

H: Islamism: The Revival of Triumphal Islam (1979)

1. After the world wars and disintegration at the hands of Europe, Islamic culture found itself in a world dominated by communist Russia and the United States.
2. Under these conditions, it seemed impossible to imagine a future in which Islamic culture would triumph over all others.
3. Tragically, in 1979, the idea of a religious triumph was revived in Iran.
4. Iran was a country allied to the United States against Russia. It was ruled by a king who was opposed to communism, but that king was a tyrant, hated by his own people.
5. In 1979, that king was overthrown by rebels who were loyal to a religious teacher known as Ayatollah Khomeini. This event, known as the *Iranian Revolution* created a theocracy—a government dominated by religious authorities—in place of the monarchy.
6. Following the revolution, terrorists attacked the American embassy in Iran’s capital of Tehran and took the American staff hostage.
7. The American president Jimmy Carter could find no way to respond to this crisis. Now it was America that seemed powerless! The *American Hostage Crisis* became a symbol of a new kind of religious triumph, even against the most powerful country in the modern world.
8. The renewal of Islamic triumphalism in the modern world is called “Islamism.” *Islamism* is the modern idea that Islamic culture can triumph even in a world of technology and even with America as a world police power.
9. Since 1979 Islamism has become more and more important, and the tactic of terrorism has been used more widely, including against the United States.
10. In 2001, with the attacks of “9/11,” Islamists finally triggered a massive American response, dubbed the “War on Terror.” To combat Islamic terrorism, the United States invaded Afghanistan and Iraq, overthrowing both their governments, and trying to help the people of those countries create democracies.
11. Iran, which sparked the modern Islamist movement, however, has not yet been confronted by America, and terrorism continues to plague the Middle East and the wider world.