legal schools, must be limited in order to keep the jihad obligation alive. This omission may have been merely political, but could also be a consequence of the ulema’s modernist position that peaceful coexistence is the normal state of affairs between Dar al-Islam and Dar al-Harb, a view different from the classical doctrine that holds that war, jihad, is the natural relationship between the Islamic and non-Islamic worlds. In the latter doctrine, a peace treaty between an Islamic and a non-Islamic state is allowed only in case of necessity, as a temporary suspension of hostilities.

The evidence the ulema adduce for the general permissibility of treaties with the enemy is similar to that found in the standard texts on fiqh: they cite K 8:61 (‘And if they incline to peace, do thou incline to it’) and the examples of the Prophet in concluding a treaty with the Meccans at Hudaybiyya and in planning to conclude an agreement with the Ghatafan tribe to the effect that, for a consideration, they would abandon the confederacy of tribes then laying siege to Medina.

The ulema’s point of view was severely criticized in al-Da’wa by ‘Abd al-‘Azim al-Mata‘ni, who defends the view that in the present circumstances a peace treaty with Israel is not allowed according to Islam. The circumstances under which the Prophet concluded the treaty of Hudaybiyya were so different from the present situation, he argues, that this comparison cannot be offered as evidence for the lawfulness of the treaty with Israel. And what is more, the treaty of Hudaybiyya was to last only ten years. The intended pact with Ghatafan was never made and cannot, therefore, in al-Mata‘ni’s view, count as evidence. As for K 8:61, he argues that this verse has no
general validity, and must be read in combination with K 47:35 (‘So do not faint and call for peace; you shall be the upper ones’). The former verse is applicable when the enemy recognizes all Muslim rights, whereas the second verse obtains when this is not the case—as in the present situation according to al-Mata’ni. Moreover, many jurists have taught that K 8:61 has been abrogated by the Verses of Fighting, such as K 9:5 (‘Then, when the sacred months are drawn away, slay the idolaters wherever you find them, and take them, and confine them, and lie in wait for them at every place of ambush’). But even if K 8:61 has not been abrogated, al-Mata’ni maintains, the Koran makes fighting incumbent in a number of specific instances—as in the situation of an oppressed Muslim people asking for help—on the strength of K 4:75 (‘How is it with you, that you do not fight in the way of God, and for the men, women and children who, being abased, say, “Our Lord, bring us forth from this city whose people are evildoers, and appoint to us a protector from Thee, and appoint to us from Thee a helper”?’).

Interestingly, al-Mata’ni does not mention the role of the head of the state in deciding when to wage war and when to accept peace, something which is an essential and realistic element in the classical theory. He was therefore an easy prey for the official ulema. The main thrust of the Al-Azhar’s counter-attack was directed against this politically sensitive issue, and in his reply al-Mata’ni was forced to recognize the head of state’s authority in these matters. His criticism consequently emasculated, he tried to present it as counsel to the ruler, similar to advice offered by the Companions to the Prophet. The Al-Azhar scholars also charged that al-Mata’ni had misunderstood why the examples of the treaty of Hudaybiyya and the intended pact with Ghatafan were cited. It was not in order to prove by analogy that the conclusion of the Camp David Agreement is permitted, but in evidence of the principle that peace treaties between Islamic and other states are permissible.

It is not surprising that the attack against the Camp David Agreement should come from the al-Da’wa group. They had criticized the Egyptian-Israeli rapprochement from the very beginning. This was consistent with their close ties to the conservative Arab oil states and an ideology that ascribed all evils in Egyptian society to four external enemies: Judaism, the Crusades, Communism, and Secularism. As peace with Israel thus would mean surrender to one of the main enemies of Islam, it is intolerable.
Moreover, depicting Jews as intrinsically untrustworthy and wicked, *al-Da'wa* reasons that any pact with them would be precarious. Occasionally *al-Da'wa* refers to the effort of introducing Islamic law and Islamicizing society as jihad. From the context, however, it is clear that no armed struggle is meant: ‘Our country is an Islamic country and Islam must return to it through our jihad. He who claims that it is *dar harb* only wants to surrender it as an easy prey to the enemies of Islam’. The contributors often mention that jihad signified much more than fighting and that spreading the message of Islam by peaceful means is also a form of jihad. Obedience to the *al-Da'wa* is regarded as a natural necessity: ‘Obedience is following orders... if there is no obedience, civil war will break out... Obedience then is obligatory as long as it does not constitute disobedience to God’s commands’. These attitudes clearly reflect the social background of the *al-Da'wa* group, whose economic position is linked to the Open Door Policy and who are not committed to radical political and socio-economic change in Egyptian society.

