Introduction

CHARLES E. BUTTERWORTH AND
I. WILLIAM ZARTMAN

Much attention, perhaps too much, has been lavished on the way Islam in its current manifestations affects or threatens to affect politics in the Middle East.[1] Equally as much attention has been placed on the durability of the Arab state.[2] In contrast, there is almost total neglect of the forces that struggle against Islamic conformism and state hegemony. Yet by manifold pluralistic and innovative activities, such forces fill the gap between these two competing absolutes. To be sure, civil society has drawn the attention of some scholars. Still, because such scholars have focused their inquiry solely on the contemporary world, they have largely ignored the relation of civil society either to Islam and the state or to its antecedents in earlier eras.[3]

[1] See, for example, Nazih Ayubi, *Political Islam* (London: Routledge, 1991); Edmund Burke III and Ira Lapidus, eds., *Islam, Politics, and Social Movements* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988); Charles E. Butterworth and I. William Zartman, eds., *Political Islam* (special issue 522 of *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, 1992); Alexander Cudsi and Ali E. Hillal Dessouki, eds., *Islam and Power* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1981); Ali E. Hillal Dessouki, ed., *Islamic Resurgence in the Arab World* (New York: Praeger, 1982); Henry Munson, *Islam and Revolution in the Middle East* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1988); and John Ruedy, ed., *Islam and Secularism in North Africa* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1994).

[2] See Hazem Beblawi and Giacomo Luciani, eds., *The Rentier State* (London: Croom Helm, 1987); Adeed Dawisha and I. William Zartman, eds., *Beyond Coercion: The Durability of the Arab State* (London: Croom Helm, 1988); Giacomo Luciani, ed., *The Arab State* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990); Giacomo Luciani and Ghassan Salamé, eds., *The Politics of Arab Integration* (London: Croom Helm, 1988); and Ghassan Salamé, ed., *The Foundations of the Arab State* (London: Croom Helm, 1987).

[3] See Augustus Richard Norton, ed., *Civil Society in the Middle East* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1995), and also Jillian Schwedler, ed., *Toward Civil Society in the Middle East? A Primer* (Boulder: Lynne Rienner, 1995). See also, as exceptions to this judgment, Iliya Harik, "Rethinking Civil Society: Pluralism in the Arab World," *Journal of Democracy* 5/3 (July 1994): 43–56; and Şerif Mardin, "Civil Society and Islam," in John A. Hall, ed., *Civil Society: Theory, History, Comparison* (Cambridge, England: Polity Press, 1995), 278–300.

There is more to political life, even more to communal life, however
defined, than what can be revealed by exclusive attention to resurgent
or insurgent Islam, to the vagaries of the organized state, or even to con-
temporary civil society. Much is to be learned about the intricate work-
ings of Arab societies and their development from a consideration of the
expression of ideas in all its manifestations—philosophy, literary works,
sermons, political tracts, even current events commentary—as well as
from a study of periodicals and the press, both as they appear now and
as they have changed over time. Yet those willing and able to pursue
such an inquiry are all too few, and the counter-balance they provide
to the trend noted above is regrettably slight.[4] Beneath a veneer of fantasy
and banality, television programs, sermons, and political commentaries
frequently contain a deeper analysis of the basic fears and aspirations
that circulate in Arab society from East to West. Yet they have rarely
been subjected to the type of study that takes them at anything deeper
than their surface value. Similarly, even though Naguib Mahfouz
has long been appreciated as a thoughtful interpreter of Egyptian and
Arab politics and a sometimes acerbic critic of the way religious zealotry
harms more than it helps, much the same as his compatriot, Tawfik al-
Hakim, few scholars focus on the role either thinker plays in shaping
public life.

Similarly, against so much attention to the struggle for orthodoxy
within militant Islam, there is little material available about the many
attempts at reform, anti-conformism, and interpretive thinking within
the same religion. Even while commentators from within the fold persist
in generalizations of the type "Muslims have continued to assume that
only a 'religious leader' can provide good government for the Muslim
community"[5]—as if all Muslims were of one mind on such matters—
Islamic thinkers apply the Quran variously to the challenges of modern
life, and their efforts are usually lost on analysts trying to portray—pos-

