

BOOK REVIEW Explanatory Dictionary of Islamic Terms
by Davit Hovhannisyan, Yerevan, Eurasia Partnership Foundation, 2024,
120 pages

Review by Vahram Petrosyan, Sargis Grigoryan, Mushegh Ghahriyan

In 2024, *Explanatory Dictionary of Islamic Terms* by Davit Hovhannisyan, an orientalist, PhD in Philology, and professor, was published. This significant work reflects the author's profound knowledge of Islam, built upon decades of research, academic expertise, and diplomatic experience in Islamic countries. It is a highly relevant resource for understanding Islamic terminology, concepts, and the broader characteristics of the religion.

The dictionary is structured in two parts, enabling readers to first gain a general understanding of the origins and development of Islam and its main branches. The second section presents the core concepts and terms related to Islam, arranged alphabetically and explained in an accessible manner for a broader audience.

In the subsection titled "*Islam: A Brief Overview of the Religion's Development*," Hovhannisyan emphasizes that the terms included were selected based on their significance in Islam and their relevance to Armenian sociopolitical interests. This approach is particularly important given Islam's diversity and the complexity of summarizing its vast terminology. As the most recent of the world's major religions, Islam is both dynamic and evolving. This focus is also relevant given Armenia's geographic position, surrounded by Islamic countries, and the presence of Armenian communities in Muslim-majority regions. Thus, compiling an explanatory dictionary of its core terms is a timely and ambitious initiative, offering readers a deeper understanding of these essential concepts.

Additionally, the subchapter "*Main Branches of Islam*" enriches readers' knowledge about the religion's formation, history, characteristics, developmental stages, branches, and sects. By presenting key concepts and terms with concise interpretations, Dr. Hovhannisyan offers an impartial and insightful exploration of Islam's origins, development, and foundational ideas.

As noted, given that three of Armenia's four neighboring countries are Muslim-majority states. Despite this geographical reality, Armenian perceptions of neighboring societies are often shaped by superficial or distorted understandings and stereotypes. While the information age provides unprecedented access to resources, it has had a limited impact in helping to better understand the neighbors. Hovhannisyan's *Explanatory Dictionary* is poised to make a meaningful contribution to address this shortfall.

The book's target audience spans several groups. Its accessible structure, style, and language make it suitable for a wide range of readers. If translated, it could also serve non-Armenian-speaking audiences.

For university students studying Islam, the dictionary offers an excellent introduction to the subject. It is equally valuable for researchers and lecturers encountering materials related to Islam.

Another key audience includes diplomats and government officials who engage professionally with Muslim-majority countries. Journalists and analysts covering these regions will also find the dictionary helpful in familiarizing themselves with key terms, avoiding confusion, and ensuring accurate interpretation.

Finally, the author has included a list of literature on Islamic terms at the end of the dictionary, providing readers with additional resources to deepen their understanding of Islamic terminology.

In sum, this dictionary is a unique contribution to Islamic studies in Armenia and holds significant importance for multiple audiences.