



Counterterrorism and the State: Western Responses to 9/11

By Dorle Hellmuth



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Dorle Hellmuth argues that the nature of state responses to terrorism is shaped by the particular governmental framework and process within which counterterrorism measures are decided. Using four Western democracies as case studies, Hellmuth measures effects of government structures on counterterrorism decision-making processes and outcomes. In doing so, she examines how similar or different the responses have been in four parliamentary and presidential systems, and clears up common misperceptions about domestic counterterrorism efforts on both sides of the Atlantic.

Each of Hellmuth's four case studies reviews the official constitutional powers and informal relationships between executive and legislative branches, outlines decision-making processes leading to counterterrorism policies and reforms since 9/11, and summarizes how structural factors influenced those processes. By measuring and comparing structural effects, and by going beyond the common U.S. and British focus to include counterterrorism decision-making in Germany and France, Hellmuth shows that there are important similarities between those governments designed to constrain executive power (Germany and the United States) and those that facilitate executive power (France and Great Britain). Her analysis further demonstrates that in presidential systems executive and legislative branches have incentives to produce a steady stream of reforms, that presidents have more opportunities than leaders of parliamentary systems to expand their unilateral powers during times of crisis, and that choices designed to strengthen presidential positions influence the direction, nature, and scope of institutional reform.

Understanding the nature, scope, and trends of national decision-making processes in Western democracies, Hellmuth contends, is imperative to identifying new mechanisms for containing transnational terrorist networks beyond national borders.

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Editorial Review

Review

"This excellent and well-written study is the first that analyzes and compares structural restraints on counterterrorism responses in the U.S., Germany, Great Britain and France. For students of national security, comparative politics and public policy this is a must read on how different governmental structures set the parameters for the political debate on counterterrorism."—Harvey Rishikof, chair of the Advisory Committee for the American Bar Association Standing Committee on Law and National Security

"*Counterterrorism and the State* is original in its focus on domestic governmental structures, presenting an impressive and comprehensively researched comparative account of the development of national counterterrorism policies after the attacks of 11 September 2001. It is needed and will be a welcome contribution to the literature on comparative government."—Audrey Kurth Cronin, author of *How Terrorism Ends*

About the Author

Dorle Hellmuth teaches politics at The Catholic University of America.

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