

Heinrich Wilhelm Schäfer: Kampf der Fundamentalismen. Radikales Christentum, radikaler Islam und Europas Moderne
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Exposé in English:

The Clash of Fundamentalisms. Radical Christianity, Radical Islam and Europe's modernity

(Essay, 400.000 characters)

The book presents a new and completely formal definition of “fundamentalism”. On this basis the book ...

- assesses Islamic movements within the framework of the kind of modernity specific to the Middle East,
- assesses Christian movements in the USA within the framework of the kind of modernity specific to America,
- locates the different fundamentalisms within the global relations of power,
- discusses the logic of the relevant “political theologies”, and finally
- outlines – contrasting with this picture – three strands of European modernity and the challenge of global justice.

The book is based on more than two decades of academic research, but its style is well-suited to a broader intellectual audience and does not require deeper religious, sociological or theological knowledge.

Definition of fundamentalism:

“Fundamentalism” is defined by two criteria that must be found in combination in order to qualify a certain religious or social practice as “fundamentalist”. A movement or similar social actor has to

1. declare a certain conviction – religious, political etc. – as an absolute value and
2. employ this in an expansive strategy to control major social space.

Only such movements that meet *both criteria* are “fundamentalist”. A movement like the Amish that meets the first criterion but focuses on withdrawal from society is not to be called “fundamentalist”. Revolutionary movements, on the other hand, like the Sandinistas or Liberation Theology that meet only the second criterion are not “fundamentalist” either.

However, an important context condition must also be mentioned: fundamentalist movements are phenomena of modernity.

This formal definition has the advantage that it can be applied to non-religious actors as well. Nevertheless, the present book focuses on religious fundamentalism.

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1. Premises

1.1. *Fundamentalism*

A definition of „fundamentalism“ as outlined above, but fully explained within the framework of scientific discussion. The formal definition allows to distinguish between different fundamentalisms according to their religious contents and cultural contexts.

1.2. *Religious movements*

Fundamentalisms are analyzed as religious *movements*. Thus, it is necessary to distinguish between different phases of non-fundamentalist and fundamentalist strategies. Moreover, this approach allows to see that religious actors, especially fundamentalists, employ identity as a strategic factor. The transformation of interest-oriented conflicts into identity conflicts turns out to be an important indicator of fundamentalist strategies.

1.3. *Modernities*

To understand the fundamentalisms, it is important to understand different “modernities“ as their contexts. Definition of modernization as an overarching politization (Senghaas) of social life. Introduction of the concept of “multiple modernities” (Eisenstadt) in order to understand the differences between Islamic and Christian fundamentalism. Moreover, inner differences *within* Western modernities.

2. The House of Islam

Assessment of Islamist movements in Middle East.

2.1. *The Unbelievers – Modernity as Domination*

Colonial European modernity as secularist dominion forming the context of the initiation of Islamic reorientation.

2.1.1. *Modernists*

Early modernist movements in Islam: Sayyid Ahmad Khan (1817-1898, India), Djamal al-din al-Afghani (1838-1897) and Muhammad Abduh (1849-1905, Egypt).

2.1.2. *Domination and Islamism*

Anti-colonial formation of radical Islamists - from the Muslim Brotherhood to Jama'at al-Djihad, Jama'a al-Islamiya and Al-Kaida.

2.1.3. *The Conflict – Modernity as Twofold Submission*

Conclusion: Islamic movements in a twofold confrontation: colonialism as the enemy from outside and secularist elites as the enemy from inside.

2.2. *Theology – There is no God but God...*

Islamic theology as a religious theory of Islamic modernity.

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The social class of Islamist actors. The perception of twofold submission, combined with social position as the context of the reformulation of Islamic theologies.

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Apocalyptic transformations in Islamic popular theology since the seventies and their political significance.

2.3. ... and Muhammad is His Prophet – Strategies

2.3.1. *Religious Revolution?*

The significance of Islamic theologies and religious convictions for political strategies.

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About the motive of "honor" in Islamic discourse and practice and its significance for a common religious-political understanding of the "Muslim world".

2.3.3. *Conclusion*

An assessment of the Islamic religious movements under the twofold criterion of fundamentalism.

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Assessment of Christian movements in the U.S.

3.1. God’s Own Country – Modernity as Freedom

Revolutionary anti-colonial modernity and a religious utopia as the context for the role of religion as a common moral denominator for American society.

3.1.1. *Precursors – the City upon the Hill*

A short history of the formation of the basic religious orientations in American modernity up to the second half of the nineteenth century.

3.1.2. *The Fight for America and the World*

The history of the radical Protestant movement in two phases. First, from the early Gilded Age to 1925, distinguishing the revival movements from academic strategies of domination in the fields of humanities and politics. Second, from the seventies until today, outlining the formation of the Christian Right, its "Neo-Pentecostalization" and its rooting in social life and politics.

3.1.3. *The Conflict – Modernity as a Threefold Opportunity*

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3.2.2. *Word – Bible and Prophecy*

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prophecy in late (Neo-Pentecostal) fundamentalism.

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3.3.3. *Conclusion*

An assessment of the Christian religious movements under the twofold criterion of fundamentalism.

4. Combat Zone and Alarms

Beyond fundamentalists condemning each other, what is the real combat zone and what are the alarm signals through which fundamentalists seek to mobilize followers?

4.1. ***Power and Justice – Resources, Globally***

The combat zone - locating fundamentalisms in a scheme of global power relations. U.S.fundamentalism is in a top position and Islamic fundamentalism maintains a global “middle class” position. This is a classic revolutionary constellation. Seen from the perspective of the “man-on-the-street” from the third world, Islamic fundamentalism occupies an important position to be identified as a defender of global justice.

4.2. ***Break and Doomsday – Political Theologies***

Alarms - on different strategies of using religious discourse for mobilization, and on the role of fundamentalist movement-organizations within larger Evangelical and Islamist religious movements.

5. Europe

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5.1. ***Revolution, Politics und Religion – What’s Special about Europe?***

Europe’s modernity was forged in opposition to religion. In the U.S. and Islamic cultures, religion is a public moral issue while state and religious institutions are normally separate. In Europe, it is the other way around. What is religion in the

U.S. and Islam, has in Europe been secularism and socialism.

5.2. „Technocracy“ and „Democracy“ – Fundamentalist Threats in Modernity

On the specific risks of technocracy of turning instrumental reason into a fundamentalist device by absolutizing it and using it in Western expansion. On a certain risk of democratic universalism of undergoing fundamentalist transformations, if the reflective checks and balances are weakened.

5.3. Freedom, Equality, and Brotherhood – European Identity-Politics

On the hermeneutical, self-reflexive strand of European modernity and its counterparts in post-modern pragmatism (Rorty) and on the necessity of global social justice as an effective antidote against fundamentalism.
