1 Introduction

9/11 and the Arab Spring

In recent times, two key events on the global stage have left an indelible imprint on popular perceptions of Islamic politics. These are, respectively, the 9/11 attacks on New York City (and the War on Terror it unleashed) and the tumultuous so-called Arab Spring. The first event seemed to lend credence to the well-rehearsed view of the world characterised by a 'clash of civilisations' and in which Islam would be a major source of threat to Western civilisation (Huntington 1993, 1996). But both 'Islam' and the 'West' are understood in highly, and implausibly, monochromatic terms in this viewpoint.[1] By contrast, the outbreak of the Arab Spring gave rise initially to the idea of a possibly triumphant Islamic politics that was not just democratising but also eager to engage with a global economic order by and large dominated by Western interests.

Some renowned experts, nevertheless, had brusquely dismissed the democratic prospects of the Arab Spring, but not because of predictions about the inevitable return of old elites via actions like military coups, as subsequently occurred in Egypt. Lewis, for example, warned that electoral democracy in the Arab world would only aggravate its existing problems and lead to the rise of radical Islamic movements but without much mention of what such movements would be in response. In somewhat overly cultural deterministic fashion, he proposed that Middle Eastern societies should look towards indigenous and historically rooted forms of governance to chart their future rather than to alien forms of democracy.[2]

[1] For highly critical assessments of this viewpoint, see Said (2001) and Halliday (2002).

[2] These comments are found in David Horowitz (2011), 'A Mass Expression of Outrage Against Injustice' (interview with Bernard Lewis), *Jerusalem Post*, 25 February 2011, www.jpost.com/Opinion/Columnists/Article.aspx?id=209770, accessed 15 April 2011. In the same interview, Lewis consigned the internally complex Muslim Brotherhood of Egypt to a category of organisation that is only 'relatively benign' when compared to Germany's Nazi Party of the last century. This view of the Muslim Brotherhood is also expressed by some of its domestic critics, however. Echoing Lewis, Mohamed M. Farid (businessman and member of the Supreme Council of the secular Free Egyptian Party) suggests that the Muslim Brotherhood would have committed atrocities of the same scale as the Nazis if given the opportunity. For him, the Muslim

To others (e.g. Berman 2013), by contrast, the sudden wave of dissent that swept the Arab world from late 2010/early 2011 offered exciting new democratic promises that had been previously unimaginable. These promises were especially prominent in Egypt, where the autocratic and formerly unassailable Hosni Mubarak was dramatically deposed in a popular uprising that took place before the eyes of a global audience. It was in this country that the Arab Spring truly caught the world's imagination through the stimuli provided by television cameras, YouTube videos and Internet chat rooms. Notably, the anti-Mubarak protesters scrutinised by the world were greatly inspired by the prior overthrow, by the Tunisian people, of their own corrupt Cold War-era dictator, Zine El-Abidine Ben Ali (Lynch 2012: 85–86). However, the toppling of the Muslim Brotherhood-led government in Egypt in yet another uprising in July 2013 put an end to much of that early optimism, as the supremacy of the armed forces over democratic processes came to be affirmed in that country.

It is maintained in this study that neither engagement with democratic politics (and/or embrace of global markets) nor continual attachment to a theocratic form of authoritarianism (and typically, hostility to a still Western-dominated international economic order) constitutes the inevitable terminus of modern Islamic politics. While the appeal of democratic politics is by no means certain to impact on the strategies undertaken by the social agents of Islamic politics, consignment to the political wilderness of violent activity is by no means inescapable. The study shows, by contrast, that the possible trajectories of Islamic politics are varied and that these are contingent on the broader constellations of power and interest encountered by social and political movements claiming to represent an *ummah* – the community of believers – that is increasingly defined in national rather than supranational terms. Furthermore, it is averred that while this community is notionally homogenous due to common faith, in actuality it has become more internally diverse due to decades of socio-economic change tied to capitalist development and neoliberal globalisation in much of the Muslim world. As such, it inevitably embodies a host of potential internal contradictions.

