

## *Guide to Islamist Movements*

Barry Rubin, ed. *Guide to Islamist Movements*. Armonk, NY: M.E. Sharpe, 2010. 2 vols.: 663 pp. \$249.00. Hardcover. ISBN 9780765617477 (set).

The *Guide to Islamist Movements* seeks to provide information relating to political Islam. Known since the 1990s as Islamism, this terminology seeks to distinguish itself from Islam. Islamist movements (Islamism) emphasize the political dimension of Islam over the theological, devotional, and ritual dimensions (*Encyclopedia of Global Religion*, Sage Publications, 2012, vol.1, 595). Barry Rubin, the editor, states in the opening essay “An Introduction to Assessing Contemporary Islamism” that the “purpose of this book is to examine the Islamist movement in the many countries where it is present. It is intended as a factually oriented report and analysis” (xiii).

The *Guide* is a two-volume set divided geographically and paged continuously; each geographic region is preceded by a map of the area. The forty-five authors who contributed to this work come from a variety of fields. Many are faculty or teaching fellows in fields ranging from political science to Middle East history to radical Islam and terrorist studies. Other contributors are in security or defense positions within governments. The information contained in the articles is primarily historical in nature, although some charts and statistics are included.

Volume one begins with two essays. The first, Rubin’s essay, is an overview of contemporary Islamism, and the second essay is on global jihad and jihadist movements, contributed by Reuven Paz. The first geographic section following these essays is Sub-Saharan Africa and includes articles on Africa (Nigeria, Kenya, and South Africa in individual sections in the same article), Somalia, and Sudan. The section on Asia covers Bangladesh, China, Malaysia, and Thailand. The Australia and the Pacific section includes Indonesia and the Philippines. In the Central Asia section, the first article is on Central Asia, and covers Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan, and Turkmenistan. (These countries are not distinguished from each other in the body of the article.) Afghanistan and the Caucasus are also in Central Asia. The Caucasus is divided into the North Caucasus (Chechnya, Dagestan, and Ingushetia) and the South Caucasus (Azerbaijan). The last section of volume one contains the first part of North Africa and the Middle East (Algeria, Egypt, Iran, Iraq, Israel, Jordan, and a single article on Kuwait, Qatar, the UAE, Bahrain, and Oman.)

Volume two begins with the second part of North Africa and the Middle East (Lebanon, Morocco, Pakistan, “Palestinians,” Saudi Arabia, Syria, Tunisia, Turkey, and Yemen). Europe is next with Belgium, France, Germany, Italy, the Netherlands, the Russian Federation, Scandinavia, Spain, and the United Kingdom. The article on the Russian Federation also includes information on Islamism in Chechnya; this is an interesting political juxtaposition since the Caucasus article is sympathetic to the Chechens, and the Russian Federation article is from the viewpoint of Russian history. The last geographic region covered is the Western Hemisphere. It only contains the Caribbean Basin (Guyana, Trinidad and Tobago) and North America. Volume two concludes with information about the authors and a bibliography of selected print sources.

Since each article is written by a different author, the articles vary in format, writing style, and depth of information. Some articles are well organized so information is easy to find; others are in a general essay format that makes finding specific information (the attack at the Empire State Building, for example) difficult. In contrast, the article on Tunisia includes subsections such as “What is Tunisian Islamism?” (vol. 2, 397); this type of division is very helpful to the reader. In addition, each article includes its own bibliography; the information in the individual bibliographies is not included in the main bibliography at the end of the work.

The *Guide* does not include any tenets of faith of the various Islamist groups mentioned. The reviewer used *The Columbia World Dictionary of Islamism* (Columbia University Press, 2007) to find the five commandments of the original Muslim Brotherhood (1. God is our objective; 2. The Prophet is our example; 3. The Qur’an is our law; 4. Jihad is our life; 5. Martyrdom is our goal) while reading about the founding and development of this organization in the *Guide*.

The *Guide* includes a lot of acronyms and abbreviations, but does not have a key to these. Unless the reader is at the right place in the text, it is difficult to find out that GIA is the abbreviation for the Armed Islamic Group since neither GIA nor Groupe islamique armeé is in the index, only the Armed Islamic Group.

The authors may not always be objective. Many organizations are cited in the article on North America—are they all Islamist? For example, Judith Colp Rubin in her article on North America lists the Council on American-Islamic Relations (CAIR) as having originated with a group linked to Hamas (vol. 2, 581) so the implication is that the organization is Islamist. On the CAIR website, the organization states that its mission is “to enhance understanding of Islam, encourage dialogue, protect civil liberties, empower American Muslims, and build coalitions that promote justice and mutual understanding (<http://www.cair.com/AboutUs/VisionMissionCorePrinciples.aspx>). Interpretation and objectivism on the part of the reader are required.

While *A Guide to Islamist Movements* contains much information gathered into one place, the reader should remember that the contributors are speaking of Islamism, not of Islam. The approach is political and historical, not religious in nature. The information given is not related to what the followers believe or how they practice their beliefs. It assumes a certain level of knowledge about Islam and Islamism on the part of the reader. There is no glossary of frequently used terms, no list of frequently cited organizations, and no information about the organizations’ founding. This information must be gleaned from various places within the articles. However, the *Guide* does contain a wealth of information on Islamist movements around the world.

The intended audience is academic and large public libraries. Most seminary and divinity school libraries will find little need for the type of specialized information contained in the *Guide*. Schools and universities with programs in Islamic studies should consider purchasing this title.

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