Between the State and Islam

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Preface

CHARLES E. BUTTERWORTH

Television programs, the World Wide Web, electronic mail, faxes, and long distance telephone hook-ups via satellite are now as commonplace as air travel. They are usual means for citizens in one part of the globe to learn about events in other parts or to keep in touch with far-flung friends and colleagues. Such ready means of communication and even the easy awareness of one another resulting from them are relatively new phenomena. Though air travel and telephone communication have been with us for a long while, the others and especially the ready resort to them are the consequences of technological advances made in the mid-1980s and 1990s.

Yet the world, especially that part of it under scrutiny here with respect to the two monoliths of state and religion, has not therefore changed dramatically. A moment's reflection suffices for discerning that to speak of resistance to, or circumvention of, these two has not become possible only now. Indeed, the chapters that follow illustrate the numerous ways in which individuals and groups successfully eluded the long tentacles of the state as well as the apparent omnipresence of religion even as they sought to reform or drastically alter one or the other. To be sure, one attempts to escape, improve, or transform only what is there to be acted upon; no one in the nineteenth century would ever have denied the need to be constantly aware of the sovereign and his subalterns or of the designated representatives of religion and their enthusiastic votaries, official or not.

Still, the plaintive cry of Jamāl al-Dīn al-Afghānī, picked up and rendered even more poignant by Muḥammad Iqbāl, was addressed neither to rulers per se nor to religious authorities, but to fellow Muslims generally. Where, they wanted to know, had the Muslim people gone wrong? What had they done to bring about so thorough a reversal of fortune

that they were now deemed backward and held subject by those they had formerly contemned? The same question, albeit somewhat transformed, is now posed in the West in terms of "Why are they not like us?" or "Why did the technological revolution occur only in the West?" But these can be formulated in a more neutral manner so as to probe what is truly at issue: "What are they like?" or "How does their cultural, economic, and political life differ—if, indeed, it does—from ours?" and, even more to the point, "How does cultural, economic, and political life assist or impede technological development?"

In his discussion of the impact technology change had and did not have on the Arab world of the nineteenth century, Zahlan focuses on technology and technology change rather than on science. Indeed, he denies that science was sought or nurtured by Arab countries or institutions during the nineteenth century. He sees technology, especially technological change, as playing an important role in the political, social, and economic evolution—if one can speak of evolution rather than stagnation—of the Arab world. Differently put, the social, political, and cultural context of the area hampered both scientific and technological activity. Nothing changed, not technologically, socially, politically, economically, or culturally.

To be sure, technological advances made their way to the Arab world. But they did so as part of a colonial enterprise. The English and French brought new modes and machines, but little to nothing was done to develop indigenous cadres capable of taking over these new technologies once the colonialists departed. As Zahlan's exposition unfolds, we see that the rulers of the Arab world were as much to blame for not developing local receptivity as the colonialists. Not religion, not unquestioning adherence to old ways, but lack of far-sightedness seems to have been the culprit. To be sure, they were politically naive, even imprudent, in not discerning how important it would eventually be to have a well-developed country. Simple greed prevented these sovereigns and their representatives from considering the more distant horizon and prompted them to pursue immediate personal gain rather than to assume the onerous task of developing their countries. Chance, at least as it became manifest in the terrible murrain epidemic of 1842–3, also played an important role. This single event set back several projects to turn Egypt into a nation that manufactured its own large machines.

Zahlan compares, but only in passing, Japan with Egypt on the issue of developing indigenous technology. Japan succeeded where Egypt

failed. Why? Though Zahlan does not dwell on it, the reason seems to be that Japan kept to itself and used foreigners rather than allowing itself to be used by foreigners. Egypt could not bring about such a policy because too many entrepreneurs were anxious to do business on their own account, and those responsible for granting permission saw all too readily that their immediate advantage lay in allowing the process.

Zahlan tells no tale of religious traditionalists trying to keep things as they once were, mythically or not. Rather, he speaks of rulers who did not understand how to achieve local development—but also, at least indirectly, of colonial and imperial powers who did nothing to further local development either. New technologies were imported into the region, promising students were sent off to England and France to study the disciplines behind these inventions, but the populace was never taught to master them. In some important respect, no one wanted new—as opposed to traditional—knowledge to become too widespread. Even the otherwise well-intentioned who sought to promote learning refused to allow certain kinds of inquiry and discussion. Thus in 1882 an English faculty member was dismissed from the Syrian Protestant College in Beirut for making favorable references to the scientific achievements of Darwin and Lyell in a commencement address. The openness to science that one would not dare stifle at home was to be silenced in the Middle East. The interesting question is not what the board of the college feared, but what vacuum of power in Beirut allowed this to occur. It becomes all the more pertinent when due note is accorded Zahlan's emphasis on the way Egypt's limited political culture—that is, the general educational level of the populace—kept it from making advances in the technological domain.

Mardin takes us away from the Arab heartland in order to focus on the dual relationship between citizen and state, religion and rulership, as manifested in Islamic regimes and experienced by Muslims in non-Islamic regimes. While no one can deny the strength of the image of constant interplay between those learned in Islamic subjects (the *ʿulamāʾ*) and the rulers or those in power (the *ruasāʾ*)—especially of the principle that rulers resolve disputes about matters having to do with the citizens by calling for and then following a pronouncement by a religious scholar or scholars—it is not always so evident in practice. But it is not therefore nonexistent. Through a detailed analysis of the life and activities of Abdurreshid Ibrahim and Ahmet Zeki Velidi Togan, who flourished in

late-nineteenth- and early-twentieth-century Russian Asia, Mardin illustrates the intricacies of this relationship.

