



# The Two Faces of Islam: The House of Sa'ud from Tradition to Terror

*Stephen Schwartz*

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## **The Two Faces of Islam: The House of Sa'ud from Tradition to Terror** Stephen Schwartz

In this informed, compelling exploration of Moslem beliefs and of the sectarian conflicts within the community, a Jewish historian paints a sympathetic portrait of mainstream Islam and exposes the centuries-old roots of Osama bin Laden's extremism.

The difficult, protracted war against terrorism has raised unsettling questions about the nature of Islam and its influence on America's declared enemies. In *The Two Faces of Islam*, Stephen Schwartz, who has devoted years to the study of Islam, explains its complex history and describes the profound philosophical and religious differences that distinguish traditional beliefs from the radical sects that have sprung up over the past fifteen hundred years. He focuses on Wahhabism, the puritanical sect to which Osama bin Laden belongs. Founded in the eighteenth century by a radical cleric, this intolerant "Islamofascist" sect became the official creed of the Saudi Arabian state and has been exported to Moslem countries from the Balkans to the Philippines, as well as to Islamic communities in Western Europe and the United States.

By setting the current upheavals within an historical and religious context, Schwartz demonstrates that Osama bin Laden and his followers are not really fighting a war against America. Rather, they are engaged in a revolution within Islam itself—a movement that parallels the turmoil within Christianity during the sixteenth century. Schwartz not only exposes the collusion of the Saudi Arabian government in the spread of radical Islam (which makes them at best reluctant allies of the West), he shows that the majority of Moslems have little sympathy for the Wahhabis and that many openly denounce their motivations and goals.

A riveting narrative that never smacks of propaganda, *The Two Faces of Islam* is essential reading for anyone who seeks to understand who we are fighting, what our enemies believe, and who our friends in the Moslem world really are.

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