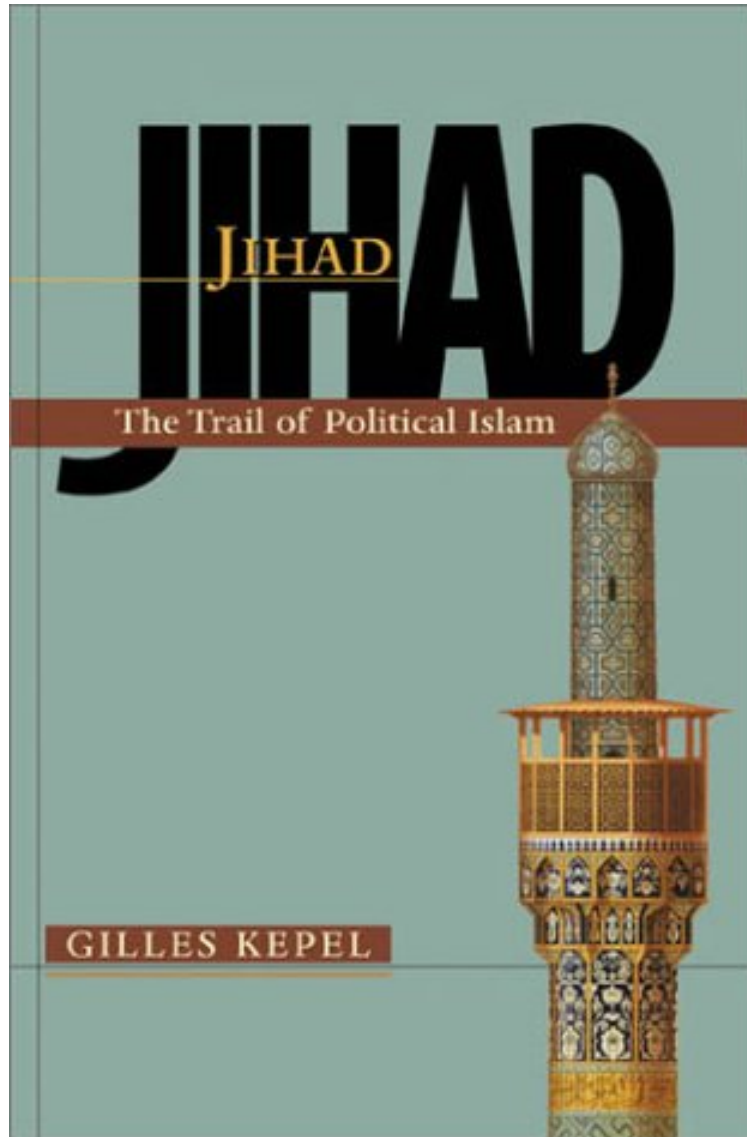


(Download) Jihad: The Trail of Political Islam

Jihad: The Trail of Political Islam

Professor Gilles Kepel

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Professor Gilles Kepel : Jihad: The Trail of Political Islam before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Jihad: The Trail of Political Islam:

4 of 4 people found the following review helpful. Vital Reading for all AmericansBy John DesmondAlthough published just after the American destruction of the Taliban in Afghanistan, Kepel's lessons are easily applied to the Iraq War. He brilliantly analyzes the Islamist movement over the last half century and shows that, far from being the wave of the future, Islamism has failed virtually everywhere and the current violent phase is actually the movement's

death throes. More than speculating, Kepel shows WHY this has happened in Algeria, Egypt, Pakistan, and elsewhere and holds out real hope for the future. Islamism sounded good in comparison to brutal, corrupt authoritarian regimes, but looks bad compared to democracy. READ THIS BOOK! 22 of 24 people found the following review helpful. Good intro to Islamist movement