[4] See Rashid Khalidi's survey of ʿAbd al-Ghanī al-ʿUraysī's thought as it was expressed in
his daily newspaper *al-Mufīd*, Wadad al-Qadī's excellent analysis of ʿAlī Mubārak's
gigantic *ʿAlamuddīn*, and Marwan R. Buheiry's account of Būlus Nujaym and *La Revue
Phénicienne* in Marwan R. Buheiry, ed., *Intellectual Life in the Arab East, 1890–1939*
(Beirut: American University of Beirut Press, 1981). See also Paul Khoury, *Une lecture
de la pensée arabe actuelle: Trois études* and *Tradition et modernité: Matériaux pour
servir* à *l'étude de la pensée arabe actuelle: I. Instruments d'enquête* (Münster: Paul
Khoury, 1981).
[5] See Jamal al-Suwaidi, "Arab and Western Conceptions of Democracy," in David
Garnham and Mark Tessler, eds., *Democracy, War, and Peace in the Middle East*
(Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1995), 87, in what is an otherwise insightful
chapter.

itively or negatively—the current of the mainstream.[6] On the other side, the attention devoted to presenting the *mukhābarāt* (state security) monolith of a regime and its single party ministry of mobilization has completely overshadowed any attempt to explain the important contributions, beleaguered existence, and real problems of independent thinkers and opposition parties.[7]

Or again, the notion that modernism means pluralism[8] suggests a necessary societal force pushing against any conformities, notably those of belief and politics; it implies that only technological innovation and social differentiation can erode and crack monoliths. The interdisciplinary leap from the study of new technologies and new social forces to the analysis of their impact on political and belief systems has been made too infrequently, so that politics and religion are examined and discussed in a vacuum. The work of Émile Durkheim and Daniel Lerner has been left by the wayside as attention shifts away from the paradigms of development and modernization.

This collective volume seeks to limit these excesses and remedy such shortcomings by showing how debate and study about the Middle East might be refocused. Between the two polar absolutes of the restrictively hegemonic state and oppressively conformist religion anchored on conflicting bases of authority surge forces of skepticism, liberty, and creativity. As they have in the past, these forces find expression in thought and action that remain staunchly independent of all efforts at control. To be sure, these expressions are themselves often flawed, vulnerable, and confused, if not outright contradictory. Nonetheless, they exist vigorous, independent, innovative, and ever persistent. Not yet able to topple the monoliths, these forces still manage to hold their own. Indeed, in one respect they may even be said to have the favored position: for them, not losing is the beginning of winning, whereas for state and religion, not winning is the beginning of losing. These efforts are not new: they existed in the nineteenth century, perhaps even earlier, and they

---

[6] See Ali E. Hillal Dessouki, ed., *Islam and Politics*; François Burgat, *L'Islamisme au Maghreb* (Paris: Karthala, 1988); John Esposito, ed., *Voices of Resurgent Islam* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1983); Abdel Salam Sidahmed and Anoushiravan Ehteshami, eds., *Islamic Fundamentalism* (Boulder: Westview, 1996). But see the fine chapters on Islamic reformists in Nazih Ayubi, *Political Islam*.

[7] Michael Hudson, *Arab Politics* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1977). But see Susan Waltz, *Human Rights and Reform: Changing the Face of North African Politics* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995); and I. William Zartman, "The Challenge of Democratic Pluralism," in John Ruedy, ed., *Islamism and Secularism in North Africa*.

[8] See S. N. Eisenstadt, *Modernization: Protest and Change* (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice Hall, 1966), 2–3.

come and go, much like the sea, ebbing and flowing in their efforts to push back authority and conformism. In sum, however influential religion appears in word and deed, however evident the trappings of state authority, people do come into being, thrive, marry, raise families, think, laugh, and cry without regard to—indeed, sometimes in utter defiance of—the strictures of religious or state authority.

Of most immediate interest as a counter to current scholarly endeavors are the ways defiance is expressed, the ways people struggle to preserve room for freedom of thought and action as well as of inventiveness and innovation with respect to politics, religion, and life in general. These expressions take place in the midst of an ongoing dialectic that pervades the Middle East. The nineteenth century opened the Islamic Arab world to a permanent conflict between two antagonistic ways of thought. Into a world of ancient, but authentic and unquestioned, mores came antithetical ways and thoughts typical of modern enterprise and its desire to spread learning and wealth. The old was forced to give way to the new, however genuinely rooted in self-identity was the old and however artificial the new. So, too, did the alien usurp the place of the familiar.

