

## **The Islamist Why I Joined Radical Islam In Britain What I Saw Inside And Why I Left**

“A welcome expansion of the fragile territory known as common ground.” —The New York Times When Reza Aslan’s bestseller *Zealot* came out in 2013, there was criticism that he hadn’t addressed his Muslim faith while writing the origin story of Christianity. In fact, Ross Douthat of The New York Times wrote that “if Aslan had actually written in defense of the Islamic view of Jesus, that would have been something provocative and new.” Mustafa Akyol’s *The Islamic Jesus* is that book. *The Islamic Jesus* reveals startling new truths about Islam in the context of the first Muslims and the early origins of Christianity. Muslims and the first Christians—the Jewish followers of Jesus—saw Jesus as not divine but rather as a prophet and human Messiah and that salvation comes from faith and good works, not merely as faith, as Christians would later emphasize. What Akyol seeks to reveal are how these core beliefs of Jewish Christianity, which got lost in history as a heresy, emerged in a new religion born in 7th Arabia: Islam. Akyol exposes this extraordinary historical connection between Judaism, Jewish Christianity and Islam—a major mystery unexplored by academia. From Jesus’ Jewish followers to the Nazarenes and Ebionites to the Qu’ran’s stories of Mary and Jesus, *The Islamic Jesus* will reveal links between religions that seem so contrary today. It will also call on Muslims to discover their own Jesus, at a time when they are troubled by their own Pharisees and Zealots.

This volume examines the lone actor terrorist phenomenon, including the larger societal trends which may or may not have led to their acts of terrorism. With lone actor terrorism becoming an increasingly common threat, the contributors to this volume aim to answer the following questions: What drives the actions of individuals who become lone actor terrorists? Are ideological and cultural issues key factors, or are personal psychological motives more useful in assessing the threat? Do lone actors evolve in a broader social context or are they primarily fixated loners? What response strategies are available to security services and law enforcement? What is the future outlook for this particular terrorist threat? Although these issues are frequently discussed, few books have taken a global perspective as their primary focus. While many books focus on lone actor terrorists in relation to terrorist groups, such as Al-Qaida and the Islamic State, few, if any, cover lone actors of all ideological backgrounds, including the variants of active shooters and malicious insiders in information security, such as Edward Snowden – with both of these latter categories constituting an important variant of lone actors. Utilising the expertise of academics and practitioners, the volume offers a valuable multidisciplinary perspective. This book will be of much interest to students of terrorism and counter-terrorism, political violence, criminology, security studies and IR.

How realistic is the prospect of peace in the Muslim world? This question is the

predominant focus for global analysis today, but its debate frequently ignores the cultural and social complexity of the Muslim world, reducing it into a system of states and select actors. This book addresses such a failing by exploring how the everyday interactions of women, in accordance with Islamic personal ethics, can offer the world a new interpretation of peace. In particular, it focuses on the women in Islamic societies, from Aceh to Bosnia, Morocco to Bangladesh, initiating a dialogue on the role of these women in peacemaking. This concentration upon the complex issues of the everyday both enables a detailed exploration of how people conceptualise peace and opens up new frameworks for conflict resolution. The discussions that emerge lead to a critical questioning of assumptions about peace as a state policy and cessation of violence. Drawing upon original research from different parts of the Middle East, North Africa and Asia, including Iran, India, Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bosnia, Egypt and Sudan, the contributors offer a refreshing new look at Muslim women as peacemakers, challenging any assumptions of Islam as an inherently violent religion. Such a timely work provides new and important analyses on the role of Muslim women in forging new pathways of peace in the contemporary world.

