



The Challenge of Fundamentalism: Political Islam and the New World Disorder

By *Bassam Tibi*

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Long before the tragic events of September 11, 2001, Islamic fundamentalism was exerting a significant influence in nearly every corner of the world. Bassam Tibi, a widely recognized expert on Islam and Arab culture, offers an important and disquieting analysis of this particular synthesis of religion and politics. A Muslim and descendant of a famous Damascene Islamic scholar family, Tibi sees Islamic fundamentalism as the result of Islam's confrontation with modernity and not only--as it is widely believed--economic adversity. The movement is unprecedented in Islamic history and parallels the inability of Islamic nation-states to integrate into the new world secular order.

For this updated edition, Tibi has written a new preface and lengthy introduction addressing Islamic fundamentalism in light of and since September 11.

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Editorial Review

From Publishers Weekly

In the global fragmentation that has emerged from the end of the Cold War, Islamic fundamentalism threatens to provoke a "new world disorder," Tibi argues. A professor of international relations at the University of Gottingen, Germany, Tibi takes great pains to point out the differences between Islamic spiritual faith, which he maintains poses no threat, and Islamic fundamentalism, which he views as a primarily political response to Western dominance. The fundamentalist revolt, he explains, targets not just Western political power but Western culture and value as well. Tibi makes a strong and urgent argument that this rejection of the West contributes to a global balkanization that must be addressed as we enter the 21st century. Islamic fundamentalism challenges the Western-based notion of a world order of nation-states because Islam rejects such boundaries and claims its own place as the legitimate organizing force of the world. Tibi contends that the prevailing approach in international relations of dismissing Islamic rhetoric because it poses no real military threat to the West misses the point that fundamentalist activists exacerbate cultural divisions that seriously threaten peace everywhere. No less than a clarion call to address what Tibi argues are deteriorating world relations before it's too late, this book urges political and religious leaders to foster cultural and religious tolerance among the world's religions.

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From Library Journal

Fundamentalism is generally viewed as a reemergent traditional religion expressing itself in the wider society through rigid politics. Tibi, a professor of international relations at the University of Gottingen and the author of several books on modern Arab history and politics, sees Islamic fundamentalism as a modern totalitarian political movement that makes selective use of popular religious devotion. Explaining that all major religions can be used for such tight social control, Tibi argues that Islamic fundamentalism, inherently violent and repressive, creates social disorder and is a sort of communism in ecclesiastical garb. This highly informed and technical work, aimed at historians and political scientists, rewards careful study.

Recommended for academic libraries and public libraries with substantial collections in religion or modern politics. —James F. DeRoche, Alexandria, VA

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Review

"[Tibi] expresses empathy for those Muslims struggling against despotic states at home and against Western hegemony from abroad. . . . All should relish chapters seven through nine, where he introduces the ideas of representative Muslim fundamentalists and exposes in cogent critiques their ahistorical and often tautological approaches." —Foreign Affairs

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