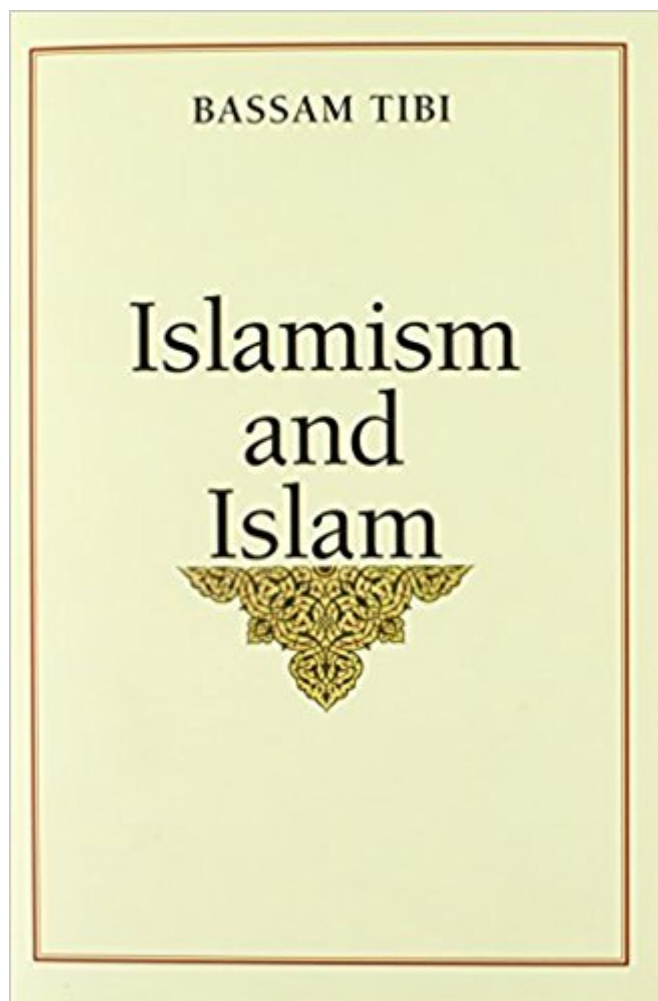


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Islamism And Islam



Synopsis

Despite the intense media focus on Muslims and their religion since the tragedy of 9/11, few Western scholars or policymakers today have a clear idea of the distinctions between Islam and the politically based fundamentalist movement known as Islamism. In this important and illuminating book, Bassam Tibi, a senior scholar of Islamic politics, provides a corrective to this dangerous gap in our understanding. He explores the true nature of contemporary Islamism and the essential ways in which it differs from the religious faith of Islam. Drawing on research in twenty Islamic countries over three decades, Tibi describes Islamism as a political ideology based on a reinvented version of Islamic law. In separate chapters devoted to the major features of Islamism, he discusses the Islamist vision of state order, the centrality of antisemitism in Islamist ideology, Islamism's incompatibility with democracy, the reinvention of jihadism as terrorism, the invented tradition of shari'a law as constitutional order, and the Islamists' confusion of the concepts of authenticity and cultural purity. Tibi's concluding chapter applies elements of Hannah Arendt's theory to identify Islamism as a totalitarian ideology.

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Customer Reviews

Bassam Tibi is Professor Emeritus of International Relations, University of Göttingen and a former A. D. White Professor-at-Large, Cornell University. In 2010, he was the Resnick Scholar for the Study of Antisemitism at the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum. He is the author of three dozen previous books, including most recently *Islam's Predicament with Modernity*. He lives in Göttingen, Germany.