"Go back to your country! You do not belong here in the United States because you're a terrorist!" Harsh statements like these have been echoed towards Julde (Jul-DAY), a former United States Army brat, but these statements transpired after Julde began wearing the hijab in 2014. Just like many other American families, Julde's family suffered the aftermaths of the 9/11 attack, especially because her dad joined a continual war for six-months out of every year. Many people do not view Muslims as equally threatened by the 9/11 attacks provided that the "War on Terror" is illustrated as a war against the entire Muslim faith; however, this is not true because during the late 1990s Julde joined other Muslim military families on base to pray, eat Iftar dinner, and attend Jummah services. The women in Julde's family openly wore their hijab, but, soon, they slowly detach from wearing their hijab, to later become untraditional Muslim women. And it appeared at that moment, being Muslim at heart was good enough. Julde acquired some of her basic knowledge of Islam through military spouses who taught her to read in Arabic, explained various narratives of the Quran, and offered her valuable words of advice. Fitting in as a child was difficult being that Julde evidently did not celebrate Christmas, Kwanza, Easter, nor other prevalent holidays at school. After classmates questioned Julde's participation in holiday celebrations, they grasp an unexpected discovery that she is Muslim. This often led Julde to feel lonely as a U.S. Army Brat; as if Military brats do not have enough obstacles to face like continually changing their neighborhood, public schools and friends every few years. Now as an adult, Julde Ball wears her hijab to complete her Islamic faith and she undergoes a difference in how people treat her. Despite being cursed out, pushed, kicked, or ignored, Julde maintains wearing her hijab. The United States is Julde's country and as well as many other American Muslims who look like her. Julde wishes that her story can

bring about future change for American Muslims.

The Road to Al-Qaeda is a controversial book. Written by an Egyptian human rights lawyer, it is the first English-language account of the development of tensions between violent and non-violent factions in radical Islamist movements, from the perspective of an insider. It is also a biography of one of the world's most-wanted terrorists: Egyptian-born Dr Ayman al-Zawahiri. Widely recognized as the man who will take over the leadership of Al-Qaeda after Osama bin Laden, he is also the reputed architect of the Riyadh bombings in Saudi Arabia. The original version of this book sold widely across the Arabic world. Reproduced in translation here, with an extensive introduction from distinguished scholar Ibrahim Abu Rabi, it stands alone as an unrivalled account of the divisions within militant Islamist ideology. The author provides insight into the internal politics of Islamic Jihad, and the radicalisation of bin Laden's deputy; he examines Zawahiri's opposition to efforts by other militant Islamists to call a ceasefire with the Egyptian authorities; and he narrates the redirection of Zawahiri's activities towards the US and Israel. As an insight into one of the key minds behind Al-Qaeda this book makes unparalleled and disturbing reading. It is an important document for anyone who seeks to understand how a minority extremist ideology came to have such an impact on world events.-- Biography of the leading mind behind Al-Qaeda and one of the world's most-wanted terrorists-- Written by an Islamist, it provides a unique insight into radical Islam from an insider's viewpoint-- Extensive introduction from leading Islamic scholar sets explains the context and background to the book-- First English-language account of an Arabic bestseller-- Ideal for anyone who wants a non-Western perspective on the internal debates of Islamic activism

The major Islamist groups in the Kurdistan region of Iraq have long been part of the political landscape both at the subnational Kurdistan level and at the Iraqi national level. They gradually emerged in the late 1980s and became more visible and pronounced as a result of the atrocities inflicted on the Kurdish people under Saddam Hussein's brutal regime. Subsequently the Kurdish Islamist groups became a fixture on the formal Kurdish political stage in 1991 after the popular Kurdish uprising in the spring of that year. The Islamists have so far not become a major determining factor in Kurdish politics, yet they are nonetheless significant and effective. In the mid-1990s they became for a short while a vehicle for protest votes against the two major Kurdish political parties, the Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP) and the PUK (Patriotic Union of Kurdistan).

