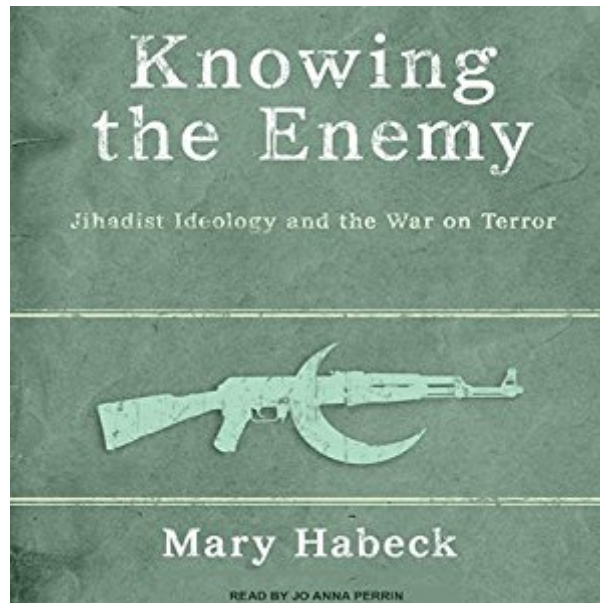




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Knowing The Enemy: Jihadist Ideology And The War On Terror



Synopsis

After September 11, Americans agonized over why 19 men hated the United States enough to kill 3,000 civilians in an unprovoked assault. Analysts have offered a wide variety of explanations for the attack, but the one voice missing is that of the terrorists themselves. This penetrating book is the first to present the inner logic of al-Qaeda, and like-minded extremist groups, by which they justify September 11 and other terrorist attacks. Mary Habeck explains that these extremist groups belong to a new movement - known as jihadism - with a specific ideology based on the thought of Muhammad ibn Abd al-Wahhab, Hasan al-Banna, and Sayyid Qutb. Jihadist ideology contains new definitions of the unity of God and of jihad, which allow members to call for the destruction of democracy and the United States and to murder innocent men, women, and children. Habeck also suggests how the United States might defeat the jihadis, using their own ideology against them.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Mary Habeck avoids polemics and sticks to pedagogy in this precise account of the nature and history of radical Islam's ideology. The title is somewhat sensational, but the text is not inflammatory. This is expository writing at its best. Habeck knows just how much detail to include to explain her subject without fatiguing her readers. In an early chapter Ms. Habeck describes the thought and writing of the first major fundamentalist thinker, Muhammad ibn `Abd al-Wahhab. He eventually emerged as one of the most influential radical Islamic writers. However his ideas were marginalized for nearly two hundred years until the oil shocks of the seventies gave Wahhabi

preachers millions of petrodollars to spread their version of Islam throughout the world. Accounts of other important radicals such as Ibn Taymiyya, Al-Banna, Mawdudi, and Qutb are included, within their historical context. Habek is able to do this clearly and without overuse of mind-numbing Arabic nomenclature. A characteristic that all the radical groups share is that their beliefs have little to do with external pressures from Europeans or others but from the internal strife and dynamics of Islam itself. She makes this point repeatedly. These people are first and foremost religious fanatics. It was not any encounter with the West that made them this way. The jihadist Muslims don't see themselves as destroyers or murderers but as saviors of mankind from its many problems. They believe the Qur'an has appointed them as guardians over humanity and the right to dominion over the world. With this absolutist utopian ideology they reject "man made laws" such as takes place in a democracy. Only religious, or "shari'a law as derived from the Qu'ran can rule mankind, and it cannot be separated into "church and state." There is no secular order in Islam, all is religious. Habek repeatedly states throughout the book that the jihadists are only a small fraction of the Islamic faith. According to her they don't represent the thinking of the vast majority of Islam. But one is left wondering, why aren't there numerous books explaining the point of view of this majority? Why are there no visible spokesmen from moderate Islam debating and excoriating the jihadists? Could it be that either (1) the vast majority of Islam agrees with the jihadists or (2) the vast majority have themselves been terrorized and are afraid to speak out? Habek lists a few recommendations for solving the clash between the jihadists and the rest of the world. She states "the United States and other countries must...find reasonable strategies that will exploit the failures of the jihadis, stop the extremists from carrying out violent attacks, minimize the appeal of their beliefs and eventually end their war with the world." "The center of the jihadist movement is its ideology, which must be directly confronted, challenged and defeated." In the end May Habek offers the neoconservative (although she doesn't call it that) approach as the best possible hope. "Only democratization...will directly attack the jihadist ideology while creating governments that are more responsive to their citizens." "If democracies can flourish in Islamic lands without disturbing the practices and beliefs of Islam, the entire jihadist argument will collapse."

