

Tradition, Modernity, and Democracy: The Many Promises of Islam

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Pragmatism, decentralization, and pluralism are typically associated with modern democracies. Yet these are also the attributes that make Islam a widely accessible political-cultural resource. Indeed, such attributes allow for multiple activisms while sparing activists the macro-coordination challenges that often hamper growing movements, and the inertia that can seize vertical organizations. But while Islamists across the spectrum have increasingly deployed this resource, secularists of various stripes have mostly eschewed it. The aggregate effect has been to amplify the voices and to raise the profiles of Islamist groups at the expense of self-described moderns and their secular ideologies. I call this Islamism's *reverberation effect*.

Deliberate integration of Islamic tradition with democratic thought and action holds substantial promise. Pro-democratic Muslims, backed by Islam's renovated classical principles and practices, can better counter supremacist claims as they arise in the plural contestations that Islam itself helps generate. They can also realistically seek a firm consensus on the inviolable status of Islamic tolerance, which in turn can serve as a functional equivalent to the central authority that Islam lacks. Most importantly, by reconsidering the modernist ideational boundary that separates religion and politics, pro-democratic Muslims can begin to reclaim the transformative power of tradition.

Introduction

Throughout most of the Muslim world, Islamist activists profess in word and deed what scholars now understand to be Islamism's core dictate: "Islam should guide social and political as well as personal life."¹ From a modernist perspective, this programmatic vision is both antiquated and antidemocratic. This assessment is hardly surprising. From the same modernist perspective, the hybrid or authoritarian democracies that have emerged from the democratization processes of the last thirty years in other regions of the globe are best explained with reference to the legacies of *ancien régimes*.² More to the point, from this perspective, the possibility that the modernizing worldviews and strategic decisions of liberals³ and pro-democratic actors may unwittingly contribute to the "authoritarianization" of new democracies remains largely unexplored.⁴

This is a serious oversight that impoverishes our understanding of potential and incipient democratization in

the Middle East and elsewhere. The Latin American experience, for example, has demonstrated that pro-democratic actors frequently make a strategic mistake: they underestimate and even forego the use of traditional political-cultural resources because they associate tradition with authoritarianism and democracy with modernity. These twin associations, in fact, are part and parcel of the democrat's ideational framework, in which centralized power is often understood as the despot's object of desire, homogeneity as the hallmark of parochialism, and righteousness as the province of the zealot. Pro-democratic modernizers thus tend to favor decentralization schemes, pluralization of the public sphere, and the pragmatic resolution of keen political differences.⁵

But decentralization, pluralism, and pragmatism are neither inherently modern nor democratic. On the contrary, depending on period and region, they have been constitutive of pre-modern politics. Moreover, this article argues that in the case of Islam, pragmatism and a highly decentralized structure make it a valuable resource for a multiplicity of groups, none of which can credibly claim a legitimate monopoly on the faith, but most of which manage to make inroads into civil society, often at the expense of self-described moderns and their secular ideologies. This skewed pluralism leads to what I call Islamism's *reverberation effect*. That is to say, the public voices of Islamist groups become disproportionately resonant. This is particularly applicable to puritanical and supremacist strains of Islamism, whose activists have shown an increasing willingness to radically

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simplify or even distort Islam's message in an effort to garner adherents. Non-Islamist groups, however, also have indirectly or directly contributed to the reverberation effect, as secularist political actors typically refrain from drawing on Islam's political-cultural trove, and authoritarian governments impose strict limits on secular associations that could have given voice to competing or complementary claims about the role of Islamic teachings in social and political life. The upshot of all this is that Islamism in general and its fundamentalist variants in particular appear more potent and widespread than they actually are.

This is not to say that Islamist groups are illusory, or that they are all the same. Rather, it is to say that appearances and perception matter, particularly in contentious politics. Think of apparent tipping points, leadership splits, and other seemingly momentous events which, real or not, competent political entrepreneurs can turn into political capital. Think, moreover, of the negative choices—from neglect to capitulation—that actors often make on the basis of perception. Both help explain why, at various critical junctures, non-Islamist groups have abdicated or retreated from political spaces that seemed lost to the religious “street.”

Stated more generally, and as Consuelo Cruz argues, political actors are “normative schemers”—rational beings who in making important choices seek to strike a more or less tenable balance between conviction and realism. To the extent that intersubjective perceptions influence actors' understanding of what is right and feasible in their given context, leaders' political effectiveness hinges critically on their ability to “realistically” describe opportunity structures. In the Muslim world, the crafting of political realism and—ultimately of reality itself—cannot be properly understood without reference to the characteristics and political use (and disuse) of Islam.⁶

In developing the arguments outlined above, the article begins by presenting in highly stylized form the dual modernizing-democratizing assumption that tends to permeate most contemporary understandings of pragmatism, decentralization, and pluralism. It then assesses extant explanations for the rise of Islamism, and places Islam's relation to politics in comparative and historical perspective. These analytical steps help us avoid the kind of reductionism that extrapolates Middle Eastern politics wholesale from Islam's early origins and texts,⁷ and to grapple with the counterintuitive claim that pragmatism, decentralization, and pluralism thus far have served better not the advocates of democratization but its opponents. The article's last two sections glean the logic of the reverberation effect from the historical-empirical literature, and examine the feasibility of the electoral solution to the problem of puritanical and supremacist intolerance. Finally, the conclusion lays out the article's scholarly and strategic implications.

Brief History of an Assumption

An English politician once said that a viable parliamentary system requires “constant dining with the opposition.”⁸ The statement harkens back to the practice of professional politics in an England that may now appear quaint if not lost. But it also captures much of the philosophical and theoretical thrust of Western democratic tradition, particularly its Anglo-American branch. This tradition has emphasized implicitly or explicitly democracy's reliance on two conditions: a delicate equilibrium among multiple power holders or centers, and a felicitous combination of principle and flexibility in the spirit of the fray.⁹ The very origins of modern political democracy, in this tradition, are seen as traceable to the subtle union of a democratic idea (rule by the people) and a non-democratic practice (representation)—an exigent but ultimately successful marriage that made democracy suitable for the large-scale politics of nation-states.¹⁰

The emblematic case of democratic balances and blends is, of course, England. There, full sovereignty came to reside in parliament, with the seated monarch, commons, and lords. Moreover, parliament came to be typically viewed as a kind of transformational container. That is, as an institutional structure into which both the controversies and the common thrust of public opinion—itsself a novelty in late seventeenth-century England—were poured, to be remolded by the procedural discipline and the vivacious play of interests that attend genuinely democratic representation.¹¹ Indeed, this view of democratic representation has proved so compelling that to this day, sophisticated social-scientific understandings of democratic politics may diverge on a range of definitional, historical, and normative axes, but they converge on the notion that modern democracies are ultimately anchored in some happy mixture of “arguing,” “bargaining,” and “voting.”¹²