Eschewing the conventional explanation that Christianity differs from Islam in that it insists on keeping Caesar distinct from God whereas Islam not only renders unto Caesar his due but actually embraces him as too superficial, Mardin draws attention to the way Western capitalism allows the market to take over the state. He infers that whereas judgments thus become subordinated to market demands in the West, moral imperatives are constantly invoked to guide statecraft within Islam. This, as Alaoui also notes, gives rise to repeated attempts at political and religious reform. The changes that occurred to a somewhat obscure Sufi organization, the Nakshbandi order, in the far reaches of the Ottoman Empire and the way they affected the lives of Ibrahim—a bonafide *ʿālim*, even a Qadi, as well as a political agitator—and Togan—a modern intellectual and sometime ruler (indeed, he was president of the Bashkurt Republic between 1918 and 1920)—vividly illustrate the complexities of this interaction.

Ibrahim fought for his people and cause by becoming more deeply rooted in Islam and its traditions. Consequently, he became a fierce opponent of Russia and its embrace of Enlightenment philosophy. For him, such opposition was but an example of railing against the injustice of pharaoh. Togan, much more committed to the world of ideas and to the freedom of intellectual pursuit, wavered between falling back on his Turkishness and the ethical as well as the political core of his Islamic upbringing, but finally moved more to the Islamic side than to the Turkish. Though he accepted the principles of Enlightenment philosophy, he rejected the historicism to which it seemed to have succumbed. He found himself most authentically or fully defined not as a Turk, but as a Muslim. In this sense, he resuscitated the Muslim moral imperative. Yet, as Mardin's careful portrait of their highly eventful lives shows, neither of these colorful figures fits the paradigm all too often evoked when reference is made to the way political activists or reformers allow themselves to be guided by reference to Islam.

With Alaoui, we return to the Arab world—the Mashriq as well as the Maghrib. Focusing on the history of Islamic political thought, he depicts it as falling into two categories—both of which are linked to Islam. The first is guided by a desire to implement Islam in daily life and thus finds itself contesting or criticizing what goes on in the political realm. The second is more accepting of what is and seeks ways to improve it without

scolding. Alaoui links Ibn Taymiyya and al-Afghānī as representatives of the first, while contenting himself with al-Ghazālī and Ibn Khaldūn as representative of the second.

In keeping with his desire to speak about how thought effects political change, Alaoui examines those thinkers who represent the first group—that is, the contesting, criticizing, or opposing group. In his eyes, reform is always opposition. Aware that such an interpretation is not without problems, he pursues it nonetheless and presents as so many instances of opposition those calls for reform that are based on trying to bring the backward Arabic/Islamic world closer to that of the modern West. Such calls are necessarily cast in religious tones, and the authors he examines—al-Ṭahṭawī, al-Afghānī, ʿAbduh, and al-Kawākibī—demonstrate that religion is the cry used to rally the Muslim peoples.

It is in the name of Islam, not human decency or the rights of man, that calls for reform are made. Justice is Islamic justice, not some idea that floats in the air. Justice has a Quranic underpinning and thus does not depend on what is right by nature. Still, those making these pronouncements do so in order to effect political change, change that strikes as much at the official representatives of religion as at political rulers. Were it feasible to voice such criticism in general or even universal terms, that might have been done. But the recent memories of the French revolution and the declaration of the rights of man notwithstanding, these reformers found it more politic to keep their sights fixed on the particular—on the Islamic, even on the Arab, rather than on the simply human.

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On What Is Between, Even Beyond, the Paradigms of the State and Islam

CHARLES E. BUTTERWORTH

INTRODUCTION

The study of Islam, Islamic or Muslim society and polity, and the Arabic, Iranian, and Turkish Middle East has a history. It is, after all, no different from any other intellectual pursuit except, perhaps, in its relative newness. Leaving the fanciful disquisitions of Chardin aside, not to mention the *Persian Letters* spoof of Montesquieu, learned individuals began to focus on this area only in the early part of the nineteenth century. Some decades later, from the later nineteenth century on through the early twentieth century, scholars concentrated on identifying the whole, defining what made Islam and things Islamic unique and thus different from what was not Islam or Islamic. They approached the subject by textual analysis.

The book that defines Islam as a faith, even a practiced faith, was ready to hand insofar as copies of the Quran were abundant. So, too, were copies of treatises about the strictures of the Quran—books explaining the way different legal schools interpreted this book as well as the sayings and deeds of the prophet, others defending the beliefs set forth by the book and the prophet, and yet others chronicling the early days and years of Islam and its political ventures. Other works, however, had first to be recovered—sometimes even discovered. These texts—writings in philosophy, collections of poems, epistles on the art of ruling, even literary tales and essays—provided a broader vision of what constituted this older culture and its tradition.

The study of these works (often carried out by individuals born and schooled in the Middle East whose native tongue was Arabic, Persian, or Turkish) first resulted in generalizations about Islam and the peoples within the Islamic world. Directed to those who knew little to nothing

about the area and most often transmitted in English, French, German, Italian, and Spanish—that is, in the tongues of peoples distant from the area—the goal of such study was less to recognize similarity than to seize upon difference. Yet both indigenous and foreign scholars had a common link of long residence in particular countries of the area and intimate familiarity with the language or languages used by the people of these countries. Their generalizations were based, then, on deep, first-hand knowledge of the subject in its many aspects and details.

This period of scholarship gave way to one that sought to delve more deeply into particular areas, practices, traditions, and peoples. The large-scale generalizations of the earlier period were reconsidered and modified, often as a result of new textual work, especially archival research, but also as a result of more self-conscious ethnography. Assumptions of uniformity gave way to ones of variety, smooth surfaces were seen to be rippled if not cataclysmic, and simple transitions of power came to be understood as complex and fraught with violence. In short, study rooted in the methods of the social sciences replaced the old humanism and its textual concentration.

