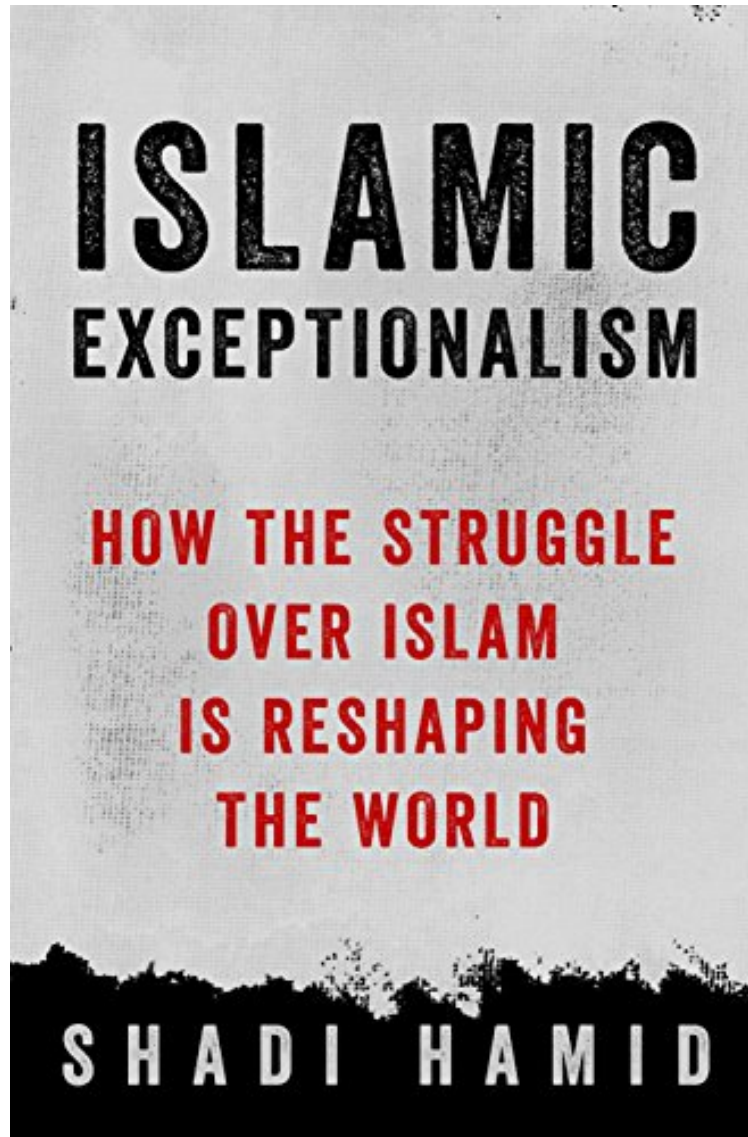


[Download] Islamic Exceptionalism: How the Struggle Over Islam Is Reshaping the World

# Islamic Exceptionalism: How the Struggle Over Islam Is Reshaping the World

*Shadi Hamid*

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**Shadi Hamid : Islamic Exceptionalism: How the Struggle Over Islam Is Reshaping the World** before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Islamic Exceptionalism: How the Struggle Over Islam Is Reshaping the World:

23 of 25 people found the following review helpful. Important PerspectiveBy Fats YamaguchiA highly-readable, well-argued survey of how Islam's political impact in the Arab World is shaped by a different view of religion's role in