Democracy's balances and blends, however, are quite difficult to achieve, and still more difficult to replicate,¹³ even where pragmatism, decentralization, or pluralism are spawned by local practices. Consider first the case of Latin America. For almost two hundred years, and throughout most of the region, rival elites have relied on pact-making to settle self-destructive conflicts. Such pacts enable rivals to shift the pursuit of ambition and principle from the realm of free-ranging antagonisms to that of mutually-assured containment. But pacts are also quintessentially pragmatic arrangements, and thus can allow elites from across the ideological spectrum to block, or at least restrict democratization (sometimes during democratic foundational moments, as in Colombia and Venezuela; sometimes during democratic transitions, as in Uruguay and Chile). The periodic eruption of conflict and the similarly periodic occurrence of pacted settlements, in fact, have generated a historical pattern in the region which can best be described as “punctuated pragmatism.”¹⁴

Consider next decentralization. An aura of democratic modernity has come to envelop the idea of decentralized power, particularly as it pertains to the nation state. Decentralization, however, is at base an old fact of political life, if only because centralization is not easily attained to begin with, much less sustained.¹⁵ Moreover, political strategists and institutional designers who seek decentralization do not always intend it as a genuinely devolutionary arrangement whereby a despotic center yields to peripheral proto-democrats. And even where formal decentralization is envisioned as an exercise in democratic deepening, it may not have its intended effect.¹⁶ Indeed, planned decentralization has been known to yield divergent outcomes within the same country. The case of Italy nicely illustrates the latter point;¹⁷ the experience of the Russian Federation illustrates the former. Post-Soviet Russia underwent a *de facto* decentralization process whereby the regions seized autonomy for themselves. From a pro-democratic stance, there was nothing inherently objectionable in that, to be sure, except that the regions proceeded to absorb resources from the center while shirking their fair share of the fiscal burden; and more than one governor turned into a petty authoritarian. Add to this Moscow's subsequent heavy-handed attempts at recentralization, and the counter-democratic potential of decentralization becomes evident.¹⁸

Finally, what of pluralism? In the private and economic spheres, the multiple pressures of pluralism can be controlled, coordinated, or reconciled in a variety of ways. Clans and markets come to mind. But in a democratic public/political sphere, pluralism calls for a perennial balancing act that entails vast institutional capabilities. Few systems possess such capabilities.¹⁹ In fact, because pluralism can become its own multiplier, it sporadically tries the institutional adaptability of some of the most advanced and wealthiest democracies in the world.²⁰ To point this out is not to say that liberal (post)industrial democracies require a homogenous "cultural nation."²¹ Rather, it is merely to underscore the importance of supple institutional frameworks.²² (Western Europe's democratic breakdowns during the inter-war period serve as reminders, and less dramatically, so do the contemporary challenges of European and North American multiculturalism.)

The Rise of Islamism

For decades now the Middle East has simmered with socio-political discontent, but it is Islamist groups that for almost as long have shown growing effectiveness in capturing the imagination and allegiance of the disgruntled. Islamism also crosses the regional boundaries of the Muslim world. Not surprisingly, Islamism has attracted substantial scholarly attention in recent years; yet explanatory results are not wholly satisfactory.

Accounts that attribute Islamism's momentum to the legacy of colonialism give pride of place to structural and

political factors. But these factors, while crucial, cannot by themselves explain why Islamism—as opposed to some other form of protest or concentrated attempt at political change—seems to have gathered force. After all, thwarted nationalist aspirations, fragile or illegitimate state institutions, endemic corruption, and severe economic dislocation have been implicated in a variety of revolutionary upheavals and diverse instances of ideological radicalization. The origins of Russian and Chinese communism come most readily to mind.

The argument that Islam itself inexorably leads to totalizing marriages of religion and politics is also flawed. Islamic law, to be sure, relies on a thoroughly theistic understanding of sovereignty; and in this sense, Islam does join politics and religion.²³ But here it must be recalled that the classical lineage of Islamic juridical tradition was highly pluralistic, and thus not particularly conducive to monolithic constructs. Moreover, as the historical record makes plain, Muslim political actors have successfully opened up *non*-Islamist avenues to politics, so much so that the notable state-builders of the past century were, in the main, secular modernizers who collided rather than colluded with religious leaders.²⁴ Finally, it is important to underscore here that the list of countries with Muslim majorities or substantial Muslim populations that have exhibited a tendency to become more cosmopolitan and less prone to Islamism is neither insignificant nor uniform. Think, for example, of Dubai, India, Indonesia, Kuwait, Qatar and to a degree, Bahrain.²⁵ These countries demonstrate empirically what the most learned Islamic scholars assert in theoretical arguments: Islam is a religion; Islamism is not.

Even the Taliban's ascent, easily depicted either as a case of culture run amok or as a mere extension of geopolitical disruptions, suggests a far more complex dynamic. Afghanistan was an increasingly pluralistic and relatively stable country prior to the murder of modernizer President Mohammed Daoud Khan in 1978 and the Soviet invasion of 1979.²⁶ But even then, the central government never exerted full control over the provinces, and the post-invasion governments, corrupt as they were repressive, built a political center so feeble that it had virtually collapsed well before the Soviet retreat.²⁷ The resultant power vacuum simultaneously tempted the ambitions of domestic political entrepreneurs and intensified Saudi Arabia's determination to encircle Iran, where Ayatollah Khomeini soon would lead the only fully Shi'a state on the Muslim map. The Saudi strategy—based on the export of Wahhabism to Pakistan and Afghanistan—undoubtedly worked to the Taliban's advantage. At the same time, however, the Taliban's identity, coherence, and agenda—essential to the movement's rise and dominance—all hinged on the political strength of their brand of Islamism.

For some scholars, this strength has been historically associated with the ruptures of modernization. Like a sword, modernization is said to have severed the shared

worldview that once tied Muslim rulers and subjects. Specifically, on this view, as official power-holders and subaltern groups increasingly diverged in their understandings of their respective duties and prerogatives, extreme variants of Islam seized the hearts and minds of the masses, particularly the uneducated and the poor.²⁸ But although modernization has wrought havoc on traditional state-society relations everywhere it has spread, including the European world from whence it came, no predetermined or mechanical correspondence obtained between modernization's ruptures and the emergent predominance of a particular ideological or political force in the West. Similarly, modernization attempts in the Arab world—from the 1950s through the 1970s—stimulated the growth of organized leftist movements, for example, that were deeply secular.²⁹

This last objection applies by extension to the claim that the growing strength of Islamism is best understood as a potent reaction to the loss of community and the spread of western individualism. Such reactionary sentiments, it is worth stressing, are not peculiar to the Muslim experience. Instructive yet again is the case of Russia, where xenophobia and nostalgia remained pervasive on the eve of a revolution that ushered in modernity's first communist regime—a regime that sought to obliterate national, tribal and even familial ties, just as Islamic supremacists deny the validity of variants of Islamic belief and practice, and demand the subordination of local cultures and national traditions to their unbending norms.