Notable exceptions notwithstanding, scholars within this new wave were more often of foreign origin. Less familiar with the languages of the area than their predecessors, they also remained on site for shorter periods of time. Two trends developed: for the most part, these new scholars shied away from the broad picture painted by their predecessors and toiled at answering more particular questions; at the same time, they paid greater attention to surface events and to the common people. Some of the new scholarship thereby came to resemble sophisticated journalism, especially in its focus on the immediate and the popular. Yet, ever conscious that they had not fully succeeded in explaining the polities of the Middle East and their workings nor in distinguishing them from—or comparing them to—polities in the West, these scholars continued to apply new concepts and forge new theories in their quest of understanding: studies of one-party rule gave way to those of ruling elites, just as investigations of centers of power and influence were replaced by those of relationships between center and periphery, and emphasis on the lives of particular rulers bowed to concentration on disenfranchised and marginal groups.

These reflections should indicate that while scholarship can be spoken of in terms of patterns and trends that are sometimes mistaken, it is no more monolithic and uniform than the phenomena it studies. That much can be admitted, as can the fact that some of the earliest individuals to

study Islam and the Islamic Middle East did so less out of disinterested curiosity than out of a desire to gain control—spiritual, economic, or political—over its peoples and social groupings. And it is important to acknowledge that in tandem with each different stage of scholarly endeavor to understand the area, its culture, and its peoples are to be found just as many instances of vulgarization as well as of imaginative attempts to reach general conclusions from particular incidents. Precise examples are Gustave Flaubert's *Bouvard et Pécuchet*, Gérard de Nerval's *Voyage en Orient*, Edward W. Lane's *Manners and Customs of the Modern Egyptians*,[1] Tawfiq al-Hakim's *Diary of a Country District Attorney*, Father Habib Ayrout's *Le fellah égyptien*, or, more recently, Richard Critchfield's *Shahhat an Egyptian*, even Kathryn K. Abdul-Baki's *Fields of Fig and Olive: Ameera and Other Stories of the Middle East* and Philip Roth's *Operation Shylock: A Confession*. Moreover, fictional accounts by those living in the area—Évelyne Accad, Driss Chraibi, Émile Habiby, Sahar Khalifeh, Naguib Mahfouz, Amos Oz, and Nawal El Saadawy—as well as journalism and memoirs permit nonscholars access, albeit less accurate access, to these same topics.

So much by way of preface is needed both to appreciate the aspirations and merits of the present volume and to explain why those contributing to it pass over, even reject, some of the current attempts to validate scholarship. To be sure, opinions too readily accepted have occasionally led scholars to emphasize one aspect of the culture at the expense of another or to neglect an awkward fact. But, as noted, these temporary imbalances are readily corrected unless attempts to reestablish equilibrium inadvertently push matters too far in the opposite direction. Today, this push and pull centers upon religion and politics or, more precisely, upon Islam and democracy. Most representative of those who deny a single political role to Islam, indeed, who deny there is such an entity as Islam, are Mohammed Arkoun and Olivier Roy. Opposing them by portraying Islam as four-square behind democracy are John Esposito and John Voll.

[1] As an antidote to Edward Said's intemperate criticism of Lane (*Orientalism* [New York: Pantheon, 1978], 161), see Jason Thompson's excellent study of Lane and his travels to, as well as writings on, Egypt: "Edward William Lane in Egypt," *Journal of the American Research Center in Egypt* 34 (1997): 243–61. The article reveals Lane's deep familiarity with the people, customs, and language of the Egyptians; in footnote references to other articles of his own, Thompson shows that he has an enviable grasp of Lane's writings, published as well as unpublished, and of the relevant contemporary literature.

THE TRADITION MISAPPREHENDED

Taking a cue from Michel Foucault, if not his erstwhile publicist Edward Said, Arkoun and Roy claim to have seen what their predecessors missed: the multiple expressions of Islam, the shortcomings of overly circumscribed social scientific study, and the tendency of scholarship to distort reality so as to subjugate it.[2] They speak as though they are the first to discern that, given so many Muslims, it is difficult to speak of one Islam. At the same time, they overlook the extent to which many Muslims think they have something in common with other Muslims—the extent to which this commonality is what makes them Muslims and what scholars seek to identify and define. They also give the impression, as though Thomas Kuhn were unknown to them, that they consider themselves the first to have identified the shortcomings of social science.

Arkoun, for example, contends that his approach is dynamic rather than static (1), in that he uses a "bundle of methods taught by the social sciences rather than one method privileged over all others" and is comparative rather than ethnographic and specific. So he claims to battle "the great Western experts in Islamology [*sic*]" (2) and to be engaged in "constructing a historical and epistemological critique of the principles, postulates, definitions, conceptual tools, and discursive procedures of logical reasoning used in the Islamic context." He identifies his critique as informed by the work of Clifford Geertz and the postmodern thinking of Michel Foucault. Thus his approach, insofar as it "aims to problematize a domain of knowledge, to think through and reflect upon historical circumstances, to deconstruct cognitive systems and ethico-juridical codes, and to historicize beliefs and nonbeliefs" is superior to one that seeks "to increase the mass of available data, rework interpretations, or extend the exploration of a single domain of reality" (3). Arkoun does not consider the latter completely void of merit. Rather, the exclusiveness of the approach bothers him, even though in following the first he must exclude the second. Most important, however, is his denial of any such thing as objective reason. For him, demands that "arguments be more 'objective,' more 'neutral,' less 'polemical' " are merely part of the Western attempt to extend and enforce its hegemony. Yet he never identifies the insight permitting him to arrive at this judgment.

[2] For what follows, page references within parentheses are first to Mohammed Arkoun, *Rethinking Islam: Common Questions, Uncommon Answers*, trans. and ed. Robert D. Lee (Boulder: Westview Press, 1994), and then to Olivier Roy, *The Failure of Political Islam*, trans. Carol Volk (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1994).