government, law and politics. Unlike earlier arguments (i.e., Huntington, Lewis, Pipes), Hamid goes beyond generalities to explore the specifics of how Islamists see their political role. The result is a fascinating perspective on the dynamics of how Egypt, Tunisia, and Turkey have grown more polarized since the 2011 Arab Spring. Unlike Christianity and Judaism, which have evolved to largely separate faith from government, Islam has been political from the start. This difference will continue to play a role in Arab politics and state-building. Attempts to foster democracy must take into account the deep divisions within Muslim societies over how Islam should shape government and society. Hamid does a good job of illustrating how today's Islamist groups grew out of modern challenges and have shaped their politics of gradualism to placate authoritarian rulers and suspicious secularists. He also gives some attention to the divisions between Islamist groups such as the Muslim Brotherhood and Ennahda and the Islamic State. Many analysts focus on Islamists as a threat to democracy. Hamid concedes the point, but notes that many of the most draconian "Islamic" legislation has come from secular groups attempting to play the Islamic card. Hamid also draws from the failures of the Arab Spring, particularly the 2013 coup in Egypt, to argue that secular liberal sensitivities over perceived Islamic threats also undermine democratization. Not all readers will agree with all of Hamid's conclusions, but his perspective is a valuable contribution to the discussion. Highly recommended.

7 of 7 people found the following review helpful. Extremely Informative and Eye Opening  
By Chris and Sharon  
I had some knowledge of Islam prior to reading this book but the author's ability to explain to a "Westerner" how Islam differs fundamentally from Christianity and how those differences make a gradual modulation of Islam to something compatible with Western democratic processes was eye opening. The chapter on ISIS was transformative in how I understood its genesis and what the West can expect its future to be. (It ain't just going to go away. You can kill as many true believers as you can but you can't kill the ideal that drives these people.) The chapters on Turkey and Tunisia got a bit "long." Anyone hoping for easy answers to "the problem," is going to be disappointed.

9 of 10 people found the following review helpful. Islamic Exceptionalism - a perspective to ponder  
By Dennis C. Roberts  
Not until Shadi Hamid's *Islamic Exceptionalism* (2016) had I seen an attempt to define Islam, Islamism, or any Islamic governmental state as exceptional in any way. His careful analysis of the conditions following the end of the Ottoman Empire, the geographic boundaries imposed after it, and the strife of the last 50+ in the Middle East and North Africa make a strong case for Islam being unique in both religious and political perspective. Islamic exceptionalism is, in fact, defined as a fusion of religion and politics that stands in contrast to the generally accepted notion that governments must be secular in order to be modern and democratic. Hamid's analyses included the three cases of Egypt, Turkey, and Tunisia. These cases are distinct in terms of the types of changes sought, who was involved, and the process of change. Much can be learned from these examples; the bottom line is that, in the face of rising Islamic fervor, where a number of political actors are present, and where the state is strong enough to be worth capturing, there is no question that ideological and religious polarization will follow. This polarization and reformation will take many years to work out and both those who endure the strife of the Middle East as well as observe and struggle with it from afar, will be better served to understand the history behind the various Islamist movements and how that impacts the alliances that form and dissolve as the process works toward an eventual solution.

Shortlisted for the 2017 Lionel Gelber Prize  
In *Islamic Exceptionalism*, Brookings Institution scholar and acclaimed author Shadi Hamid offers a novel and provocative argument on how Islam is, in fact, "exceptional" in how it relates to politics, with profound implications for how we understand the future of the Middle East. Divides among citizens aren't just about power but are products of fundamental disagreements over the very nature and purpose of the modern nation state and the vexing problem of religion's role in public life. Hamid argues for a new understanding of how Islam and Islamism shape politics by examining different models of reckoning with the problem of religion and state, including the terrifying and alarmingly successful example of ISIS. With unprecedented access to Islamist activists and leaders across the region, Hamid offers a panoramic and ambitious interpretation of the region's descent into violence. *Islamic Exceptionalism* is a vital contribution to our understanding of Islam's past and present, and its outsized role in modern politics. We don't have to like it, but we have to understand it because Islam, as a religion and as an idea, will continue to be a force that shapes not just the region, but the West as well in the decades to come.