Alternatively, the strength of Islamism may be viewed as stemming from its understanding and uses of historical time. Briefly put, Islamist activists are said to be especially persuasive because they are willing and able, in Eric Hoffer's words, to render the present as merely "an interlude between past and future." The recasting of historical time, however, is essential to almost any sweeping vision of a reconfigured world. On this point, a final parallel with Communism may be useful, since like Islamism, it treated the present as an "aberration and a deformity." And Islamist extremists are indeed ready to proceed recklessly with the present, partly by relying on an absolute glorification of "self-sacrifice." But this was equally true of Communism. The key distinction between the two lies in their orientations. Communism, in principle at least, was idealistic and progressive, while in the Islamist worldview, human beings are not assumed to possess "unfathomed potentialities for good," and the future is envisioned as a "glorious restoration rather than an unprecedented innovation."³⁰

So why has Islamism risen, often at the expense of "modern" ideologies? Shifts in state-society relations, as previously mentioned, do provide a key part of the answer. Take, for example, the state's increasingly apparent impotence as leading agent of socioeconomic development, and the attendant erosion of its political prestige. Sheri Ber-

man has argued convincingly that in Egypt nearly every vacuum that an exhausted developmental state has left behind in civil society soon becomes an opportunity target for Islamist activists.³¹ Or consider state actors' divide-and-rule strategies, and their deleterious effects on political society. Here, one need only glance at Pakistan. That country's Islamist parties, as Aqil Shah argues, have managed to regain electoral ground in recent years in good measure because the military has sought to consolidate its hold on state power by splintering the opposition and sponsoring religious allies.³²

If the plain failures of the developmental state as well as the perverse political successes of undemocratic state actors make civil and political societies vulnerable to Islamism, the carriers or agents of Islamism recognize and exploit in synergetic fashion favorable conditions as they arise. In civil society, as both Berman and Shah note, Islamist groups continue to use mosques and *madrasas* as vehicles of ideological inculcation and political mobilization; in political society, they deploy their enhanced organizational, institutional, and electoral capabilities to press for the "Islamization" of public life.³³ This interplay among Islam, the state, and civil society, however, is not entirely new. At critical points in history, Arabs, Persians, and Turks have all struggled, competed, compromised, and cooperated with reference to Islam. Indeed, Islam has proved to be subtly pragmatic—suitable for grafting—and strikingly decentralized.

Pragmatism

Major shifts at the center of political power tend to reconfigure social and cultural fields. In this sense, the recent role of the state in the rise of Islamism is a modified replay of previous instances in which politics directly affected religion's sway. In fact, it resembles the state's role in the early emergence of Islam in the public sphere. In eastern Iran between the ninth and eleventh centuries, for example, the changing strategies and preferences of ruling dynasties, as well as their rise and fall, played out in ways that enhanced the influence and raised the profile of the *ulama*, first among the Iranian peoples, then across the Asiatic lands that came under the domination of Turko-Persian empires.³⁴

The importance of Islamic institutions in shaping state-society relations over time is not new, either. Consider the *madrasas*. Between the eleventh and thirteenth centuries, Sunni scholars used these centers of higher instruction and research to shape and consolidate internal consensus on matters of dogma. Indeed, the *madrasas* became the frame that united the Sunni *ulama*. And to the extent that the *ulama* developed some degree of unity, they were better positioned to endure the indifference and even the hostility of state actors. This was the case from the seventeenth to nineteenth centuries, when the Turko-Persian

empires suffered debilitation, first by tribal wars and later by European encroachment. Foreign ideologies and institutional models gained currency among the ruling class. Emulation, in fact, came to typify elite attitude, to the point that secularism dislodged Islamic “perspectives and ideals” from the public sphere. But the Islamic perspectives and ideals that were shunted aside by secularism in the nineteenth century did not perish. Rather, they permeated and governed a less visible complex of “informal” relations.³⁵

Unpredictable outcomes of this sort can be traced to other key points in the history of Islam. One such point came early on with the attempt by four successive caliphs to dispel the traditionalist claim that the Koran always existed, and to impose by decree the alternative belief that the Koran was “created.” Perceived as doctrinal imposition, the caliphs’ move provoked intense resistance, and its failure helped reassert the autonomy of the “religious public sphere” from the “official sphere of rulers.”³⁶

This dual-sphere construct, in turn, proved ambiguous enough to accommodate contestation, as well as settlements subject to reversal, renegotiation, and displacement by hybrid alternatives. The case of the Ottoman Empire is especially illuminating on this count. Sultans claimed “perfect wisdom and knowledge,” seized the mantle of religious leadership, and ultimately even reached for the title of Caliph. And yet, by the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, these sultan-caliphs had to contend with “the *ulama* and janissaries of Istanbul, who frequently challenged the Sultan’s authority and severely restricted his room for maneuver, especially if he wanted to implement changes.” Indeed, “central-despotism” became entwined in a symbiotic relationship with both “secular and religious notables” and a “patchwork of local autonomies,” so much so that the Ottomans eventually relied on *de facto* power sharing.³⁷

Islam’s relation to the state was always a contested issue whose resolution varied. Ottoman statecraft produced a hybrid that upheld the primacy of *Shari’a* but combined it with the innovation of *kanun*, or non-religious law (alternatively known as customary law and sultanistic law). That *kanun* was possible in the first place is intriguing, since it implied the possibility of the *Shari’a*’s insufficiency. That the sultanate managed to integrate *kanun* and *Shari’a* so effectively is just as important. To begin with, *kanun* was intended to supplement the *Shari’a* in matters pertaining to criminal offense, land-tenure, inheritance, taxes, and the like. This allowed for a degree of legalistic differentiation. Yet the same courts administered both laws. The Sultan’s jurists, the *kadis*, often decided on *Shari’a* cases, while the *ulama* could adjudicate *kanun* cases.³⁸ Most remarkably, this hybrid was embedded in a consensus of pragmatic opinion which said that “the Holy Law did not cover everything necessary for social order, the preservation of which was after all a basic postulate of Islam.”³⁹

Well-tolerated during the Ottomans’ high noon, *kanun* proved keenly vulnerable to criticism at the dusk of empire. Nothing defends pragmatic arrangements from attack better than success; nothing exposes them more than failure. The *ulama* had been key participants in the Ottomans’ hybrid legal system. But with the onset of imperial decline, it was the universities and academies controlled by the *ulama* that clamored for a return to a purer Islamic tradition. Changing conditions once again shaped Islam’s relation to the state specifically and to politics more broadly. This was also the case, for example, with the formative alliances between Saudi rulers and Wahhabism. From the start, these alliances responded to fears and opportunities as they presented themselves in the Arabian Peninsula and beyond. The enticing vision of a Saudi kingdom, the Ottomans’ reversals, the advances of the British, and the potential threat that the Saudis perceived in the Hashemite monarchies, all helped set the alliances’ terms and strength.⁴⁰