In *Rethinking Islam*—a compilation of Arkoun's responses to a series of twenty-four questions that admit of grouping, but show no definite order—Arkoun presents himself as primarily intent on providing a sociology of Islam. He brings back environmental and social determinants much as W. Montgomery Watt first sought to apply them, yet refuses to take seriously the actual phenomena of religion—even to the point of explaining them all away. Thus, in speaking of revelation, he asserts:

> Taking into consideration all the experiments generated in the societies of the Book/book, one could say it is a revelation each time that a new vocabulary comes to radically change man's view of his condition, his *being-in-the-world*, his participation in the production of meaning. (34)

Such a "definition of revelation," he boasts, "has the merit of making a place for the teachings of Buddha, Confucius, African elders, and all the great voices that recapitulate the collective experience of a group in order to project it toward new horizons and enrich the human experience of the divine." In other words, like a new Humpty-Dumpty, Arkoun calls things as he sees them and cares little for how they are presented by those who first brought them to our attention. What, one wonders, would he make of the following explanation of revelation, an explanation advanced by one so renowned for his knowledge that he was familiarly called "the second teacher," second, that is, after Aristotle:

> Now the craft of the virtuous supreme ruler is kingly and joined with revelation from God. Indeed, he determines the actions and opinions in the virtuous religion by means of revelation. This occurs in one or both of two ways: one is that they are all revealed to him as determined; the second is that he determines them by means of the faculty he acquires from revelation and from the Revealer, may He be exalted, so that the stipulations with which he determines the virtuous opinions and actions are disclosed to him by means of it. Or some come about in the first way and some in the second way. It has already been explained in theoretical science how the revelation of God, may He be exalted, to the human being receiving the revelation comes about and how the faculty acquired from revelation and from the Revealer occurs in a human being.[3]

There is no room in this statement for sundry voices that sum up or recapture a group's "collective experience" so as to move it "toward new

[3] The second teacher is none other than Abū Naṣr al-Fārābī (870–950), and this passage is taken from the opening lines of his *Book of Religion* (Kitāb al-Milla), trans. Charles E. Butterworth, in Alfarabi,*The Political Writings: "Selected Aphorisms" and Other Texts* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, forthcoming); for the Arabic text, see *Abū Naṣr al-Fārābī, Kitāb al-Milla wa Nuṣūṣ Ukhrā*, ed. Muhsin Mahdi (Beirut: Dār al-Machreq, 1968), 41–66.

horizons" or somehow "enrich the human experience of the divine." No, Alfarabi, unlike Arkoun, articulates what it means to receive revelation and how it affects political life. He points clearly to the implications of speech about revelation and to how they must affect anyone who believes that another has received it. Arkoun's inattention to detail or negligence is also manifested in his failure to analyze the arguments of previous interpreters in detail or by name despite insisting on how mistaken they are; instead, he presents them as dupes of a particular movement—Orientalism—or victims of a historical period.

Persuaded that political Islam has failed, Roy proposes to investigate what it offers as an alternative to Muslim societies (vii). Like Arkoun, he dismisses the idea of there being one Islam—an idea he attributes to the Orientalists (vii and 7)—and criticizes the Enlightenment view of reason, albeit not as adamantly as Arkoun. He finds political Islam to be naive in that it fails to recognize how rooted it is in history (viii–ix) and attributes its failure to errors that are both intellectual (the desire for an Islamic polity to achieve virtue presupposes virtue in its leaders) and historical (no new society has been founded). As Roy sees it, sociological influences explain the Islamist movement: increased educational opportunities but insufficient chances of employment and greater urbanization of society.

Yet Roy falls prey to the very generalizations he deplores: for him, political Islam is monolithic. He can make this claim only insofar as he ignores—and is ignorant of—the details of what occurs in particular countries, and his references betray his limited grasp of Islamic culture: all are secondary, and most are sympathetic to his own position. Moreover, when he speaks about the past or the tradition, he cites no sources; his generalizations gloss over issues, but do so without providing evidence he knows the details that would justify the generalizations.

Although Roy correctly discerns that the Islamists have a weak grasp of politics, he overstates the case by attempting to see a dialectic at work: there is, for example, no necessity for emphasis on political virtue to lead to mysticism, his claims to the contrary notwithstanding. Similarly, his assertion that society "defined in modern terms" is "one in which the distinction among social, political, and economic authorities is recognized" (37) ignores that it has never not been so recognized, while his contention that coining terms is a sign of trying to bring religion into the language overlooks the more obvious possibility that it is an attempt to bring an older language into step with modern Western terminology (39–49).

In sum, Roy's book is based on a superficial reading of secondary sources, many of them journalistic accounts of what has happened in particular countries and why. He has tried to weave a sociological explanation to account for the different transformations of society, but the limitations in his Arabic vocabulary—like those in his attempts to use the tradition—undermine his tentative explanations. Thus, he intimates familiarity with an issue or a text by citing key words only to take one out of context and use it as though it alone meant what the phrase or expression means.[4] Similarly, because his reading is limited to modern secondary accounts and translations of recent thinkers, he makes sweeping and erroneous generalizations about the tradition or incorrectly credits contemporary activists with innovations to which they never laid claim.[5]

Clearly, then, these books by Arkoun and Roy fail on at least two counts. First, by condemning traditional scholars for giving a monolithic view of Islam without ever citing whom they have in mind, they oblige their readers to accept on faith an accusation to the effect that all prior scholars—especially those who focus on the tradition—have misunderstood what they studied. Yet in trying to label Bertrand Badie an Orientalist, a charge he cannot even lay at the feet of his source (see p. 14, n. 12), Roy reveals confusion about what Orientalist scholarship might

[4] Errors in the handling of Arabic terms abound:

(a) *ʿulamā'*, the plural of *ʿālim*, is given an "s" to make it plural as in "ulamas" while the singular for school, *madrasa* (pl. *madāris*), is treated as a plural (28); similarly, the singular for legal opinion, *fatwā* (pl. *fatāwin* or *fatāwā*), is treated like a plural (29);

(b) *amīr* is rendered as "leader," but nothing is said of *amīr al-mu'minīn*, and *shūra* is termed "advisory council" (42); later, it is correctly referred to as "consultative council" (which in Arabic would be *majlis al-shūra*), yet rendered *majlis-i-shura'*, as in Persian, and attributed to the Arabic-speaking Hasan al-Turabi (45, n. 35);

(c) the Arabic for "those who have the power to bind and unbind" is said to be *ahl al-hall wal-aqd*, but the English clause calls for *ahl al-ʿaqd wa al-ḥall*; when the terms are reversed, as occurs so often in Arabic, this should be reflected in the translation.