Before the hopes that were temporarily raised by the Arab Spring (Gerges 2013), Indonesia and Turkey were generally considered to be the rare exemplars of democratic Muslim-majority societies, notwithstanding the major faults in the way that their democracies have functioned. On the one hand, Indonesia's democracy, to put it succinctly, is rife with money politics and

Brotherhood-led Morsi government was rightly deposed in 2013 because it represented 'barbarians at the gate' who would have thrust Egypt into a divisive civil war. Interview, Cairo, 16 December 2014. In addition, see Lewis (1990, 1994) for his views on Islam, violence and democratic politics. In the latter article, he argues that Turkey has only democratised because of its close geographical proximity to Europe – an argument that would not hold much water for far away yet highly democratised Indonesia, of course.

corruption. On the other hand, the ruling Justice and Development Party (AKP) in Turkey has been accused of bullying the media, systematic brutality against the Kurdish movement and undertaking a malicious campaign of persecution against the country's once unassailable military.[3] More recently, it has been embroiled in a bitter struggle against erstwhile allies in the wealthy religious movement led by the long-exiled cleric Fethullah Gülen.

But it was the AKP's experience – emerging as it did from long established but often marginalised Islamic social and political networks – that had originally brought about the most serious reconsiderations of the relationship between Islamic politics and democratisation in the academic literature (e.g. Nasr 2005), even if the party prefers to portray itself as being 'conservative' rather than 'Islamic'. No doubt this is because Islamic parties in Indonesia had failed to fully capitalise on the openings offered by democratic politics after the fall of Soeharto in 1998, never attaining a position enabling possible ascendancy over the state.

In fact, major developments across the Muslim world in recent times have essentially raised a new fundamental question: what accounts for the different trajectories of Islamic politics in different contexts? Indonesia, Turkey and Egypt are all Muslim-majority countries that have undergone significant social, economic and political changes. But whereas the representatives of Islamic politics succeeded in gaining access to, and then dominating, the state in Turkey, their counterparts in Indonesia have continually failed to do the same. Moreover, the Egyptian case can be counterposed to both Indonesia and Turkey given the success of the Muslim Brotherhood in dominating civil society-based opposition in that country for decades but its inability to hold on to state power once it was presented with the opportunity to do so.

This book examines such divergent trajectories through the lens of a new Islamic populism, merging the interests, aspirations and grievances of a cross-section of social classes, particularly the urban poor, the new urban middle class and possibly peripheralised segments of the bourgeoisie, in potentially powerful ways. The development of these broad and varied social bases distinguishes the newer from the older form of Islamic populism that had been more fully rooted in the traditional urban and rural petty bourgeoisie, and significantly shapes Islamic politics in the contemporary era. It is noteworthy that the older form of Islamic populism was already in steep decline during the era of Western colonial domination over much of the Muslim world. Like all populisms, the Islamic variant involves the mobilisation and homogenisation of a range of disparate grievances of the 'masses' against identified 'elites'.

[3] See Tagma (2011) for a critical examination of the 'Turkish model', especially in relation to possible emulation in Arab countries.

It is therefore important to consider the social bases of populist politics (Ionescu and Gelner 1969). In this connection, it is critical that the transformation of the social bases of Islamic populism is connected to the social changes commonly associated with the advance of the capitalist economy, as always so uneven and contradiction-ridden, and to more recent pressures emanating from neoliberal globalisation processes. Another key factor in the shaping of the new Islamic populism is the legacy of the outcomes of Cold War-era social conflicts that entangled Islamic social and political movements, typically resulting in the eradication or domestication of leftist and even liberal political currents. In both the older and new forms, however, a central conception of Islamic populism is that of the *ummah* as proxy for 'the people' – the virtuous masses who are juxtaposed (in classic populist fashion) against an elite characterised as being immoral and rapacious.

In other words, the new Islamic populism is but a specific manifestation of populist politics. As discussed in the next chapter, contemporary populist politics, whether in the developing world or in the advanced industrialised countries, is very much connected to social contradictions intimately related to participation in the processes of neoliberal globalisation. This is the case even if the present manifestations borrow some of their ideological baggage from prior traditions of populist politics that had emerged under different sets of circumstances.