Modern Turkey further illustrates the high potential for adaptive reconfigurations in the relationship between the official and the religious-public spheres. In the 1920s, Republican leaders embarked on an unrelenting campaign to centralize state power and to secularize society—by reform if possible, by coercion if necessary. The decades that followed brought religious reaction, provincial alienation, and ultimately, a bifurcation whereby Kemalist doctrine guided official elites, while Islam showed the way for the people. The process of democratization in the 1980s closed this bifurcation, but only in the sense that civil society now brimmed with a plethora of causes and their champions. These ranged from religious fundamentalism to post-modern causes like environmentalism and the vindication of homosexual rights.⁴¹ By the 1990s, the context for the emblematic expression of pragmatism—unlikely political alliances—was provided partly by the formal rules of the political game, partly by the character of the groups in the game. The Islamist Welfare Party was one such group; and its electoral success in 1995 was due in good measure to its willingness to pool votes with left-leaning Kurdish groups.⁴²

Islam’s affinity with pragmatism also underlies political-religious debates, which in the 1990s revealed a basic consensus even among conservative elements of the Sunni Arab mainstream. Gudrun Kramer summarizes this consensus as follows: “The state is considered to be central to having Islamic law enforced, its form and organization are declared to be secondary, a matter not of substance but of technique.” From this assertion, which reduces political form and organization to a technical question, the theoretical possibility of virtually any sort of government follows logically.⁴³ In this sense, Islamic political thought allows for significant political contestation. Indeed, it is arguable that Islam more than *allows* contestation; it *invites* it. Islamic law, for example, is divinely inspired

and authorized. This means that, in theory, it is more important to determine accurately “what constitutes law” than it is to possess the means and capacity to impose it. This constitutes a “gap between law and enforcement”—a gap that pulls in contenders “who claim to understand the true meaning of the law over those who have the temporal power to enforce it.” Further, the divine nature of the law compels society to intervene when voluntary compliance fails: “by enforcing the law, society reinforces the law’s authority.”⁴⁴ Perhaps this is partly why Ayatollah Khomeini was once moved to remark that “Islam is politics or it is nothing.”⁴⁵

Among contenders, the hallmark of fundamentalists is their insistence on a dual return—to the essentials of Islam and “to a fixed historic framework.” The critical pieces of their argument are fairly obvious. First, because the Koran is immutable, and the *Sunna*⁴⁶ is the last word on the Koran, God and His Prophet have said everything that had to be said. Second, given that nothing remains to be said, all that matters henceforth is the rigorous execution of the divine will. With this argument in place, fundamentalist leaders move to claim the role of arbiters, and arrogate unto themselves the authority to render decisive judgment on the validity of positions. From this arrogation, in turn, flow momentous political consequences, such as the prerogative to establish and apply the distinction between true believer and heretic.⁴⁷

The exercise of this prerogative is most commonly associated with Saudi Arabian Wahhabism, which since its eighteenth-century inception has vilified alternative schools of Islamic doctrine, whether Sunni or Shi’ite. Fundamentalists in various parts of the Muslim world, however, have availed themselves of this political weapon. Their condemnations of corrupting deviations from the text and their fulminations against heretics obviously contribute to the amplification of Islamism as a whole. But the voices of these puritanical arbiters are not without competition. The same pragmatism and decentralized structure that help account for their visibility and influence also enable a variety of new Islamists simultaneously to update traditional political discourse and selectively to adopt modern political practices. This discourse is traditional in the sense that it remains pledged to the delivery of Islamic justice and to the unimpeachable nature of Islamic law. The prerogative of interpretation, however, is less strictly defined. Mass higher education—a legacy of previous rounds of state-led modernization—allows emerging Islamist leaders and intellectuals to develop their interpretative competencies independently of traditional sources of knowledge and truth. Mass higher education, moreover, provides these leaders and intellectuals with audiences that are more open and responsive to novel forms of religious discourse.⁴⁸

In this renovated tradition, Islamic justice and law remain the central referents, but the sacred texts are no longer the sole means of access to their wisdom. Instead, as Dale

Eickelman has shown, publics are more likely to rely on Islamic practical manuals, audiocassettes, and even martial chants, all of which marginalize the sacred texts and diminish the role of religious scholars. “Chemists, medical doctors, journalists, even garage mechanics,” Eickelman reminds us, “can interpret ‘Islamic’ principles as equals with scholars who have graduated from the schools of the *ulama*. This multiplication of voices in public discussion of religious and political belief further erodes the boundaries between kinds or sources of authoritative speech.”⁴⁹

Decentralization and Pluralism

Over two decades ago, Reinhard Bendix’ *Kings or People* highlighted Islam’s decentralized character. All members of the *umma*, or community of Muslims, stand in equal relation to God, or *Allah*, who is the only law-maker and whose divine law is embodied in *shari’a*.⁵⁰ The state is mandated to preserve this law, but no explicit directions are given on how to organize the *umma* politically. Moreover, while the Koran and the *Sunna*, the primary sources of law, do have their learned scholars, the texts lend themselves to interpretation by virtually anyone who sets himself up as an expert. To further complicate matters, Islam has no final arbiter. The result is that disagreements among the *ulama* are commonplace, yet there is no central authority to which one can appeal for clear answers.

Even in the glory days of Islamic civilization, the juristic class did not opt for assembly within an encompassing institution. Classical jurists, to echo Khaled Abou El Fadl, did possess the distinctive “insignia of investiture.” But theirs was a pluralist tradition, at once a fountain of competing learned opinions and an anchor for tolerant conduct. As El Fadl puts it, this tradition “reveled in indeterminacy.”⁵¹ (The Islamic hierarchies that later appeared in Turkey and Iran had no roots in this classical tradition, nor did its members assert powers comparable to those of Christian hierarchs.)

Remarkably, classical jurisprudence insisted on the multivalence of orthodoxies, even though it was partly for this reason that puritanical movements emerged from the start to contest the legitimacy of the juristic class. But tolerance had its limits: it stopped at the point where puritans began their violent attempts at imposing a single legitimate orthodoxy. Jurists viewed such extremists as enemies of society, roundly condemned their terrorist tactics, and infused their condemnation of “crimes of terror” with the force of “religious imperative.”⁵² In this there was no indeterminacy, only a delicate balance between the exercise of tolerant pluralism and its vigorous defense.

