

SERIES EDITOR'S PREFACE

The volume that I have the honor of introducing in the Palgrave Series on Islamic Theology, Law, and History is a distinctively thoughtful and, I daresay, intellectually prodigious contribution to contemporary scholarly discourses on Islam and governance. Since the end of the age of empires and the rise of nation-states, the subject of Islam and government has been the focus of much attention. Of the many writings in this field, Joseph Kaminski's contribution is necessary, comprehensive, pressing, and superlative. This volume provides readers with a learned and cautious exploration of the major intellectual orientations within the Islamic classical heritage on what may be described as Islamic politics. However, Kaminski does not analyze the classical Islamic discourses on power, justice, and government in an historical vacuum. One of the most important contributions of this book is that it situates and links classical Islamic political thought with its proper historical lineage in Greek and Persian thought. However, Kaminski does not treat the classical normative orientations of the Islamic tradition as determinative for modern Muslims. Unlike many studies that limit themselves to an historical exploration of pre-modern Islamic thought without investigating the ways that contemporary Muslims have negotiated their own intellectual heritage, with notable mastery and finesse, Kaminski gives equal weight to the classical heritage as well as the lived experience of modern Muslims. Consequently, readers will receive a deeply informed introduction to the classical discourses on governance and politics as well as insightful case studies of the ways that the Islamic intellectual heritage

was negotiated by modern Muslims in Turkey, Egypt, Tunisia, and Malaysia. Most significantly, Kaminski does not limit himself to a descriptive survey of the continuities and disruptions between the Muslim past and present. Kaminski's project is far more ambitious. He attempts a reconceptualization of what Islamic governance means in the modern age and, in this regard, his arguments are provocative and compelling. Notably, Kaminski is equally comfortable and adept at navigating the intellectual terrain of Islamic thought as he is with Western political theory. In analyzing what the right to self-determination means for modern Muslims, Kaminski takes readers on an intellectual journey from Michel Foucault and Ernesto Laclau to Robert Dahl's *Polyarchy* in arguing for a substantial difference between what he describes as an Islamic state as opposed to an Islamic governed state. Perhaps most provocatively, Kaminski argues that while democracy is a necessary and wise form of rule for an Islamic governed state, the same cannot be said about liberalism. Moreover, Kaminski contends that while democracy is compatible with the values of Islamic governance, liberalism is not. Whether readers are ultimately persuaded by the author's approach or not, it is undeniable that Kaminski has made an emphatically pressing and cogent contribution to contemporary discourses on Islamic political thought, liberalism, and democracy. In my view, no serious student of Islamic political thought or Islamic politics can afford to ignore Kaminski's challenging and inspiring contribution to the field. With this, I take distinct pride in introducing this inspired and sorely needed scholarly voice to readers interested not just in Islam and governance and politics, but also the role of religion and religiously inspired traditions in modern politics.

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