If the word jihad is used in *al-Da'wa* to mean fighting, this is (apart from occasional references to the freedom struggle of oppressed Muslim peoples like the Afghans, the Muslims of the Soviet Union, or those of the South Philippines), always done in the context of the Arab–Israeli conflict. But anyone joining this struggle must await the orders of the head of state, as is clearly shown in the following words of the editor-in-chief, ‘Umar al-Tilimsani, written in October 1978, with reference to the Camp David talks:

If asked for an alternative I would say that I am ready, and, I believe, all Muslims and non-Muslims of Egypt are ready to place themselves to-day and tomorrow under the command of the president of the state. If he appeals to *God*’s Book, demands from us the austerity required by the nature of the situation, and prepares us dogmatically, morally and militarily for the decisive stand, we shall not bargain or demand a price. Because then we shall enlist ourselves for jihad in the way of God, because jihad in the way of God is the only way to reduce every aggressor to his natural proportions.

There is nothing here that reminds us of the zeal of the Muslim Brothers in 1948, when they sent guerrilla bands to Palestine to aid the Palestinian people before the war between Israel and the Arab states had broken out. On the contrary, jihad against Israel is not envisaged as something immediate or pressing:

We shall seek its [the Jewish occupation of Jerusalem] remedy only in
devotedness and sacrifice, and in the training for the holy jihad (al-jihad al-muqaddas), which we must promote with the youth of the present generation, so that they can teach it to those who come after them. We shall be victorious through God's favour and power: 'And they will say, "When will it be?" Say: "It is possible that it may be nigh"'. (K 17:51.)"

For the other Islamic political groups war against Israel is of only secondary importance. Foremost on their agenda is the struggle in their own country to establish an Islamic government or society. The issue is lucidly dealt with in al-Farida al-Ghaiba (The Absent Duty), a booklet written by Muhammad 'Abd al Salam Faraj, the ideologue of the Jihad Organization and our main source for discussion on internal jihad. The author adduces three arguments in order to refute the view that the jihad duty requires that Jerusalem be liberated before anything else. In the first place, he argues, the Jews are in the present situation the further enemy, whereas the rulers of Egypt are the nearer one. According to the prescriptions of the Koran the nearer enemy ought to be attacked first (cf. K 9:123: 'O believers, fight the unbelievers who are near to you and let them find in you a harshness'). His second point is that the struggle for the liberation of Jerusalem can only be waged under the banner of Islam, not under the leadership of impious rulers. Finally he maintains that the colonial presence of Israel in the Islamic world is completely the fault of the rulers of the Muslims. These must therefore be replaced before Jerusalem can be set free.

The standpoint of the Association of Muslims (al-Takfir wa-l-Hijra) is similar on this score, except that, as we shall presently see, they not only abominate the rulers, but Egyptian society at large, with all its institutions. They therefore keep aloof from the struggle between Israel and Egypt in its present state and are not inclined to fight in order to rescue Egypt and Egyptian society. Their leader, Mustafa Shukri, expressed himself as follows on this point: 'If the Jews or others would arrive here, the movement should not participate in combat within the framework of the Egyptian army, but, on the contrary, go to a safe place. In general our line is to flee from both the external and the internal enemy and not to offer resistance'.