That this balance was lost is a matter of significant consensus.⁵³ Agreement on the causes of imbalance and the relevant critical junctures is less substantial. For Bashir Ahmad Ansari, the lineage of Islamism can be traced back to the absolutist caliphs, from the Umayyads to the

Ottomans, who weakened and distorted Islam's system of consultative government. On this account, the golden centuries were the crucial period, and voracious state actors were the unwitting originators of Islamism. The clergy were merely the enablers, who permitted the corruption of Islam.

For El Fadl, in contrast, the scales began visibly to tip in the mid-1970s under the newly combined pressure of Wahhabism and Salafism. Interestingly enough, however, El Fadl also suggests that more subtle shifts had been set in motion in the nineteenth century, when in an effort to produce Koranic interpretations compatible with the political ideals and institutions of Western modernism, Salafism disregarded jurisprudential precedent and championed interpretative egalitarianism. Individuals were now equally suited to glean authoritative insights from the sacred texts. From this followed a further erosion of authority within Islam. Worse yet, for El Fadl, it was all for naught. The modernization project was truncated, and Salafism became enmeshed with Wahhabism in a web of puritan theology, ahistorical idealization of the Prophet's time, and the supremacist repudiation of plural interpretations.

Both of these accounts—one pointing to egalitarianism, the other to absolutism—are partially accurate because each points, from a different angle, to the fluctuations that stem from Islam's decentralization and pragmatism. In the practice of Islamic law, these fluctuations occur in good part because the legal structure provides a fixed, uncontested premise for interpreters and upholders while simultaneously engendering highly complex divergences among their schools. To restate the claim in historical terms: although the Koran and *Sunna* were universally recognized early on as the primary sources of Islamic law, their ambiguities and silences also led to the accretion of supplemental legal sources.

These supplemental sources were perhaps the only practical way to cope with new questions and changing conditions after the Prophet's death. But they also stimulated disagreement. The four Sunni schools of jurisprudence have differed in their ranking, understanding, and *ad hoc* application of such sources; each school followed its own legal method, and each, as a result, reached its own conclusions. Furthermore, all schools of jurisprudence, particularly across the Sunni and Shiite divide, have varied in the degree of flexibility they deem appropriate in reading the Koran and the *Sunna*. The upshot of all this was that the complexities of the schools' methodologies, as well as their intricate debates and divisions, created a demand for "streamlined simplicity." As fundamentalist movements meet this demand, they grow increasingly popular.⁵⁴ In other words, neither despotism nor egalitarianism can wholly account for fundamentalism. Rather, the development of Islam has ushered in *de facto* pluralism, from which decentralization continues to flow and fundamentalism emerges endogenously.

Like the practice of the law, the practice of the faith has shown a tendency to generate difference and diffusion. Islam is practiced on two levels. One is formal, legal, and scholarly; the other is more intuitive and mystical. Formal Islam is austere—devoid of sacraments, ordained priests, and saints. The mosque is sparse, the *imam* is only a prayer leader, and public prayer is a disciplined act of submission to a remote God. These characteristics often have led the faithful to seek a more personal religious experience. In medieval Turkey, the faithful sought out Shiite sects, which many Sunni leaders deemed heretical. After the Mongol invasions, they turned to the dervish brotherhoods, which remained within the sphere of Sunni dogma and were thus tolerated better.⁵⁵

The faithful found in the brotherhoods what they could not find in the mosque and the *imams*. The leaders of the brotherhoods played the role of pastors, saints played the role of intercessors, and mysticism offered the hope of a "union with the Godhead." Despite their rivalries, the brotherhoods provided community services, gained control of guilds and professional associations in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, and in the nineteenth, they even managed to penetrate the formal, orthodox institutions. By the early twentieth century, the brotherhoods were vibrant enough to be noticed by political parties and movements, which often instrumentalized them. But with the secular reforms of the 1920s, the dervishes demonstrated their capacity for independent opposition, even though the reforms were initially aimed not at them but at the *ulama*. Soon thereafter, the reformist state dealt severe blows to the brotherhoods. Moreover, when the state eventually turned to a more conciliatory religious policy, it reserved its benefits for the *ulama*. But by the 1950s, a religious revival was flowering in Turkey, and once again a wide range of voices emerged. The revitalization of the brotherhoods was only a matter of time.⁵⁶ In fact, they became increasingly important in key parts of the Muslim Middle East. Their renaissance generally conformed to the Turkish pattern. In Egypt, the Muslim Brotherhood seized the initiative in a wide range of civil-society activities such as charitable works and university students' organization; by the 1990s, the Brotherhood had even gained electoral control of professional associations and syndicates.⁵⁷

The Reverberation Effect

Islam's pragmatism and decentralization allow for a multiplicity of activisms without creating macro-coordination challenges. Moreover, activist groups evade the inertia that often seizes large, vertically-organized movements, whose rank-and-file can march full force only after higher-ups debate, resolve, and issue directives.⁵⁸ This is not to say that pragmatism and decentralization necessarily entail the absence of discipline. Loosely-connected organizations,

associations, and movements, in fact, sometimes can better establish and enforce clear lines of authority because leadership and monitoring are both closer to the ground. Karmer observes that “forceful leadership, unity, strict loyalty and obedience is mirrored in the organizational structure of virtually all Islamist movements, from the relatively moderate Muslim Brotherhood to the militant underground, which in their internal affairs do not adhere to democratic principles.”⁵⁹ At the same time, pragmatism and decentralization enable militant groups without any serious commitment to “doctrinal purity” to draw on Islam for symbolic power and for the necessary elements to craft an identity style.⁶⁰

The aggregate effect of all this, again, is to amplify the sound and to raise the profile of Islamist groups while blurring important distinctions *among* the groups themselves. In this way, an undifferentiated Islamism looms disproportionately large. Looming Islamism, in turn, tests the mettle and strategies of secular political actors. The reformed Palestinian left of the 1990s, for example, competed ineffectually with puritanical religious forces for power in political society and for influence in civil society. Most crucially, on matters of social freedoms, both the Palestinian and the broader Arab Left were loath to “alienate the religious street,” and retreated.⁶¹ Meanwhile, the Egyptian state responded to Islamists through a strategic blend of coercion and contestation. On the one hand, in the same way that the Left abandoned the cause of social freedoms, the Egyptian state abandoned the cause of secularism while simultaneously repressing violent and militant Islamists. On the other hand, as one writer points out, “a group of highly conservative Islamic scholars with close ties to Hosni Mubarak’s regime” became key players “in the struggle over what practices are deemed justifiable in Islamic terms.”⁶²

