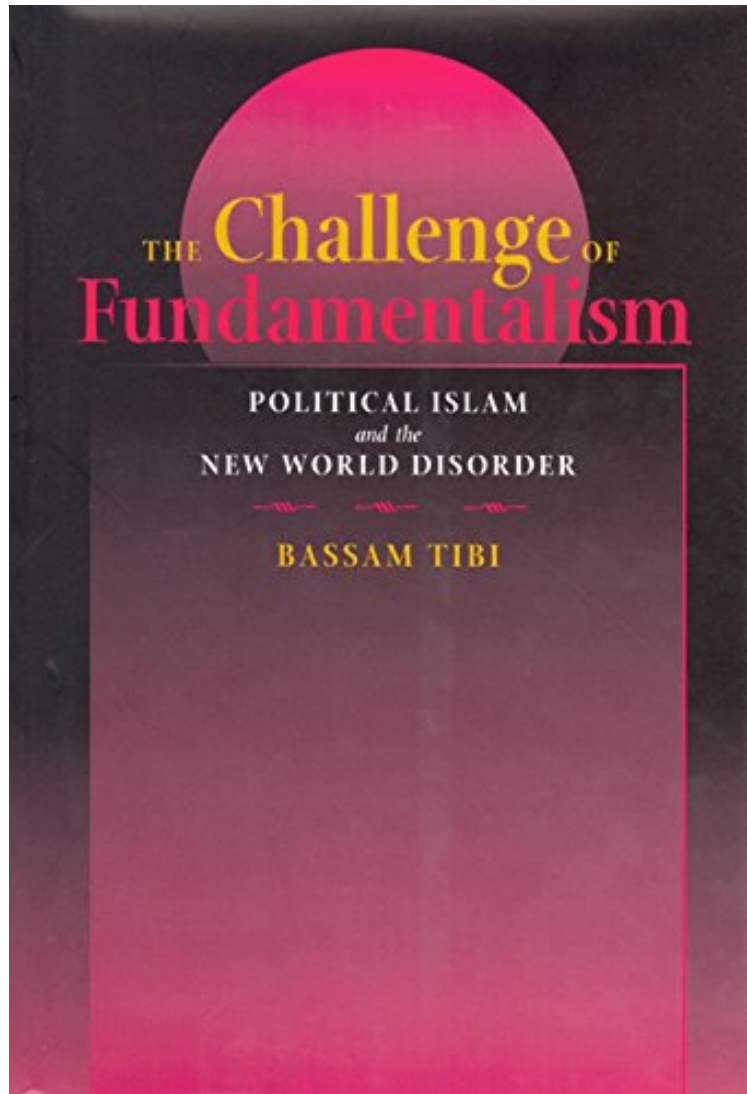


(Free) The Challenge of Fundamentalism: Political Islam and the New World Disorder

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

Bassam Tibi

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#1362834 in Books 2002-08-05Original language:EnglishPDF # 1 9.00 x .87 x 6.00l, 1.00 #File Name: 0520236904256 pages | File size: 33.Mb

Bassam Tibi : The Challenge of Fundamentalism: Political Islam and the New World Disorder before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised The Challenge of Fundamentalism: Political Islam and the New World Disorder:

2 of 3 people found the following review helpful. The new world disorderBy Harry EagarFor two decades, Bassam Tibi, one of the tiny and dwindling number of Muslim liberals, has been preaching conciliation between his co-religionists and the rest of the world."The Challenge of Fundamentalism," which was written after the first Gulf War

but before Sept. 11, 2001, then revised, represents a viewpoint that may need serious revision again as a result of the second Gulf War. Nevertheless, as a comprehensive and clarifying statement from one end of the political range, it repays reading. If nothing else, it's worth \$19.95 to clear away the sappy misconception that Islam is a "religion of peace." Tibi explains that this refers not to peace now, but to a promise in the Koran that eventually the warfare between dar al-Islam (house of Islam) and dar al-Harb (house of war) will end with Islam triumphant. There will then be no more war between the houses, since one will have ceased to exist. That such a childish tautology has status as profound doctrine in Islam shows how very different Islam is from other societies, leading some, like Professor Samuel Huntington of Harvard, to predict a "clash of civilizations." Tibi also demolishes the idea that jihad means spiritual struggle. Of course it means armed violence, he says, which will hardly surprise anyone but the willfully ignorant. "Fundamentalism" is an unfortunate term to use for American audiences, because it gets confused with Christian Fundamentalism, which is not even remotely similar to the Islamic kind. Nor, says Tibi, is Islamic fundamentalism either traditional or authentic. He contends that Islam as a religion should be viewed as an ethical system, that sharia does not derive from either the Koran or hadith (sayings of Prophet Muhammad) and that Islamic fundamentalism is riddled with modern, although unacknowledged, concepts. "The Challenge of Fundamentalism" is loosely reasoned, but among several candidates as the central point, Tibi argues that the concept of the nation-state is western and alien to the rest of the world -- not just the Islamic part. The borders and the forms of government, not being organic to their societies, of course have failed. With the Cold War ended, this hidden crisis springs into the open. The situation is complex, with Tibi taking pains to try to separate out strands such as pan-Arabism, legal systems (Islam has four) and anti-colonialism. He concluded, though, that Gulf War I was a political victory for Saddam Hussein. It's a dubious proposition, but if ever true, it didn't last. Tibi, a Syrian who lives in the West (as almost all Muslim liberals must do to avoid being murdered), says that the political program of the Islamic fundamentalists can never succeed, but that does not mean they cannot create a "new world disorder" by trying. He disparages military solutions from the West, suggesting instead that Islam as a religion could revert to an authentic tradition of rationality and secular government. Unfortunately, the last important Muslim philosopher who advocated rationalism died more than 500 years ago, and Tibi does not explain how to inculcate an admiration for rationalism in a billion people who are mostly illiterate, who do not enjoy a free press when they can read and whose leading intellectual institutions are avowedly anti-rational. If there were suitable institutions, even he avers that "in the minds of the Islamic peoples . . . democracy is not an important issue." If that's right, then Tibi's program of "international morality and cross-cultural bridging" is more a counsel of despair than a practical political program. He lets his guard down at one point, noting that "there are competing views of what the commonalities might be." In that case, then, they aren't commonalities. Nevertheless, Tibi is persuaded that the only alternative to a clash of civilizations (which Islam is certain to lose) is "cross-cultural morality." "The Challenge of Fundamentalism" is meant to be an optimistic analysis. It comes across the opposite.

