



Turning Point: The Arab World's Marginalization and International Security After 9/11 (Praeger Security International)

Robert Daniel Tschirgi

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The danger raised by the terrorist threat is real, existential, and vital to the United States. But the attacks on 9/11 have been broadly misunderstood. In assessing the meaning and significance of the war on terror, Tschirgi raises many issues related to the Middle East and American policy toward that area. For example, he debunks the entire exceptionalist approach to the Arab world (the presumption that Arab societies fail to be fathomed by Western social science). While Tschirgi stresses the need for resolving the war on terrorism favorably, he also suggests two broad policy recommendations. First, he argues that while the United States should maintain its firm commitment to Israel's preservation as a Jewish state, it has no corresponding duty to support Israeli expansionism. U.S.-Israeli relations should proceed on this basis and should be informed by a greater American reliance on principles of international law. Second, Tschirgi concludes that an American withdrawal from Iraq must be effected as early as possible.

Tschirgi's provocative thesis is that the attacks of 9/11 were not as unique an event as we commonly believe. Rather, they were understandable?though deplorable?human reactions to a combination of factors that fueled the Arab world's marginalization and led to a generalized feeling among the people of that region that the West (and particularly the United States) posed a mortal threat to their identity. Employing three case studies of marginalized violent conflict?Mexico's Zapatista conflict, Egypt's struggle against the *Gama'a al-Islamiyya* in Upper Egypt, and Nigeria's fight against the Ogoni people in the Niger Delta?Tschirgi demonstrates the dynamics through which traditional peoples have in modern times opted to wage hopeless struggle against objectively more powerful states. The parallels between the dynamics that informed each of these situations and those marking the international Muslim insurgency against the West are striking, as are the significant differences between the two phenomena. The parallels are found in the mechanics of marginalization and resistance. The differences lie, first, in the Muslim insurgency's identification of the West as a total enemy and the struggle with it as having a zero-sum nature and, second, in the modern terrorists' potential access to lethal means of mass destruction. Both the parallels and differences that mark the two phenomena help deepen a real understanding of the meaning of 9/11.



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