

Party and resulted in numerous arrests. “Sitting on two chairs diplomacy”: trying to establish good relations with Baghdad and USA, then Hezbollah and USA, showed how complicated Syria’s policy is. Syria has demonstrated repeatedly that it is unable to have a clear position on any of its internal or external issues. Al-Assad strongly condemned the Muslim Brotherhood, he even imposed “Law 49” stating that all members of the Muslim Brotherhood will be executed. This was changed in 2005 when Syrian universities were established, and when the Syrian people started to seek greater respect for Islam. Accordingly, Muslim festivals were organized and new mosques were built. About all this, but more detailed, of course, Radwan writes in his book which he ends simply by saying that political Islam is likely to remain relatively stable, as it has been for three decades, but this will not prevent the emergence of fundamentalists and extremist groups, which may carry out armed operations from time to time. However, he is certain that the Muslim Brotherhood will not have any political or social impact.

The book *Power and Policy in Syria* predicts a negative scenario for Syria’s future, which perfectly reflects current events. Assad’s resignation is still far from reality and war is ongoing. Radwan Ziadeh’s positivism is derived from the fact that Damascus is his hometown and he has been working in USA for years. He wants only the best for his people and he believes that political reform, a reform that should culminate with an entirely new democratic constitution, is the right way for Syrian people. In the eyes of the entire international community, Bashar al-Assad

is condemned as a ruthless dictator who needs to step down as soon as possible, as well in Radwan Ziadeh’s eyes. Radwan Ziadeh provided us with an excellent historical overview, which makes it easier to understand why Syria has been suffering for so long. The only objection to Radwan Ziadeh’s *Power and Policy in Syria* is the lack of an overall conclusion, which would include the summarization of all chapters and therefore facilitate understanding.

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Review

Bassam Tibi
The *Shari’a* State: Arab Spring and Democratization

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We have before us Bassam Tibi’s new book, *The Shari’a State: Arab Spring and Democratization*. Although Tibi is a worldwide known authority on issues of political Islam, a man “that needs no introduction”, so to speak, he is not well known in Croatian political science. During the past 40 or so years, Tibi has written and published numerous books and academic articles on Islamism. He is the “founding father” of the study of “Islamology”, a study of Islamism and the conflict of Eastern vs. Western ideas, or the “cold war of

ideas”, as he puts it. This subfield of political science rests on the shoulders of a combined methodology of international relations, comparative politics and historical sociology. It can also be described as a cultural approach to political science, since Tibi himself admitted that he is a “culture matters” proponent within political science. His new book is no exception, as it is an “Islamologic” approach to the so-called Arab Spring phenomena. The book was written in the “Middle Eastern” style of writing, as Tibi puts it, that is, in a more personal style of writing than Western academic scholarship would allow. This does not in any way diminish the academic value of the manuscript, since Tibi is a Sunni native of Damascus and a true expert on the MENA region. Interestingly enough, this book should never have seen the light of day, because the author himself admitted that his last two books were supposed to be *Islamism and Islam* and *Islam in Global Politics*, both published in 2012. However, the so-called Arab Spring phenomena that toppled the long-lasting autocrats in the MENA region and brought Islamist movements to power compelled him to write another book. The core question that Tibi poses in this book is whether the Islamists that rose to power during the Arab Spring would bring about a genuine democracy. This question is answered through six chapters: The *shari’a* state and Western scholarship: the reality of the Islamist *shari’atization* of politics that seeks a name; The *shari’a* state is not the faith of Islam: *shari’a* and politics; The challenge of the Islamist *shari’a* state to international order: torn between the Westphalian synthesis, *Pax Americana* and *Pax Islamica*; *Shari’a* and Islamism

in the ‘Arab Spring’: from the promise of blossoming spring to a frosty and lethal winter; From traditional *shari’a* reasoning to Islamist *shari’atization* of politics in post-Arab Spring; Torn between combating prejudice and the accusation of Islamophobia: the *shari’a* state and policing speech in the debate ‘Whither Islamic civilization?’.

The answer to the question Tibi posed is a “no” with a capital N. That is why, although he uses it himself, he denounces the term “Arab Spring”, because the Islamists have driven the MENA region to a new season by hijacking the Arab Spring by way of elections – a blazing summer, and a chilling winter, respectively. Unlike the AKP in Turkey, the Muslim Brotherhood does not hide its wish to impose the *shari’a* order, which they call “Islamic democracy”. Islamism (*al-Islamiyya*) was born in Egypt in 1928. Its creator is also the founding father of the Muslim Brotherhood, Hassan al-Banna. He coined the term Islamism to describe his political project. Tibi emphasizes that Islam (*al-Islam*) is not Islamism. One is a religious faith and the other is a political ideology. Islamists want to reverse “the end of history” into “the return to history”. But according to Tibi, we must tread lightly here, because Islamists are not about the revival of the Caliphate, but rather they are reinventing history. Tibi warns that Western pundits often do not understand the differences between Islam and Islamism, but also between Islamism and liberal or civil Islam. The Islamists want to build the Islamic order (*nizam Islami*) or the *shari’a* state, which is a new addition to Islam. The Quran is the only source for any argument on Islamic faith. Since there is only

one notion of the *shari'a* in the Quran, which means morality, and there is no notion of the state in the Quran, Islamism is not an Islamic revival, but rather a new invention of tradition. Tibi admits that Islam provides political ethics, but he firmly states that *shari'a* cannot be the basis for constitution-writing. Even though after the death of the Prophet, *shari'a* was made into law by Muslim scholars, it was a civil and a penal code, not the blueprint for a political order. The Muslim Brotherhood in reality wants the *nizam Islami/shari'a* state and not a genuine democracy. The *shari'a* state would also be a threat to the Westphalian international system based on sovereign nation states, because Islamists want to export and impose this political order on non-Muslims outside the *dar al-Islam*, they want to make it a global order. Islamists believe that "Islam is the solution" to the grievances of the MENA region, and after decades of being the opposition to the *ancien régimes*, the "Arab Spring" brought them to the surface. To them, democratization is simply "ballotting", and Tibi fears the *shari'a* state will be the aftermath of the "Arab Spring". The "no hope" generation started the "spring" and the Islamists hijacked it from them. Tibi suggests an alternative to Islamism, and that is "enlightened Muslim thought" and civil Islam which can be found in Indonesia. Still, Tibi does not wish for the Islamists to be excluded from the democratic process, he wants to engage them, but not to empower them so that they can impose hegemony. The West also needs to be careful. Criticism of Islamists and the *shari'a* state is almost always labeled as Islamophobia by the Islamists. The Western scholars and policy makers should not

fall into this trap. They should never, according to Tibi, confuse "respect for Islam" with political correctness pressed by Islamists. Self-imposed censorship is bad for freedom of thought on which the academia lies, but also for policymaking, which could lead to disastrous consequences.

These are, in a nutshell, the main arguments of Tibi's new book *The Shari'a State*. Tibi has been researching Islamism for over three decades in more than twenty Muslim countries. This is a surgically precise book that demystifies the Islamist movements, which pose as true democratic forces, and shows that their true goal is the *shari'a* state and not a genuine democracy. Tibi predicted that after some time has passed, the people will again pour into the streets, this time to protest against the Islamist government. But what Tibi failed to predict, focusing exclusively on Islamists, is the "empire striking back". For example, the aftermath of the "Arab Spring" in Egypt was not a *shari'a* state, but a military coup. Egypt's democratization had its reversal, similar to Algeria's in the 1990s, and the military flexed its muscles and demonstrated who the true boss of Egypt is. Aside from that, in my humble opinion, there are no other objections to this book.

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