The eruption of the anti-Assad revolution in Syria has had many unintended consequences, among which is the opportunity it offered Sunni jihadists to establish a foothold in the heart of the Middle East. That Syria's ongoing civil war is so brutal and protracted has only compounded the situation, as have developments in Iraq and Lebanon. Ranging across the battlefields and international borders have been dozens of jihadi Islamist fighting groups, of which some coalesced into significant factions such as Jabhat al Nusra and the Islamic

State. This book assesses and explains the emergence since 2011 of Sunni jihadist organizations in Syria's fledgling insurgency, charts their evolution and situates them within the global Islamist project. Unprecedented numbers of foreign fighters have joined such groups, who will almost certainly continue to host them. Thus, external factors in their emergence are scrutinized, including the strategic and tactical lessons learned from other jihadist conflict zones and the complex interplay between Al-Qaeda and the Islamic State and how it has influenced the jihadist sphere in Syria. Tensions between and conflict within such groups also feature in this indispensable volume.

During the two World Wars that marked the 20th century, hundreds of thousands of non-European combatants fought in the ranks of various European armies. The majority of these soldiers were Muslims from North Africa, Sub-Saharan Africa, Central Asia, or the Indian Subcontinent. How are these combatants considered in existing historiography? Over the past few decades, research on war has experienced a wide-reaching renewal, with increased emphasis on the social and cultural dimensions of war, and a desire to reconstruct the experience and viewpoint of the combatants themselves. This volume reintroduces the question of religious belonging and practice into the study of Muslim combatants in European armies in the 20th century, focusing on the combatants' viewpoint alongside that of the administrations and military hierarchy.

Islam is one of the Semitic Religions thus one of the greatest religions of the world, and it is not easy to present a complete description of this religion in a Compact Survey, as this book is. It is also not easy to understand the practical life of the Muslims without some knowledge of their religious-social life. For that, one needs to have a complete understanding of the principal institution of Islam. A compact exposition of Muslim institutions covers at least important aspects of Arab-Muslim life. Keeping in mind these facts, I have tried to deal with the origin, background, and the rise of Islam; the dogmas and the superstitions of the faith; the sources and practice of Muslim law, the family life; and Sufism. It packs an immense amount of information even though there are still other aspect to be dealt with. Concerning the life of the Prophet, it is well-known that Muhammad b. 'Abdullah was born about 570 C.E. in Mecca (al-Makkah), the son of a Korashite family. Orphaned early, he grew up under the care of his nearest relatives. His father had already died so he was brought up by his nearest relatives—his grandfather and his uncle. He was a shepherd during his boyhood age. It is also reported that unlike other boys, Muhammad was thoughtful, rather than playful. At the age of about twenty-five, he became the business adviser of a famed widow named Khadija, who was fifteen years his senior. Eventually he became her third husband. We do not know much about his early religious life. He seems, however, to have begun early to meditate on the values of life, and to have had an unusually nervous, "high-strung constitution." At the age of forty, he started receiving the divine

Seminar paper from the year 2019 in the subject Gender Studies, grade: A, University of Vienna (Development Studies), course: Gender Module, language: English, abstract: This paper sets out to provide a nuanced perspective on ISIL women (women in the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant) by analyzing their prescribed roles and positions in the Islamic State in light of particular norms that many feminists adhere to in order to transcend the debate between global and Islamic feminism. The author lays a particular focus on the political dimension that is interwoven with the role of ISIL women in the establishment of a global caliphate and identifies some of the intricacies thereof. More specifically, the construction of differences between women and men as well as among different types of women served as a main instrument for ISIL's gender ideology in this larger state-building project. The author,

