



# Partisans of Allah: Jihad in South Asia

*Ayesha Jalal*

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## Partisans of Allah: Jihad in South Asia Ayesha Jalal

The idea of *jihad* is central to Islamic faith and ethics, and yet its meanings have been highly contested over time. They have ranged from the philosophical struggle to live an ethical life to the political injunction to wage war against enemies of Islam. Today, more than ever, *jihad* signifies the political opposition between Islam and the West. As the line drawn between Muslims and non-Muslims becomes more rigid, Ayesha Jalal seeks to retrieve the ethical meanings of this core Islamic principle in South Asian history.

Drawing on historical, legal, and literary sources, Jalal traces the intellectual itinerary of *jihad* through several centuries and across the territory connecting the Middle East with South Asia. She reveals how key innovations in modern Islamic thought resulted from historical imperatives. The social and political scene in India before, during, and after British colonial rule forms the main backdrop. We experience the *jihad* as armed warfare waged by Sayyid Ahmad of Rai Bareilly between 1826 and 1831, the calls to *jihad* in the great rebellion of 1857, the fusion of *jihad* with a strand of anti-colonial nationalism in the early twentieth century, and the contemporary politics of self-styled *jihadis* in Pakistan, waging war to liberate co-religionists in Afghanistan and Kashmir.

*Partisans of Allah* surveys this rich and tumultuous history of South Asian Muslims and its critical contribution to the intellectual development of the key concept of *jihad*. Analyzing the complex interplay of ethics and politics in Muslim history, the author effectively demonstrates the preeminent role of *jihad* in the Muslim faith today.

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