"Islamism and Islam" by Bassam Tibi, (Fall 2012), hardback, 340 pgs. [Caution: This is a book review about Tibi's book, not about Islam.] In this book the author denounces Islamism for its: anti-democracy, anti-semitism, violence, and for what Tibi calls its perverse pro-violence from "its invention of the true peaceful Muslim past". Tibi identifies himself as a Muslim, a liberal Muslim bordering on pro-secularism, who is opposed to the oppression of non-Muslims. Tibi tries to promote his contention that the religion of Islam is peaceful, that it does not justify violent Islamism/ jihadism/ caliphate-dreamers. While Tibi makes this claim repeatedly throughout this book, but he does not really explain how the religion of Islam is "peaceful". The author does NOT try to list 15-20 ayat from the Quran that promote peace; he probably doesn't because he knows that Islamo-realists can quickly cite a similar number of Quranic verses promoting intolerance and outright violence - to say nothing about quoting similar war-mongering ahadith sources. Another reviewer has pinned Tibi as being an Islamic "sleeper cell", i.e. a Muslim who practices "taqiyya" (hiding) his knowledge that Islam really promotes violent, world-conquest-seeking Islamism; I'll just politely opine that given what Tibi knows about Islamism how he can argue that peaceful-Islam is really separate from violent-Islamism baffles me. Tibi acknowledges that the jihadist-Islamists base their ideology from their "misunderstanding" readings of the peace-oriented teachings of the Quran. Despite Tibi's baffling fondness for Islam, he is very critical of western scholars who advocate that Egypt's Muslim Brotherhood is somehow pro-democratic and peace oriented. He has no kind words for either Prof. J. Esposito nor Tariq Ramadan. While I am a devout follower of Islamo-realists (R. Spencer, D. Pipes, R. Rubin, etc.), I strongly recommend this book to Islamo-realists, because Tibi discusses how al-Banna and Qutb championed the demise of secularism, with their replacement with Islamism. In this book, Tibi acknowledges the criticisms of Andrew Bostom and Bat Ye'or, but Tibi just isn't willing to make the plunge in acknowledging that Islam/Quran IS inherently violent against other religions. Nonetheless, this book is worth reading/having for its analysis as to how "Islamism is Totalitarianism". Tibi berates the Islamists for their dishonesty in not acknowledging that Hitler's 'holocaust' against the Jews did occur. Due to his lack of justifying that Islam is peaceful, Tibi should have instead titled this book: "The Threat of Totalitarian Islamism" (although maybe in some subliminal error, Tibi titled this book "Islamism AND Islam" instead of "Islamism VERSUS Islam"). (Okay, enough of my objective review of this book: Tibi, you need to read "The Politically Incorrect Guide to the Koran" by Robert Spencer and "Muhammad: And the Birth of Islamic Supremacism" by David Hayden).

Not all Muslims are Arabs and not all arabs are terrorists. We need to start making important distinctions. Read this.

Book was damaged when received.

Tibi gives a much needed nuanced picture of Islam. He makes a distinction between the Islamists, the totalitarian version of Islam, the result of the decline of power of Islam in the modern world and the rise of religious fundamnetalism of which islam is not alone in fostering. His use of Hannah Arendt to define totalitarianism and the relationship with anti-smitism, analogous to the Nazi ideology is right on the money. This connection puts the issue in historical context. Islam in Tibi's view is another matter. This is a religion that can accomodate reason and moderation as it tries to accomodate itself to the modern world just as mainline Christianity and Judaism have done. This work by an author with superb academic credentials unlike Pam Geller or Robert Spencer, for example, should get peoples attention as an anecdote to the fear mongering of the the Gellers and Spencers of the world.

This book, while both insightful at Islamism but not Islam, was a serious disappointment. He brands Islamism as a totalitarian ideology borrowed from communism. This is not correct. While some Islamism may be authoritarian, never has there been evidence for totalitarianism. Also, he says on pg. 16 about the Muslim Brotherhood, "They subscribed to terror and practiced it on all possible levels." Where is his evidence? Then, he goes about saying that just because al-Banna preached martyrdom for Islam, it reflects "suicidal terrorism." Not true, al-Banna was a community activist and never advocated terrorism to justify an end. Lastly, he says that Islamism is NOT part of the greater Islamic revival. What is the revival then? It actually is in that the revival has incorporated political ideology into its doctrine. Clearly, Mr. Tibi is not the right scholar to read. He confuses both facts and opinions.

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