



Afternoon Talks on Islamic Law

Thursday, 19 August 2021 – 4 pm (CET)

Virtual lecture via Zoom

**"Islamic Governance in Saudi Arabia:
Contemporary Perspectives on *siyāsa
shar‘iyya*"**

Dominik Krell

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Hamburg*

All employees and guests of the institute as well as
other interested parties are cordially invited to the lecture.

Nadjma Yassari



About the speaker

Dominik Krell is a research associate at the Max Planck Institute for Comparative and International Private Law in Hamburg. Previously, he was a visiting fellow at the King Faisal Center for Research and Islamic Studies in Riyadh. His research is informed by his academic background in Law, Middle Eastern Studies and Anthropology and focuses on how Islamic Law is understood and applied in the contemporary Middle East.

About the topic

Until today, the Saudi kingdom is built on an alliance between the Sa'ūd family and influential Islamic scholars ('ulamā'). The scope of the king's rule is defined by *siyāsa shar'īyya*, a state doctrine that originates in the works of the controversial medieval Ḥanbalī scholar Ibn Taymiyya (d. 1328). Broadly speaking, the doctrine obliges everyone in the state, the ruler and the ruled alike, to follow and apply Islamic law in all their actions.

In the talk, I explore how contemporary Saudi 'ulamā' understand *siyāsa shar'īyya* and how this understanding is reflected in the political and legal organisation of the Saudi state. I show how *siyāsa shar'īyya* defines the king's legislative powers and how it limits the possibilities for state-driven reform. Current developments in the kingdom, I argue, can only be fully grasped by considering the doctrine's complicated role in political and legal processes.