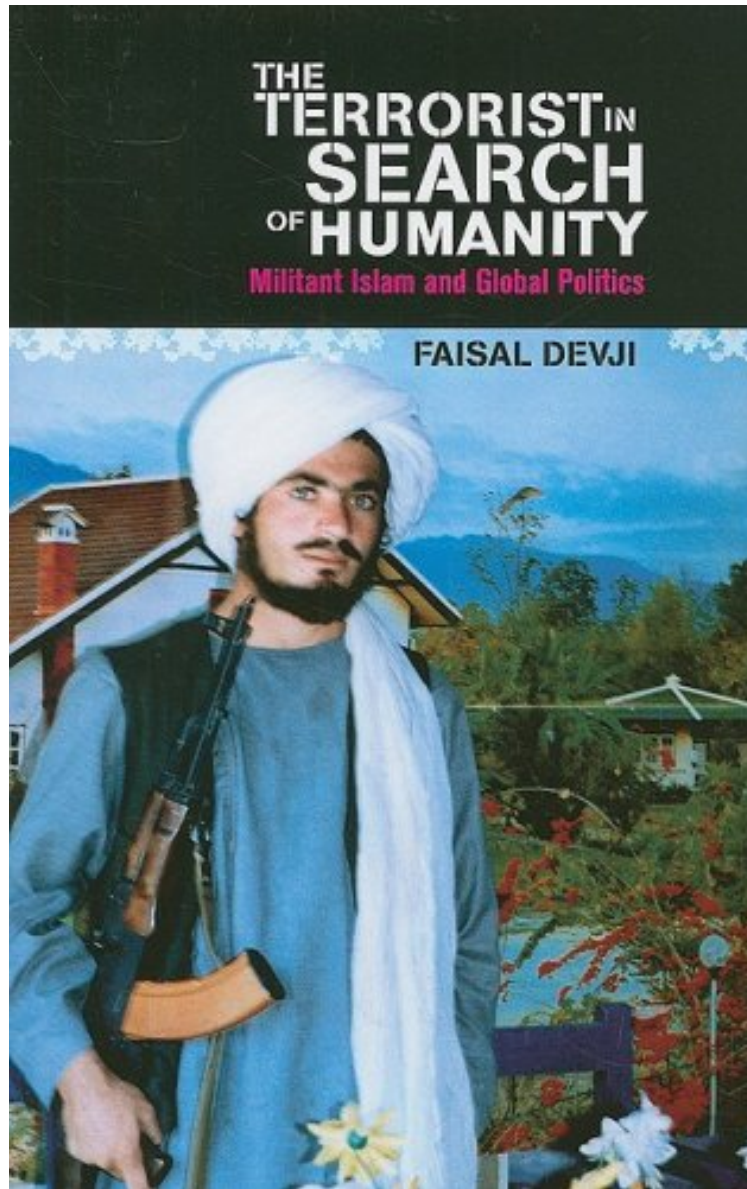


# The Terrorist in Search of Humanity: Militant Islam and Global Politics

*Faisal Devji*

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**Faisal Devji : The Terrorist in Search of Humanity: Militant Islam and Global Politics** before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised The Terrorist in Search of Humanity: Militant Islam and Global Politics:

6 of 14 people found the following review helpful. Al-Qaeda Ghandi Humanitarian Globalization By William Garrison Jr. The author stated that: "My object in this book is to argue that a global society has come into being, but possesses as yet no political institutions proper to its name, and that new forms of militancy, like that of Al-Qaeda, achieve meaning in this institutional vacuum, while representing in their own way the search for a global politics" (p.8). While the author seems to be implying that Al-Qaeda is some type of typical NGO (non-governmental organization) seeking world peace by helping others to achieve global humanity, the author is no Pollyanna regarding the Islamo fascists: he is clearly aware that Al-Qaeda and its associates are seeking their One World view of humanistic justice through violence - should their 'peaceful' overtures inviting infidels to embrace Islam as dhimmi fail. The author tries to convince the reader that Al-Qaeda views itself as being on a 'humanitarian-like mission' in appealing to atheists to embrace the Muslim Allah. The author contends that Al-Qaeda tries to show its concern for 'humanism' by warning the masses that atheistic capitalistic countries are harming the world environment through Global Warming (which somehow can be avoided by people embracing Islam). To further tie-in Al-Qaeda as having a 'humanistic' perspective, the author drags in India's Mahatma Gandhi. While most people are aware of Gandhi's non-violent political protests against some British injustice, the author discusses Gandhi's militant-side: whereby Gandhi at times condoned violence against the British 'occupiers.' This completes the author's circle of world 'humanism': Al-Qaeda is like Gandhi: both urge peaceful resolution to disputes, but should peaceful enticements fail, then violence is permissible against those who rebuff their peaceful overtures. Not that the author is trying to equate Al-Qaeda with Gandhi, just that they have similar 'humanistic' perspectives (actions) in achieving their version of a peaceful globalized ummah community. The author all too-frequently re-writes his sentences in trying to present his themes in new perspectives, but an effort which just unnecessarily lengthens his book. (Okay, I think the author is a little wordy.) I learned more about Gandhi than I did about Al-Qaeda. This book isn't going to contribute to a U.S. soldier stationed somewhere in the Middle East in trying to figure out how to defeat or 'engage' Al-Qaeda, it's for academia musing. I'm sure the author is very insightful about this topic, it's just not one of the first 25 books that I would recommend in reading to learn something really meaningful about Al-Qaeda.

