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Book Reviews

Good Governance: A critical introduction. By Maszlee Malik. Gombak: IIUM Press, 2015, Pp. 125. ISBN: 978-967-418-374-5.

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In this book, Maszlee Malik presents an introduction to the concept of Good Governance, which has gained prominence of late within the context of international development and political institutional reform. While "governance" is a notion that denotes our general understanding about the diverse procedural and technical aspects that are related to the way the modern society is managed, Good Governance refers to a doctrine about governance that is comprehensive and imbued with moral assumptions. As such, it assumes a set of philosophical underpinnings which are in line with liberal-democratic principles, which would set itself apart from "bad governance". In practice, it has become the lynchpin of international developmental and institutional reform efforts that have developed through the Washington Consensus, where aids and assistance are conditional upon its institution.

Admirably, Maszlee manages to tackle a vast topic concisely, and with great clarity. This includes a sound treatment of a massive corpus of texts that are not only directly related to the development of good governance as a recent doctrine, but also those that play a philosophical role in its development. Earlier in the book, Maszlee examines the shifts in how the notion of "governance" has been used in recent times, from being a term that is closely related to the workings of government, to one which application encompasses a variety of institutions and organisations.However, these shifts, according to him, are not as momentous as the emergence of the notion of Good Governance. While the former encompass definitional and operational changes, which allowed for scientific rethinking of their usage, the latter emerges as a moral doctrine, which allocates normative values on society. Against the background of this acknowledged importance of Good Governance, Maszlee presents a critical overview of the debates

surrounding it, by way of thematically highlighting a set of rejoinders that come from a diversity of perspectives.

As a stand-alone text, this is a useful handbook for those who would like to have a sense of what the debates surrounding Good Governance are all about. However, it would have helped massively had Maszlee made clear who his intended audience is when reflecting on the diverse issues that he has considered in the book. This is particularly crucial, since it appears that, in addition to introducing us to the concept, the book contains a programmatic impulse that is embodied in his proclamation that "religion and faith" (p. ix) can play a role in furnishing a novel understanding of Good Governance. As it is, the book seems to oscillate between presenting a neutral picture of the debates surrounding GoodGovernance and taking a stance against some of its fundamental assumptions. While it is obvious that the intuition in coming out with this book is that Good Governance is indeed a useful concept, Maszlee's reticence to make explicit why he thinks that some of its aspects are problematic renders his more critical points ambiguous. At times it seems like he wants to think about this issue through his deconstruction of the doctrine by way of exploring the critiques of Good Governance from other perspectives, such as from the Asian Values and post-develop mentalist discourses. However, the critical interventions that emerge out of this process appear impersonal and aloof, as Maszlee seems to be speaking with and through those contending perspectives, without delivering a more pointed verdict. The reason for this is that those explorations are not brought together rigorously from the faith perspective that he flags as a crucial part of the book. It is not until page 43 that we encounter the idea of "Islamic episteme", which would narrow the faith that he refers to. And, while Maszlee states that he would attempt to construct an understanding of the concept of good governance through this "Islamic episteme", this is not done (apart from asserting the benefit of the framework of "multiple modernities", which acknowledges the presence of "alternative narratives" [p. 87]).

Further, a contention has to be pressed here against Maszlee's treatment of the "post-modern" stance against what he calls the "dark side of modernity" (p. 72). The way post-modernism is presented here seems to be based on an assumption that it is an ideological movement that seeks to establish a moral primacy over modernity – a "counter-discourse" (p. 73).This is highly problematic. This is because, those critiques that he labels"post-modern",

including the works of Jean-François Lyotard, Michel Foucault and Gianni Vattimo, do not share homogenies among them. They also escape such labelling. Post-modernism is a means to describe social reality *as it is*, rather than an ideological standpoint. While it is fine to reject its description of social reality, it is not right to indicate that there is a cohesive discourse that represents a post-modern *ism*. Different "post-modern" thinkers, we will find, have different starting points for their projects, and channel their projects towards defending particular political perspectives. For example, Richard Rorty, often cited as one of the most important figures of post-modernism, was an unrepentant liberal. Where his liberalism differs from other more orthodox, foundationalist interpretations is its acknowledgement of its own contingency. On the other hand, Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe, who revisited socialism's basic assumptions in the 1980s against – among other things – the backdrop of postmodernism, defended the socialist project by acknowledging its own shortcomings and calling for a more self-reflective approach to its struggles. Perhaps, instead of looking at seminal texts as what he has done in this part of the book, Maszlee could consider examining critical works that have studied various issues that are related to governance and that adopt approaches that emerged out of the context of the interpretive turn in the social sciences, which is informed by the postmodern argument.

