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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The London School of Economics and Political Science
To Greta and Marcos
# Contents

**Acknowledgements**  
ix  

Introduction: The Book’s Central Question and Rationale  
US Democracy Promotion in the Middle East  after 11 September 2001  
The Book’s Argument and Methodology  
Key Terms and Concepts  

1  Terrorism, Democracy and Islamist Terrorism  
Terrorism and Democracy  
The Causes of Islamist Terrorism  
Conclusion  

2  Transnational Islamist Terrorism: Al Qaeda  
Al Qaeda’s Evolution as a Terrorist Actor  
Rootlessness and Terrorist Violence  
Rootlessness and the Absence of Terrorism: The Case of Hizb ut Tahrir  
Conclusion  

3  Islamist Terrorism and National Liberation: Hamas and Hizbullah  
Hamas  
The Muslim Brotherhood and the Emergence of Hamas in the First Intifada  
Terrorism and the Oslo Peace Process  
The al Aqsa Intifada and the 2006 Legislative Elections  
Hizbullah  
Hizbullah Terrorism in the 1980s  
The Trajectory of Terrorism and Violence in the 1990s and Beyond  
Conclusion  

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## Contents

### 4 Islamist Terrorism in Domestic Conflicts: The Armed Islamic Group in Algeria and the Gamaa Islamiya in Egypt
- The Armed Islamic Group (GIA) 97
- The Background of Islamist Politics in Algeria 99
- The Rise and Fall of the Islamic Salvation Front (FIS) 101
- Terrorism and the GIA 107
- The Gamaa Islamiya 111
- Islamist Politics in Egypt and the Emergence of the Gamaa Islamiya 111
- Patterns of Terrorism in the Egyptian Conflict of the 1990s 115
- Conclusion 119

### 5 Moderation and Islamist Movements in Opposition: The Jordanian Muslim Brotherhood/Islamic Action Front, the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood and the Tunisian Nahda
- The Jordanian Muslim Brotherhood/Islamic Action Front 123
- Islamist Politics in Jordan 124
- Participation as a Cause of Moderation 127
- Egypt’s Muslim Brotherhood 130
- The Monarchical and Nasser Eras 130
- The Muslim Brotherhood’s Ideological Evolution under Sadat and Mubarak 133
- Participation and Repression as Causes of Moderation 137
- Tunisia’s Nahda 140
- Islamist Politics in Tunisia 140
- Moderation despite Repression 143
- Conclusion 145

### 6 Islamist Moderation and the Experience of Government: Turkey’s Welfare and Justice and Development Parties and the Islamic Republic of Iran
- Turkey’s Welfare and Justice and Development Parties 148
- Islamist Politics until the 1980s 149
- The Welfare Party 152
- The Justice and Development Party (JDP) 155
- The Islamic Republic of Iran 161
- Iranian Islamism under the Shah 161
- Terrorism and the Islamic Republic 162
- Democracy, Liberalism and Political Pluralism 168
- Conclusion 174

- Bibliography 187
- Index 209
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