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978-0-521-17307-0 - Terrorism and National Security Reform: How Commissions Can Drive Change During Crises

Jordan Tama

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Terrorism and National Security Reform

Terrorism and National Security Reform demonstrates that blue-ribbon commissions can be powerful vehicles for policy change, overturning the conventional wisdom that views them only as devices for passing the buck. Jordan Tama explains how the unique political credibility of commissions can enable them to forge bipartisan consensus on tough policy challenges. He also shows that commissions are most valuable during a crisis, when policy makers face pressure to make changes but frequently cannot agree on what to do. Using an original database, case studies, and more than 200 interviews of policy makers and commission participants, Tama reveals how commissions have shaped Barack Obama's plan for ending the Iraq War, spurred the largest government and intelligence overhauls since 1947, and driven many other elements of U.S. counterterrorism policy. In an era of unrelenting partisanship and extreme polarization, this book shows that commissions are increasingly valuable policy-making tools.

Jordan Tama is Assistant Professor at American University's School of International Service and Research Fellow at AU's Center for Congressional and Presidential Studies. His scholarship and commentary have been published in *Presidential Studies Quarterly*, *Foreign Policy*, *The Atlantic.com*, *The Hill*, *Asian Survey*, *International Affairs Review*, and other journals. He has served as a member of the Intelligence and Counterterrorism Expert Advisory Groups for Barack Obama's 2008 presidential campaign, as a speechwriter for former U.S. Representative Lee Hamilton, and as a contributor to the Princeton Project on National Security. He is a Fellow of the Truman National Security Project and holds a Ph.D. from Princeton University's Woodrow Wilson School of Public and International Affairs.

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To My Family

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Acknowledgments

The inspiration for this book dates back to when I worked as a speechwriter for former U.S. Representative Lee Hamilton (D-IN), from 1999 to 2002. This was before the 9/11 Commission or Iraq Study Group had been created, but Lee served on several other panels then and was already establishing his reputation as a master of the commission form. Once at Princeton University's Woodrow Wilson School, where I pursued my Ph.D., my interest in commissions was further stoked by my involvement in the Princeton Project on National Security, a bipartisan study of national security strategy led by John Ikenberry and Anne-Marie Slaughter. I started to wonder: What impact do commissions generally have? I decided to write a dissertation that would attempt to answer this question, and thus this book was born.

In addition to providing this inspiration, Lee and Anne-Marie have been terrific mentors and have shaped my understanding of commissions through many conversations. I am also grateful to Anne-Marie for serving as one of my dissertation advisors and always making time to give me helpful feedback – even after starting a very demanding job as the State Department's Policy Planning Director.

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