The well-known fundamentalist thinker and militant, Sayyid Qutb (hanged in 1966), used to elucidate the concept of jihad by saying that it is the permanent revolution of the Islamic Movement. This is an indication of the centrality of the concept in Islamic activist thought. This notion of jihad, that is internal jihad, the struggle within one's
own society in order to change it according to the Islamic ideals, has also been the subject of heated discussions. The analysis here concentrates on the definition of the enemy and the permissibility of the immediate use of violence, and draws on two texts: the booklet ‘The Absent Duty’ (al-Farida al-Ghaiba) by Muhammad ‘Abd al-Salam Faraj, which expresses the views of the Jihad Organization and also expounds the ideas of other groups and organizations in order to rebut them, and its refutation by the Sheikh al-Azhar, Jad al-Haqq ‘Ali Jad al-Haqq. The booklet consists of an introduction and three parts. Part One deals with the definition of the enemy and as to demonstrate that the present rulers of Egypt are unbelievers and must therefore be fought. In Part Two, a number of contrary positions, which actually represent the points of view of the whole spectrum of Islamic organizations and groups, are systematically refuted. The last part is of less interest to us; it mentions a number of instances of the Prophet’s and the Companions’ use of tactics and enumerates the rules of warfare.

The title of the book refers to the jihad duty. According to the author, the command to take part in jihad is no longer observed and is even denied by some. In his introduction the author stresses that jihad is the method by which to establish an Islamic government, a duty for all Muslims because God orders men to judge and govern according to His revelation: ‘So judge between them according to what God has sent down, and do not follow their caprices’. (K 5:48.) Finally, the author cites traditions, some of which are clearly millenarian and connected with the coming of the Mahdi, in order to demonstrate that after a period of tyranny an Islamic state, encompassing the whole earth, will soon be established.

Jihad is basically a struggle of Muslims against unbelievers who not protected by a treaty of dhimma or an armistice. An appeal to the doctrine of jihad to justify a struggle waged against people who are to all appearances Muslims and consider themselves so, requires some reasoning. This is done in the first part of ‘The Absent Duty’. The props of the author’s disquisition are two fatwas by the well-known fundamentalist scholar Ibn Taymiyya (1263-1328) dealing with the consequences of Mongol or, as he calls it, Tartar rule in the Middle East. The first fatwa addresses itself to the question of whether these rulers are Muslims as they claim to be, and the second explains the position of Muslims under their rule.

In spite of their profession of faith (shahada), it is beyond dispute
for Ibn Taymiyya that these Mongol rulers must be fought because they are unbelievers. For they venerate and obey Genghis Khan and consider him of the same rank as the Prophet Muhammad; they take unbelievers as allies against Muslims; and, what is of the utmost importance, they do not apply the shari’a, but judge according to their own law (yasaq or yasa). Even if it is held that they are not unbelievers, this last charge justifies that they be fought on the strength of K 2:278 (‘O believers, fear you God; and give up the usury that is outstanding, if you are believers. But if you do not, then take notice that God shall war with you, and His Messenger’), which was directed against the inhabitants of Taif, who first refused to abide by the shari’a and abandon their usurious practices. Territory under their rule where Muslims live is, according to Ibn Taymiyya, neither dar harb nor dar silm [dar islam]. It is a category of its own, ‘where both Muslims and those who deviate from the shari’a must be treated each according to what they deserve’. Muslims are certainly not allowed to help such rulers.

For ‘Abd al-Salam Faraj it is not difficult to find parallels between the Middle East under Mongol rule and present-day Egypt: the Egyptian rulers apply laws made by unbelievers instead of the shari’a, they take unbelievers as their allies, and they are venerated even more than their Creator: ‘Therefore the rulers of these days are apostates. They have been brought up at the tables of colonialism, no matter whether of the crusading, the communist, or the zionist variety. They are Muslims only in name, even if they pray, fast, and pretend that they are Muslims’. He then continues and expounds in detail that apostasy is much more serious than just unbelief, because the shari’a prescribes that the apostate must be killed unless he repents, whereas unbelievers may escape this fate by, for example, accepting dhimma or an armistice.

Having thus established that jihad against the government is incumbent immediately, the author devotes Part Two to refuting alternative arguments. He first tackles those who maintain that an Islamic society and an Islamic state can be brought about through individual piety, obedience to God, and by establishment of pious associations (jam’iyat khayriyya). Piety and obedience, he argues, can only mean jihad under the present circumstances, and founding pious associations is out of the question because they perforce must collaborate with the infidel state.

