

Islam in the Balance

Ideational Threats in Arab Politics

By Lawrence Rubin



Islam in the Balance: Ideational Threats in Arab Politics is an analysis of how ideas, or political ideology, can threaten states and how states react to ideational threats. It examines the threat perception and policies of two Arab, Muslim majority states, Egypt and Saudi Arabia, in response to the rise and activities of two revolutionary "Islamic states," established in Iran (1979) and Sudan (1989).

Using these comparative case studies the book provides important insight about the role of religious ideology for the international and domestic politics of the Middle East and, in doing so, advances our understanding of how, why, and when ideology affects threat perception and state policy.

Rubin makes clear that transnational ideologies may present a greater and more immediate national security threat than shifts in the military balance of power: first because ideology or ideational power, triggers threat perception and affects state policy; second because states engage in ideational balancing in response to an ideological threat

The book has significant implications for international relations theory and engages important debates in comparative politics about authoritarianism and Islamic activism. Its findings about how an Islamist regime or state behaves will provide vital insight for policy creation by the US and its Middle East allies should another such regime or state emerge

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"Why do Arab regimes so frequently find ideological movements beyond their borders so threatening? *Islam in the Balance* provides an innovative and thoughtful new argument for the centrality of ideas and ideology to the international relations of the Middle East. By examining the reactions of key Arab regimes to Iran's revolution, Sudan's Islamist coup, and the electoral success of the Muslim Brotherhood, Larry Rubin sheds new light on the relationship between ideas and power in Arab politics and advances our understanding of the non-material components of regional power politics."

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"This groundbreaking book unites theoretical innovation with area-based insight. New concepts—ideational security dilemma and ideological balancing—are used to explain the dynamics of regional politics in the Middle East. It is essential reading for area specialists along with political scientists and even a more general audience."

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