



Islam and Democracy: Fear of the Modern World

By *Fatema Mernissi*

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Is Islam compatible with democracy? Must fundamentalism win out in the Middle East, or will democracy ever be possible? In this now-classic book, Islamic sociologist Fatima Mernissi explores the ways in which progressive Muslims--defenders of democracy, feminists, and others trying to resist fundamentalism--must use the same sacred texts as Muslims who use them for violent ends, to prove different views. Updated with a new introduction by the author written in the wake of the September 11 terrorist attacks on the United States, Islam and Democracy serves as a guide to the players moving the pieces on the rather grim Muslim chessboard. It shines new light on the people behind today's terrorist acts and raises provocative questions about the possibilities for democracy and human rights in the Islamic world. Essential reading for anyone interested in the politics of the Middle East today, Islam and Democracy is as timely now as it was upon its initial, celebrated publication.

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Editorial Review

From Publishers Weekly

In this deeply textured philosophical analysis, Mernissi (*The Veil and the Male Elite*), a sociologist in Morocco, argues cogently that Islam has been perverted by Arab leaders who want to deny their people democracy. Mixing personal experience, Arab history, Koranic analysis and cultural references, Mernissi explores Arab fear of the West, the rise of the "media imam," the process by which the concept of freedom "has been tainted with sin" and the loopholes that allow Arab states to be seated in the United Nations without adhering to all its principles. Arab masses sided with Saddam Hussein, she states, mostly due to their anger against the wealthy leaders of Kuwait and Saudi Arabia. She argues that the Gulf war, as well as the growth of Arab feminism, will spark demilitarization and democracy. However, Mernissi, a self-described "incurable optimist," offers little hard political analysis and does not examine what precisely the masses mean when they call for democracy.

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About the Author

Fatema Mernissi teaches sociology at University Mohammed V in Rabat, Morocco. She is the author of more than eight books, including *Dreams of Trespass: Tales of a Harem Girlhood*, *Scheherazade Goes West*, *The Veil and the Male Elite*, and *Beyond the Veil*.

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