Next he addresses the Jama’at Islamiyya, without, however, men-
tioning their name. That they want to realize their ideals simply by propaganda (da‘wa) and by creating a broad base is only a consequence of their cowardice, because populism cannot be a substitute for jihad. Moreover, the Koran teaches that the establishment of an Islamic regime is the work of only a very small group: ‘For few indeed are those that are thankful among My servants’ (K 34:11); ‘If thou obeyest the most part of those on earth they will lead thee astray from the path of God’ (K 6:116); and ‘Yet, be thou ever so eager, the most part of men believe not’ (K 12:103). This minority, the author goes on, must first try to get control of the mass media by force, and the rest will then follow automatically: ‘The effort that is really useful is the one for the sake of setting free these mass media from the hands of these... It is well known that as soon as we are victorious and have command, there will be a response, for He Who must be praised and is exalted says: “When comes the help of God, and victory, and thou seest men entering God’s religion in throngs”’ (K 110:2). As can be imagined, Faraj makes short shrift of the view that was sometimes brought forward by the Jama‘at Islamiyya, according to which a real Islamic state could eventually be founded by the pious and devoted after having won positions of influence in society. From such people, he asserts, nothing can be expected, as they will have had to collaborate with the existing state in order to establish themselves, and will have been corrupted in the process.

Another target of his attacks is the Association of Muslims (al-Takfir wa-l-Hijra). This group considers not only the rulers as unbelievers, but also the entire Egyptian society (takfir). However, being well aware of the balance of power between their small band and the rest of society, their tactics differ from those of the Jihad Organization. Their solution is to withdraw or emigrate from society, either geographically by going to live in small settlements along the edge of the desert, or socially by founding a community within, but totally separated from, society at large. They compare their lack of power with that of Muhammad and the first Muslims during the earliest Meccan period, when Muhammad only preached in secret to friends and relatives. Their strategy is a long-term one. They want to create a counter-society which, once it has acquired power, would proclaim jihad and take over the country.

After a short exposé of the theory of hijra in Islam and under what conditions emigration is compulsory, Faraj ridicules their notions: ‘There are also those who say: The way to establish the Islamic state
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is by emigrating to another place, establishing the state there and coming back again victoriously. But in order to save effort, they should establish the Islamic state in their own place and then leave victoriously'.²⁵ Neither does he approve of their view that jihad is not (yet) obligatory since, as al-Takfir wa-l-Hijra maintain, their position is to be compared with that of the first Muslims in Mecca. The consequence would be, he argues, that all other prescriptions, for example fasting, that were revealed after this Meccan period, would not be applicable either. This is obviously not the case. Moreover God has said: ‘Today I have perfected your religion for you’ (K 5:3).

The jihad obligation can take different forms. In general it is a collective duty (fard kifaya), for example a duty of which the fulfilment by a sufficient number of believers is the responsibility of the whole community. Only under special circumstances can the jihad duty become an individual obligation (fard 'ayn) for everybody who is capable of going to war. One such case occurs, however, when enemies attack and occupy Islamic territory. Thus, in the concluding sections of Part Two the author demonstrates that under the present circumstances jihad has indeed become an individual duty, as the enemies, the infidel rulers, have taken over the country and are occupying it. He further deals with some modernist positions on jihad, now held by many official ulema. The first view he attacks is that jihad is only defensive warfare:

This is a false opinion... The correct point of view is to be found in the answer given by the Messenger of God – may God bless him and preserve him – to the question: ‘What is jihad in the path of God?’ He said: ‘Who fights in order that God’s word be uppermost [cf. K 9:40], is on the path of God’. The aim of fighting in Islam is therefore raising God’s word on earth, both by attacking and by defence... Islam was spread by the sword, against the leaders of unbelief who tried to keep it [Islam] away from humanity, and therefore nobody is forced [to accept Islam]... Therefore it is obligatory for the Muslims to raise their swords against the leaders who hide what is true and divulge what is false. Otherwise the truth will not reach the hearts of the people.²⁶

In addition, he argues, quoting a host of classical texts, that the Sword Verses or the Verses of Fighting (K 9:5 and 2:216) have abrogated all other verses concerning relations with unbelievers. Modernist writings often emphasize that jihad covers a much wider set of meanings than merely fighting. They explain that there are spiritual and moral forms of jihad which are more important than fighting and that the jihad duty can also be performed by the tongue or the pen (jihad al-da'wa) or by financial support. Faraj rejects all
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this. God has said: 'Prescribed to you is fighting [qital, not: jihad]' (K 2:216); just as He has said: ‘Prescribed for you is the Fast’ (K 2:183). This proves that fighting is obligatory and that one cannot just discharge one’s duty by preaching or propaganda, or by any other means apart from combat.

