

Book Review:

**Why Islamists Go Green. Politics, Religion and the Environment
(Emmanuel Karagiannis).**

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Islamist groups have been examined from various perspectives, with most studies focused on these groups' use of violence, which provides a misleading perspective of how Muslim societies evolve and how they interact with the rest of the world. As a result, there is a lack of focus on Islamist movements' relationship with the environment. Emmanuel Karagiannis's *Why Islamists Go Green* is the first well-researched work that reveals important trends in how Islamism interacts with the environment (p. xi). The author focuses on five Islamist groups – the Muslim Brotherhood, Hizb ut-Tahrir, Hizbullah, Hamas, and Salafi-jihadist groups such as al-Qaeda and ISIS – and the religious and political foundations for the formation of their green policies based on Islamic texts, rulings and principles (p. 10). The author's argument convincingly sheds light on the basic principles and essence of Islamist environmentalism as it includes extensive literature and interviews with representatives of these movements and an analysis of online resources and initiatives from the various parties and groups (pp. 11-13).

With reference to each of the Islamist groups' environmental agendas, Karagiannis categorizes the five groups into three types: global, glocal and local (p. xi). The Muslim Brotherhood, Hamas and ISIS are examples of local movements that focus on improving the living conditions of the local community, such as water supply. Hizb ut-Tahrir and al-Qaeda, on

the other hand, seek a global agenda, focusing on issues such as climate change and the hunting of animals. While Hizbullah recognizes the relevance of climate change, it prefers to focus on local or national projects, which Karagiannis describes as a “glocal” approach. Although these groups have different focus areas, all deal with environmental issues that are important and appeal to their specific constituencies.

This book consists of an introduction, seven chapters, and a conclusion. The first chapter provides an extensive discussion on Islam and how it interacts with the environment. Land and water, trees, animals, pollution, and energy emerge the key themes. The next five chapters highlight the Islamist movements; after introducing a particular movement or group, each chapter returns to and expands upon the concepts described above. Using an interdisciplinary approach incorporating perspectives from Islamic studies and political science, the author further enhances this work to better comprehend the intricate interplay between politics and religion in Islamist ecology. This method can assist us in comprehending how political Islam has developed as a social force and how it affects environmental policy.

Chapter 1 addresses the relationship between Islam and the environment, with a focus on the role of religion in preservation and protection. Four separate but related themes are covered by the author: pollution and energy, animals, trees, and land and water, which the author selected based on their practical importance in terms of the information available and the welfare of Muslim communities (p. 24). The main objective is to show how the Muslim faith views the interaction between humans and nature. In this regard, Karagiannis points out that a growing movement among Muslims dedicated to preserving the environment and advancing sustainability, driven by growing awareness of environmental issues. Islamic eco-theology is a distinct subcategory of Islam that lays out ethical values for protecting and preserving the environment (p. 18). Islamic ideas of *tawhid* (the unity of God), *khalifa* (vicegerency), and *akhira* (accountability) are the foundation of this environmental ethics. Respecting and actively fostering human ties with the environment, Islamic values advocate for environmental sustainability and

conservation. The role that *Shari'a* plays in environmental issues and the *fatwas* issued by religious authorities serve as more examples of this.

Chapter 2 examines the Muslim Brotherhood's past interactions with the Egyptian government to shed light on its position on the environment. The author notes the organization has developed an environmental agenda that aligns with its broader political and social goals (p. 62). The chapter proceeds to examine the Brotherhood's efforts to present itself as a modern institution that genuinely cares about the country's environmental welfare. In this chapter, Karagiannis critically examines how this rebranding impacts the organization's political actions and policies. He argues that the Brotherhood intentionally crafts its environmental programs to gain legitimacy and win over Egyptians to their cause. Environmentalism is intertwined with the Brotherhood's broader strategy for obtaining political dominance and popular support among Egyptians.

