

However, there appear to be some loopholes in the book. When Maajid Nawaz says that there is no correct interpretation of the scriptures, he opens the door for everyone to become a *mujtahid* (one who derives injunctions from Islamic texts). He hardly distinguishes between the established interpretation of texts (*qat'ī*) and speculative interpretation of the texts (*ẓannī*). He passes on a general statement on the entire text of the Qur'ān and *aḥādīth* (Sayings of the Prophet). Similarly, when he says that the relationship of a believer with the texts of Islam is more spiritual than legal, he reduces Islam to mere philosophy. Likewise, when Sam Harris claims that violence is intrinsic to Islam and that modern values are antithetical to the specific teachings of Islam, he fails to go beyond the literal meanings and the historical background of the Qur'ānic verses, besides failing to recognise the good Islam has done to the cause of human rights and individual freedom.

Islamic fundamentalism since 1945 (Second Edition). By Beverley Milton-Edwards. London and New York: Routledge, 2014, pp. 192. ISBN: 978-0-415-63989-7.

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Islamic movements are frequently dubbed by the West as Islamism, Islamic fundamentalism, Islamic fanaticism, militant Islam, or political Islam (for example, see G. P. Makris, *Islam in the Middle East, USA*: Blackwell Publishing, 2007, pp. 192–193, and B. Laurence, *Muslim Fundamentalist Movements: Reflections toward a New Approach*, in B. Stowasser (Ed.), *The Islamic Impulse*, London: Croom Helm, 1987, pp. 15–16). These movements, which surfaced in the twentieth century, are a manifestation of what can be called a “revivalist” or “reformist” trend in Islam, with positive and creative aspirations to address the social, political, and economic decline of Muslim societies. Their aim is to rebuild and restructure Muslim societies through the foundations laid by Islam.

In this light, the book under review by Beverley Milton-Edwards, who is Professor at Queen’s University, Belfast, is, on the one hand,

in the wake of the Arab uprising, a fresh and updated exploration of the Islamic movements, but on the other hand, an analysis that has ignored solid realities firmly associated with Islam and Muslims. The first edition of the book was published in 2005, in which the author had “developed a series of ideas about Islamic fundamentalism as a contemporary historical phenomenon” (p. viii). This revised and updated second edition, besides providing different dimensions of Islamic fundamentalism, especially the political one, examines one of the very important contemporary topics — Islamic fundamentalism *vis-à-vis* the Arab awakening.

The book comprises eight chapters plus an introduction. The concluding pages of the book contains a glossary, a bibliography, and an index. In the introduction, the author lays emphasis on the need of a thorough and intensive exploration and analysis of the “political history of Islamic fundamentalism” so as to develop a “response to the terrorism that the Islamic fundamentalists have wrought against modern Western societies [a mendacious propaganda by the West]” (p. 1). For the author, fundamentalism is “a primary reference point of Islam” for one and all who “describe and analyse manifestations of Islam from Beirut to Birmingham, Lahore to London, Dacca to Detroit” (p. 3).

Chapter 1, “A Diverse Tradition from Past to Present”, (pp. 10–32), provides a general historical overview, albeit briefly, of Islam. In this chapter, the author presents a history of the spread of Islam in the West to North Africa and Spain and in the East to farther areas of Asia coupled with the subsequent developments like, among others, Shi’a-Sunni division, Muslim-Christian relationship, and emergence and fall of the Ottoman Empire in a very concise and lucid fashion (pp. 12–19). In the subsequent pages, the chapter emphasises colonialism, its impact on Muslim society, and the response of Muslim thinkers, categorised by the author into fundamentalists, modernists, reformists and so on (pp. 19–31).

Chapter 2, “The Advance of Secularism: The Decline of Islam”? (pp. 33–53), focuses on secularly governed Muslim countries like Tunisia, Indonesia, Turkey, Pakistan, etc., and explores and examines the secular political model that was imposed by their leaders, which reduced Islam to the ritualistic realm of the societies. In the chapter, the author highlights state-enforced campaigns and coercive measures

to eliminate those elements aspiring to establish an Islamic state. The accretion of the personal power by these rulers is also mentioned, which the author calls “secular dictatorship”. The chapter also highlights that the tenacious grip of power by the secularists is undermined and challenged by the fundamentalists (p. 52).

Chapter 3, “Identity and Revivalism” (pp. 54–72), besides focussing on the period following the 1960s, discusses Islamic resurgence, its origins, causes, impact on the society (within and without), and more importantly, its line of action, with Pakistan and Egypt as the focal point. The author’s main argument is that revivalism was not only the response of the new generation of activists against the failing political establishments and their project of secularisation and modernisation, but also an aspiration to replace the existing *jāhili* system with an Islamic one (pp. 54–57). For the Islamists, as the author mentions, revival and resurgence demand complete and total return to the path of Islam.