A crude version of the conflict is played out daily before Arab eyes via television and the cinema. Tales of marital infidelity, scenes of opulence, suggestive—even explicit—flirtations and seductions, and myriad instances of successful challenges to traditional authority float across the Mediterranean, enticingly accessible yet frustratingly unattainable. The morning after, many of the beguiled recoil in horror from what that world seems to prize. More promising are the attempts by reformers to challenge traditional authority in the name of rightly reasoned interpretation and to overcome economic stagnation or out-moded patterns of governance by calling for technological innovations and pluralistic competition. Vestiges of such attempts at challenge and change hang even in the closets of leaders of opposition parties and organizers of professional groups.

But the image of confrontation and nothing but confrontation is incomplete. The confrontation gives rise to a dialectic in which the extremes are finally bridged and a synthesis produced. Therein lies the significance of the thoughts and activities presented here. For the television and cinema audiences whose impressions lack precision and cohesion, the extremes have been bridged so partially that the resulting synthesis is as inchoate as it is incomplete. Even so, its confused dissonance prepares a context of both receptivity and resistance for the writings and actions of the other groups. The very task of journalists and

professors writing for a wider public represents synthesis after analysis; as they seek to mold and inform that emerging view, they increase the receptivity of their own followers to some aspects of the synthesis while strengthening their resistance to others. Similarly, reform-minded religious scholars seek an authentically modern political system of debate and choice along with a contemporaneous interpretation of belief and practice so as to move Islam from the fifteenth or sixteenth century to the twenty-first. At the same time, political activists and professional organizers strive for progressive strategies and programs that reflect the interests of the people.

Yet a dialectic—any dialectic, but especially this one of commentary, exchange, analysis, and attempt at criticism as well as reform—moves on, until its own internal logic of confrontation leading to synthesis and synthesis giving way to new confrontation is broken. By drawing attention to the dialectical character of the confrontation, we wish to focus on the manifold ways individuals and groups thrive without undue concern about the demands of the state and religious hegemonies. Remember, Muslim experience today is not that of the painful awakening of the nineteenth century—neither that called for by Jamāl al-Dīn al-Afghānī and Muḥammad ʿAbduh, nor that of the al-ʿAlawī's. Moments of synthesis have occurred in the meantime, moments later to be opposed by a new antithesis that decries the preceding synthesis as a sell-out to another group (most often to foreign modernists). In this sense, the Islamist revival or resurgence of today may well be yet another antithesis, returning the subject to its recurrent confrontation.

The struggle during the nineteenth century between reformers and their critics provides the context within which, in the first part of this work, are presented themes, voices, and actors focused on reform, harmony, or synthesis, as well as their opposites. So, too, does the conflict between their twentieth-century counterparts frame the analyses set forth in the second part. Yet the two parts are not completely congruent. Although external information and sources of independent thought and action disseminated by multiple types of media have penetrated the Middle East and North Africa since Napoleon's invasion of Egypt, the latest and most dramatic vehicle is the satellite dish that captures foreign television. Along with other intrusive communications technology, it sets the twentieth century apart from the nineteenth. Ineffectively banned in Algeria and Iran by militants both of the state and of Islam, the satellite dish receives images that cannot be censored in the same manner as books and newspapers. Potentially, an even greater threat is posed by

the growing use of cyberspace around the world. Yet another external source of information and thought is found in international cooperation, as is manifested by the growing trends toward professionalization, privatization, democratization, and globalization.

As did the Napoleonic invasion and those other intrusive phenomena, these, too, flow like flood waters under the door no matter how tightly it is closed or even sealed. They gain pressure through the backing they receive from transnational institutions such as universities, multinational corporations, private voluntary organizations, and financial institutions. And they are reinforced by other events in distant places, such as the collapse of the Communist Party in the Soviet Union. At the same time, there is a need for some kind of fallow, fertile ground waiting to be tilled. Otherwise, the external influences would have far less impact. Difficult as it is to pinpoint these internal sources of change and challenge, they appear to arise more from the simple playing-out of human nature than anything else. Dissatisfaction and restiveness under the insufficiencies and constraints of religious and political authority, natural tendencies to strike out independently from the controls of unity and consensus, and separate interests derived from the specialization and differentiation accompanying modernization are sources of creativity and questioning, that is, of confrontation and subsequent compromise or synthesis.

It is on this kind of struggle and these phenomena that the chapters here focus, first from the experience of the nineteenth century and then from that of the twentieth.

Part I

Nineteenth Century

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

9

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