By Kindle Customer
Kepel's 'Jihad' is an excellent introduction to modern Islamism. This is a great book if you want to know more about various Islamist movements such as: bin Laden's al-Qaeda, the civil war in Algeria, the Shi'ite revolution in Iran, the Taliban in Afghanistan, and the various Islamist movements from Egypt to Malaysia. Kepel comes to an interesting and controversial conclusion. At a time when the US administration is making vast increases to the budget to fight the war on terror (against Muslim terrorists), Kepel writes that Islamism has seen its peak as a political movement and has been on the decline since the mid 1990's. He wrote in his conclusion: "In spite of what many hasty commentators contended in its (September 11th) immediate aftermath, the attack on the United States was a desperate symbol of isolation, fragmentation, and decline of the Islamist movement, not a sign of its strength and irrepressible might." My reaction to this conclusion (I read the conclusion before reading the entire book) was similar to what Walter Laqueur wrote in his article 'A Failure of Intelligence', published in The Atlantic Monthly - March 2002: "However, the same conditions that gave birth to Islamism thirty years ago persist: economic stagnation or even negative growth, the unemployment of the young. So do resentment and free-floating rage. If Islamism is bankrupt, where is the ideology to replace it?" These are good observations, but they miss the point of Kepel's book. Kepel does not cover what he thinks will replace Islamism. Laqueur's arguments make me wonder if he even read the entire book. (Laqueur also finishes with some ridiculous statements about a lack of Middle Eastern self-criticism, which makes it sound like Laqueur has digested the ideas of the famous orientalist Bernard Lewis more than anything Kepel wrote.) Kepel is not making a sweeping statement about Islam and the West - that the tension is over and everyone will live happily ever after. Kepel realizes there will be violence in the name of Jihad. For example, his conclusion also stated: "This does not mean that we shall not see other outbursts of terrorism that claim the mantle of jihad. The Israeli-Palestinian conflict in particular will be ripe for more violence." Kepel's book is more informed and specific than Laqueur acknowledges. It is about specific movements within the Islamic world, started by theorists such as Mawdudi from Pakistan or Qutb from Egypt. These movements seemed to be ready to take over the Middle East as recent as five years ago. Islamist movements succeeded in Iran and Afghanistan, and in various other places in the Middle East. But since then the theories behind Islamism have not been as accepted. This is due to complex reasons, such as the increased power of the middle class in the various countries, which Kepel covers in detail. If there is a fault in Kepel's 'Jihad', it is that the text takes a while to get used to, since it was originally written in French. I found myself reading some paragraphs two or three times over - especially in the first half. I'm not sure if I got used to the text in the second half, or the writing improved. Also, he could have spent some pages on a definition of Islamism - what theorists such as Mawdudi and Qutb wanted. You would have to get that research from another book, such as Qutb's 'Milestones'. 22 of 28 people found the following review helpful. International Guide to Islamism

By Tron Honto
Kepel is an ideal guide to Islamism as an international movement. Though somewhat controversial, Kepel has produced quality scholarship with an eye for detail for a long time and is well-known and widely recognized scholar in the field. Islamism has become over time a politically moribund ideology driven more by desperation and disillusionment than by anything resembling political success or ascendancy. He covers all the major topics and personalities--not nearly enough for in-depth study but that's not the purpose of his book--and has a talent for connecting the dots of the international scene, thereby demonstrating the geopolitical nature of the movement despite its diversity and diffuse organization. While some may be taken aback by his assertion of the 'failure' of Islamism in light of the extreme actions committed, he nonetheless makes a good case for argument not equivocating political failure with political impotence. Likely the best introduction to the topic available.