## File Type PDF The Islamist Why I Joined Radical Islam In Britain What I Saw Inside And Why I Left

thus, aims to address and answer the following question in this paper: How did the construction of differences inherent to ISIL's gender ideology shape the discursive construction of the role and position of women in the Islamic State and the Levante? Women joining and serving terrorist groups is not a new phenomenon. However, the large number of female recruits also from Western parts of the world together with ISIL's gender-targeted propaganda strategy, its specific policy on women and its strict gender apparatus made it rather unique. The global dimension with women having joined from all over the world to support the establishment of a global caliphate adds yet another level to the complexities and historical relevance of this phenomenon. A lot has been written about ISIL's gender-specific recruitment practices, the motivations of women to join ISIL as well as the particular functions of and conditions for women from a security perspective, particularly with view to counter-terrorism aspirations and the broader "Women, Peace and Security" (WPS) agenda addressing also women's rights concerns including Sexual and Gender-Based Violence (SGBV). ISIL women are thus mostly portrayed as either committed jihadists or victims of a brutal regime. Less has been written though on ISIL's gender ideology from a feminist perspective, although various sources list "liberation from the West" as one of the main motivators for women to join ISIL. The literature also neglects somewhat the political dimension of ISIL's gender apparatus. Considering women's contributions to a larger state-building project it is rather surprising that the literature has not taken these perspectives up in depth.

So-called Islamic State began to appear in what it calls Khorasan (Afghanistan, Pakistan, Central Asia, Iran and India) in 2014. Reports of its presence were at first dismissed as propaganda, but during 2015 it became clear that IS had a serious presence in Afghanistan and Pakistan at least. This book, by one of the leading experts on Islamist insurgency in the region, explores the nature of IS in Khorasan, its aim and strategies, and its evolution in an environment already populated by many jihadist organisations. Based on first-hand research and numerous interviews with members of IS in Khorasan, as well as with other participants and observers, the book addresses highly contentious issues such as funding, IS's relationship with the region's authorities, and its interactions with other insurgent groups. Giustozzi argues that the central leadership of IS invested significant financial resources in establishing its own branch in Khorasan, and as such it is more than a local movement which adopted the IS brand for its own aims. Though the central leadership has been struggling in implementing its project, it is now turning towards a more realistic approach. This is the first book on a new frontier in Islamic State's international jihad.

In recent years, like many countries caught between the tides of fundamentalist religion and secular culture, Algeria has been rocked by social upheaval, protest, spasmodic violence, and terrorist activity. Middle East scholar Michael Willis here charts the meteoric rise of one of the largest and most powerful Islamist movements in the Muslim world.

The Islamic State in the Post-Modern World is a study of the political development of Pakistan. This study consists of three parts. The first addresses the concept of the 'state' as it has evolved historically, the second section focuses on the creation of Pakistan as an experiment in bridging the gulf between the demands of the modern state and the philosophical-spiritual attraction of the Islamic model, and the third part considers international issues from the beginning of the 21st century especially the conflicts in Iraq and Afghanistan.

The Islamist Why I Became an Islamic Fundamentalist, what I Saw Inside, and why I Left Penguin

In April of 2002, a mosque in Cambridge, MA run by the Islamic Society of Boston (ISB) posted an appeal on its website: "Chechen refugee family needs temporary place to live until they complete their permanent refugee status in the US. Husband has good business knowledge, auto-mechanic experience and construction." Contrary to the Islamic Society of Boston's

## File Type PDF The Islamist Why I Joined Radical Islam In Britain What I Saw Inside And Why I Left

claims, taken entirely at face value by most media, that the Tsarnaev brothers only briefly and occasionally attended its Cambridge mosque over the year or so before they bombed the Boston Marathon, the Tsarnaevs were already involved with the ISB in April of 2002 – the month that they arrived in the United States. The family, which was not religious when it arrived in America, began regularly praying at the ISB mosque and turned increasingly fundamentalist. This fits an alarming pattern: Since 9/11, fourteen leaders and members of the ISB have either been imprisoned, killed by law enforcement, or declared fugitives for their involvement in Islamic terrorism. The stories of the Tsarnaev brothers have been told in countless places. The story of the mosque that they attended during their increasing radicalization – and the organization that runs it – has not been told in any meaningful way yet. Terror in the Cradle of Liberty documents the rise of Islamist networks within New England's historically-moderate and century-old Muslim community since the 1960s. It contains a detailed and personal account of the efforts by Massachusetts activists since 2002 to expose and counter the influence of Islamist networks in New England – even as Jewish, political, and law enforcement leaders in the Bay State have decided to embrace these networks as interfaith and community allies.

