Radicalism and Political Reform in the Islamic and Western Worlds

Over the last decade, political Islam has been denounced in the Western media and surrounding literature as a terrorist or fascist movement that is entirely at odds with Western democratic ideology. Kai Hafez’s book overturns these arguments, contending that, despite its excesses, as a radical form of political opposition the movement plays a central role in the processes of democratization and modernization and that these processes have direct parallels in the history and politics of the West. By analyzing the evolution of Christian democratization through the upheavals of the Reformation, colonization, fascism and totalitarianism, this book shows how radicalism and violence were constant accompaniments to political change and – despite assertions to the contrary – are still part of Western political culture. In this way, it draws hopeful conclusions about the potential for political, religious and cultural transformation in the Islamic world, which is already exemplified by the cases of Turkey, Indonesia and many parts of South Asia. The book marks an important development in the study of radical movements and their contribution to political change.

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