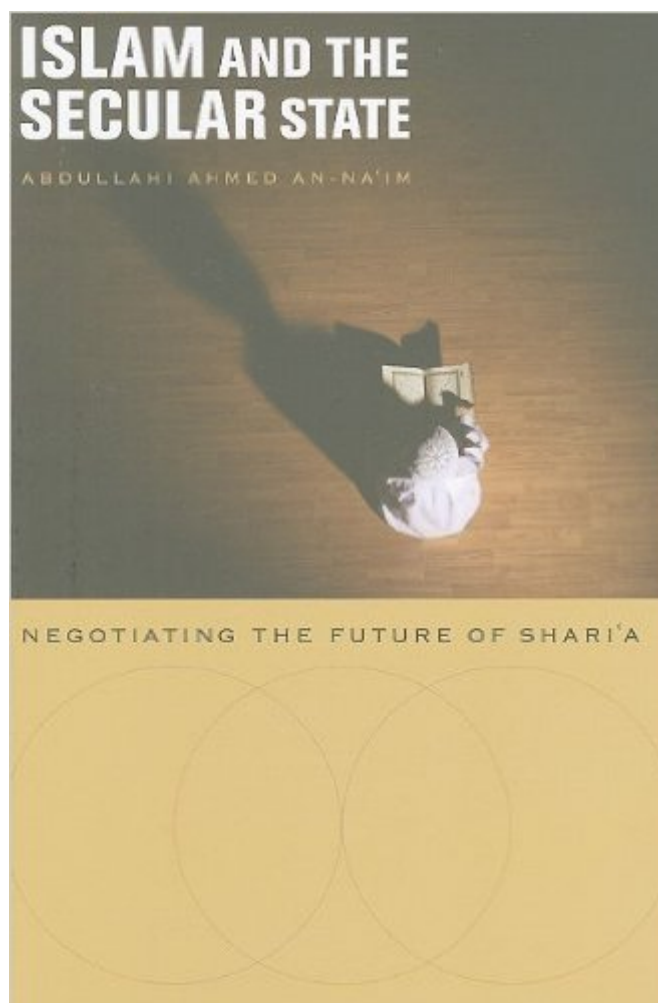


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# Islam And The Secular State: Negotiating The Future Of Shari`a



## Synopsis

What should be the place of Shari'ah - Islamic religious law - in predominantly Muslim societies of the world? In this ambitious and topical book, a Muslim scholar and human rights activist envisions a positive and sustainable role for Shari'ah, based on a profound rethinking of the relationship between religion and the secular state in all societies. An-Na'im argues that the coercive enforcement of Shari'ah by the state betrays the Qur'an's insistence on voluntary acceptance of Islam. Just as the state should be secure from the misuse of religious authority, Shari'ah should be freed from the control of the state. State policies or legislation must be based on civic reasons accessible to citizens of all religions. Showing that throughout the history of Islam, Islam and the state have normally been separate, An-Na'im maintains that ideas of human rights and citizenship are more consistent with Islamic principles than with claims of a supposedly Islamic state to enforce Shari'ah. In fact, he suggests, the very idea of an "Islamic state" is based on European ideas of state and law, and not Shari'ah or the Islamic tradition. Bold, pragmatic, and deeply rooted in Islamic history and theology, *Islam and the Secular State* offers a workable future for the place of Shari'ah in Muslim societies.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

A new book by Emory Law Professor Abdullahi Ahmed An-Na'im offers a formula for nations and peoples of the world - including the United States and its current presidential candidates -- struggling with the separation of religion and politics. "The American Constitution got it right on the separation of church and state, but there isn't much clarity of the relationship between religion and

politics," said An-Na'im, a senior fellow in the Center for the Study of Law and Religion (CSLR) at Emory University. "You can't separate religion and politics even if you try. Believers will act politically as believers." An-Na'im wrote *Islam and the Secular State: Negotiating the Future of Shari'a* (Harvard University Press) to help countries navigate this tricky and treacherous plane, no matter the religion, no matter the geography. The book was first published in Indonesia last year and is available on the Internet in eight languages spoken by Muslims. It is a product of An-Na'im's role in the CSLR's Islamic Legal Studies research project and was funded in part by a grant from the Ford Foundation. "I want to help clarify the role of religion in society so that it is seen as a positive, humanizing force, not as a bigoted, narrow-minded, destructive force," he said. "The state is the institutional continuity. Countries must be able to keep this alive while allowing elected officials to lead, but without allowing them to take over the state." An-Na'im, who serves as Charles Howard Candler Professor of Law at Emory, pointed to the Bush Administration's dismissal of federal prosecutors as an abuse of political power. "President Bush used the Justice Department to further his own agenda - he tried to take over the department, he didn't just lead," he said.

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