Chapter 3 delves into Hizb ut-Tahrir's political ideology and history, focusing on the party's environmental stance. Karagiannis contends that Hizb ut-Tahrir's views on the environment are inextricably linked to their understanding of Islamic teachings and their wider political purpose, which is centred on the establishment of an Islamic state (p. 74). The party emphasizes that humans have a divine mandate to protect the environment and that the current environmental catastrophe is a result of capitalists' profit-driven exploitation of natural resources (p. 78). Furthermore, Hizb ut-Tahrir's environmental approach is inextricably linked to its overall political aim of establishing an Islamic state founded on Islamic values and principles. Since Hizb ut-Tahrir prioritizes the formation of an Islamic state founded on Islamic principles and places a strong emphasis on the welfare of people and the environment over economic gains, their environmental outlook is consistent with their overall political agenda.

Chapter 4 discusses Hizbullah's place in Lebanese politics and its relation to Islamic theology. Hizbullah sees environmental conservation as a niche issue that is relevant only to its particular social and theological base. The organization actively participates in protective measures, such as rubbish collection, water distribution, forest cleanup, and tree planting, because

it views the environment as a contested territory (pp. 49-60). Hizbullah's environmentalism takes an anthropocentric stance, emphasizing marginalized communities (p. 79). Notably, the group has exhibited a dynamic shift between pan-Islamic extra-territoriality, Lebanese territoriality, and even hydro-territoriality in its approach to environmental issues. Hizbullah, motivated by its divine mission, sees environmental protection and preservation as religious duties. The group aims to intricately align its activities with Islamic environmental ethics, following not just the concepts of vicegerency (*khalīfa*) and balance (*mīzān*), but also outlining a vision for environmental sustainability (p. 117).

Chapter 5 delves into the origins and ideology of Hamas, examining its stance toward Israel and the environment. Written before the current conflict triggered by Hamas' 7 October 2023 attacks on Israel, Karagiannis argues Hamas had demonstrated a more pragmatic approach on the environment, recognizing the potential economic benefits of tourism in Gaza (p. 129). The group had increased its criticism of Israel, particularly concerning the blockade of Gaza, and accused Israeli authorities of obstructing the entry of medical supplies during the COVID-19 pandemic. Karagiannis emphasized that Hamas's broader environmental perspective is defined by its ongoing confrontation with Israel. The group's ideology, rooted in the belief that Palestine is a sacred land for Muslims destined for liberation, inevitably shapes its environmentalism. Unlike some Palestinians who advocate for a public role for Islam in addressing ecological problems, the author notes that Hamas has not actively promoted faith-based solutions within its environmental agenda (p. 142).

Chapter 6 explores the history and evolution of the Salafi-Jihadi movement and the emergence of Salafi-Jihadi environmentalism. Karagiannis argues Salafi-Jihadis have shown little sincere interest in alternative forms of energy and remain oil-and gas-centric due to their primary goal of defeating Arab regimes and attacking Western interests in the Middle East (p. 168). Still, the movement has developed an increasing focus on environmental issues. Al-Qaeda and ISIS' engagement with ecological matters can be partially explained by

religious commitment. This chapter delves into the polemical understanding of the environment within the Salafi-Jihadi movement. It covers the movement's overall environmental perspective, emphasizing both general and specific understandings of territoriality (p. 210). The politicization and weaponization of water in the Middle East by Salafi-Jihadis are examined, as are their views on animal issues, pollution, and energy.

Chapter 7 invites readers to take an in-depth views of Islamist environmentalism. According to Karagiannis, all the Islamist groups being studied have addressed the issue of water supply in one way or another, as desertification and a lack of clean water have impacted several Middle Eastern countries (p. 179). In response, they have developed sewage management and pollution control policy goals. Some organizations, such as Hizbullah and Hamas, have undertaken forestry programs, while others, such as the Muslim Brotherhood and Hizb ut-Tahrir, have tackled animal welfare issues. In their basic understanding, *Shari'a* provides a historical-legal framework for environmental protection, covering aspects like land management and water use.

The rise of Islamist environmentalism challenges the common conception of political Islam as an anti-modern and reactionary movement striving to restore "Islamic values," notwithstanding conceptual shortcomings (p. 212). Karagiannis' work helps us understand the evolution of political Islam as a social movement and challenges Western notions of Islamism by demonstrating that it is a socially complex and adaptive process involving many players and agendas. Much of Karagiannis' evidence is worth considering and expands our understanding of Islamist ideology and policies across the globalized Muslim world.