That a group of conservative Islamic scholars would enter this fray is neither strange nor wholly explained by state cooptation. For if the terms of Islamism are left wholly uncontested, there could be especially deleterious consequences for those who identify themselves as learned interpreters and upholders of Islam but are not, or cannot be, doctrinal supremacists. Here they need only recall that the champions of Wahhabism—self-described *Salafis*—consider their dogmatic and methodological orientations not merely a school of Islam but Islam itself.⁶³ In this sense, conservatives have a specific incentive to protect their long-term prospects.⁶⁴ And yet, fearful of innovation and its attendant disruptions to the *status quo*, religious scholars (and authoritarian governments) have for decades restricted the contemporary practice of *ijtihad*—interpretation of and reasoning about the Koran and the *Sunna*—a practice which in its traditional incarnation was effectively “terminated” five centuries ago.⁶⁵

Moderate and liberal Muslims in search of innovative flexibility now advocate *ijtihad*’s revival, an idea that raises

delicate issues, such as: what is the nature of *ijtihad*, who is qualified to practice it, and how should this be done? Moreover, *ijtihad*’s revival must entail, among other things, a liberalized scholarly environment and a reformed educational system.⁶⁶ If these are exacting challenges, then the attainment of two related broader goals is bound to prove even more difficult. One is the restoration of Islam’s ethical discourse to the public sphere. This strategic call, eloquently made by El Fadl, emphasizes the tradition at the core of Islam that is “tolerant toward the other and mindful of the dignity and worth of all human beings.”⁶⁷ The other strategic call, made with equal eloquence by Radwan Masmoudi, emphasizes the resolution of the grave dilemma facing liberal and moderate Muslims: while they cherish liberty, justice, consultation, and rational interpretation, they find themselves wedged between a repressive state and religious extremists, and are thus unable to express these Islamic values freely. These liberal and moderate Muslims, Masmoudi laments, are “the silenced majority.”⁶⁸

The Electoral Solution

Competitive democracy is often seen as the encompassing solution to the interlinked obstacles standing in the way of Middle Eastern modernization and moderation. This is not surprising. The politics and power of the ballot presumably can accommodate and reconcile all sorts of groups, interests, and views. Muslim politicians, for example, already have shown that they can draw effectively on religious values in order to win electoral contests. As Vali Nasr points out, parliamentary seats have been conquered in precisely this way in Pakistan and Turkey (as well as Indonesia and Malaysia).⁶⁹

But this still leaves a prior question unanswered: how is democracy to be established and sustained? Nasr argues that a series of factors—military involvement in politics, an entrepreneurial private sector, and keen competition over votes—combine to create a structure of incentives and opportunities that favors pragmatic change. Such pragmatic change, in fact, accounts for the pattern of electoral outcomes that has emerged as dominant thus far. Specifically, the big electoral winners have been neither secularists nor Islamists; instead, those Right-of-Center forces that successfully integrate Muslim values, moderate Islamic politics, and non-religious concerns have been the ones to capture “the strategic middle.”⁷⁰ On this view, the logic of political change begins with the application of power and the restructuring of institutional arrangements in the economy and polity. Similarly, the course of political development runs from the structural to the ideational, such that the path of democratization ushers in the transformation of Islamic thought.

Though compelling, this argument is ultimately problematic on several counts. First, the master triad—military involvement in politics, an entrepreneurial private sector,

and keen competition over votes—has come about in very specific cases as a product of complex historical struggles and political choices that cannot be replicated elsewhere as a matter of strategy or sheer political will. Second, the triad's posited outcome (an incentive structure that favors *pragmatic* politics), represents in itself neither a modernist breakthrough nor necessarily a pro-democratic condition. Pragmatism, we have seen, can also be viewed as a traditional attribute that may or may not contribute to the pacification and democratization of nations. Third, the electoral allegiance of “the strategic middle”—the political prize sought by pragmatic Muslim politicians—may not be forthcoming because “the middle” cannot even begin to emerge when caught in a religious rift that dominates the political field. The antagonism between Sunni and Shiite political entrepreneurs in Iraq serves as a reminder that the central problem is not so much the rift itself, deep though it may be, but the resurgent belief that political violence is an acceptable, even unavoidable means to break a religiously-based impasse. Fourth, and perhaps most importantly, electoral processes are neither isolated nor crowning events.

On this last count, current trends in Pakistan offer a warning. Not only has General Pervez Musharraf marginalized liberals and moderate political parties, but after a half-hearted post-2001 attempt, the military as institution has proved reluctant to confront *jihadis*. Military leaders suspect no doubt correctly, that their own ranks harbor sympathizers of *jihadi* groups and extremist clerics.⁷¹ The actual numbers and influence of those sympathizers, however, are not really known. More significantly still, military leaders have made no serious effort to ascertain with any degree of accuracy the size and strength of *jihadi* organizations.⁷²

In this nebulous atmosphere, the sway and numbers of *jihadis*, extremist clerics and intolerant groups in civil and political society may be easily exaggerated. But at the same time, their real importance can grow to match their exaggerated appearance, something that could occur with the witting and unwitting assistance of actors whose fears, lack of information, or short-term opportunism might undermine their own long-term prospects. This applies to the military in particular. Recall Shah's argument: as the Pakistani military seeks to consolidate its hold on state power by splintering the opposition *and* sponsoring religious allies, Islamist parties benefit most. Meanwhile, Musharraf and the military continue to fall in the public's esteem.

Conclusion: What Is to Be Thought, What Is to Be Said, What Is to Be Done?

This article's normative desideratum is unreservedly pro-moderation and pro-democratic. Its recommendations,

however, flow directly from a historically and culturally derived vision of political change and development in which causality traffics back and forth between agency and structure. A partial sketch may be in order. Political agendas range from the reactionary to the revolutionary, and typically unleash intense struggles. In these struggles, one key factor is the contenders' interpretations of what is “thinkable” and “doable.” In the Middle East, as in Europe prior to the peace of Westphalia, these interpretations have been forged and reshaped at the nexus of religion and politics.⁷³ But past accomplishments—either mythological or factual—also shape the thinkable and the doable. The first factor is mostly ideational and normative, the second is mostly practical.

Political actors who draw “authoritatively” on Islam stand a better chance of reconciling the ideational/normative with the practical, and partly for this reason, claimants to Islamic “authority” continue to multiply. In this, there is as much continuity with the past as there is novelty. Indeed, this article argued that three attributes often associated with modern democracies—pragmatism, decentralization, and pluralism—have long made Islam both a powerful and widely available political-cultural resource. The difference is that now, due to the spread of *madrasas* and the dispersion of communication technologies (audio and video), this resource is accessible in new forms to an increasingly complex pool of activists and aspirants to leadership and power. This last point partly explains the rise of Islamism. But the rise of Islamism is also due to developments extrinsic to Islam proper. Here, strategic choice-making stands out. Anti-modernists have embraced Islam politically, while modernists—and by extension the majority of democracy's advocates—have been reluctant to do so, thus limiting their ability to engage effectively in political debate and competition.