The late twentieth century has witnessed the emergence of an unexpected and extraordinary phenomenon: Islamist political movements. Beginning in the early 1970s, militants revolted against the regimes in power throughout the Muslim world and exacerbated political conflicts everywhere. Their jihad, or "Holy Struggle," aimed to establish a global Islamic state based solely on a strict interpretation of the Koran. Religious ideology proved a cohesive force, gathering followers ranging from students and the young urban poor to middle-class professionals. After an initial triumph with the Islamic revolution in Iran, the movement waged jihad against the USSR in Afghanistan, proclaiming for the first time a doctrine of extreme violence. By the end of the 1990s, the failure to seize political power elsewhere led to a split: movement moderates developed new concepts of "Muslim democracy" while extremists resorted to large-scale terrorist attacks around the world. Jihad is the first extensive, in-depth attempt to follow the history and geography of this disturbing political-religious phenomenon. Fluent in Arabic, Kepel has traveled throughout the Muslim world gathering documents, interviews, and archival materials inaccessible to most scholars, in order to give us a comprehensive understanding of the scope of Islamist movements, their past, and their present. As we confront the threat of terrorism to our lives and liberties, Gilles Kepel helps us make sense of the ominous reality of jihad today.

.com Gilles Kepel's Jihad is an intense, detailed examination of the militant Islamist movement over the last quarter-

century. Kepel divides his book into two parts--"Expansion" and "Decline"--and posits that the September 11, 2001, attacks, rather than demonstrating "strength and irrepressible might," highlighted the "isolation" and "fragmentation" of a "faltering" and probably doomed extremist ideology. Kepel follows Islamism from its theoretical underpinnings in the late 1960s and its rapid expansion into Africa, the Middle East, the Balkans, and Central, South, and Southeast Asia, through the Taliban's ascendancy in Afghanistan and beyond. He explains Islamism's attractions, and outlines its severe shortcomings. With consummate skill, he illuminates the bewilderingly intricate effects global events (oil prices, the fall of Communism) have had on internal politics of individual countries, and vice versa. Kepel, wisely, refuses to prognosticate. Instead, his achievement is in providing--for the determined reader--a deeply authoritative context for the seemingly inexplicable events of the recent past. --H. O'BillovichFrom Publishers Weekly

In this history of fundamentalist Islam, Kepel stands conventional wisdom on its head, asserting that the spate of Islamist violence during the last few years is a result not of the movement's success, but of its failure. A professor at Paris's Institute for Political Studies, Kepel clearly traces the rise of the contemporary Islamist movement from its origins in the mid-20th century through its later appearance in countries such as Malaysia, Algeria and Turkey, as well as in Western Europe. Its apogee, he argues cogently, was the 1979 revolution in Iran that brought about the defeat of the Shah and the rise of a fundamentalist Islamic regime. But while ideologies that fused Islam with political power gained adherents throughout the world in the ensuing 20 years, says Kepel, in no other country were Islamists able to seize and hold power for more than a few years, a factor that he attributes to the ideology's inability to attract both the middle class and the poor. "Muslims no longer view Islamism as the source of utopia, and this more pragmatic vision augurs well for the future," he writes. Despite some outpourings of support, he believes, Osama bin Laden and his followers squandered much of the movement's political capital with its attacks on American institutions, most notably the World Trade Center. Kepel's approach is not without weaknesses in many places around the globe, fundamentalist political Islam has transformed society and politics, even if Islamists have not been able to attain political rule. But amid the plethora of books on Islam released since September 11, this work stands out, both for its erudition and its provocative thesis. Copyright 2002 Cahners Business Information, Inc.From Library Journal

The rise since the 1970s of political Islam and its revolutionary message has received ample coverage in popular and scholarly writings in the West. Aside from journalistic reporting, much of it by nonspecialists, there are few comprehensive and analytically sound books in the Euro-American world that explain the recent ascendance of militant Islam to the Western audience. This book by Kepel, a professor at the Institute for Political Studies in Paris and a leading European specialist on contemporary Islamic movements, is a welcome addition to the growing literature on this topic. Meticulously researched and written in a jargon-free narrative style, the book covers the trials and tribulations of political Islam throughout the world. The author explains how and why the promises of political Islam have not materialized and describes why contemporary Islamic movements have failed. A standout in the field of current books, this is a sophisticated and timely work that places the events of September 11 in historical and sociopolitical context and sheds greater light on the influence of Osama bin Laden and his movement. Highly recommended for large public and academic libraries. Nader Entessar, Spring Hill Coll., Mobile, ALCopyright 2002 Cahners Business Information, Inc.