12 of 12 people found the following review helpful. Answers to Post 9/11 Questions By Thomas J. Tucker This brilliant and prescient volume (written in 1997) belongs in the library of anyone interested in military history or world affairs as well as general academic circulation. It should be mandatory reading for anyone in Western government. It's one of the most important books written about the turmoil in our world today. A non-academic, I found it a revelation. Questions about the silence of the non-violent, "moderate" Muslims receive tentative answers in these pages. It also deals with the widespread fundamental movement within Islam of which the terrorists compose only a tiny percentage. It sets the historical framework for the acceptance of Islamic fundamentalism, in its many imperfect forms, as a reaction to the foolish post WWI decision of the French and British foreign offices in dividing the Arabic Middle East into arbitrary nation-states. They were never accepted by many Muslims who regarded them as an irrelevant imposition by the West. As a Muslim, Tibi demonstrates great courage in detailing the inherent inconsistencies in Islamic fundamentalism thought as well as its lack of historical grounding in traditional Islam. He places Islamic fundamentalism in the political arena. Nothing is more potent than religion coupled to political drive for change. He's careful to point out there are many fundamental movements worldwide that have nothing to do with Islam. I've just touched the surface of the many important points Tibi raises.

7 of 8 people found the following review helpful. One of the most important works on Islamic Fundamentalism from Westerners By Sage107 The fact that this book was written several years before 9/11 tells wonders to how deep the problem with Islamism (i.e Islamic extremism/fundamentalism) was throughout the globe well before the attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon. As a U.S. student of international relations, this was one of the first books that exposed me to the problem of Islamic fundamentalism and I am glad it was the primer. I have gone on to read other books and I am just astonished by the disinformation and as well the misinformation presented by authors claiming to interpret the inner psyche of fundamentalists. What disturbs me the most about other authors is that most do not even read or write Arabic. In turn, they rely on translations by others which could be easily misconstrued from a difficult dialect such as Arabic and the style and prose of Quranic verses. Professor Tibi, on the other hand, does not suffer from this pathology. Aside from being able to speak and write fluently in Arabic, Professor Tibi is an Arab as well as a devout Muslim - a moderate one at that. Furthermore, Professor Tibi has actually traveled all over the world, into some of the most violent and volatile regional hotbeds to experience first hand the problem with Islamic

fundamentalism. To understand the roots the problem, I believe one cannot sit in the comfort of Washington, D.C. think tanks or American universities: the dimensional problems associated with Islamic fundamentalism require proactive engagement. But thankfully, most readers and students will not have to experience such hardship because of Professor. Tibi's work. It would be difficult to do justice to Professor Tibi works in such a short review. Having said that, here are three important points I felt are worthy of notice. First, Prof. Tibi contends that Islamic fundamentalism is not at war with the West, but at war with secular nation-states. He contends convincingly that the concept of the nation-state is foreign to Islam. He cites several passages from the Quran that support this contention and goes on to explain how such a political arrangement - often advocated by the West - is incompatible with current understanding of Islam by followers. Second, he strongly advocates that Islamic fundamentalism (he refers to it as Islamism as well) as a pure political apparatus to undermine the apologists of the nation-state. He does this by showing the contradictions between the interpretations of fundamentalist teachings and works to that of the Quran. By following this methodology, Professor Tibi lays out the framework for Islam as the peaceful religion and its rogue opposite (Islamism) which twists the teachings in the Quran to sanction terrorism as means to its political ends. Third, he discusses the West's inability to escapes its "Orientalism" when it comes to interpreting and understanding Islamic fundamentalism. Orientalism implies the Western perspective of old-fashioned and prejudiced outsider interpretations of other cultures and peoples. In other words, an ethnocentric bias to which the West consistently interprets the events of fundamentalism. He believes that as long as the West continues viewing the problem of fundamentalism through this prism, the problem will continue perhaps perpetually. Needless to say this book really expanded my "horizons" on this contentious subject. Considering that I am not Arab, Islamic, or born in the Middle East, I think what I appreciated most about this book is how the entire discourse is underpinned in peace studies from an individual that fills all three of these voids. Such an approach ultimately advocates a pragmatic solution to the problem with Islamism and helps preserve Islam as a spiritual faith.

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.

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 take 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. Copyright 1998 Reed Business Information, Inc. 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 politic, 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 Copyright 1998 Reed Business Information, Inc. "[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