Roy, unlike Arkoun, is no Arabist; in fact, his experience has been more in Afghanistan than the Arab world. Since his argument in no way depends on recourse to Arabic terminology, one wonders what prompted him to weaken it by such obvious errors.

[5] For example:

(a) the concept of *wilāyat al-faqīh* is traced to Khomeini (30), despite Khomeini's own refusal to make such a claim in his *Islamic Government*;

(b) the listing of qualifications for the leader is attributed to Maududi (43), in flagrant neglect of the whole medieval tradition;

(c) the claim that Maududi was the first to criticize contemporary society by using the term *jahiliyya* (41 and n. 25) ignores Alfarabi and the whole medieval tradition;

(d) the account of al-Afghani relies on Kedourie (33 and n. 5);

(e) the discussion of the Muslim Brotherhood draws on nothing more recent than Richard Mitchell's book of 1969 (35 and n. 1).

be.[6] Worse, his awareness of what constitutes the tradition of Islam is woefully inadequate. In other writings, but not in the volume under review, Arkoun has studied the tradition. Were it not for his penchant in those other works to mistake the ephemeral and the peripheral for the core, one might think he did understand the tradition.

Second, in claiming that there are many Muslims but no Islam, both authors betray a curious lack of common sense. On the one hand, it is obvious that manifold difficulties await anyone temerarious enough to attempt a description or definition of Islam as a single phenomenon. But on the other, we must ask what practicing Muslims think of as they invoke the word. Surely, we must strive for a working idea of a single Islam, all the while being aware that it is only a working idea or working definition. To do so is not to engage in a self-defeating Orientalism or to prolong a meaningless and romantic notion of religion as monolithic. It is, rather, to start with the phenomena and to take them as they first appear, that is, to gain a full appreciation of the surface before attempting to delve beneath it.

Only by a firm grasp of what Islam represents in its multitudinous manifestations as well as in its historical development can anyone hope to address intelligently the questions Mohammed Arkoun's interlocutors put to him. The attack upon reason as a Western imposition, attractive as it is for its boldness, reveals itself as foolhardy when reconsidered. What might a scholar, or any normally intelligent person, propose as a substitute for reason—sentiment? Is it not ironic and ever so detrimental to Arkoun's position that the only serious case for sentiment (but sentiment as the good natural conscience of a being not corrupted by society or fellow humans) as a guide is set forth in Rousseau's paradoxical *First Discourse*, written in response to the question posed by the Academy of Dijon "Whether the Re-establishment of the Sciences and the Arts has contributed to Purifying Morals," and later in the treatise that brought him so many troubles, *Émile or On Education*? By the same token, it is no more sufficient to point to the intellectual shortcomings of those promoting political Islam to declare it a failure than it is to invoke a vague notion of this movement being swept away by a coming historical cycle. The facts, especially in Algeria, but even in Roy's own bailiwick of Afghanistan, are all too clearly against such wishful thinking.

[6] For a different view of Badie, see below, Jean Leca, Meriem Vergès, and Mounia Bennani-Chraibi, "Daniel Lerner Revisited, The Audio-Visual Media and its Reception: Two North African Cases," n. 1.

TOWARD A MORE CATHOLIC VIEW OF ISLAM

Arkoun and Roy err in a more fundamental way, but one common to most contemporary students of the Middle East, in that they seek to explain politics, culture, social relationships, in short, everything, by recourse to Islam. Great as the temptation to do so may be, one must never forget that people live, marry, procreate, and die within the nations of this region—many of which formally proclaim themselves Islamic—yet remain, for the most part, outside observers unmoved by the wonders promised to faithful Muslims. Patterns of speech, social customs, even forms of dress are no more unambiguous indicators of what individuals think and believe than other modes of conformity to the larger milieu. Sociological analysis must look below or behind the surface and in doing so be ever alert to the way intelligent thinkers and actors manipulate symbols. What is more, however impressive the numerical and financial superiority of Muslims in the Arab countries of North Africa, as well as in Egypt and Sudan, it pales when compared to the political power and civil rights enjoyed by Christians and other minorities in the Levant.

Two excellent examples of how Islam is both more and less or, alternatively, of how difficult it is to explain phenomena in terms either of our usual understanding of Islam or of that put forth by those hewing to the visions of Foucault are the Arab revolt and the rise of the West. More than a quarter of a century ago, C. Ernest Dawn published his path-breaking studies that, even then, dated back one and two decades and represented the first attempts to subject the available evidence on the Arab revolt to a judicious examination. In *From Ottomanism to Arabism*,[7] Dawn tries to explain how Arab nationalism arose, especially as concerns the Arab revolt of the Sharīf of Mecca, al-Ḥusayn Ibn ʿAlī, and his sons. A historian of ideas, yet one ever sensitive to the principle that the explanations people offer for their actions are not to be unquestioningly accepted, Dawn re-examined the basic documents and came up with an explanation at odds with, and more nuanced than, those prevailing.