It is also suggested in this study that the main project of the new Islamic populism is defined in terms of the favourable repositioning of the marginalised *ummah* within the confines of the nation state through an array of possible strategies of contestation, which does not necessarily involve the overt call to establish a state based on Islamic law, the Sharia. At the same time, neither is there linear correspondence with an embrace of modern democratic politics; instead the relationship between the political agenda of the new Islamic populism and democratic procedures and rights is highly contingent, as it is with acceptance of the precepts of the neoliberal world order. The logic of this contingency is to be found in the specific contexts of political struggle within which the new Islamic populism has been forged.[4]

Thus, the conceptual foundations of this book differ markedly from that of Bayat's perceptive and highly influential work on 'post-Islamism', which is

[4] I refer to the idea of contingency as developed in the critical political economy literature. It features strongly in the work of Eva Bellin (e.g. 'Contingent Democrats', *World Politics* 52, 2000: 175–205), for example, in her discussion of the dispositions of capital and labour in relation to democracy in varying contexts. It should be pointed out that contingency is quite different from the idea of critical juncture, with which it may be confused. The latter is rooted in historical institutionalism and refers to a short period when structural conditions that impact on political choices are relaxed, therefore resulting in a greater range of political possibilities (Capoccia and Kelemen 2007: 342). By contrast, contingency in critical political economy is about how the direction of social change depends on the outcomes of social conflict within specific constellations of power and interests.

generally presented as political adaptation in a single direction: towards 'a more rights-centred and inclusive outlook that favors a civil/secular state operating within a pious society' (Bayat 2013b: 29). Not surprisingly, Bayat's original model was the case of Iran after it became increasingly clear that there was no viable or ready-made 'Islamic' template of economic and political governance to which the Islamic Republic could latch on.

Importantly, while the *ummah* is traditionally understood in supranational terms, it has come to develop an increasingly national outlook as Islamic movements evolved through a concrete struggle against national authoritarian states.[5] The latter is by no means a new observation. Writing specifically on the Middle East, Owen (2004: 15) notes how the *ummah* has come to be conceived more strongly in relation to the community of believers within a particular country. It is maintained here, additionally, that such a conception facilitates a process of homogenising political identities that can be useful in forging multi-class alliances in societies that are becoming increasingly complex. These need to primarily transcend the reality of diverse and mutually contradictory social interests emerging from the profound social changes that have been taking place over the last half-century.

It might also be added that even where the embrace of political and economic reforms has taken place, this has only resulted in the partial and hesitant shedding of the social conservatism that continues to serve as a major marker of Islamic political identity. Thus, there can remain considerable tentativeness about accepting women as equals to men in the public sphere,[6] and certainly, there continues to be almost uniformly strong rejection of homosexual rights even among Muslims who see themselves as 'modern' and 'liberal'. The impulse to place barriers on the role of religious minorities in the state and the economy can also remain strong. But rather than just the durable elements of a traditional 'Islamism' (Bayat 2013b: 29), all this can be viewed as part of

[5] As discussed further in this book, such is the case in spite of the Pan-Islamic outlook of the Hizbut Tahrir and the supranational ambitions of organisations like Al-Qaeda or Jemaah Islamiyah in Southeast Asia. The same might be said in relation to the subsequent rise of Islamic State in Iraq and Syria (ISIS), which clearly gained impetus during the protracted conflict in Syria against the Assad regime.

[6] On the patriarchal values that continue to imbue Egypt's Muslim Brotherhood, even as it took the democratic route to power, see Badran (2013). Also see Shehata (2012: 28–29) on its wavering position on equal rights for religious minorities. According to Marwa Adam, Egyptian political and feminist NGO activist, even the female activists of the Muslim Brotherhood, known as the 'Sisters', are only interested in penetrating society to spread fundamentalist ideas rather than to empower women. Interview, Alexandria, 20 December 2014. Buruma (2013) has observed that the economically liberalising and electorally successful AKP in Turkey can be simultaneously illiberal in the social values it promotes. Taşpinar (2012: 133) thus notes that AKP views on family and gender issues remain decidedly archaic and constitute a barrier to the progress of women in society. Their counterparts in Indonesia, as shown in this study, often hold similarly illiberal views on a host of social issues even if many will support democratic politics and, to some extent, the virtues of engagement with neoliberal globalisation.