The author describes how, at the age of sixteen, he became an Islamic fundamentalist, and after much emotional turmoil rejected the fundamentalist teachings and returned to his previous life and family.

Based on substantial fieldwork and thorough knowledge of written sources, Xavier Bougarel offers an innovative analysis of the post-Ottoman and post-Communist history of Bosnian Muslims. *Islam and Nationhood in Bosnia-Herzegovina* explores little-known aspects of the war in Bosnia and Herzegovina, unravels the paradoxes of Bosniak national identity, and retraces the transformations of Bosnian Islam from the end of the Ottoman period to today. It offers fresh perspectives on the wars and post-war periods of the Yugoslav space, the forming of national identities and the strength of imperial legacies in Eastern Europe, and Islam's presence in Europe. The question of how Islam is tied to national identity still divides Bosnian Muslims. *Islam and Nationhood in Bosnia-Herzegovina* places the history of ties between Islam and politics in Bosnia and Herzegovina in the larger global context of Bosnian Muslims relations both with the umma (the global Muslim community) and Europe from the late 19th century to the present and is a vital contribution to research on Islam in the West.

Traces the evolution of the ISIS ideology, from its origins in the prison writings of the revolutionary jihadist Sayyid Qutb, through the thinking of Osama bin Laden and Ayman al-Zawahiri, in a book that is essential reading for anyone concerned about terrorist violence.

--Publisher

When I was sixteen I became an Islamic fundamentalist. Five years later, after much emotional turmoil, I rejected fundamentalist teachings and returned to normal life and my family. I tried to put my experiences behind me, but as the events of 7/7 unfolded it became clear to me that Islamist groups pose a threat to this country that we - Muslims and non-Muslims alike - do not yet understand. Why are young British Muslims becoming extremists? What are the risks of another home-grown terrorist attack on British soil? By describing my experiences inside these groups, the reasons I joined them and how, after leaving I recovered my faith and mind, I hope to explain the appeal of extremist thought, how fanatics penetrate Muslim communities and the truth behind their agenda of subverting the West and moderate Islam. Writing candidly about life after extremism, I illustrate the depth of the problem that now grips Muslim hearts and minds. I will lay bare what politicians and Muslim 'community leaders' do not want you to know. This is the first time an ex-member openly discusses life within radical Islamic organisations. This is my story.

*The Islamists Are Coming: Who They Really Are* is the first book to survey the rise of Islamist groups in the wake of the Arab Spring. A wide range of experts from three continents cover the

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major countries where Islamist parties are redefining politics and the regional balance of power. They cover the origins, evolution, positions on key issues and the future in key countries. Robin Wright offers an overview, Olivier Roy explains how Islam and democracy are now interdependent, Annika Folkesson profiles the 50 Islamist parties, and 10 experts identify Islamists in Algeria, Egypt (two), Jordan, Lebanon, Libya, Morocco, the Palestinian territories, Syria, and Tunisia.

Keen to learn but short on time? Get to grips with the history of the Islamic State in next to no time with this concise guide. 50Minutes.com provides a clear and engaging analysis of the history of the Islamic State. The brutal terror attacks in Paris in 2015 sent shockwaves across Europe. The group which claimed responsibility for them, the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant, has been active since 2006 and seeks to impose its radical and distorted version of Islam across the Middle East. The international coalition established to combat the organisation has made some significant advances, but the fight against fundamentalism is still far from over. In just 50 minutes you will:

- Understand the history of the Islamic State and the events leading up to its foundation, including colonial rule and the regime of Saddam Hussein
- Learn about the key figures in the organisation, including current leader Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi
- Evaluate the successes and failures of the coalition fighting against the Islamic State

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Using a wealth of primary sources, this book traces the history of Palestinian Islamic Jihad (PIJ), one of the most important yet least understood Palestinian armed factions from its origins in the early 1980s to today, exploring its continued presence despite its more powerful sister movement Hamas.