Faisal Devji argues that new forms of militancy, such as the actions of al-Qaeda, are informed by the same desire for agency and equality that animates other humanitarian interventions, such as environmentalism and pacifism. To the militant, victimized Muslims are more than just symbols of ethnic and religious persecution they represent humanity's centuries-long struggle for legitimacy and agency. Acts of terror, therefore, are fueled by the militant's desire to become a historical actor on the global stage. Though they have yet to build concrete political institutions, militant movements have formed a kind of global society, and as Devji makes clear, this society pursues the same humanitarian objectives that drive more benevolent groups.

From Publishers Weekly Devji (*Landscapes of the Jihad*) examines the vitality of militant movements, arguing that in a global society, organizations like al-Qaeda have gathered meaning and strength in an "institutional vacuum." The author classifies pacifism and environmentalism as "intellectual peers" of militant Islam: they transcend traditional nation states and ideologies by identifying with "planetary ideals" like human rights and humanitarianism just as militant Islam does this by "identifying Muslims with the passive victims who embody humanity." Once Muslim suffering has been established, militants employ the "logic of equivalence" to justify acts of terrorism. Since Islamic militancy is a global phenomenon, Devji rejects the traditional scholarship that roots it in regional issues like the Palestinian cause and poverty and oppression. Most controversially, he equates militant Islam with "the plethora of non-governmental agencies dedicated to humanitarian work." He also concludes, more conventionally, that the U.S. response to militant Islam--the "global war on terror"--has transformed war "into a species of policing." Despite the breadth of his research and his iconoclastic conclusions, Devji's scholarly prose will likely limit his audience to fellow scholars and students. (Nov.) Copyright Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved. "An understanding of groups like Al-Qaeda has virtually been absent from the discourse as it has been explained away as pure 'evil'. Devji does the opposite. He begins by locating their (ostensible) appeal in their language for rights of the oppressed of the world, typically, and from there launches into an understanding of how Quranic verses, Islamic teachings and what they claim to be inspired by have been changed into a modern political message that has succeeded in destabilising the world as the West has known it, since 9/11.. . What makes the book readable is his meticulous research. . . Plenty of what Devji concludes may be controversial, but it is bound to stir the pot in a most interesting way." --Indian Express "Devji (*Landscapes of the Jihad*) examines the vitality of militant movements, arguing that in a global society, organizations like al-Qaeda have gathered meaning and strength in an 'institutional vacuum.' Devji rejects the traditional scholarship that roots it in regional issues like the Palestinian cause and poverty and oppression. Most controversially, he equates militant Islam with 'the plethora of non-governmental agencies dedicated to humanitarian work.' He also concludes, more conventionally, that the U.S. response to militant Islam--the 'global war on terror.'--Publishers Weekly "The Terrorist in Search of Humanity is in many ways a sequel to Devji's equally provocative 2005 book, *Landscapes of the Jihad*. Al Qaeda's importance in the long run, Devji writes, lies not

in its pioneering a new form of networked militancy... but instead in its fragmentation of traditional structures of Muslim authority within new global landscapes. . . . it is a measure of Devji's seriousness, and his unfailingly original turn of mind, that one waits impatiently for his next provocation."--The National (Abu Dhabi) Faisal Devji's text is an original, timely, and extremely impressive contribution. Devji allows us to situate Islamic militancy within the discursive proximity and exchange that globalization enables. His focus is the moral economy of militant Islam's struggle against the West, and while this struggle contains the potential for a new global politics, Devji shows that Islamic militancy suffers from de-politicization as a consequence of its global diffusion and lack of political instrumentality and institutional realization. The result adds an 'existential dimension' to militant ideas and practices. (Shane Brighton, Birkbeck College, University of London)