ISLAM UND POLITISCHER EXTREMISMUS: EINFÜHRUNG UND DOKUMENTATION, BY KHALID DURAN, HAMBURG: Deutsches Orient-Institut (Sondernummer 11, Hamburg), 1985, Pages, 140 + 146 + VI. No price.

This study on Islam and political extremism has two parts within one binding. The first part (pp. 1-140) depicts contemporary developments in the Islamic World within the focus of two related notions, "re-Islamisation" and "Islamisation". It also includes specific case studies of major Muslim countries (e.g. Lebanon, Egypt and Morocco) and concludes with a representative bibliography and an index. The second part (pp. 1-146) is a volume of documentation which contains clippings of reports, editorials, and op-ed pieces published in newspapers of the English and German-speaking world from September 1979 to October 1985 (roughly from the insurrection at the Great Mosque of Makkah to the aftermath of Mahmud Tahâ’s execution in Khartoum). There are also specimens from English-language newspapers printed in the Islamic world and a few items from the French and Spanish press, a number of them translated in English.

The documentation is broad, yet selective and representative. In geographical, not chronological order, it covers events in Iran, Lebanon, Libya, Egypt, Sudan, Afghanistan, Pakistan, Malaysia, Saudi Arabia, Morocco, Turkey, countries of East and West Africa as well as several other nations. Although exemplifying but a fraction of the extensive material which local presses have published in Arabic, Persian or Urdu, the author has selected those pieces from the Western press which, in his judgement, best represent the essentials of the situation as covered by those indigenous news agencies. Duran also highlights some press items that derive from two media centres, the international network of the Khomeini establishment and the Saudi-sponsored propaganda of the Muslim World League.

Duran addresses the analysis offered in the first part of this book to the informed, educated reader, not to the specialist in political science or modern Islamic history. He presents certain contemporary Islamic developments, in particular so-called "Islamist" groups that are totalitarian in nature and intent upon overthrowing the existing order. In focusing on militant organizations in the Islamic world, Duran is aware that his analysis touches upon only a small, though violent, segment of the Muslim community and does not represent Islam in its entirety. He contrasts these extremist "Islamist" movements (such as Khomeini's Iran, Zia's Pakistan and Qaddafi's Libya) with the genuine trends of re-Islamisation that permeate the present-day Islamic world. Duran portrays re-Islamisation as the revival of contemporary Islamic consciousness, as the attempt to create an Islamic ideology which draws upon Islam alone rather than upon Islam paired with the formal aspects of nationalism, socialism, liberalism or secularism. Throughout his study, Duran clearly demonstrates that he commands a wealth of information about contemporary currents in the Muslim world. He knowledgeably documents developments in Lebanon, Egypt, Morocco, Pakistan and the Sudan and is able to relate these to the events in other Muslim countries as well. His over-all vision of contemporary Islam and the theoretical scheme which supports that vision are not yet fully developed. While a consistent interpretation of the complete spectrum of present day revival in Islam remains a distant goal, the present study marks a significant advance towards that objective.

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