GILLES KEPEL

JIHAD

THE TRAIL
OF POLITICAL
ISLAM

Translated by Anthony F. Roberts

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The late twentieth century saw the emergence of an unexpected and extraordinary phenomenon, culminating in a devastating onslaught in the West in 2001: Islamist political movements. Beginning in the early 1970s, militants revolted against the regimes in power across the Muslim world and exacerbated political conflicts internationally. Their jihad or 'Holy Struggle' - aimed to establish a global Islamic state based solely on a strict interpretation of the Qur'an. Religious ideology proved a cohesive force, gathering followers from the young urban poor to middle class professionals and students.

After an initial triumph with the Islamic revolution in Iran, the movement waged jihad against the USSR in Afghanistan, proclaiming a doctrine of extreme violence for the first time. By the end of the 1990s, the failure to seize political power elsewhere led to a split: moderates developed new concepts of 'Muslim democracy' while extremists resorted to large-scale terrorist attacks around the world, beginning with the unprecedented hijackings and biological attacks on the US in 2001.

Jihad is the first comprehensive attempt to follow the history and spread of this new political-religious phenomenon. Gilles Kepel has travelled throughout the Muslim world gathering documents, interviews and archival materials inaccessible to most scholars, in order to provide a full understanding of the scope of Islamist movements, their past, their present and their future direction. As we confront the escalated threat of terrorism, Gilles Kepel helps us make sense of the ominous reality of jihad today.



'This is a landmark book, a work of breadth and scope and scholarship, and genuine imaginative powers. It should be the standard work on political Islam.'

Fouad Ajami, author of Dream Palace of the Arabs: A Generation's Odysse, and Director of Middle East Studies at SAIS. Johns Hopkins University





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