the intricate mechanisms by which the new Islamic populism mobilises a kind of identity politics among an increasingly diverse *ummah* in order to forge social alliances that are, in effect, multi-class in nature for the purposes of contesting power and resources. It is in part the ability to claim authority over the symbols, terminology and imagery associated with religious identity that endows the new Islamic populism with the potential to bring together disparate members of society that have nevertheless commonly experienced modernity, though to different degrees, as socially, politically and economically marginalising.

In comparative perspective

Islamic politics have been most commonly studied in relation to the Middle East (and North Africa). However, new insights can be gained by positioning the case of Indonesia in a comparative study. Indonesia is host to the largest Muslim population in the world – around 88 per cent of its approximately 250 million people. Emphasis is placed here on Indonesia's evolving political economy and on the historical and sociological dynamics that have characterised that country's trajectory from the late colonial period to the present post-authoritarian phase, and the forging of the new Islamic populism within decades of social transformation. It is asserted that deeper understanding of the complexities of the Indonesian case can be achieved through a comparative exercise that will cast light not only on the specific features of Islamic politics in that country but also on the broader phenomenon of the new Islamic populism itself.

With this in mind, the book examines the Indonesian trajectory by drawing close comparisons with some Middle Eastern experiences, especially those of Egypt and Turkey. These are two other large Muslim-majority countries within which the evolution of Islamic populism has been clearly connected to contradictions emanating from Cold War-era social conflicts, integration into the world capitalist economy and democratisation struggles – however problematic or halting. All of these countries have problems, furthermore, rooted in development processes that have been skewed, leading to social disparities, including those expressed in the proliferation of the new urban poor as well as large cohorts of relatively highly educated youths who are either unemployed or have little prospect of meaningful employment, much less social and material advancement. References to other cases are also made, though to a lesser extent, including to Tunisia, Morocco and Iran.

It should be stated at the outset, therefore, that the book is focused on explaining the shaping of the new Islamic populism in conjunction with a number of key themes external to that of the doctrines of the Islamic religion itself and through a set of theoretical issues examined especially in Chapter 2. Most prominent among

these themes are the historical legacies of the age of Western colonial domination, the reshaping of the socio-political landscape of most of the Muslim world during the Cold War, the concurrent evolution of mainly secular state power, and socio-economic change, principally but not exclusively in the present neoliberal and highly globalised phase. In the process, the book explores the evolution of Islamic politics in relation to social transformations that have altered the prevailing constellation of power and interest, providing the context for diverse trajectories. The approach adopted means that the new Islamic populism is understood as being deeply intertwined with distinctly modern kinds of politics and social conflict (Zubaida 2009: 63–64) that have come to the fore in conjunction with the entrenchment of particular modes of power and wealth distribution in many parts of the Muslim world. In this sense, it broadly follows a tradition in the scholarly analysis of Islamic politics associated with authors that range from Rodinson (1966 [2007]) to Halliday (1996), and more recently, Bayat (2007, 2013) and Zubaida (2011), who tend to emphasise social and historical context over the content of religious scripture or their interpretation.

Virtually all such authors, however, have focussed their writings on the Middle East or on Arab countries, the assumed 'core' of the Muslim world – and do not address cases outside of it – such as Indonesia and the broader Southeast Asian region. In helping to fill this gap, the interest in questions of historical sociology and political economy means that this study focusses on the development of Islamic populist politics within broader socio-economic and historical processes that have elicited political appeals often expressed in the terminology, imagery and the claimed social justice ideals of the Islamic religion.[7] The main implication of adopting such an approach is to direct scholarly attention away from a focus on interpretations of Islamic doctrine in shaping Islamic politics or the effects of varieties of religious traditions on the behaviour of social actors. Attempts to explain Islamic politics by way of interpretations of doctrine and cultural orientation have been a particularly strong characteristic of the literature relating to Indonesia and, by and large, to Southeast Asia more generally, especially since the advent of the War on Terror and the region's emergence as its presumptive 'second front' in the early 2000s (Gershman 2002). A major aim of the latter approach has been to understand the competing influences of intolerant and inflexible traditions of political behaviour among Muslims and those that are seen to be more inclusive and malleable.

