

VOLUME 36 | ISSUE I | AUTUMN 2015

# The Muslim World Book Review

PUBLISHED BY  
THE ISLAMIC FOUNDATION

## Blessed Names and Attributes of Allah

*Abdur Raheem Kidwai*

Remembering the Names of Allah is a sacred tradition in Islam. Both the Qur'an and sayings of the Prophet (Hadith) state the importance of learning them and promise reward for reciting them in supplications and prayers.

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– **Qur'an (Al-Hashr 59:24)**

*"Allah has 99 names. He who remembers these will certainly enter Paradise."* – **Prophet Muhammad (Bukharhi Hadith Kitab Ad-Dawat, 2, 949)**

New



BLESSED NAMES AND  
ATTRIBUTES

of

**Allah**

*Abdur Raheem Kidwai*

£6.99 | Hardback | 9781847740878  
120pp | 193 h x 127 w

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**Kube Publishing Ltd**, MCC, Ratby Lane, Markfield, Leicestershire, LE67 9SY, UK  
**KUBE** Tel: 01530 249 230 E: info@kubepublishing.com [www.kubepublishing.com](http://www.kubepublishing.com)

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VOLUME 36 | ISSUE 1 | AUTUMN 2015

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# Contents

## **Review Article**

### **Ruqaiyah Hibell**

#### **In the Eye of the Beholder: Revisiting the Perception of Terrorism**

*Disciplining Terror: How Experts Invented Terrorism,*

by Lisa Stampnitzky.

*The Psychology of Terrorism,* by John Horgan.

*On Western Terrorism: From Hiroshima to Drone Warfare,*

by Noam Chomsky and Andrew Vltchek.

*Reclaiming Jihad: A Qur'anic Critique of Terrorism,*

by ElSayed M.A. Amin.

*The Rise of Islamic State: ISIS and the New Sunni Revolution,*

by Patrick Cockburn.

*New Approaches to Countering Terrorism,* by Hamed El-Said. .... 6

## **Islamic Thought and Sources**

### **Abdur Raheem Kidwai**

*The Qur'ān: A New Annotated Translation,* by A. J. Droge. .... 21

*Misquoting Muhammad: The Challenge and Choices of Interpreting*

*the Prophet's Legacy,* by Jonathan A. C. Brown. .... 25

### **Muhammad al-Ghazali**

*Rāzī: Master of Qur'ānic Interpretation and Theological*

*Reasoning,* by Tariq Jaffer. .... 27

### **Muhammad Yaseen Gada**

*Islam: An Introduction,* by Catharina Raudvere. .... 31

## **Contemporary Muslim World**

### **Elfatih A. Abdelsalam**

*Routledge Handbook of the Arab Spring: Rethinking*

*Democratization,* edited by Larbi Sadiki. .... 34

### **S Parvez Manzoor**

*Confronting Political Islam: Six Lessons from the West's Past,*

by John. M. Owen IV. .... 35

**Anis Ahmad**

- Temptations of Power: Islamists and Illiberal Democracy in a New Middle East*, by Shadi Hamid. .... 38

**Murad Wilfried Hofmann**

- Non-State Actors in the Middle East: Factors for Peace and Democracy*, edited by Galia Golan and Walid Salem. .... 41

**Islamic History****Abdullah Drury**

- History of the Umayyad Caliphs: Tarikh al-Khulafa*, by Jalal ad-Din as-Suyuti. .... 43

**Shahrul Hussain**

- Henry Stubbe and the Beginning of Islam: The Original & Progress of Mohometanism*, edited and Introduced by Nabil Matar. .... 45

**Elfatih A. Abdelsalam**

- The Yezidis: The History of a Community, Culture and Religion*, by Birgul Acikyildiz. .... 46

**Islam and the West****Philip Lewis**

- Muslims In British Local Government, Representing Minority Interests in Hackney, Newham, and Tower Hamlets*, by Eren Tatari. .... 49

**Murad Wilfried Hofmann**

- Organizing Muslims and Integrating Islam in Germany: New Developments in the 21st Century*, by Kerstin Rosenow-Williams. .... 51
- Mysticism and Spirituality. Part Two: Spirituality – The Way of Life*, by Raimon Panikkar. .... 53

**Shahrul Hussain**

- Muslim Family Law in Western Courts*, edited by Elisa Giunchi. .... 55

**Abdur Raheem Kidwai**

- Muslims in the Western Imagination*, by Sophia Rose Arjana. .... 58

**Islamic Banking and Finance****Abdelkader Chachi**

- Islamic Finance: Political Economy (Vol I: Values and Innovation; Vol II: Risk, Stability and Growth; Vol III: Performance and Efficiency)*, edited by Mehmet Asutay and Abdullah Q. Turkistani. .... 61

**Toseef Azid**

*Risk and Regulation of Islamic Banking*, edited by Mervyn K. Lewis, Muhamed Ariff and Shamsheer Mohamad. .... 66

**Faizal Ahmad Manjoo**

*Derivatives in Islamic Finance, Examining the Market Risk Management Framework*, by Sherif Ayoub. .... 71