A New Statesman Book of the Year  
"Few issues capture the public imagination quite so urgently as that of Islam's troubled relationship with the West, democracy, modernity and, indeed, itself... This is where Shadi Hamid's *Islamic Exceptionalism* comes into its own." Shiraz Maher, *The New Statesman*  
"Fresh, provocative thinking." Kirkus  
Well, it turns out, there is something going on with Islam, and Shadi Hamid, quite helpfully, has figured it out [An] illuminating book. Carlos Lozada, *The Washington Post*  
"A page-turner For me, the book also provided the rarest of enjoyments; it changed the way I looked at the world, even if just a bit." Murtaza Hussain, journalist at *The Intercept*  
"[*Islamic Exceptionalism*] limns the Islamist mind in unnerving detail... Hamid is unafraid to talk about heaven, theodicy and divine justice. The National Interest  
Perhaps [Hamid's] most provocative claim is this: History will not necessarily favor the secular, liberal democracies of the West. Emma Green, *The Atlantic*  
Shadi Hamid provides an invaluable corrective to Western interpretations of Islam, Islamism, and the future of democracy in the

Muslim world. Whatever debate remains to be had cannot take place without reference to this insightful and sympathetic document. Lawrence Wright, author of *The Looming Tower* and *Thirteen Days in September* A riveting account of the Arab Spring and all that followed, by one of the worlds leading scholars on political Islam. Shadi Hamid explains convincingly that Islam and the political movements it spawns are truly exceptional and likely to frustrate the liberal determinists who believe that history inevitably gravitates to a secular future. A hugely important book. General David Petraeus (Ret.), former director of the CIA and commander of coalition forces in Iraq and Afghanistan Islamic Exceptionalism is an honest, deeply researched, and at times anguished effort to make sense of the Middle East after the failure of the Arab Spring and the rise of ISIS. Particularly rich and subtle on the crisis facing the Muslim Brotherhood, the book offers both a snapshot of a painful moment and a long-view inquiry into the meeting between Islam and democracy. Sobering, urgent reading for anyone who cares about the region, past and future. Noah Feldman, Felix Frankfurter Professor of Law, Harvard Law School and author of *Cool War*, *Scorpions*, and *The Fall and Rise of the Islamic State* "A smart and highly readable book by one of the leading experts on the topic. Hamid examines the defining problem in the modern Middle East: how to mix religion and politics. His heartfelt fear is that in the age of ISIS a solution wont come quickly because the features of a modern democratic state are often at odds with the path to God. David Gregory, former host of *Meet the Press* and author of *Hows Your Faith* Hamid offers readers a vital road map to navigate the chaos and confusion that is the postArab-Spring Middle East. Reza Aslan, New York Times bestselling author of *Zealot* and *No God but God* Beyond the zero-sum proposals of Islam or liberalism, Shadi Hamid boldly wrestles with how these two can negotiate the future of Muslim polities. Along the way, he educates us, challenging entrenched stereotypes and blind presumptions, especially the notion that the Muslim world must, can, or should go the way of the West. Islam is a constant not a variable. Islamic Exceptionalism suggests that this may be the beginning of wisdom for anyone wishing to understand, let alone shape, the political future of majority Muslim states. Sherman A. Jackson, King Faisal Chair in Islamic Thought and Culture, University of Southern California "Ambitious and Challenging" Amanda Zeidan, *The Huffington Post* Probably the most thoughtful attempt that I know to come to grips, to try to make sense of the rubble of the Arab Spring, to see what can be done after these colossal disappointments. Leon Wieseltier, Isaiah Berlin Senior Fellow in Culture and Policy, *The Brookings Institution* "Hamids work offers a tempered, well-researched analysis of Islamism in its current state and offers tentative hopes for those seeking a new way through the intricacies of Islamic politics in the Middle East." *Publishers Weekly* Excellent. *The Irish Examiner* "For those who feel that everything will be solved by an 'Islamic reformation,' Hamid has cautionary words." --Prospect About the Author Shadi Hamid is a senior fellow in the Center for Middle East Policy at the Brookings Institution and a contributing writer for *The Atlantic*. An expert on Islamist movements, he previously served as director of research at the Brookings Doha Center. His first book *Temptations of Power: Islamists and Illiberal Democracy in a New Middle East* was named a Foreign Affairs Best Book of 2014. Hamid lives in Washington, D.C.