The article's primary argument, then, is that Islam's three hallmark attributes and the choices that actors make about Islam's political uses jointly account for Islamism, whose extensiveness, at any rate, is—for the moment at least—best understood as a reverberation effect. A secondary argument is that while the modernists' abstention turned out to be a strategic mistake, it is far from irreversible. In the Islamic world as well as in Europe and the United States, pro-democratic Muslims have begun to appreciate the need to establish through reason, interpretation, *and* practice a legitimate link between political agency and Islamic tradition. This is all to the good. Political culture is generally viewed by political scientists and political actors as vague, unwieldy, slow to change, and long-term in its effects. Yet the evidence examined here strongly suggests that the strategic use of political-cultural resources by pro-democratic actors actually represents the most realistic and efficacious way to dampen Islamist reverberations and to improve the chances of democratization.

At a more practical level, the political and religious history examined in this article also indicates that liberal and moderate Muslims correctly emphasize Islam's classical precedents—the period's more flexible practices, juridical sophistication, and ethical limits. Also crucially important, however, is the broad diffusion of a clearly-articulated, easily graspable message whose strategic aim is to strip political and religious entrepreneurs of false claims to privileged knowledge. This message, firmly grounded in Islamic principles, should seek simultaneously to expose the illegitimacy of self-appointed religious arbiters and to form a consensus on the inviolable status of Islamic tolerance. Significant progress in these areas would help provide a functional equivalent to the central authority Islam lacks while demonstrating the transformative power of tradition. Muslim liberals and democratizers have already taken the first step by proclaiming their right and the will to deploy this power. This is no small matter. For as in all momentous politics, what is to be thought and said will help shape what is to be done.

Notes

- 1 Berman 2003, 257. Islamism is, of course, a contested concept, and is claimed by a variety of groups that are not necessarily in agreement on appropriate tactics for its achievement, on specific policies (e.g. economic organization, the role of women), or even on the degree to which Islamic teachings should dominate civil and political life. However, many Islamists share the general assumptions and goals mentioned here, and consider secular governments foreign to Muslim society. Some, but not all, Islamist groups also claim to be the true representatives of an idealized Islam and/or of ethnically pure communities from the seventh century. For a helpful, brief analysis of the rise of the "Islamist challenge" in the twentieth century see El-Affendi 2003, 37–38.
- 2 For an excellent discussion of hybrids, see Levitsky and Way 2002. For illuminating multi-regional perspectives, see Handelman and Tessler 1999. For a collection of in-depth analyses of authoritarian legacies in Latin America and Southern Europe, see Hite and Cesarini 2004. For a cogent interpretation of the Russian hybrid and the role of legacies (as endurance of an "old paradigm"), see Shevtsova, 2001.
- 3 The term "liberal" is used here solely in its political sense. Under conditions of dual transition, economic liberals may well sacrifice democratic principle for the sake of market reforms.
- 4 The failure of liberal and pro-democratic actors is typically interpreted as failure to fulfill a moderating systemic function, rather than as failure to uphold the principle of tolerance as the polar alternative to the forces of intolerance. Nearly three decades ago, for example, Juan Linz wrote of the failure of democratic leaders to preempt or solve structural contradictions, which he posited as a root-cause of "extremist politics." See Linz 1978. The flaws of Third Wave democracies are often explained in similar fashion. For an illuminating discussion of scholars' tendency to focus on a) elites' incapacity to harmonize the political and economic logics, b) the resultant failure of representation, and c) poor substitutes such as pork-barreling, see Karen Remmer 2003, especially 32–33.
- 5 For the spread and mechanisms of democracy's influence since the late eighteenth century, see Bukovansky 2002. For modernist invocations in nineteenth-century Latin America, see Ramos 2001. For historical as well as contemporary modernist invocations in both authoritarian and democratizing contexts, see Cruz 2005, especially chapters 8 and Conclusion.
- 6 Cruz 2005, 25–28.
- 7 Gerges 1991, 217–218.
- 8 Attributed to Sir William Harcourt by T.S. Eliot, and cited by Edward Shils in Banfield 1992, 4.
- 9 Montesquieu's design, the Madisonian project, and J.S. Mill's concerns for the rights of (opinion) minorities are among the notable examples. There are less noted but also important scholarly examples. For Joseph Schumpeter, the democratic political method can be effective only in the context of a political culture that is itself an ideal combination of self-restraint, accommodation, moderation, and professionalism among citizens and public servants. See Schumpeter 1962. Similarly, while Barrington Moore writes of social classes in conflict, such conflict culminates in parliamentary democracy only where it produces an exquisite balance "between too much power and too little royal power." This argument, as Moore himself points out, endorses the pluralists' understanding of modern democracy's origins. Modern democracy, moreover, requires independent town-dwellers to break with the past, hence Moore's famous pronouncement: "No bourgeois, no democracy." Democratic modernization, from this perspective, leaves the baggage of tradition behind. It is, simply put, a bourgeois revolution, so much so that this time Moore must register agreement with "the Marxist thesis." See Moore 1967, 415–418.
- 10 For the most lucid discussion on political representation as response to new exigencies, see Dahl 1989. Also see Dahl for Rousseau's initial acceptance, subsequent rejection, and yet again, acceptance of representation.
- 11 See Zaret 2000, especially chapters 1, 2, and 6, for a compelling account of the democratization of