Exploring the relations between Islamists and rulers, Chapter 4, “Islam Armed: Resistance in an Ideological Era” (pp. 73–94), discusses the charges and counter charges between the two, and more importantly the development of militant features among the Islamists. The author discusses *inter alia* the landscape of Afghanistan (Soviet invasion and after), Iran, Sudan, and Lebanon, *vis-à-vis* fundamentalism. In this broad spectrum, the chapter also features the role predominantly played by the USA in influencing the political process of those contexts.

Correlating terrorism with Islam, in Chapter 5, “Going Global: Fundamentalism and Terror” (pp. 95–115), the author discusses fundamentalism and terrorism within Muslim countries and their global spread. It broadly unfolds the definition of terrorism (in which there is disagreement), which is “illegitimate violence”, and which “can be used to label almost any form of political behaviour that the elites of the modern nation-state dream a threat to the status quo” (p. 96). The author links terrorism largely to Saudi Arabia, the movement of Muhammad ibn ‘Abd al-Wahhāb (the Wahhabi ideology), and Salafism. The chapter broadly focuses on how terrorism is manifested by groups such as al-Qaeda, Taliban, Abu Sayyaf, etc., in countries like Afghanistan, Bosnia, Chechnya, Gaza, and Somalia.

Chapter 6, “Ground Zero and Islamic Fundamentalism” (pp. 116–135), is a discussion on secularism, democracy and modernity in

general, and the relationship of the West *vis-à-vis* Islam in the post-9/11 world in particular. The author, besides reprimanding – albeit meagerly – some of the policies of the West, also examines the political landscape of (especially) those Muslim countries impacted by the US-sponsored War on Terror. The exploration and analysis revolves around the notion of Islam as an anti-modern, anti-secular religion, promoting fundamentalism, terrorism, violence and the philosophy which is based on the “doctrine of hate against others”, especially the West (pp. 116–129).

Chapter 7, “Islamic Fundamentalism and the Arab Awakening” (pp. 136–155), while shedding light on the events surrounding the Arab awakening including its causes and reasons, emphasises on the argument that Islam and the Islamists were not the key players engaged in mobilising the masses (p. 139). In this vital and updated topic, the author focuses on al-Qaeda and its *jihadi* threat and maintains that the Arab awakening has put limits to al-Qaeda’s *jihadi* ideology. However, these *jihadi* elements will exploit the situation in those regions where states fail or become fragile (pp. 146–153). The author further points out that although the fundamentalists gained popular support and strengthened their broader agenda, they were compelled “to compete in a dynamic transitional landscape” and accept, *inter alia*, the notions of democracy (p. 140).

Chapter 8, “Conclusion” (pp. 156–162), is a comprehensive exploration of fundamentalism and its proliferation globally (pre and post Arab Spring). In this chapter, the author opines that the majority of the Islamists not only remain circumscribed within their own mundane politics linked to their own societies, but also do not advocate war against the West. The author further argues that, despite the switchover and change in the approach of the fundamentalists, the theme, i.e. the establishment of the Islamic State, remains central to all of them. The author concludes that Islamic fundamentalism is “a modern phenomenon” which should be recognised as a “rapidly moving target for analysis and understanding” (p. 162).

Islamic movements are an indigenous and positive phenomenon seeking to revive the Muslim society. However, Milton-Edwards dubbed them as fundamentalist, radical, anachronistic, anti-Western, and so on. The author’s bias against Islam and Muslims is palpable in her book,

from notions like “Muslims are innately violent” (p. 30), “Islam [is] the faith of failure, backwardness and despotic tendency” (p. 121), and other such statements. It seems that Milton-Edwards’ analysis and arguments have been established through her less charitable presuppositions about Islam and its social effects as well as Muslims, which have unfortunately brushed off reality. She has ignored that the revivalist phenomenon is an active and engaging social occurrence to build a just society based on Islamic principles and values, though it may be possible that it would come into disagreement with mainstream trends. From a normative perspective, clamping the cap of “fundamentalism” or “radicalism” to the phenomenon of revivalism (and to Islam) does not do justice to it.

Apart from these shortcomings, *Islamic Fundamentalism since 1945* offers a comprehensive analysis of Islamic resurgence. This phenomenon is examined by discussing a diverse range of topics, as have been summarised in this review. The author deserves an appreciation for producing a work of such depth. The book is a must read for those interested in comprehending the history, diversity, development, and impact of Islamic movements.