

Political Islam in the Middle East: Resistance or Terrorism?

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The previous American administration spent most of its time and effort on fighting a global war on terror; Muslims who thought that American infidels should be forced out of Muslim lands through militant jihad were the enemy. But the turmoil and mayhem caused by this long war has caused many different concepts to be defined and categorized in a wrong way. Al Qaeda and Taliban, and people and groups that have been resisting years of foreign occupation have been presented to people around the globe as one entity. But is there really no difference between terrorism and resistance?

This paper will first try to define political Islam, explain its current state in the Middle East, and the reasons behind its rise to power. The main aim of the paper is to distinguish between two types of political Islam: the old, autocratic governments that have been established or at least supported by the US, and the younger, more democratic governments and groups that have enjoyed rising popular support and are the indirect result of American presence in the region. It is argued that the American policy to empower the first group in order to stop the spread of the resistant version of political Islam has backfired and caused the emergence of dangerous terrorist groups.

The paper concludes that the US has to understand that neither secularism nor Muslim dictatorships are desirable for the Middle East. The new American administration has to put aside the traditional categorization of us and them, friends or enemies. They should respect whatever comes out of democracy, and the right of Muslim nations to resist occupation. Rejecting the will of the people of this volatile region will only lead to more violence, and certainly will not make the world a safer place for Americans, or anyone else.