The Sheikh al-Azhar’s fatwa against al-Farida al-Ghaiba is long and detailed. Much of it is taken up by discussion of the authenticity of certain Traditions or interpretation of particular words and expressions in the Koran and the Hadith in order to sap the foundations of his adversary’s positions. Occasionally there are interesting remarks that show how close ulema thought is to the official political ideology. The ruler in Islam is described as ‘the representative of the nation (wakil al-umma)’, which has the right to choose its rulers and to depose them. With regard to our interest here, the fatwa deals with two issues: the question of when and under what conditions a Muslim, and especially a Muslim ruler, becomes an unbeliever, and second, the jihad doctrine and its application.

The first debate is a very old one in Islam. It goes back to the first century when the Kharidjites justified their revolt by pointing out that the caliph had committed grave sins and could therefore no longer be considered a Muslim. This, however, was not the generally accepted position, which held that a Muslim would be regarded as an apostate only when he expressly abjured Islam or denied axiomatic articles of faith (ma ‘ulim al-din daruratan) in act or speech. Non-observance of the shari‘a is not enough. There must be an explicit act or utterance which denies the obligatory character of certain prescriptions. There is, of course, much room for interpretation, and one might argue that a ruler who does not apply parts of the shari‘a denies its binding character and is therefore an apostate. Al-Haqq, however, does not go into this question. Instead, he formulates a totally new principle in this matter, namely that one becomes an apostate only by renouncing the shari‘a in its entirety and he toils mightily to explain in this sense the verse: ‘Whosoever judges not according to what God has set down – they are the unbelievers’ (K 5:44). Finally he asserts that judging a Muslim’s belief or unbelief is not the task of a layman, but exclusively the task of the ulema. His conclusion is that ‘accusing a ruler of unbelief because he does not enforce some of God’s prescriptions and ordinances, is founded on no text in the Koran nor on the Sunna’.

Having argued that under these circumstances a ruler is not an
unbeliever, he then tackles the question of whether a rebellion against him might be allowed on other grounds. After quoting a host of Traditions, he declares:

On the strength of these and other authentic Traditions we must conclude that Islam does not allow rebellion against nor the assassination of a Muslim ruler as long as he sticks to Islam and acts according to it, even if this is only by performing prayer. If the ruler acts contrary to Islam, the Muslims must take care of him by counsel and sound and sincere appeal... Whenever a ruler does not administer God's ordinances nor enforce His law in any way, he loses the right to demand obedience with regard to such commands as are sinful or blameworthy. 30

Jad al-Haqq's treatment of the jihad doctrine conforms completely with the writings of the Modernists. He states clearly that there are many forms of jihad apart from fighting and that, if combat is necessary in order to protect Islamic territory or the religion of Islam, the jihad duty can also be performed by financial support, by the tongue, or by the heart. Islam, he argues, has not been spread by the sword, Orientalist slander notwithstanding. This would be contrary to verses like: 'No compulsion is there in religion' (K 16:25); 'Call thou to the way of thy Lord with wisdom and good admonition, and dispute with them in the better way' (K 16:125); and 'Wouldst thou then constrain the people, until they are believers?' (K 10:99). As for the Sword Verse, he asserts that it has not abrogated all other verses regarding the relationship between Muslims and unbelievers, which are all applicable under specific circumstances. Jihad is, then, essentially defensive warfare, and when the need for jihad exists, it is to be carried out by the regular army to which the nation has entrusted this task.