- political communication in mid- to late-seventeenth-century England, when norms of secrecy and deference began to give way to a novel configuration: public opinion, the public sphere, and parliamentary politics. It is this modern trinity that will thenceforth sustain democratic rule legitimation.
- 12 For an elegant discussion on arguing, bargaining, and voting, and possible combinations, see Jon Elster, "Introduction," in Elster 1999, 4–9.
 - 13 Robert Putnam's innovative study of divergent democratic performance in the North and South of Italy, for example, explains why this is so difficult, but the explanation itself relies on the source of the difficulty, that is, the attainment of a particular equilibrium. For Putnam, civic equilibrium, which is vastly superior to the Hobbesian alternative, leads to higher democratic effectiveness. Putnam 1993, 177–185.
 - 14 I borrow the term *punctuated pragmatism* from work in progress by Consuelo Cruz on state-building in Latin America. For an enlightening, systematic comparative study of coalitional and pact-based arrangements and their significant impact on the chances and development of democracy, see Yashar 1997. For a thought-provoking discussion on this theme and related issues of emergent multiculturalism, see Van Cott 2000, especially chapter 2.
 - 15 For the pervasive challenges of centralization, see Migdal 2001.
 - 16 As Alfred Stepan cogently argues, federal systems are far from uniform. For the formation of federal systems, see his "Coming-Together" vs. "Holding-Together" logics; for their effect on democracy, see his "*Demos-Constraining*" vs. "*Demos-Enabling*" patterns, Stepan 2000, 89–104.
 - 17 For the political contingencies involved in the forging of relations between center and regions in a large, complex country, see Tenenbaum 1997, 85–98. For divergent intra-country effects, see Putnam 1993.
 - 18 Other second-iteration consequences were also negative, most notably, a diminished national state capacity.
 - 19 The requirements that must be met for a Dhalsian regime of multiple minorities to be viable are daunting on paper. They are even more daunting in practice, especially as democratic systems are called upon to respond to vast societal transformations.
 - 20 See Bobbio 1987.
 - 21 Abizadeh (2002) argues persuasively that this is a false requirement.
 - 22 For the extensive and intense pluralism of the public sphere and its negative consequences in the absence of an appropriate institutional frame in colonial Latin America, see Cruz 2005. For the convergence of intense pluralism, uneven modernity, and exclusionary politics, see Van Cott 2000.
 - 23 See Lewis 1987.
 - 24 See Mufti 1996, especially chapter 10.
 - 25 Thoughtful observers, however, remind us that India's constitutional secularism remains vulnerable to political leaders' opportunistic disregard. Indira Gandhi's record illustrates the point. See Ganguly 2003.
 - 26 Dauod, along with most of his family members, was murdered in April of 1978 immediately after the start of a revolution led by the Marxist People's Democratic Party of Afghanistan, itself bitterly divided internally. Afghanistan's government under Dauod had been an admixture of repression and increasing pluralism. Nevertheless, in the 1970s, the country was clearly moving towards a system of representative government that retained some indigenous political traditions. See, among others, Dupree 2002, Rubin 1995, and Maley and Saikal 1991.
 - 27 Even so, it should be noted that—ineffective and/or brutal as they were—the regimes of Nur Muhammad Taraki (March 1979–December 1979), Hafizullah Amin (September 1979–December 1979), Babrak Karmal (1979–86) and Najibullah (1989–92) did considerably better than the alliance of mujahideen in power from 1992–94, to say nothing of the Taliban. Thanks to Hassan Abbas for his comments on this point.
 - 28 One well-known exponent of this view is Kedourie 1994.
 - 29 Tamari 1992.
 - 30 Hoffer 1951.
 - 31 Berman 2003.
 - 32 Some of the tactics include manipulation of the electoral process, opportunistic constitutional amendments, and abuse of executive orders. Shah 2003.
 - 33 Berman 2003 and Shah 2003.
 - 34 Robert Canfield details how the Samanids' drive to differentiate themselves from their Shi'ite neighbors, the Buyids, led them to favor Sunnism, which in turn elevated the *ulama* above the other influential classes—the scribes, who staffed the bureaucracy, and the literati. Moreover, the decline of the Samanids and the rise of the Qarakhanids caused societal tremors that turned the network of recognized religious authorities into an institutional instrument of public order. Finally, the *ulama's* alliance with the Qarakhanids, as well as the latter's predilection for exercising control from outside the cities, rendered the *ulama* the *de facto* urban leaders, able to bring into their fold even the bureaucratic class. See Canfield 1991, 8–9.
 - 35 Canfield 1991, 14, 28.

- 36 Eickelman and Anderson 2003, 2. Eickelman and Anderson are referring to the period from 844–848. It is, of course, a key tenet of the Muslim faith that the Koran always existed and was revealed or “re-cited” by God, in Arabic, to Mohammed. Moreover, interpretations of the four caliphs’ decrees vary, and some do not see them as “directly challenging the assertion that the Koran always existed in Heaven”. Hassan Abbas, personal communication with author (January 2005) Medford, MA.
- 37 Black 2001, 203–204, 206–208. By comparison with Arab control, during the Umayyad and Abbasid periods, the caliphs used the ulama to legitimate their controversial policies.
- 38 And a degree of cooperation existed as well. *Kadis* also sought the expert opinion of *ulama* when adjudicating shari’a. Thanks to Hassan Abbas for pointing this out.
- 39 Black 2001 210–213.
- 40 Lewis 1987, 120–125.
- 41 Kadioglu 1996.
- 42 Schwedler 2001.
- 43 Kramer 1993, 5.
- 44 Bassiouni and Badr 2002, 172
- 45 Cited in Lewis 2003, 7–8
- 46 “Sunna” in this context are the traditional social and legal practices that constitute proper observance of Islam, which over time were codified as the Hadith by Abu ’Abd Allah Shaf’ii, and authenticated by later scholars.
- 47 Bassiouni and Badr 2002, 171
- 48 Eickelman 1997, 28–29.
- 49 Eickelman 2003, 42.
- 50 See Bendix 1980. For a more contemporary work see Crone 2004.
- 51 El Fadl 2001, 28–33.
- 52 Ibid.
- 53 El Fadl explains this loss with reference to several factors, most notably the importation of European systems of codified civil law at the expense of the “dialectical and indeterminate methodology of Islamic jurisprudence;” and Muslim modernizers’ reshaping of jurisprudential tradition to fit the ideological exigencies of Third-World nationalism.
- 54 Bassiouni and Badr 2002, 140–144.
- 55 Lewis 2001, 407–409.
- 56 Ibid., 407–409; 417–424.
- 57 Berman, 2003, 260–262.
- 58 For the complex connections among sectarianism, networked organization, insurgency, and terror, see the discussion among Byman, Scheuer, Lieven, and Lang 2005.
- 59 Kramer 1993, 6.
- 60 See, for example, Pescataing 2004, 156–57.
- 61 Tamari, 1992, 18, 20–21.
- 62 Schwedler, 2001, 8.
- 63 El Fadl 2001, 32.
- 64 Even the Society of the Muslim Brothers in Egypt have suffered splintering. In fact, this may be the provenance of many Egyptian *jihadi* groups. See Byman, Scheuer, Lieven, and Lang, 2005, 14.
- 65 Ijtihad refers to the science of interpretation “developed by Muslim scholars in order to understand and apply the message of the Qur’an to varying needs and conditions”. *The Muslim Democrat* 2004, 2. See also “Ijtihad: Reinterpreting Islam for the Twenty-first Century,” workshop co-sponsored by the United States Institute of Peace and the Center for the Study of Islam and Democracy, March 19, 2004, Special Report 125, accessible at www.islam-democracy.org, and the U.S. Institute of Peace Special Report “Reinterpreting Islamic Principles for the Twenty-First Century” available at www.usip.org
- 66 Radwan Masmoudi, one of the most prominent figures in the West advocating for the revival of *ijtihad*. Ibid.
- 67 El Fadl 2001, 33.
- 68 Masmoudi 2002.
- 69 Nasr, 13.
- 70 Ibid.
- 71 Abbas 2005, 217–233.
- 72 Ibid., 240.
- 73 For a penetrating analysis of religious conflict and Westphalia, see Daniel Philpot, “The Religious Roots of Modern International Relations,” *World Politics* 52, no. 2 (January).

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