

Title: The Muslim Revolt: A Journey through Political Islam

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Review:

We live in a time when daily news reports are rife with references to the War on Terror and 'fundamentalist Muslims'. Unsuspecting viewers often take what they hear as fact, due to a lack of knowledge surrounding the context of what we today perceive, as the gaping ideological rift between the West and Islam. Roger Hardy in his book attempts to give this issue much needed context by providing an in depth study of the development of political Islam, not only through the ages, but also mapping its journey through the world. His approach is refreshing in the manner in which he speaks to individuals holding differing opinions in order to present a balanced recount. However, his commentary often indicates a subtle bias in favour of one group over another.

The structure of the book is such that each of the nine chapters is dedicated to a different country or geographical region, and this is, for the most part arranged chronologically. Hardy begins with an introduction to his book in which he refers to President Obama and the supposed shift in position indicated by the president's Cairo speech. The author elaborates on the diversity of the Muslim community and since Muslims cannot be called a homogeneous group, opinions and approaches to political Islam will differ, therefore it is impossible to generalise.

The journey begins in Egypt where Hardy briefly discusses the history of Islam and the place of the Prophet (pbuh) in uniting Arab tribes that were otherwise in harsh opposition to one another. Islam in its heyday was regarded as a challenge to European Christendom, and ultimately culminated in the Crusades which served as a long-standing symbol of hostility between the West and Islam. Hardy confidently states that whilst Muslims did hold power for a significant period of history, the shift towards a Western monopoly of power was "hard to bear" for Muslims as they had been "programmed for victory" (p.14). The proceeding discussion of Hasan al-Banna, dubbed the "Marx and Lenin of the Islamic movement" (p.22) and the role of the Muslim Brotherhood is a significant one as it marks the birth of 'political Islam' for many. Al-Banna's rejection of both colonialism and secular nationalism, led him to take a new approach – one that signified a return to the tenants of the faith. In an interesting diagnosis of the

problems faced by Muslims, Hardy quotes al-Banna saying: "Eject imperialism from your souls, and it will leave your lands."

Iran is next on the list of discussion due to its role as an "Islamic State". Hardy speaks of Ayatollah Khomeini and how his achievement of creating an Islamic state signified something that Hasan al-Banna "only dreamt of" (p.39). This section is particularly interesting as the relationship between the US, Iran and Iraq is explored in detail, thereby giving rise to critical questions about the double standards present. Hardy expresses Western shock at the notion that an established government could be overthrown by a new order, particularly if that order was related to religion since social scientists had spoken of the gradual decline of religion. "Modernisation theory had determined that 'they' (the developing world) would become like 'us' (the developed world)" (p.40). The global ramifications were therefore immense, and this marked a crucial point in the development of political Islam, particularly since whilst liberalism "promoted the sovereignty of man...Islam proclaimed the sovereignty of God." (p.54).

The discussion on Pakistan pays attention to the role of the supposedly 'notorious' madressa's which are often portrayed by Western media as being 'jihadi training camps'. However, through his travels and countless interviews, Hardy discovers that in fact, the madressa's are playing a vital role in filling the education void in Pakistan. The respective roles of a number of individuals, such as Zulfikar Ali Bhutto (the father of late Benazir Bhutto) and Abul-Ala Maududi are explored. This is then followed by chapters discussing the role of political Islam in Africa, (specifically Sudan and Algeria), Saudi Arabia, Turkey and the Far East, namely Thailand, Malaysia and Indonesia.

The penultimate chapter bring the discussion back home to Europe and explores hostilities present between Islam and the West, exemplified by the French hijab ban, killing of Theo Van Gogh in the Netherlands, the Rushdie affair in Britain and later of course, the London bombings. Hardy indicates that ultimately the question is reduced to the issue of security vs. integration and what integration really would mean for Muslims. Hardy concludes by stating that the failure is twofold – Western nations have not succeeded in dealing equitably with other nations and Muslim regimes have not adapted to modernity. This conception of 'adaptation to modernity' seems a rather condescending statement since it assumes that the Western approach to organising society is the most suitable mechanism, and one which must be aspired to. The book ends on this point, and notes that the battle to win "hearts and minds" by both sides, continues.

The structure of Hardy's writing is effective and helpful as it compartmentalises the discussion by country. However one may argue that this can also result in confusion as the interplay between the countries is only briefly touched upon. Overall, the text is a very good introduction to the topic of political Islam and successfully fulfils its aim of providing context to the issue. It certainly empowers the reader into feeling that they have a relatively good grasp of the issues at hand; however, it goes without saying that further reading into the subject matter is essential. History is very much subjective and differing 'slants' are

inevitable depending on the author's belief, perspective and experience. Furthermore, Hardy's writing addresses the issue of Islam solely via its political role, as the book title states. However, Islam as a religion is not defined solely by its politics and the text fails to consider the principles or tenants of belief. Hardy's writing could have benefited from a better consideration of the Islamic faith, as this would provide a more effective contextual foundation to the issue.

'The Muslim Revolt is the first book you should read if you want to discover and decipher the implications of political Islam. Roger Hardy's firm grasp of history and his long experience on the ground in the Middle East have given him the perspective essential to understanding what is happening today and is likely to happen tomorrow.Â 2 January 2011 - Published on Amazon.com. "The Muslim Revolt: A Journey Through Political Islam" by Roger Hardy, (2010), small hardback, 230 pages. The author `worked as a Middle East and Islamic affairs analyst for the BBC World Service for over twenty years.' Roger Hardy. "We pay a high price when we fail to understand Islam," writes Roger Hardy in this timely guide. Designed for readers of all backgrounds, this book demystifies the phenomenon of Islamism and the forces that drive it, situating the movement within a clarifying history that views Islamism, for the last two hundred years, as the product of a war against Western domination and as a consequence of the disappointments of modernization. Roger Hardy builds his narrative around personal travels and his encounters as a journalist covering Mideast and Islamic issues for more than three decad The Muslim revolt: a journey through political Islam. Brown Katherine E.