In addition to the substantial concerns above, there are formal ones. It would be helpful had Maszlee supplemented his points with examples/evidence. For instance, on page 39, he cites "the failure of some experiments of the Good Governance project in a number of countries", but those countries are not discussed. On page 45, who the "radical circles" who claim that Good Governance was "part of the wider governance of the predominant 'New World Order'" is also not clearly discussed. Bob Jessop is repeatedly misspelled as Bob Jessops (pp. 16 and 94).

All in all, the book's attempt to bring to light the potential of Good Governance as a means to better governance through a critical exploration of the doctrine is an interesting one. The condition that Maszlee puts to embracing this potential, that it must acknowledge the cultural and religious sensitivities of different societies (p. 87), is one which many will find worth considering. However, how the"Islamic episteme" would reconstruct Good Governance could have been thoroughly discussed within this book to give it a more complete

picture as an all-inclusive introductory text. In particular, a discussion of how it would negotiate the neoliberal impulse of Good Governance would be extremely noteworthy.

Temptations of power: Islamists & illiberal democracy in a new Middle East. By Shadi Hamid. New York, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014. Pp.269. ISBN: 9780199314058 (hardback).

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In 1989, Francis Fukuyama famously announced the "end of history." The Berlin Wall had fallen; liberal democracy had won out. But what of illiberal democracy – the idea that popular majorities, working through the democratic process, might reject gender equality, religious freedoms, and other norms that Western democracies take for granted. Nowhere have such considerations become more relevant than in the Middle East, where the uprisings of 2011 swept the Muslim Brotherhood and other Islamist groups to power.

In *Temptations of Power*, Shadi Hamid advances a new understanding of how Islamist movements change over time. He puts forward the bold thesis that repression "forced" Islamists to moderate their politics, work in coalitions, de-emphasize Islamic law, and set aside the dream of an Islamic state. Meanwhile, democratic openings in the 1980s – and again during the Arab Spring – pushed Islamists back toward their original conservatism. With the uprisings of 2011, Islamists found themselves in an enviable position, but one for which they are unprepared. Groups like the Brotherhood combine the features of both political parties and religious movements, leading to an inherent tension they have struggled to resolve. However pragmatic they may be, their ultimate goal remains the Islamization of society.

As long as the battle over the role of religion in public life continues, Islamist parties in countries as diverse as Egypt, Tunisia, and Jordan will remain an important force whether in the ranks of opposition or in the halls of power. But what are the key factors driving their evolution? A timely and provocative reassessment, Hamid's account serves as an essential compass for those trying to understand where the region's varied Islamist groups come from and where they might be headed.

Who are the Islamists? What are the boundaries of their politics? And what decides whether they moderate or grow extreme? These are questions of great importance which this book addresses with clarity and erudition. Hamid advances a bold, counterintuitive thesis about the Muslim Brotherhood's trajectory: that political repression before the Arab Spring forced moderation and electoral victory in its aftermath brought on illiberalism and failure. Even those who disagree will have to take on Hamid's arguments about the centrality of ideology.

This book takes both a chronological and thematic approach to the topic at hand. In the first part of the book, Hamid discusses the behavior of Islamist groups in opposition as they faced intensifying repression. He surveys how Islamists' experiences under autocracy shaped their behavior, and what that tells us about how they perceive and respond to various political pressures and threats. Here he has chosen to focus on Egypt and Jordan, two countries that in the pre – 2011 period experienced both significant political openings as well as sharp increases in repression.