The discussions summed up above demonstrate that the jihad doctrine is still very much alive and the subject of fierce controversies. This, however, does not tell us anything about the actual impact of jihad doctrine on Egyptian politics. In order to clarify this issue we shall first have a look at Egypt's foreign policy and, more specifically, her relations with Israel. Even without going deeply into the motives underlying the change in Egyptian policy towards Israel, it is evident that they were not religious. However, in order to confer greater legitimacy on the Camp David Agreements, especially in the face of the Islamic opposition, the government invited a number of religious institutions and religious dignitaries to pronounce on the
matter from the point of view of the shari'a. Not surprisingly these fatwas and declarations lent full support to Sadat’s policy, stating that termination of jihad on the strength of a peace treaty was under the present circumstances permitted. As for the Islamic opposition to the new relationship with Israel, represented by the al-Da’wa group, their stance was not based on the jihad doctrine. Going through the editorials of al-Da’wa, it becomes clear that their main motives for opposing the Camp David Agreement were Islamic solidarity with the Muslim Palestinians and aversion to and mistrust of the Jews. References to jihad are rare, and the jihad doctrine is only invoked to counter the legal arguments of the official ulema and to demonstrate that a peace treaty is not allowed under the given circumstances and war continues to be obligatory. From the foregoing, it appears that in Egyptian foreign policy the jihad doctrine does not play an independent role, not for the government, as could be expected, and not for the Islamic opposition. Its role is only marginal or complementary; and it is interpreted in different ways in order to justify political stances that have already been taken for other reasons, religious or otherwise.

In national politics there is more room for Islamic discourse, which by increasingly employing Islamic symbols and idioms the state has tried to dominate and even to monopolize. For obvious reasons the doctrine of internal, revolutionary jihad is not mentioned except to refute its legitimacy; this form of jihad is an essential part of the ideology of the opposition Islamic movements. To them it is identical with revolution, which like jihad, is an instrumental or tactical concept, covering all kinds of activities conducive to the ultimate objective: the overthrow of the established order and the restructuring of the state and society. Only for the most radical organizations does internal jihad require actual fighting and the use of violence, themselves calling for considerable doctrinal acrobatics, as the enemies to be fought are to all appearances Muslims. However, by applying a very strict definition of Islam, the radicals’ enemies are excluded and regarded as unbelievers. Differences among the various groups with regard to the application of this definition are related to differences in strategy. Some organizations see only the rulers and their supporters as being beyond the pale of Islam. They are in favour of an immediate struggle to topple the government, and count on popular support for their cause once they have seized power. Others see only themselves
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as true Muslims and regard anybody not belonging to their organization as an unbeliever. For them, being only a small minority in society, immediate jihad is out of the question; by conversion and recruitment they hope to create a position of power which will ultimately enable them to wage a successful jihad against their adversaries.

Thus it is clear that jihad is a concept with a wide semantic spectrum, and its actual meaning differs from organization to organization. Even if there is agreement among some groups that jihad signifies armed struggle only, these groups disagree on strategy and the immediacy of the struggle. The concept and doctrine of jihad, it appears, do not give clear and unambiguous directives; their interpretation and application depend very much on the political and strategical positions taken by the Islamic opposition groups. Jihad, therefore, cannot be considered as an independent driving force in Egyptian national politics. But like the notion of revolution, it can be used to justify positions that have already been taken and, what is perhaps more important, to enhance the loyalty and devotion of an organization's followers.

NOTES

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4. *Takfir* or accusing of unbelief is a practice going back to the early Islamic sects like the Kharidjites. More recently the Wahabi and the Sudanese Mahdhi movement used it in order to justify war against their Muslim adversaries. In the Egyptian context the discussion goes back to the prison terms of the Muslim Brethren under Nasser. For a survey of the various answers to the question of who exactly were to be regarded as unbelievers, see Salim 'Ali al-Bahbasawi, *al-Hukm wa-qadiyyat takfir al-Muslim* (Cairo, 1397/1977).


6. A German translation was published by Sabine Hartert in the above mentioned article.


12. 'Abd al-'Azim al-Mata'ni is a professor in the faculty of Arabic Linguistics of al-Azhar University and the editor of the *fatwa* section of *al-Da'wa*.


22. For the texts of these *fatwas* see Ibn Taymiyya, *al-Fatawa l-Kubra* (Repr. Beirut, 1397/1978), iv. 331-58.

23. *al-Fatawa l-Islamiyya*, x. 3766.


29. *al-Fatawa l-Islamiyya*, x. 3743.