

Martin Riexinger

Mawdūdī's legitimization of violence

The Indo-Pakistani author Abū I-A'ālā Mawdūdī (1903-1979) played a major role in the formulation of Islamist ideologies. He affirmed two traditional justifications of violence, i.e. the capital punishment for apostasy and *jihād* as offensive warfare. Although he does not discard traditional, text based arguments, his justification of these two items is primarily based on his reinterpretation of Islam as an ideology that aims at forming a uniform collective (*qawm*).

His approach reflects his admiration for Western totalitarian ideologies. For him Marxism-Leninism provides an example for a worldview that designs an ideal societies from the scratch and for a political strategy that provides the means to implement this concept. Hence the *qawm* is equated with the vanguard party whereas *jihād* is re-interpreted as the world revolution that will bring about a harmonious society. In this context apostasy is equated with political deviance to be "cleansed".

However, it would be precocious to conclude from this observation that Mawdūdī broke with traditional concepts. The purpose of this "modernization" and politicization of traditional concepts is to defend traditional norms and hierarchy against the onslaught of liberal individualism which Mawdūdī considers the main enemy of Islamic civilization.