Study Guide for Healing the Open Wounds of Islam

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Chapter 6

THE "GREAT SATAN": Did America Create Militant Islam?

The United States was founded on the principle that opposing oppression justifies war. The Quranic view is that initiating war (being the oppressor) is a rightful and even glorious pursuit. The failures of the United States outlined in this chapter stem from the West's failure to act according to its biblical foundation.

Section I:

From early encounters to modern jihadist movements, U.S. foreign policy has been challenged by Islamic resistance. Radicalization, government destabilization, and the framing of America as Shaytan-e-Bozorg were the unintended consequences of intervention. Religious identity has influenced the U.S. Islamic clash. Many Muslims view Western intervention as a threat to their sacred beliefs.

- The impact of military intervention on sovereignty and stability.
- Perceptions of America as an imperial force versus a stabilizing influence.
- The divide between Islamic governance and Western secularism.
- The role of religious narratives in mobilizing resistance movements.
- Why some Muslims see Western secular values as corrupting Islamic society.
- The difference between defensive and offensive jihad movements.

Section II.

The positive light in which Iran originally viewed America was in large part formed by missionaries and statesmen such as William Morgan Shuster, Arthus Millspuagh andElgin Groseclose. These individuals played a crucial role in reforming Iran's struggling economy. They showed the Iranians the value of integrity by resisting bribes from foreign powers like Britain and Russia. Shuster in particular modeled what it meant to be a public servant. He followed the biblical example of the Prophet Daniel.

However, American influence shifted in the mid-20th century, particularly after the 1953 CIA-backed coup that overthrew Iran's elected Prime Minister, Mohammah Mosaddegh. The coup was motivated by Western oil interests and led to Iran's growing distrust of America. As the Shah's new power became corrupt, America began to be seen as a force of evil in the eyes of many.

- Early U.S. influence from Missionaries and financial advisors helped reform Iran's economy.

- Integrity & Resistance caused them to reject bribery from Russia and Britain.

- 1953 Coup: The U.S. backed Mosaddegh's overthrow over oil interests.

- U.S. support for the Shah reinforced corruption.

- Long-term effects of Iranian distrust lead to the 1979 revolution

Section III.

U.S. foreign policy in the Islamic world has fluctuated between intervention and stabilization, often with unintended consequences. While interventions aim at security and democracy-building, they frequently lead to destabilization, fueling resistance and radical resistance movements. This section examines key military engagements, their goals, and their lasting impact.

- Military engagement and its long-term consequences
- Operation Cyclone: Cold War strategies and the rise of militant Islam.
- The collapse of the government in post-invasion Iraq.
- Sectarian conflicts have prevented stable democratic transitions.
- The consequence of failing to anticipate sectarian divisions following U.S. involvement.
- The difficulty of distinguishing militants from legitimate resistance groups.
- The impact of drone strikes and covert operations on regional stability.

Section IV.

The Sykes-Picot Legacy and the Dream of a Caliphate:

The 1916 Sykes-Picot Agreement, which divided Ottoman territories into European-controlled mandates, left a lasting impact on the Middle East. Many Islamist movements view these artificial borders as a betrayal, fueling calls for a restored caliphate.

The Sykes-Picot Agreement of 1916 divided the Ottoman territories and left a lasting impact on the Middle East. The imposed borders were seen by many Islamic movements as a betrayal, and some even saw them as justification for war against the West.

- The perceived betrayal of Muslim lands through European agreements.
- The ideological push to dismantle Western-imposed nation-states.
- Why the Sykes-Picot Agreement was seen as a symbol of colonial oppression.
- The rise of ISIS as a rejection of post-colonial nation-states.

Section V.

Theological and Ideological Impact:

The intersection of theology and ideology has played a critical role in shaping US-Islamic relations. Religious narratives influence governance, resistance movements, and perceptions of Western intervention. This section explores the ideological foundations of radical movements, the role of eschatology in jihadist recruitment, and how Western secularism is perceived as a threat to Islamic values.

1. If an individual were to play the role of peacemaker between the Muslim nation and Western countries, what characteristics and principles would they need to apply based on an understanding of this chapter?

2. How do you think the missionaries' commitment to integrity, even in the face of foreign opposition, reflects their faith and personal sacrifices? Would you have made similar choices in their position?

3. What role could faith-based diplomacy play in building peace between the U.S. and Islamic nations?

4. When viewing history through a Christian lens, how do themes of redemption, forgiveness, and restoration apply to global conflicts?

5. In what ways can Christians act as peacemakers in a world shaped by religious divides?

6. How has studying these historical conflicts strengthened your faith and discernment in pursuing truth, justice, and reconciliation?