



The Last Crusade: Americanism and the Islamic Reformation

By Michael A Palmer

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The United States, argues Michael A. Palmer, is engaged in a political crusade to modernize the Islamic world. Americanism is in the vanguard of modernity's relentless advance, promoting capitalist markets and democratic institutions. To compete, Islamic societies must adopt a more secular and material approach, as have the West and South and East Asia. But these principles conflict with Islamic fundamentals.

Once a vibrant force, much of the Muslim world spent four centuries as prisoner of an Ottoman Empire that embraced feudalism while the West jettisoned it. In the absence of a renaissance or enlightenment, modernization in the Islamic world has been painful and unsuccessful. While many in the West long for an "Islamic reformation," Palmer argues that Islamists such as Osama bin Laden are the face of that reformation. Just as Protestant reformers sought a return to the purity of early Christianity, jihadists desire a return to the halcyon days of conquest and expansion, when the Caliphate controlled a united and powerful Muslim community.

American actions have not provoked this conflict, nor can American withdrawal end it, Palmer contends. For example, China, also a once-powerful civilization subjected to Western imperialism, has not produced homicide bombers. Instead, the Chinese are busy modernizing. Islam's failure to modernize is the root cause of the current situation. Bin Laden and other jihadists understand, correctly, that if Islam is to avoid the materialism and secularism that come with modernity, they must Islamize the West by force.

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Editorial Review

Review

"The Last Crusade accurately places the Islamist enemy in historical context and offers an excellent guide for Americans to understand that victory implies modernizing the Muslim world, and nothing less." - Daniel Pipes, director, Middle East Forum"

From the Publisher

Argues that Osama bin Laden and his followers are waging jihad against not only American policies but also American values

Surveys the evolution of religion and politics in the West and Middle East to show why the former successfully modernized and the latter did not

Warns that pulling out of Iraq under the pressure of Islamist attack would provide legitimacy for the jihadists, a defeat for a modernized Middle East, and a major setback in the war on terrorism

About the Author

Michael A. Palmer is a professor in the history department and the program in maritime studies at East Carolina University. He is the author of two previous books that address U.S. policies in the *Middle East, On Course to Desert Storm: The U.S. Navy and the Persian Gulf* and *Guardians of the Gulf: The Growth of American Involvement in the Persian Gulf, 1833-1992*. He lives in Greenville, North Carolina.

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