

Islamist Terrorism and Democracy in the Middle East

What were the reasons behind the terrorist attacks of September 11 and the many others perpetrated by radical Islamist groups? Does the cause of Islamist terrorism relate to the lack of democracy in the Middle East? The assumption that there is a causal link between the two phenomena was widely accepted in the post-2001 period and appeared to inform Western foreign policies in the region, but does the premise really stand up to scrutiny? Through detailed research into the activities of both radical and moderate organizations across the Middle East, such as the Muslim Brotherhood, Hamas, Hizbullah and the GIA, and via interviews with key personnel, Katerina Dalacoura investigates whether repression and political exclusion pushed Islamist entities to adopt terrorist tactics. She explores whether inclusion in the political process had the opposite effect of encouraging Islamist groups toward moderation and ideological pragmatism. In a challenge to the conventional wisdom, she concludes that Islamist terrorism is not a direct consequence of authoritarianism in the Middle East, and that there are many other political, strategic and social factors that generate radicalism or inspire moderation.

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To Greta and Marcos

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