A ground-level picture of the Islamic world as it is being changed by America's war on terror is painted in an examination of the pitfalls of trying to revamp a misunderstood civilization that often sees the worst in America's intentions. Reprint.

This is the first book in the English language to deal with the spiritual significance of Islamic art including not only the plastic arts, but also literature and music. Rather than only dealing with the history of the various arts of Islam or their description, the author relates the form, content, symbolic language, meaning, and presence of these arts to the very sources of the Islamic revelation. Relying upon his extensive knowledge of the Islamic religion in both its exoteric and esoteric dimensions as well as the various Islamic sciences, the author relates Islamic art to the inner dimensions of the Islamic revelation and the spirituality which has issued from it. He brings out the spiritual significance of the Islamic arts ranging from architecture to music as seen, heard, and experienced by one living within the universe of the Islamic tradition. In this work the reader is made to understand the meaning of Islamic art for those living within the civilization which created it.

In this timely and important work, John Esposito and John Voll explore the development of contemporary Islamic movements and thought through the biographies of nine major activist intellectuals who represent a wide range of Muslim societies. Many Muslims have combined revivalist activism with intellectual efforts, but only a few have achieved significant international visibility and influence. By examining the lives and work of nine such internationally recognized figures, Esposito and Voll provide a new understanding of the intellectual foundations of contemporary Islamic awareness and politics. Included are profiles of: Ismail Ragi al-Faruqi (U.S./Palestine), Khurshid Ahmad (India/Pakistan), Maryam Jameelah (U.S./Pakistan), Hasan Hanafi (Sudan), Rashid Ghannoushi (Tunisia), Hasan al-Turabi (Sudan), Abdolkarim Soroush (Iran), Anwar Ibrahim (Malaysia), and Abdurrahman Wahid (Indonesia). These thinkers

## File Type PDF The Islamist Why I Joined Radical Islam In Britain What I Saw Inside And Why I Left

contributed to some of the most significant intellectual and activist developments in the Muslim world during the 1980s and 1990s--the period during which Islamic movements became a major force in Muslim societies and international affairs. They helped to organize and lead the movements of Islamic renewal and provided the conceptual foundations for the programs those movements advocate. Together, they represent a distinctive phase in the evolution of Islamic thinking: the ongoing effort to create an effective synthesis of modernity and Islamic tradition. Their work supplies the core of the Islamic resurgence of the 1990s and the foundation for what it can become in the twenty-first century.

*The Athaan in the Bull City: Building Durham's Islamic Community* tells the little-known story of the growth of the Islamic community in Durham, North Carolina. Drawing upon his own knowledge of the founding and development of Jamaat Ibad Ar-Rahman, Inc., Nazeeh Z. Abdul-Hakeem, the organization's principal founder, draws together personal recollections and the details of Durham's major Islamic organization to tell about Durham's burgeoning Islamic community. Reaching back across the community's history of more than thirty years, *The Athaan in the Bull City* recounts how Islam's foundations in Durham rest upon the lives of Black American Muslims. With the passing of years, the community has grown and has changed, as arriving immigrants, Muslims from around the world, have given the community a decidedly international perspective and outlook.

Based on years of immersive reporting, Pulitzer finalist Moaveni has written a gripping account of 13 women as they joined, endured, and, in some cases, escaped life in the Islamic State. Among the many books trying to understand the terrifying rise of ISIS, none has given voice to the women in the organization.

Following the terrorist attacks on London and Madrid, radical Islam is presumed to be an increasingly potent force in Europe. Yet beneath the media hysteria, very little is actually known about it. What radical movements are there? How do they operate? What is driving them? Who are their recruits? What is their relationship, if any, to Al Qaeda? Alison Pargeter has spent three years interviewing radical Islamists throughout Europe to find answers to these questions. She examines how radical ideology travels from East to West, and how the two contexts shape each other. She finds that contrary to what some analysts have claimed, the European Muslim community has not become radicalised en masse. What has happened is that in a globalised world, Middle Eastern power struggles are now being played out in the mosques of Birmingham, Paris and Milan. This is a must-read book for anyone who wants to know the real story of the jihad which has apparently arrived in our back yard.