As much as this book is about knowing the enemy, it is as much about knowing who isn't the enemy. If you came away from any of your previous readings with feelings of intolerance for Muslims in general, then Mary Habeck's arguments will appeal to you. As an Associate Professor at John's Hopkins School of Advanced International Studies, Habeck's ultimate focus is public policy and statecraft. For her the term "war on terror" fails to sufficiently describe our objectives. She

prefers "war on jihadism" or "war on the khawarij." The Khawarij were a group which tried, unsuccessfully following the death of Muhammad, to hijack Islam and declare war on mainstream Muslims. The similarity between the khawarij and modern jihadis has already been commented on by Muslim scholars, to the irritation of the jihadis. This approach will also illuminate for mainstream Muslims that the U. S. and the other Western democracies are natural allies in saving their religion from its fanatics. But renaming the battle won't win it. Spreading democracy throughout the Islamic world, and defusing the Palestinian crisis are the principal prescriptions for defusing jihadism. The U. S. cannot go it alone, however, so we have to improve our diplomacy and better engage other democracies to support us in defeating jihadism. The world of the jihadist is a very strange one, and Habeck instructs us without condescension or wonkism, and with a minimum of Arabic vocabulary. We learn, for instance, that it is intuitive to jihadists that the victory of the Afgan mujahidun "working entirely on their own" against Russian occupation caused the downfall of the Soviet Union. They believed that the United States would similarly collapse following 9/11. Moreover, they are stunned that we did not collapse, since it is a core tenet of their belief. This book is exceptionally well researched, and includes fifty pages of endnotes. It is readable and accessible to the open-minded and literate reader. It is a multidisciplinary study of a complex subject which has unfortunately lent itself to oversimplification. Whether this is your starting point in learning about "the enemy," or if you already have been exposed to other authors' treatments, this book is an absolute must read. If you intend to read only one book on Islam, this is your best choice. And don't just put it back on the shelf when you're done. Recommend it, and pass it along.

This book should be mandatory reading in every high school and college history department teaching middle eastern history. It tells us that the Islamic Revolutions of the Jihadist-fundamentalists started not because of Israel and the Palestinians. She writes that the current Jihad began in 1924 with the fall of the Ottoman Empire and the start of modern Turkey under General Attaturk. She writes as to how the so-called Jihadist movements throughout the Muslim world arose. The book is a primer of knowing our enemies and the beliefs which propel them to become suicide bombers trying to murder as many infidels as feasible. I recommend this book to every concerned American. Our country has entered into a divided world where cunning and deceit is common practice. Our so-called Arab allies find such behavior acceptable in their dealings with the naive American "allies.". Places such as Saudi Arabia, Iraq, Afghanistan and other so-called middle eastern moderate nations practice such cunning and lies in their relations with us and with each other. In reality they are our enemies and we wouldn't be there but for the oil. Her book helps to

spread the word about those nations we call our friends and allies and her book sounds the warnings that we as a nation don't really want to hear. We have to recognize the warnings in this book for our own national security; otherwise we will go the way of Western Europe and in a few years we will be a minority in a Muslim fundamentalist country known as the Islamic Republic of America. The book should be entitled "Wake Up America." Robert A. Shaines Author of "Command Influence" a story of Korea, soon to be published

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