**Children’s Literature**

**Sabeeha Coates**

*She Wore Red Trainers: A Muslim Love Story*, by Na’ima B. Robert. .... 75  
*The Victory Boy: Team Spirit*, by Jamal Orme. .... 76

**Imran Mogra**

*I Wonder about Allah (Book 2)*, by Özkan Öze. .... 78

**Short Reviews**

**Murad Wilfried Hofmann**

*Teilhard’s Mysticism: Seeing the Inner Face of Evolution*, by Kathleen Duffy. .... 81

**Abdur Raheem Kidwai**

*English Poems on Prophet Mohammed*, edited by Massood Ul Hasan. .... 82

**BOOKS RECEIVED.** ..... 84

**INDEX TO VOLUME 35.** ..... 87

## *Contemporary Muslim World*

**ROUTLEDGE HANDBOOK OF THE ARAB SPRING: RETHINKING DEMOCRATIZATION.** Edited By Larbi Sadiki. London and New York: Routledge, 2015. Pp. 679. ISBN: 9780415523912 (HB).

Four years after its eruption, the Arab Spring saga continues to capture the interest and concern of scholars. In the *Routledge Handbook of the Arab Spring*, there is no fixed or single meaning given to the term 'Arab Spring'. The kind of fluidity that informs the Arab Spring is mirrored in the handbook. The editor claims from the outset that it is futile to attempt to impose one meaning or to try to disaggregate the phenomenon into its constitutive manifestations, whether 'uprisings', 'protests' or revolutions. While all these labels indicate nuance, and signify specific dynamics, they owe their existence to the common symbolism of bottom-up change and the forces driving it. Moreover, they all capture the essence of an historical moment, still unfolding. Integral to this moment is the anomic condition that grips societies determined to overthrow existing brutal and exclusionary regimes.

*The Routledge Handbook of the Arab Spring* should not be read with the wrong paradigm in mind. The book does not make any bold claims to be theoretical. It is primarily intended to collate the initial analyses of the events imploding in 2011 up to the present. The strength of the handbook lies in the fact that it is enriched by a variety of styles and even levels of experience. In addition, it represents a kind of 'transgenerational' work in terms of academic experience, combining the works of renowned and established scholars with the inputs of young researchers. Equally important is the mix of voices in the handbook that is trans-regional in nature. This fact enriches the discourse of the Arab Spring with wide-ranging representations of the phenomenon from within the Arab world, Africa, North America, Europe and Asia. The country chapters represent important voices by promising scholars, research scholars, and a few committed activists, attempting to capture at once the global travel and the local impact of the Arab Spring. The result is a set of wonderful and insightful interventions by able scholars.

The handbook's scope is immense. This is deliberate, and the rationale seems to allow for diverse styles, voices, backgrounds, and wide-ranging positions and perspectives to consider the Arab Spring phenomenon as well as to arrive at a notion of the Arab uprisings that transcends neat labels, fixed interpretation and one-sided understanding. The editor claims that he has not superimposed any agenda on the authors, except to honestly and candidly share

their tentative analyses of the Arab Spring from their respective standpoints. The handbook has succeeded in meeting this objective and in so doing has produced a kind of dialogue between different viewpoints and assumptions. On the whole, what the authors of the chapters of the handbook collectively articulate are lines of investigation, suggesting possible clues, hinting at some answers but without closing the discussion of a fluid phenomenon, still unfolding, refusing to stagnate, wane and fade into something that verges on the banal and dogmatic. The idea is that the handbook with its focus on the Arab Spring and bottom-up forces of change contributes to the scholarship of Middle East politics, democratisation and Arab politics, and sets the stage for further investigation of the phenomenon.

The 49 chapters in the handbook marshal evidence on vast angles from a variety of sources, including primary material gathered by competent authors, many of whom are linked to the theatre events. Change or lack of it is mapped out succinctly in the chapters of the handbook. The forces driving or arresting change are equally dealt with, as are the contingent and contextual variables leading to divergent trajectories within the Arab Spring. To facilitate the reading of the handbook, the chapters have been organized into eight thematic sections. The result is a highly informative and readable text.

It goes without saying that the handbook is neither the final word on the Arab Spring nor does it claim to be without limitations or imperfections. It is written with the reader in mind, to give students, practitioners, diplomats, policy-makers and lay readers contextualisation, knowledge and, undoubtedly, a degree of joy by adding insight and engaging curiosity about the Arab Spring.

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Elfatih A. Abdelsalam

**CONFRONTING POLITICAL ISLAM: SIX LESSONS FROM THE WEST'S PAST.** By John. M. Owen IV. Princeton University Press, 2015. Pp. 216. ISBN: 9780691163147.

The pugnacious title gives little indication of the sober historical analysis and sustained political reflection that is the hallmark of this pensive and suggestive work. Though addressed primarily to the Western reader, and adopting a constrictively pragmatic American approach, it is a book that Muslim scholars and critical thinkers would also find quite rewarding. As a matter of fact, in a debate that is notoriously marred by a propensity for immediate responses and quick fixes, it projects a *longue durée* perspective that reveals the current political