

The Crisis of Islam: Holy War and Unholy Terror (Modern Library)

By Bernard Lewis

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In his first book since *What Went Wrong?* Bernard Lewis examines the historical roots of the resentments that dominate the Islamic world today and that are increasingly being expressed in acts of terrorism. He looks at the theological origins of political Islam and takes us through the rise of militant Islam in Iran, Egypt, and Saudi Arabia, examining the impact of radical Wahhabi proselytizing, and Saudi oil money, on the rest of the Islamic world.

The Crisis of Islam ranges widely through thirteen centuries of history, but in particular it charts the key events of the twentieth century leading up to the violent confrontations of today: the creation of the state of Israel, the Cold War, the Iranian Revolution, the Soviet defeat in Afghanistan, the Gulf War, and the September 11th attacks on the United States.

While hostility toward the West has a long and varied history in the lands of Islam, its current concentration on America is new. So too is the cult of the suicide bomber. Brilliantly disentangling the crosscurrents of Middle Eastern history from the rhetoric of its manipulators, Bernard Lewis helps us understand the reasons for the increasingly dogmatic rejection of modernity by many in the Muslim world in favor of a return to a sacred past. Based on his George Polk Award–winning article for *The New Yorker*, *The Crisis of Islam* is essential reading for anyone who wants to know what Usama bin Ladin represents and why his murderous message resonates so widely in the Islamic world.

From the Hardcover edition.

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Editorial Review

Amazon.com Review
After the terrorist attacks of September 11, many Americans yearned to understand why Muslim extremists felt such passionate animosity toward the Western world, particularly the United States. Since that historic attack there have been many books and discussions about this very question, but few of them offer such a readable and relevant response as this excellent offering by renowned historian Bernard Lewis (*What Went Wrong?*). For modern Westerners, Islam is an especially foreign religion and culture to understand. For instance, Westerners typically dismiss things as unimportant when using the expression "that's history." But for those raised in Muslim households, history—even ancient history—is just as important (if not more important) as the present. And to better understand the hostilities rooted in this history—one could start with recognizing the long-standing resentment the Islamic community harbors from having its homelands torn apart and re-packaged into random political states by occupying Europeans (Westerners). Or stretch back in time to the brutality of the Crusades. Or go straight to the U.S. political meddling in the region throughout the latter 20th century.

This is not a pity fest for Muslims. Lewis even-handedly explores the sources of Islamic antagonism toward the West while also explaining how a supposedly peace-worshipping religion could be so distorted by violent extremism. He notes that the American way of life—especially that of fulfillment through material gain and sexual freedom—is a direct threat to Islamic values (which is why night clubs—places where men and women publicly touch one another—are targets of bombings). But it is basic Western democracy that especially threatens Islamic extremists, notes Lewis, because within its own community more and more Muslims are coming to value the freedom that political democracy allows. For anyone wanting an intelligent and accessible primer on the Islamic-Western conflict, this is an excellent place to begin. *Gail Hudson*

From Publishers Weekly
This lean, muscular volume, an expansion of Lewis's George Polk Award-winning New Yorker article, sheds much-needed light on the complicated and volatile Middle East. To locate the origins of anti-American sentiment, Islamic scholar Lewis maps the history of Muslim anxiety towards the West from the time of the Crusades through European imperialism, and explains how America's increased presence in the region since the Cold War has been construed as a renewed cry of imperialism. In Islam, politics and religion are inextricable, and followers possess an acute knowledge of their own history dating back to the Prophet Mohammed, a timeline Lewis revisits. By so doing, the bestselling author of What Went Wrong? is able to cogently investigate key issues, such as why the United States has been dubbed the "Great Satan" and Israel the "Little Satan," and how Muslim extremism has taken root and succeeded in bastardizing the fundamental Islamic tenets of peace. Lewis also covers the impact of the Iranian Revolution and American foreign policy towards it, Soviet influence in the region and the ramifications of modernization, making this clear, taut and timely primer a must-read for any concerned citizen. (171 pages; 4 maps)
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From Booklist
Islamic scholar Lewis explores both the historical and the theological roots of militant Islam. He painstakingly traces the evolution of a basically peaceful philosophy into a rationalization for terrorism. While explaining how anti-American sentiment, fueled for decades by Islamic fanatics, has been distorted beyond all proportion, he provides the political and religious context for the horror of 9/11. Written in an easily accessible style, this analysis provides a digestible overview for Westerners still asking why. *Margaret*

Flanagan
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Users Review

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Book is to be different per grade. Book for children until eventually adult are different content. We all know that that book is very important for us. The book The Crisis of Islam: Holy War and Unholy Terror (Modern Library) seemed to be making you to know about other understanding and of course you can take more information. It is rather advantages for you. The book The Crisis of Islam: Holy War and Unholy Terror (Modern Library) is not only giving you considerably more new information but also to be your friend when you sense bored. You can spend your personal spend time to read your e-book. Try to make relationship with the book The Crisis of Islam: Holy War and Unholy Terror (Modern Library). You never really feel lose out for everything if you read some books.

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