According to Dawn, Ḥusayn and his sons would not have revolted had they not come to believe that the Turks—especially the Young Turks

[7] See C. Ernest Dawn, *From Ottomanism to Arabism: Essays on the Origins of Arab Nationalism* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1973), especially Chapter 5, "From Ottomanism to Arabism: The Origin of an Ideology," 122–47. In what follows, page references within parentheses are to this book.

of the Committee of Union and Progress—were no longer willing to respect the special status of the Hijaz and of the Arabs. For Ḥusayn as well as his second eldest son ʿAbd Allāh, and here Dawn can point to their writings and public speeches, the soul of Islam was its Arabness. Consequently, they insisted that the Arabs and the Arab language must have a special place in any state daring to call itself Muslim.

Dawn concedes that Ḥusayn's own desire for gaining greater independence and that of the Turks for bringing the Hijaz more completely into the Turkish system had to lead sooner or later to a break (54–5). But the question is why it happened when it did. There are many answers: heavy-handedness by the Young Turks, the weakness into which Turkey had fallen as a result of siding with the Germans in World War I, British wooing of ʿAbd Allāh, and the ideas of revolt put forth by Muḥammad Rashīd Riḍā and ʿAbd al-Raḥmān al-Kawākibī.[8] These thinkers were moved to call for resistance, even revolt, by what they saw as the abandonment of both the caliphate and the *sharīʿa* by the Turks. It was not merely that the Young Turks called for embracing Western constitutional ideas, but that they sought, in addition, to replace the caliphate itself with these ideas and to alter the traditional role of Islam with respect to personal matters—especially as concerned women (69–74 and 82–85). For Muslims to identify with one another across national boundaries, there had to be a caliphate; nothing else would do. Finally, the revolt fits into the larger attempt to regain political, military, and religious pride by patriots gradually recognizing to what extent they were ruled by Westerners not of their choosing.

A recent study by Mahmoud Haddad focused on Muḥammad Rashīd Riḍā[9] corroborates Dawn's earlier analysis. Haddad seeks above all to put Riḍā's writings and the thoughts he expressed therein into historical context, this in order to show that what has heretofore been called Riḍā's wavering or inconsistency about whether the caliphate should be purely spiritual—that is, have a role similar to that of the Roman Catholic papacy—or temporal was a response to the politics of the day. Upon examination, Haddad concludes that though Muḥammad Rashīd Riḍā did indeed express different opinions at different times, he did so always in the service of a single ideal, namely, keeping Islam politically independent.

[8] For a more complete analysis of al-Kawākibī's thought, see Chapter 4, below: Said Bensaid Alaoui, "Muslim Opposition Thinkers in the Nineteenth Century."

[9] See Mahmoud Haddad, "Arab Religious Nationalism in the Colonial Era: Rereading Rashīd Riḍā's Ideas on the Caliphate," *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 117/2 (April–June, 1997): 253–77.

From this perspective, the attachment of Riḍā, al-Kawākibī, Ḥusayn, and ʿAbd Allāh to Islam was an attachment to a larger cultural and, above all, political tradition and not merely to a fixed religion. To be sure, there is no reason to suppose that Ḥusayn and ʿAbd Allāh had any more aversion to their activities resulting in greater political power for themselves than did Riḍā and al-Kawākibī with respect to the fame brought upon them by the positions they took. But with all due respect to Machiavelli, Hobbes, and even Lasswell, desire for glory and self-aggrandizement can no more be set down as the determining factors for the actions of these four than can a pious conviction that Islam had somehow to be vindicated. The language and symbols of religious reform—even resurrection—were ready to hand, and so they were used. But the language and symbols of returning Islam to its triumphant role are also common to the goal of escaping foreign domination and were first used to this latter end. The thoughts and actions of Riḍā, al-Kawākibī, Ḥusayn, and ʿAbd Allāh mesh perfectly with the earlier ones of Jamāl al-Dīn al-Afghānī and Muḥammad ʿAbduh.[10] That they gave way to calls centered primarily upon religious reform with the advent of Muḥammad Iqbāl, Ḥasan al-Bannā, Abū al-Aʿlā al-Mawdūdī, and eventually Sayyid Quṭb cannot be denied, but is to be explained as the development of a strategy and not as something essential to the movement.[11]

So, too, with the question about why industrialization and mercantile capitalism succeeded so well and so early in the West. The literature about this issue is abundant and reaches back to at least the time when Ernest Dawn was first re-examining the question of the Arab revolt.[12]

[10] See Muhsin Mahdi, "Modernity and Islam," in *Modern Trends in World Religions*, ed. Joseph Kitagawa (La Salle, Ill.: Open Court, 1959), 1–30; and *Die geistigen und sozialen Wandlungen im Nahen Osten* (Freiburg I. Br: Romback, 1961).

[11] In addition to the Alaoui article, below, see Charles E. Butterworth, "Prudence vs. Legitimacy: The Persistent Theme in Islamic Political Thought," in *Islamic Resurgence in the Arab World*, ed. Ali E. Hillal Dessouki (New York: Praeger, 1982), 84–114; and "Political Islam: The Origins," in *Political Islam*, ed. Charles E. Butterworth and I. William Zartman, a special issue of *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, 524 (November, 1992): 26–37.

[12] See, for example, K. N. Chaudhuri, "Capital and Trade in the Indian Ocean: The Problem of Scale, Merchants, Money, and Production," in *Trade and Civilisation in the Indian Ocean: An Economic History of the Rise of Islam to 1750* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), 203–20; Randall Collins, *Weberian Sociological Theory* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986); Mark Elvin, "China as a Counterfactual," in *Europe and the Rise of Capitalism*, ed. Jean Baechler, John A. Hall, and Michael Mann (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1988), 101–12; Edward W. Fox, "The Range of Communications and the Shape of Social Organization," *Communication* 5 (1980): 275–87; E. L. Jones, "Environmental and Social Conjectures," in *The European Miracle: Envi-*

Yet common to almost every study about the issue is general ignorance about the Middle East plus a tendency to pass over or ignore it.