The book then moves to another unexpected shock – the 2011 uprisings. In Egypt, Hamid notes a striking shift from one of the worst periods of anti-Islamist repression to an unprecedented democratic opening, where the Muslim Brotherhood found itself free to operate as never before. The pre – and post – revolution contrasts were even starker for Tunisia's Islamists. In Egypt as well as most other Arab countries, the repression was bad, to be sure, but it was never total. In Tunisia, the Ben Ali regime had eliminated its Islamist opposition in the early 1990s, to the extent that Ennahda ceased to exist in any real sense. After Ben Ali's fall, Tunisia's Islamists, quite literally, had to start from scratch.

Foreign policy experts have long had a blind spot regarding political Islam, failing to understand or appreciate the complex interplay between a deeply rooted vision of a purer society and the competing demands of democratic legitimacy and constitutional liberalism. *Temptations of Power* leaves us no excuse for continued ignorance. It is a nuanced, carefully researched, and engaging analysis that draws on history, culture, political theory, and theology to illuminate contemporary politics across the Middle East and North Africa. This book is a welcome contribution to the debate on the past, present, and future of Islamism across the Middle East.

Heretic: Why Islam needs a reformation now. By Ayaan Hirsi Ali, Harper, 2015, Pp. 272, ISBN: 978-0-06233393-3.

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Ayaan Hirsi Ali, in 2004, became famous for *Submission*, a video that satiated many people's hunger for sex and sacrilege.*Time*, in 2005, included her in its list of 100 Most Influential People. *Zembla*, in 2006, aired its exposé of her life story. With her credibility shaken, she left Netherlands for America. Her book *Infidel*, published in 2007, became an International Bestseller. In the book, she didn't know the difference betweenthe Quran and Hadith (2008, p. 50).She had difficulty in thinking beyond the absurd; for instance, she said, "In Islam becoming an individual is not a necessary development; many people, especially women, never develop a clear individual will" (p. 94). Breivik cited her in his manifesto, then, in 2011, he massacred seventy seven people. Brandeis University, in 2014, cancelled plans to give her an honorary degree, after it became aware of her anti-Islamic slurs. This year, her book*Heretic: Why Islam Needs a Reformation Now*was published.

"[M]y views on Islam," Hirsi Ali writes, "are based on my knowledge and experience of being a Muslim, of living in Muslim societies—including Mecca itself, the very centre of Islamic belief—and on my years of study of Islam as a practitioner, student, and teacher" (2015: 8). She later says that "Allah's imperatives for the faithful are not exhortations . . . or a covenant . . . or even a wider moral code" (p. 92).She tells us, with all seriousness, that computers contradict Islam (p. 16).

Her main message is this: I (Hirsi Ali) am a reformer of Islam. Muslims, when hearing this, laugh. A reformer of Islam must respectthe Quran and Muhammad. A reformer must know the reality Muslims live in, and the problems they face. If a reformer is missing any one of these conditions, he or she will not get the support of the majority of Muslims. That is, the reformer will not be able to *democratically* reform Islam. (Some people have tried to coercively reform Islam, only to find, to their horror, that Muslim conviction grew*stronger* as the coercion got harsher.)

Hirsi Ali doesn't meet any of the conditions.

She wants Muslims to abandon their belief that the Quran is Divine, and that Muhammad is a Prophet (p. 78). Islam, to her, is a "cult of death" (p. 122). She says Muslims have to choose between "apostasy and atrocity." She wants to help them by giving them a "third option" (p. 51). Most Muslims commit neither apostasy nor atrocity. This suggests that the dilemma is false. Muslims, for sure, do not need her help, because it is a "relentless campaign of blasphemy" (p. 234).

*Heretic*stands on two ideological legs. The first, Western supremacism wears the garb of ethnic diversity. The second, Muslims can only reform Islam if *we*, the Westerners, do it for them.

The post-colonial age brought an increase in cultural awareness. People in post-colonial countries see the racism in the Western supremacist narrative; what's more, they are not afraid of pointing out the shark in the cot. Western supremacists, those who believe that the West is inherently superior to the rest of the world, didn'tdiscard their narrative; they repackaged it. They dressed it up in the garb of ethnic diversity. When critics claim that this narrative is racist, the Western supremacists point to the garb. But the critics are pointing to what's behind the garb.

