The Islamic law of war: justifications and regulations, by Ahmed Al-Dawoody (Palgrave Series in Islamic Theology, Law, and History), New York, Palgrave Macmillan, 2011, x + 338 pp., $90.00 (hardback), ISBN 978-0-230-11160-8

This is the second book in the Palgrave Series in Islamic Theology, Law and History. In the Foreword, the series editor, Khaled Abou El Fadl, states his commitment to 'publishing original and transformative scholarship in Islamic Studies and to raising the threshold for the standards of scholarship in the field' (p. ix). He has largely succeeded here, as Al-Dawoody takes the reader on an intellectual *tour de force* through several centuries of evolving Islamic theological conceptualization and practice regarding the sometimes controversial issue of jihad, often translated simplistically as 'holy war', as the author laments. Ahmed Al-Dawoody is a graduate and lecturer in Islamic Studies at Al-Azhar University and this book is certainly a credit to this, the oldest and perhaps most prestigious Islamic institution of higher learning.

The Islamic law of war contains five comprehensive chapters: 'War during the Prophet's lifetime'; 'The justifications of war in the Qur'an'; 'Judicial justifications for war'; 'Islamic international humanitarian law'; and 'Internal hostilities and terrorism'. Al-Dawoody simply ignores a lot of facile and third-rate material that has been passed off as authoritative research on the subject of jihad over the past two decades. He touches on only a handful of examples (and then only briefly) simply to demonstrate their inaccuracy, superficiality and total irrelevance. However, he makes liberal use of a wide range of other Islamic and non-Muslim scholars such as Sheikh Yusuf Al Qaradawi, Sayyid Qutb, Ismail R. al-Faruqi, Abu al-Ala al-Mawdudi, Karen Armstrong, Andrew Rippen, H.A.R. Gibb and W. Montgomery Watt, amongst others. His real focus is clearly on the Qur'an and original or early sources for Shariʿa laws governing and regulating jihad. There are extensive notes here for future researchers: the reference pages and bibliography extend to well over 100 pages, constituting nearly a third of the entire book. There is also a useful transliteration table but, surprisingly, no glossary, which would have been most helpful, especially for non-specialists. There are constant references to complex and misunderstood Arabic words and ideas and the exposition of obscure theological and theoretical terminology is truly excellent. The author takes time to examine the socio-political culture behind the vocabulary, but it pays to keep those more challenging words and definitions at the forefront of one's thinking when reading on through the text.

A highlight of the book is Chapter 2, where Al-Dawoody examines and explores the justification of war in the Qur'an. Here, the author displays his keen grasp of the subject matter, its exegesis and the issues arising therefrom. He analyses the various qur'anic words for war and the differing categories of non-Muslims to which war applies. He includes a discussion of modern locutionary speech-act theory as it might be applied to the Qur'an. He compares the directives regarding war and conflict as they appear in the Medina and Mecca suras, and he provides a brief overview of the relevant qur'anic disciplines. He neatly concludes the chapter by tying this classical theological paradigm altogether into Article One of the UN Charter.

Fundamental to Al-Dawoody's criticism of popular misunderstandings of Islamic law on military jihad is his belief that non-Muslim writers have invariably focused on *jus in bello* (laws of war) rather than *jus ad bellum* (the right to wage war) when examining the topic, and have thus provided a distorted impression of a complex and diverse subject. Modern writers are reading the accumulated opinions of generations of individual Islamic scholars and jurists, or contemporary interpretations of the Shariʿa in various Muslim societies, without really grasping 'the rules of Quranic textual discourse' (p. 45). They simply assume a degree of formal codification that is not really there. Thus, the commentators are

commenting, in effect, upon the commentaries. For the author, all the evidence – the Qur'an and centuries of *tafsīr* (commentary) – clearly demonstrates that this category of jihad 'is a just war that aims at stopping aggression or protecting religious freedom of Muslims' (p. 198). It should come as no surprise that towards the end of the book Al-Dawoody repeats and affirms the appeals for international peace and 'a coalition between the West and the Muslim world' (p. 196) voiced by David Miliband, then British foreign secretary, in 2009.

The Islamic law of war is thoroughly convincing in its substance, articulate and sincere. However, it is a hard read at times and will mostly attract academics (both Muslim and non-Muslim) keen to learn more about military jihad and related subject matter. The author reiterates time and again that 'Islam was born in a culture of intertribal conflicts' (p. 47) and that this has shaped the theological basis for conflict – and conflict resolution. This book certainly supersedes much of the apocryphal material currently circulating on the topic, and although one would hope such a book would appeal to a wide readership, especially to those who otherwise are often guilty of misrepresenting the idea behind 'jihad' in the media, I suspect its intense academic style will limit its circulation.