



The Missing Martyrs: Why There Are So Few Muslim Terrorists

By Charles Kurzman

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Why are there so few Muslim terrorists? With more than a billion Muslims in the world--many of whom supposedly hate the West and ardently desire martyrdom--why don't we see terrorist attacks every day? Where are the missing martyrs? In this startlingly counterintuitive book, a leading authority on Islamic movements demonstrates that terrorist groups are thoroughly marginal in the Muslim world. Charles Kurzman draws on government sources, public opinion surveys, election results, and in-depth interviews with Muslims in the Middle East and around the world. He finds that young Muslims are indeed angry with what they see as imperialism--and especially at Western support for local dictatorships. But revolutionary Islamists have failed to reach them, as can be seen from the terrorists' own websites and publications, which constantly bemoan the dearth of willing recruits.

Kurzman notes that it takes only a small cadre of committed killers to wreak unspeakable havoc. But that very fact underscores his point. As easy as terrorism is to commit, few Muslims turn to violence. Out of 140,000 murders in the United States since 9/11, Islamist terrorists have killed at most three dozen people. Of the 150,000 people who die each day, worldwide, Islamist militants account for fewer than fifty fatalities--and only ten per day outside of the hotspots of Afghanistan, Iraq, and Pakistan. The real bulwark against Islamist violence, Kurzman finds, is Muslims themselves, who reject both the goals of the terrorists and their bloody means. With each bombing, the terrorists lose support among Muslims.

Incisive and authoritative, *The Missing Martyrs* provides much-needed corrective to deep-seated and destructive misconceptions about Muslims and the Islamic world. The threat of Islamist terrorism is real, Kurzman shows, but its dimensions are, so far, tightly confined.

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Editorial Review

Review

"[A] hard-headed empirical approach to an issue so often locked in emotion-fueled back and forth...a must read." - *Mother Jones*

"Kurzman's book is a contribution to the study of Al Qaeda and Islamism." - *New York Times Book Review*

"Kurzman provides a significant answer to a question that needs to be addressed: in a world of more than a billion Muslims, why are there so few Muslim terrorists? So much attention is given by policy makers and media experts to the small number of extremists that Kurzman's crucial question is too often ignored. For anyone interested in reducing the threat of global terrorism, this study is required reading." -John Voll, Professor of Islamic History, Georgetown University

"The best scholarship asks uncomfortable questions, and then attempts to provide trenchant answers. Charles Kurzman has asked: why does fear of terrorism persist, despite the meagre number of actual casualties caused by those who claim to be Islamists or violent jihadi warriors? His answer is as bracing as it is counterintuitive: media need to tune down the obsession with violent episodes, but the American public also needs to clamor for an open, honest debate about terrorism. This book is a hard-headed manifesto, calling for a return to pragmatism, with more reliance on academics and less on interest-driven think tanks engaged with Middle East politics." -Bruce B. Lawrence, co-editor, with Aisha Karim, of *On Violence: A Reader*

About the Author

Charles Kurzman is a professor of sociology at the University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill. His books include *Democracy Denied* and *The Unthinkable Revolution in Iran*.

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