That is all the more curious given that none of the factors different scholars identify as contributing to the rise of capitalism in the West is absent from the Middle East. Technology was present, though it certainly came later and remained largely in the hands of the colonialists. Travel by both sea and land—that is, a form of mobility—was as widespread in the Middle East as in the West. To counter the notion that a prolonged feudalism held back the Middle East, one need only reflect on Reischauer's contention that Japan's feudal system is the precise spur for its development. Property rights were as widely recognized in the Middle East as in the West, and sovereignty was as parceled in the one as in the other.

Still, the point is that capitalism and industrialization did not occur in the Middle East until long after they occurred in the West. Why not? And why was there not the same revolution in thinking in the Middle East as occurred in the West? Or, differently stated, is it because there was a revolution in thinking in the West, a break with older ways, that the West became capitalist and industrialized?

For those who do focus on the Middle East with respect to this and similar questions, the tendency today is to explain the differences between what happens there and what happens in the West in terms of religion, that is, in terms of the way Islam differs from either Judaism or Christianity. Here, too, a moment's reflection should give pause. Judaism and Islam have many features in common, from the prominence of the divine law to the refusal to accord the prophet divine status. Is it possible, then, that the explanation for the material success of the West must be cast in terms of Western peoples' nonadherence to the given faith, to a secularist mentality? However hardy such a conjecture is when it comes to speaking about individual religious commitment, it certainly finds grounding when the history of modern Western thought is considered.

ronments, Economies, and Geopolitics in the History of Europe and Asia, 2d ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), 3–21; Charles P. Kindleberger, "Commercial Expansion and the Industrial Revolution," in *Economic Response: Comparative Studies in Trade, Finance, and Growth* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1978), 135–66; Edwin O. Reischauer, "Japanese Feudalism," in *Feudalism in History*, ed. Rushton Colbourn (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1956), 26–48; Nathan Rosenberg and L. E. Birdzell, Jr., "The Growth of Trade to 1750," in *How the West Grew Rich: The Economic Transformation of the Industrial World* (New York: Basic Books, 1986), 71–96; Jane Schneider, "Was There a Pre-capitalist World-System?" *Peasant Studies* 6 (1977): 20–7; and Robert G. Wesson, "The Western Creativity" and "The Nation-State System: Interaction and Development," in *State Systems: International Pluralism, Politics, and Culture* (New York: Free Press, 1978), 153–211.

Consequently, the analysis or explanation must focus on the peculiar revolution in thinking that occurred in the West, and only in the West, from the end of the fifteenth century until the late eighteenth century.[13]

Such a conclusion is in no way intended to confirm Arkoun's desire to repudiate Western thinking as hegemonic, but merely to point to the way ideas influence action. The reason for pausing to consider these two phenomena—the Arab revolt and the rise of capitalism in the West—is, in the first place, to show that explanations other than those proffered by a Foucault-based historicism have to be entertained, that what has taken place in the Middle East and is occurring even now is both very complex and quite straightforward. Dawn and Haddad demonstrate not only deep familiarity with the basic facts surrounding the controversies they seek to explain, but also an unusual willingness to consider and then reconsider the language people use and why they use some forms of speech rather than others. Differently stated, language—the words used to propose and defend precise courses of action—can be as indicative of personal style while serving to hide one's person as clothing. That a speaker has recourse to religious terminology tells us nothing about his personal convictions in and of itself.

The second reason for such a pause follows from the first. To the extent that the careful scholarship of a Dawn or a Haddad shows how ever so nuanced explanations of past events must be while remaining open to continuous re-examination, the error of blithely rejecting such scholarship on external, a priori grounds is patently revealed. In addition to all else, such a posture risks undoing all the fruits of careful scholarship, of bringing back something like Ernest Renan's narrow-minded positivist judgments of almost a century and a half ago:

> I am the first to acknowledge that we have nothing or almost nothing to learn from Averroes, the Arabs, or the Middle Ages . . . the merit of the history of philosophy resides less perhaps in the positive teachings to be drawn from it than in the picture it provides of the successive evolution of the human mind. The feature characteristic of the nineteenth century is to have substituted the historical method for the dogmatic method in all branches of study relative to the human mind.[14]

[13] For a fuller development of this idea, see Charles E. Butterworth, "Philosophy, Stories, and the Study of Elites," in *Elites in the Middle East*, ed. I. William Zartman (New York: Praeger, 1980), 10–48.

[14] See Ernest Renan, *Averroès et l'Averroïsme: Essai historique* in *Oeuvres complètes de Ernest Renan*, ed. Henriette Psichari (Paris: Calmann-Lévy, 1949), 15. This passage is from the Preface to the first edition of the work published in 1852.

Even the shortcomings of the studies focused on "the rise of the West" are instructive in this respect. Clearly, to date there is no adequate explanation that accounts for what happened in the West and not elsewhere.

SETTING THE RECORD STRAIGHT

A similar series of questions arises today with respect to democratization. Still, once careful attention is paid to the facts, to what is going on in polities that are either proudly self-identified as Islamic or that must be so considered because the vast majority of the citizens are Muslim, one cannot help but note the presence of democratization or, at the very least, vestiges of nascent democratization. Political Islam, wherever one looks—Tunisia, Egypt, Sudan, Jordan, Saudi Arabia, Pakistan, Malaysia, and Indonesia—is anything but a failure. It is also somewhat democratic, or so it appears from the reports of scholars like John Esposito and John Voll, a judgment with which Glenn E. Robinson concurs.[15] Yet others—Jean-François Bayart, Abdelbaki Hermassi, Aziz al-Azmeh, Ghassan Salamé, and John Waterbury come most readily to mind—trace the difficulty democracy has taking root in such polities to factors having more to do with history, economics, and politics than with Islam.[16]

Starting from an observation similar to the one that guides this book—namely, that "even in medieval Islamic civilization, in the era of the great Muslim empires of the Umayyads and the Abbasids, nonstate structures with important functions in the life of religious faith and action developed" (4)[17]—Esposito and Voll seek to explain that Islam is not antithetical to democracy. Casting the reformers of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries as modernists rather than reactionaries, they urge

[15] See John L. Esposito and John O. Voll, *Islam and Democracy* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996), and Glenn E. Robinson, "Can Islamists be Democrats? The Case of Jordan," in *The Middle East Journal* 51/3 (Summer 1997): 373–87.