Focuses on the historical common ground that the Islamic and Western worlds share. How big is the threat posed by American ISIS supporters? How many Americans have joined ISIS and how many want to return to the United States? Compared to participation by Americans in other jihadist groups, the scale of American involvement in jihadist activity today is unprecedented. This book, from one of the leading counter-terror centres, draws on first-hand interviews with former American Islamic State members and law enforcement officials who tracked them, and includes detailed analysis of the court cases against them and their social media presence. Homegrown reveals how and why ISIS was able to radicalize and recruit a new generation of jihadist sympathizers in America.

Bernard Lewis's work has covered all periods, and most countries, of the Islamic Middle East. This festschrift, written by some of his numerous colleagues, friends, and former students, includes some of the most distinguished orientalist, historians, and social scientists of our time and is a fitting tribute to Professor Lewis's scholarship. The contributions range, geographically, from "On Chinese Rhubarb" to "The Jewish Courtier Class in Late Eighteenth-Century Morocco" and, topically, from "The Concept

of Authority in Islamic Thought" to "A Forgotten Ottoman Romance" and "Safety in Numbers: Reflections on the Middle Eastern Balance of Power". Taken together, the fifty-two essays constitute a variegated collection of studies on a many-sided and important civilisation. The collections are assembled under three major headings: The Classical and Medieval Islamic World; Ottoman Studies and The Modern Middle East. In the modern world, the ideology of Islamic fundamentalists is of central importance, but it is often distorted or misunderstood by the world media. In this detailed study, Andrea Nusse provides an insightful analysis of the Palestinian Hamas movement's world-view and shows how the theoretical framework developed by thinkers like Hassan al-Banna, Sayyid Qutb and al-Mawdudi is applied to a specific political, social and economic context. It presents the Islamist position towards recent events, such as the Gulf war, the Madrid peace negotiations and the Hebron Massacre and helps to dissipate myths surrounding modern Islamist movements and their overwhelming success as opposition forces in the Islamic world.

Sayyid Qutb is widely considered the guiding intellectual of radical Islam, with a direct line connecting him to Osama bin Laden. But Qutb has too often been treated maliciously or reductively-"the Philosopher of Islamic Terror," as Paul Berman famously put it in the New York Times Magazine. James Toth offers an even-handed account of Sayyid Qutb and shows him to be a much more complex figure than the many one-dimensional portraits would have us believe. Qutb first gained notice as a novelist, literary critic, and poet but then turned to religious and political criticism aimed at the Egyptian government and Muslims he deemed insufficiently pious. After a two-year sojourn in the U.S., he returned to Egypt even more radicalized and joined the Muslim Brotherhood, eventually taking charge of its propaganda operation. When Brotherhood members were accused of assassinating Egyptian President Gamal Abdel Nasser, the group was outlawed and Qutb imprisoned. He was executed in 1966, becoming the first martyr to the Islamist cause. Using an analytical approach that investigates without passing judgment, Toth traces the life and thought of Qutb, giving attention not only to his well-known Signposts on the Road, but also to his less-studied works like Social Justice in Islam and his 30-volume Qur'anic commentary, In the Shade of the Qur'an. Toth's aim is to give Qutb's ideas a fair hearing, to measure their impact, and to treat him like other intellectuals who inspire revolutions, however unpopular they may be. In offering a more nuanced account of Qutb, one that moves beyond the cartoonish depictions of him as the evil genius lurking behind today's terrorists, Sayyid Qutb deepens our understanding of a central figure of radical Islam and, indeed, our understanding of radical Islam itself.

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