



# Al-Qaeda and Sacrifice: Martyrdom, War and Politics

*Melissa Finn*

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## **Al-Qaeda and Sacrifice: Martyrdom, War and Politics** Melissa Finn

Al-Qaeda and Sacrifice is a pioneering critical intervention into the study of terrorism. Challenging the commonly held idea that 'suicide-bombings' are motivated by a nihilistic hatred of life, Melissa Finn argues that it is more honest and helpful to examine such violent agency through the concept of 'sacrifice'. The book provides a unique look at the way 'sacrifice' is used in the Arabic language and in the writings of Islamists and jihadis. Finn offers penetrating insights into jihadi thought on its own terms, arguing that it constitutes a political theory which can be usefully compared and related to western political theorists, from Machiavelli and von Clausewitz to Hannah Arendt, Julia Kristeva and Judith Butler. She critically examines the strategy of 'sacrifice' in martyrdom operations and ultimately concludes that the heedless certainty of such violence undermines attempts to redress political grievances. Al-Qaeda and Sacrifice is a unique contribution which goes beyond simplistic or apologetic explanations of terrorism and allows the authentic jihadi voice to speak for itself.

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