

# A FURY FOR GOD

THE ISLAMIST ATTACK ON AMERICA

06

MALISE RUTHVEN

The terrorist attacks on New York and Washington were carried out by men steeped in Islamist ideology, an amalgam of traditional Islamic concepts such as 'jihad' and extremist ideas adapted from European leftism, fascism and anarchism. All of the nineteen suicide skyjackers were Arabs connected with al-Qa'ida, the extremist Islamist network presided over by the Saudi dissident Osama bin Laden. Fifteen of the terrorists came from Saudi Arabia, America's closest ally in the Arab world.

In *A Fury for God* Malise Ruthven traces the religious and intellectual background behind the Islamist attack on America. He investigates the hijacker's motives, particularly those of Mohammed Atta, their leader, a personality troubled like many of his contemporaries by the clash between 'Islamic' and 'Western' values, including unresolved conflicts over gender and sexuality. He also shows that it would be a mistake to treat these people as medieval fanatics: their attitude to modernity is dangerous and ambivalent.


And in a challenging analysis, the author exposes the crucial importance of the Saudi connection, the massive sponsorship of 'fundamentalism' by an authoritarian tribal regime cynically armed and tolerated for its oil. Whilst rejecting the thesis that the Western and Islamic worlds are heading inevitably for a clash between 'civilizations', he concludes by suggesting that, if left unchecked, pressures from religious fundamentalists in America and Israel, added to the religious forces at work in the Muslim world, might well conspire to produce just such an outcome.

*Praise for Malise Ruthven's Islam in the World:*

**'This is an unusual book, full of original ideas and judgements based upon wide reading and personal observation. Its most valuable feature is its attempt to show the relationship between the modern doctrines of Islam and the ways in which Muslims live in the modern world'** Albert Hourani, author of *A History of the*

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