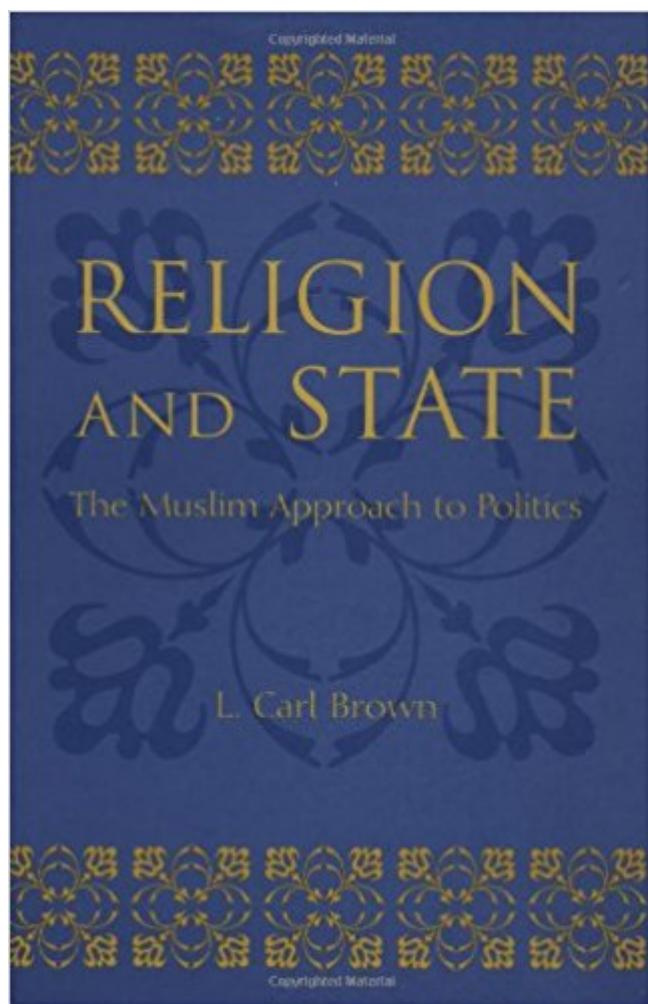


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Religion And State: The Muslim Approach To Politics



Synopsis

If Westerners know a single Islamic term, it is likely to be jihad, the Arabic word for "holy war." The image of Islam as an inherently aggressive and xenophobic religion has long prevailed in the West and can at times appear to be substantiated by current events. L. Carl Brown challenges this conventional wisdom with a fascinating historical overview of the relationship between religious and political life in the Muslim world ranging from Islam's early centuries to the present day. Religion and State examines the commonplace notionâ •held by both radical Muslim ideologues and various Western observers alikeâ •that in Islam there is no separation between religion and politics. By placing this assertion in a broad historical context, the book reveals both the continuities between premodern and modern Islamic political thought as well as the distinctive dimensions of modern Muslim experiences. Brown shows that both the modern-day fundamentalists and their critics have it wrong when they posit an eternally militant, unchanging Islam outside of history. "They are conflating theology and history. They are confusing the oughtand the is," he writes. As the historical record shows, mainstream Muslim political thought in premodern times tended toward political quietism. Brown maintains that we can better understand present-day politics among Muslims by accepting the reality of their historical diversity while at the same time seeking to identify what may be distinctive in Muslim thought and action. In order to illuminate the distinguishing characteristics of Islam in relation to politics, Brown compares this religion with its two Semitic sisters, Judaism and Christianity, drawing striking comparisons between Islam today and Christianity during the Reformation. With a wealth of evidence, he recreates a tradition of Islamic diversity every bit as rich as that of Judaism and Christianity.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Brown (foreign affairs, emeritus, Princeton), editor of *Imperial Legacy: The Ottoman Imprint on the Balkans and the Middle East*, has studied and lived among Muslims of the Middle East and North Africa since 1953. Here he provides more of a historical and sociological and less of a theological approach to Muslim politics. He argues that to achieve a better understanding of present-day Muslim politics, it is crucial to accept the reality of historical diversity among Muslims and to identify what is distinctive in relation to political thought and action through a comparative study of Islam, Judaism, and Christianity. In the first seven chapters, Brown covers the historical basis for traditional Muslim and Christian political theory and dispels some popular false notions: he notes that radical Islamic fundamentalists and many non-Muslims typically view Islam outside of a historical context and thus see it as unchanging, and both Muslims and non-Muslims tend to overemphasize Islam in the Middle East while paying less attention to the majority of Muslims who live in the rest of the world. The bibliographical essay on Islam and politics is a plus. Recommended for academic libraries. DMichael W. Ellis, Ellenville P.L., NY Copyright 2000 Reed Business Information, Inc. --This text refers to the Hardcover edition.

A balanced, scholarly assessment of Islamic politics.... A subtle and skilled rejoinder to the conventional schools of thought and to fashionable assumptions about the 'post-Islamist' era. (Foreign Affairs) Brown... is one of the giants of Middle Eastern studies and his books get better and better.... A well-written and lucid study. (Middle East Quarterly) Both an important and a useful book. It is important for the light it sheds on the politics and also on the societies of the Islamic world by daring to make an unfashionable but highly productive comparison between Islam and Christendom.... It addresses very precisely the questions in the minds of many upper-level undergraduates taking courses in Islamic political thought. It should, however, be read by everyone interested in politics in the Islamic world or in international relations. (Islamic Studies) Religion and State destabilizes entrenched conventional thinking about Islam and politics. This alone makes the book worth reading. (The Journal of Religion) The image of Islam as an inherently aggressive and xenophobic religion has long prevailed in the West and can at times appear to be substantiated by current events. This book challenges this conventional wisdom with a fascinating, historical overview of the relationship between religious and political life in the Muslim world, from Islam's

early centuries to the present day. (The Middle East) Paves the way for grasping the Islamist phenomenon in its diverse forms in the contemporary Muslim world. (History of Religions) This timely book on Islam and politics... paves the way for grasping the Islamist phenomenon in its diverse forms in the contemporary Muslim world... Brown has offered us the necessary epistemological tools to come to grips with the complex theme of Islam and politics both in the classical and modern phases of the Muslim world. (Ibrahim M. Abu-Rabi Muslim World Journal)

An excellent overview. Not overburdened with theological claptrap, but written by someone who has clearly read a lot and knows a lot and has picked out what is practically useful to know...

The book arrived within a few days, so it was fast. Even though I bought it used, it looked new, like it was never touched. So really satisfied about everything.

This product was exactly as described, great condition, fast shipping also. I would definately reccommend this seller.

I have read many, many books on this subject. Brown has written an easy yet very informative read. He has an excellent grasp on the three monotheistic religions and their interaction. He outlines how Islam's tenets effect its political role. Well done.

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