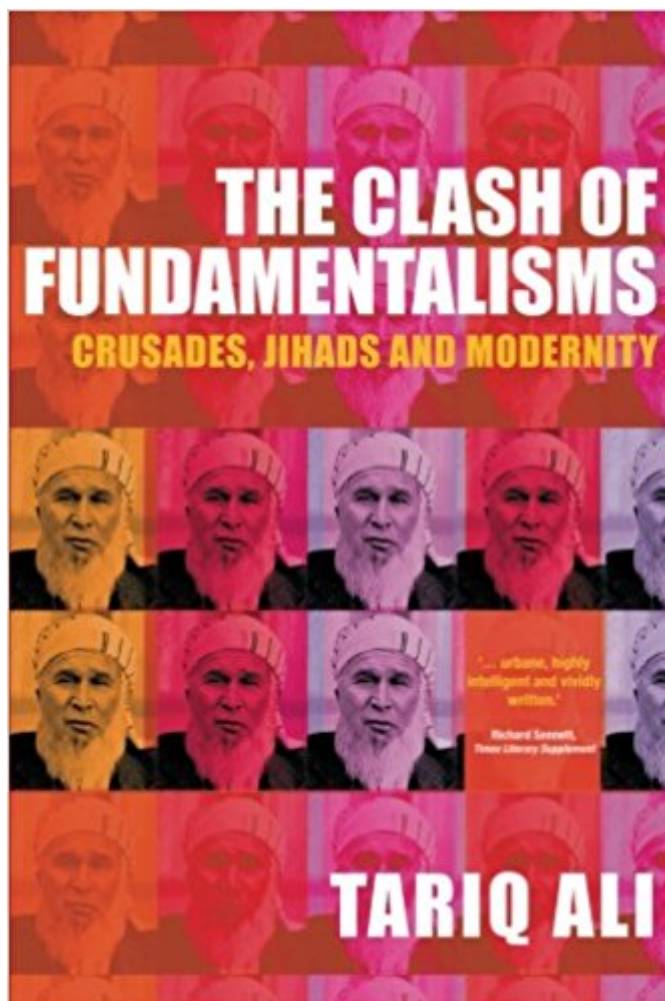


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The Clash Of Fundamentalisms: Crusades, Jihads And Modernity



Synopsis

The aerial attacks on the Pentagon and the World Trade Center, a global spectacle of unprecedented dimensions, generated an enormous volume of commentary. The inviolability of the American mainland, breached for the first time since 1812, led to extravagant proclamations by the pundits. It was a new world-historical turning point. The 21st century, once greeted triumphantly as marking the dawn of a worldwide neo-liberal civilization, suddenly became menaced. The choice presented from the White House and its supporters was to stand shoulder-to-shoulder against terrorism or be damned. Tariq Ali challenges these assumptions, arguing instead that what we have experienced is the return of History in a horrific form, with religious symbols playing a part on both sides: "Allah's revenge," "God is on Our Side" and "God Bless America." The visible violence of September 11 was the response to the invisible violence that has been inflicted on countries like Afghanistan, Pakistan, Iraq, Saudi Arabia, Egypt, Palestine and Chechnya. Some of this has been the direct responsibility of the United States and Russia. In this wide-ranging book that provides an explanation for both the rise of Islamic fundamentalism and new forms of Western colonialism, Tariq Ali argues that many of the values proclaimed by the Enlightenment retain their relevance, while portrayals of the American Empire as a new emancipatory project are misguided.

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Customer Reviews

This is a work of truly monumental vacuity. On September 11, declares Ali (editor, New Left

Review), the "subjects of the Empire had struck back." He depicts the United States as a nation bent on a "fundamentalist" foreign policy, impelled purely by economic self-interest, since its inception. The conflict now raging, then, has little to do with terrorism or with individual terrorist leaders. Rather, it is yet another in a series of struggles between the dispossessed and their imperial masters hence a clash of Islamic and American fundamentalisms. See? Well, no. The book has no bibliography and only a handful of footnotes, largely from secondary sources. Some undocumented howlers: FDR maneuvered Japan into war; the "massacre of civilian populations was always an integral part of US warmaking strategy" in Vietnam; and Harvard economists persuaded Boris Yeltsin, "an amoral and debauched clown," to adopt free-market policies that gave Russians "the most harrowing ordeal" of the postwar era presumably including the Stalin years. In short, this isn't a serious work. Libraries owning works by Edward Said (Orientalism) and Bernard Lewis (What Went Wrong?) can skip. Not recommended. James R. Holmes, Fletcher Sch. of Law & Diplomacy, Tufts Univ., Medford, MA Copyright 2002 Cahners Business Information, Inc. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

Ali's style is vigorous, his narrative compelling, showing that the short-term, self-interested and oil-greedy policies of the British and Americans in such countries as Egypt, Israel, Saudi Arabia, and Iran must make our much-vaunted ideals of democracy and equity seem like a bad joke.