Hirsi Alipresents Islam, Muslims, and Femininity in the same way as Annie Van Sommer and S. M. Zwemer did in their book *Our Moslem Sisters: A Cry of Need from Lands of Darkness Interpreted by Those Who Heard It* (1907). The title summarizes the Western supremacist narrative. It is the "Moslem sisters" who need help from the masculine West. The West, symbolised by Jesus Christ, *has* to help them; it cannot do otherwise. The "Moslem sisters" do not ask for help, but "cry" for help. This "cry", one imagines, is the perfect sound effect for *The Rape of the Daughters of Leucippus*. Muslim countries are "lands of darkness", bereft of rationality, humanity, and morality. Muslims are not allowed to speak for themselves; their words have to be "interpreted by those who heard it". Those who heard it are missionaries who believe that Islam is "the devil" (1907: 92).

In *Heretic*, Muslim women beg the West for help. The masculine West, symbolized by America, cannot do nothing. Muslim girls who look at a boy get doused in acid by their parents. Muslim countries are dens of ignorance, inhumanity, and immorality. Hirsi Ali doesn't tell us how Muslims interpret the

Quran; instead, she interprets the Quran using sources like *Jerusalem Post*, and online articles with titles like "Ten Ways Islam and the Mafia Are Similar".[1]

Islam, Hirsi Ali tells us, didn't change from its founding till now (2015: 25).She, withthe American Enterprise Institute, is teaching Muslims how to change their religion.

Islam is *not* static: it is dynamic. Muhammad made dynamism a key partof Islam. He said, "God will send at the head of every hundred years someone who will revive the religion" (Abu Dawūd, 2009: 36:1).This person (or people) will reform Islam, and help Muslims solvetheir problems. 'Umar b. 'Abd al-'Azizand Al-Ghazāli were reformers of Islam.

When 'Umar b. 'Abd al-'Aziz was appointed Caliph, he stood on the pulpit and said, "O' people! I was appointed against my will; you were not consulted. I nullify the pledge that binds you to me. Choose whoever you want to be Caliph." The people shouted in unison, "We choose you, and are pleased with you!" (Ibn al-Jawzi, 2001, p. 65). During his reign, he redistributed wealth. Peopledidn't need to give charity, because "'Umar made everyone rich" (p. 94). His policies angered some people; so, they gave one thousand dinar to his servant to poison him. His servant did it. When 'Umar found out, he asked the servant, "Why did you poison me?" "Because," the servant said, "I was paid to." 'Umar, lying on his death bed, said, "go hide so people cannot harm you" (IbnKathīr, 2006, vol. 5: 193).

Al-Ghazāli was the chief scholar of the Niẓāmīyacollege, the finest educational institute in the Muslim Empire. He felt that Islam, as practiced then, was stale. Its legal rulings did not speak to the soul; he felt hollow. He decided to seek out true spirituality. He gave up his job andhis wealth, his home and his family. He spent ten years travelling in search for what he was missing. In Damascus, he spent his days secluded in the minaret of the Umayyad Mosque (Subki, 1999, vol. 3, p. 419). A new spiritual horizon was unveiled to him, one that was greater than he ever conceived. He then wrote his magnum opus *Iḥyā 'Ulūm al-Dīn*. He returned to society, and showed people the spirituality of Islam's legal rulings. One Monday, after Fajr, he asked his brother to bring him a

[1] The article, published in PJ Media, had film clips from the Godfather and Good Fellas to show the similarity of the Mafia and Islam. http://pjmedia.com/lifestyle/2014/12/05/10-ways-the-mafia-and-islam-are-similar/?singlepage=true

shroud. He kissed the shroud, wore it, thenfaced the Qibla (Ibn Al-Jawzi, 1992: 125).

What did Hirsi Ali do to deserve the title of a reformer? She wrote the script for a ten minute video which opens with a woman in Salāt, naked, with Al-Fātiḥa written above and below her perky breasts.[2]

"For years," she says, "I have been told, condescendingly, that my critique of Islam is a consequence of my own uniquely troubled upbringing. This is rubbish" (2015: 48). She says that Muslims studied philosophy to "make the religion less all-encompassing and inflexible in its demands upon believers" (p. 59).Muslims, in reality, studied philosophy because they were confident that reason led to Islam. They knew that philosophy validated Islam, not diluted it (Kindī, 1950, vol. 1: 104-5). Hirsi Ali looked at the history of Islamic philosophy and saw herself. She teaches Islam at Harvard. Islam needs a reformation now; it will come from Muslims, not heretics.