[16] See Ghassan Salamé, ed., *Democracy without Democrats? The Renewal of Politics in the Muslim World* (London: I. B. Tauris Publishers, 1994). The articles of Salamé ("Small is Pluralistic: Democracy as an Instrument of Civil Peace"), al-Azmeh ("Populism Contra Democracy: Recent Democratist Discourse in the Arab World"), and Waterbury ("Democracy without Democrats? The Potential for Political Liberalization in the Middle East") are presented as broad essays about the general topic, while those of Bayart ("Republican Trajectories in Iran and Turkey: A Tocquevillian Reading") and Hermassi ("Socio-economic Change and Political Implications: The Maghreb") are case studies.

[17] Here and in what follows, references within parentheses are to Esposito and Voll, *Islam and Democracy*.

that these activists were looking for structures that would not jeopardize Islam and thus were not desirous of turning back the clock (5–6). They arrive at such an understanding of Islamic reform, even the reform of recent times, because they look at the particular political phenomenon in a global context while paying especial attention to the particular opinions of the Islamic peoples they seek to explain.

With an eye to the fundamental precepts of Islamic teaching, Esposito and Voll attempt to account for the way recent Muslim reformers have argued for there being basic agreement between the principles of Islamic government and those of democracy. They pay special attention to Abū al-Aʿlā al-Mawdūdī and his account of how sovereignty within Islam is rooted in the principle of divine unity or *tawḥīd*. This, coupled with the idea that each individual human being is on earth as a vicegerent—that is, a khilāfa—of God and thus obliged to carry out His prescriptions to the extent possible, distinguish Islamic political thinking from Western notions of popular sovereignty and untrammeled freedom (21–4). That is clearly a basic difference.

Yet even the most dedicated proponents of the people's will admit some limits to that will. Here, then, at a setting down of the fundamental conditions for living together in community, is where the comparison between the two systems must begin. Though Esposito and Voll do not address this issue, they turn to yet other Pakistani thinkers—Muhammad Iqbal, Fazlur Rahman, and Khurshid Ahmad—to show how the principles of consultation (*shūra*), consensus (*ijmāʿ*), and interpretative judgment (*ijtihād*) embody many of the precepts of democratic practice and theory (25–30). That these principles are rooted in Islamic jurisprudence means that nothing in Islam forbids democracy.

Indeed, there are many features of Islamic doctrine and practice that are perfectly consonant with democratic rule. While opposition that arises as a threat to rulership (*fitna*) is no more tolerated in Islamic government than in any other kind of polity, opposition as difference of opinion (*ikhtilāf*) about particular policies is perfectly acceptable (33–46). Evidence of toleration, a principle that was the cornerstone of civil religion according to Rousseau,[18] is to be found in the freedom Islam has traditionally accorded Jews and Christians, that is, "the people of the Book" (46–8).

Broad, even somewhat elastic, these concepts can at best provide only the foundations for democratization. One must still wonder what actual

[18] See Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *On the Social Contract*, Bk. 4, Chapter 8, end.

evidence of democratic Islamic polities or Islamic movements tending toward democracy can be mustered. To answer such a query, Esposito and Voll offer six case studies. Two—Algeria and Egypt—are instances where Islamic movements or groups have been declared illegal and now function as militant opposition forces. With two others—Malaysia and Pakistan—the Islamic movements or groups function as representatives of the loyal opposition and are fully incorporated into a flourishing parliamentary system. The final two case studies center on Iran and Sudan, instances in which Islamic movements have come to full power.

The cases are well chosen and such that our authors are obliged to draw mixed conclusions. Though democracy is not to be found everywhere in the world of Islam—indeed, out and out opponents of it are sometimes to be found, as in Saudi Arabia—there are instances of it flourishing. What is more, the cases of Pakistan and Malaysia show that the secular character of democracy can be tempered, that democracy need not be opposed to religion. That raises the question of why successive regimes in Tunisia have chosen to act so anti-democratically in order to suppress Islamic political movements that claim to be democratic. The final chapter wrestles with the question with somewhat different results.

CONCLUSION

In sum, the state and Islam are always with us, just as are the poor. But we need pay no more attention to the state and Islam than we do the poor. Nor does any one of them—the state, Islam, or the poor—constantly play an important role, despite being always present. The emphasis on Islam in academic studies and media commentary is due to the widespread resurgence of Islam as well as to the ample opportunities its claims and pretensions have provided for observing differences between "our" ways and "theirs." Yet, as has always happened during times of political upheaval, other forms of civic life go on. And to understand Middle Eastern society fully, we need to know more about this aspect of communal life.

It would not be amiss to insist that attention also be paid to the influence the media have today on academic trends. Or, more in keeping with the principles of dispassionate academic discourse, it might be appropriate to query why academic attention is focused on a particular problem today and probe for the way this particular problem fits into the larger picture.

The Islamic movements that attract our attention so at the moment came to the foreground and grew stronger as one or another existing political regime was unable to meet the popular expectations it had either created (however inadvertently) or actually promised to meet. Popular associations did not fill the void. In fact, it is perhaps not to be expected that they should have. After all, they first came into being to meet more limited needs—or did they? That is where the study of what is between Islam and the state must begin, namely, at identifying the goals of these private organizations, analyzing how they came into being, and how they function.