•Karen Armstrong, The Times "The Clash of Fundamentalisms is well worth reading ... it shows that the harshest critics of fundamentalism are often exponents of a rival fundamentalism."

•John Gray, Independent "In this timely and important book, Tariq Ali puts the events of September 11 into sweeping historical perspective. As we have come to expect from him, he is lucid, eloquent, literary, and painfully honest, as he dissects both Islamic and Western fundamentalism."

•Howard Zinn "It will not open doors at the White House because it makes for uncomfortable reading ... a wide-ranging and powerfully argued critique, that gives pause for thought."

•Financial Times "... urbane, highly intelligent and vividly written."

•Richard Sennett, Times Literary Supplement "The book is an outstanding contribution to our understanding of the nightmare of history from which so many people are struggling to awake, and deserves serious engagement and consideration. Ali broadens our horizons, geographically, historically, intellectually and politically ... His mode of history telling is lyrical and engaging, humane and passionate."

•Anthony Arno, The Nation "[Ali] finds little to distinguish between the organised violence of the United States and

that of those who oppose it ...
Sydney Morning Herald

I would make this the first book taught in every history class. It is certainly the most informative book that I've read this year; and I read a lot of them. It was most interesting reading the Library Journal review above as anything that provokes that kind of reaction would make me want to read it. It's about time that we wake up to what is really going on with our country and this is an excellent place to start. Mr Ali is an engaging writer and the pages just flew by. I'm about 10 pages from the end and I'm going to read it again (and me with a stack of "to be read" books on my desk, ah, well). There is much to learn from this book. Inquiring minds will love it reactionaries- not so much.

Tariq Ali along with Robert Fisk are the two writers on "Middle Eastern Politics" that have lifted "The Mist" on what has become an ever confusing Real Politik. Effecting our understanding of where forces such as Al Qaeda and ISIS have been sporn.

Great book. I bought it a long time ago but I lost. I told my husband about it and wanted him to read.

I confess I began this wonderful book about this time last year. Why, you have every right to ask, did I take over a year to complete a relatively small book and the answer lies in the fact that I feel Mr. Ali's book is several books in one and therefore you can read one part as complete unto itself. The topics that Ali explores are diverse but all of immense importance to America as she tries to feel her way in a world that is hostile to her much valued beliefs. Everybody in the world knows that America is hell-bent on building the first world empire but Ali's book is the best indication that goal, if it happens, will be more costly than the Washington conservatives think it will be. If there are any of those conservatives who would like an insight into the movements of the contemporary world, I suggest that they grasp the contents of chapter 19, if little else in Ali's book, because no more need be read to have an insight into the ways of our modern world. Further, chapter 16 on his country-Pakistan-will not only illuminate an area of the world that for many decision-makers is still a blank-a blank whose mysteriousness will, and perhaps already has, lead to involvement mistakes that will haunt this new empire for many years to come. As one commentator said-this book is a modern political classic that should be read by all who think to captain the ship of this empire.

just one word for this book : marvelous. anyone wanting to get a historical handle on the relation between the west and the middle east has to read this book end to end.

There were a number of very good historical pieces of information along with a very good bibliography. The book helps fill gaps in education that we do not always get through our current media.

I remember Mr Ali as an activist, a man who appeared to have the guts to take on issues and challenge the mainstream thinking in politics. Not an easy companion, not always right but worth hearing the discussion. In looking at the reviews of this book there was a certain predictability of responses. Not much in the 'we need to understand' what is happening across the globe currently and to face some less palatable facts face on. Such as do we want to coexist in a world where the rights of women and children and those of differing opinions are invalidated to the extent of being brutalised. Fundamentalism is fundamentalism regardless of the creed. Brutalisation of people's basic rights is that no matter how it is dressed. In Australia it is how Anglo Australia confronts Aboriginal rights, how we engage in the debate on "boat people" and the many migrant groups recently taking root in this country. So, I found this book thought provoking because it challenged the bigger picture often controlled by one aspect of the debate (such as Murdoch and our middle of the road, self serving political leaders). Although I do not agree with everything Mr Ali has to say, I enjoyed that he made me think and at times uncomfortably so. As for lacking answers. I think there is. Make no mistake liberalisation in the sense of achieving emancipation and achieving basic human rights across the globe is the enemy of fundamentalism and of consumerism (the modern face of capital). Is it a worthy aim to say that the rights of women, children, the vulnerable are as important for people where-ever they are in the globe, under whatever system political or religious. I think it is, and this book left me with the impression, so is Mr Ali.

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