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[2] "On [the woman's] torso is written the opening verse of the Quran, the "Surah Fatiha," which every Muslim is required to recite first, at every prayer," Hirsi Ali (2008, p. 313). Al-Fātiḥa is not a Quranic verse; it is a Quranic chapter of seven verses.

The Politics and poetics of Ameen Rihani: The humanist ideology of an Arab-American intellectual and activist. By Nijmeh Hajjar. New York: I.B. Tauris Publishers, 2010, Pp. xv + 305. ISBN: 978-1-84885-266-2.

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Ameen Rihani, an Arab-American essayist, a novelist, a literary translator, historian, traveler, and an activist wasborn in 1876 in a village in Mount Lebanon. He received rudimentary primary education before emigrating to the United States in 1888. Rihani was mostly self-educated through rigorous reading in Arabic and English. In 1898, he started his illustrious writing careerby contributing to Arabic newspapers in the US. He became the first Arab to write a novel in English, to write free verse Arabic poetry, and to publish books in English and Arabic upon extensive travels in Arabia. He contributed scores of articles to newspapers around the world, and was a prominent speaker on literary, social and political issues. Rihani passed away in his hometown, Freike, in 1940.

The first chapter, out of eight, sketches the life and the intellectual formation and stature of Rihani. It also traces his journey in Arabia where he met its kings and tribesmen. The second chapter is divided into three parts that details the key roles played by Rihani as a journalist, a historian, and an activist. As a journalist, his writings covered literature, cultural understanding, national and international politics, and various cultural and social concerns in journals ranging from places such as China and South Africa to England and the US. As a historian, he published three major books on Arabian history. His travels and meetings with key political figures provided vital information for his books, basing them on first-hand sources and official documents. Yet his insights were not limited to politics, but covered economic, cultural and social aspects as well. As an activist, Rihani was not affiliated to any political party or state agency. He was motivated by his “own conviction, rather than any external influence”. His activism included political and humanitarian campaigns, associations and meetings with influential intellectuals and officials, lectures and writings, for various causes such as Ottoman reform, ending the French Mandate, socialism and secularism, and supporting Palestinians.

After these introductory chapters, the author embarksupon analyzingRihani's major social and political ideas; namely reform and revolution, secularism and sectarianism, followed by justice, freedom, democracy and socialism. According to the author, after more than seventy five years since the death of AmeenRihani, the problems of sectarianism and fanaticism remain rampant in the Arab world. The unfulfilled Arab renaissance and challenges that grew more complex since the turn of the twentieth century, render Rihani's works important. Essentially, this book aims to facilitate a better understanding of his historical period and the current conditions in Lebanon and the Middle East. Accordingly, in subsequent chapters, the evolution and application of Riahni's major ideas are presented through the examination of Rihani's position on Arab-Ottoman relations, the Arab-French encounter, and Arab nationalism. In his belief in social evolution, Rihani advocated democratic socialism that is achievedprogressively through education (down-up), rather than revolution. He called for a free Greater Syria, integrated within a larger Arab union that includes Iraq and Arabia. Some of his ideas witnessed partial and doomed application in some socialist countries upon independence from European Mandates. The book offers detailed answers about the ideas of Rihani; however, it leaves much to be desired in terms of historical narratives and critical analysis of these political initiatives. They are rarely unfavorably compared to other views of more influential thinkers in the period. Nonetheless, the book is unique in focusing and analyzing the political thought of Rihani. It is also rich in references to his works, making it an excellentreading for students of Arab-American émigré thought.

In conclusion, the book is based on a "thorough reading" of Rihani's English and Arabic writings. It methodically, albeit with some unwarranted repetition, addresses the politics of Rihani. It does not deal with the literary aspects (poetics) of his works.Additionally, the book, as the author admits,does not address the question of Palestinenor the issue of women's rights,whichleaves a regrettable void as these two issues are still as pressing now, if not more pressing, than at the times of Rihani. The book avoids controversial points of view, and if oneis already familiar with Rihani's works, this book will not offer great additions in terms of political and social analysis.