[7] According to Tripp (2006: 69), there is little precedent for the idea of 'social justice' in classical Islamic thought but it came to the fore in the writings of modern thinkers like Qutb in Egypt, Mawdudi in South Asia and Bazargan and Syariati in Iran. While making reference to 'divine justice', their ideas of social justice were induced more directly by the encounter with the socially dislocating and marginalising effects of Western capitalism during the age of colonialism. See Qutb's (2000) work for texts that remain particularly influential among activists today.

However, this book takes a vastly different approach. Inspired by a stream within the study of Islamic politics in the Middle East that has been more strongly influenced by political economy and historical sociology considerations, it examines how the new Islamic populism has been made possible by the immensely altered social bases of Islamic politics over the last half-century.[8] It explores the implications of such changes for present-day – nationally defined – struggles over states and markets in the Muslim world. Thus, the main social agents of Islamic politics in the past were to be found among petty commodity producers, small urban traders – the so-called men of the bazaars – or among minor rural propertied interests. Nevertheless, as the social structures of Muslim-majority societies like Indonesia have become more complex, so too has the composition of the social agents of Islamic politics.

Though largely supplanted by subsequent developments, these petty commodity producers and traders did leave important historical legacies, not least the incorporation of social justice objectives within political agendas expressed in the idioms of Islam. While in seemingly perpetual decline since the apogee of global Western colonial domination, they had articulated their grievances and aspirations with reference to the ideals and morality they viewed to be inherent in the Islamic religion. But like today's representatives of Islamic politics, they were also inevitably projecting their own prosaic concerns onto their religious faith. Thus, the social justice concerns of the older form of Islamic populism were associated primarily with efforts to revive the fortunes or protect the social position of the traditional petty bourgeoisie in the face of continuing threats of marginalisation, as clearly seen in the much examined case of the Sarekat Islam (SI) in the colonial-era Dutch East Indies. In pursuing its agenda, the SI became the receptacle of struggle for social groups that were systematically marginalised under the colonial order in the 1910s and 1920s, not least small traders and producers increasingly besieged by Chinese

[8] The political economy aspects of this work also represent an application and extension of the theoretical concerns of what is often dubbed 'the Murdoch School of Political Economy', which emerged out of the Asia Research Centre at Murdoch University, Australia, in the 1990s. Influenced in particular by British, and to a lesser extent, Continental European traditions of scholarship in political economy, its researchers have mainly concentrated on Southeast Asia (see Rodan, Hewison and Robison 2006). From this point of view, the present study could be seen as an effort to extend the application of the work of the Murdoch School beyond the region and its environs and to a subject matter only rarely touched upon before (see Hadiz and Robison 2012). According to Robison (2014: 27), at the heart of this political economy of Islamic politics is the proposition that 'its various manifestations are part of larger processes of change as modern capitalism is entrenched and sweeps aside older forms of economic and social life based on land or rents or colonial authority. The new economic and social order, in this view, is shaped in conflicts over power between declining and emerging interests and alliances that change over time'. Thus, understanding 'Islamic politics means that we must examine how fundamental changes in capitalism itself creates new social forces and interests and consigns others to the margins.'

interlopers.[9] Given that their marginalisation was attributable to the workings of the existing state, one solution to the predicament appeared in the form of the establishment of a future state that was to be based on Islamic law, however it was to be imagined.

Today the SI is widely accepted as a major precursor of the Indonesian nationalist, anti-colonial movement, having progressed within a relatively short period as a formidable mass organisation before being sidelined in later developments by a combination of colonial state repression and, importantly, the appearance of new rivals, including the Indonesian Communist Party (PKI), to which it had ironically helped to give birth (McVey 1965 [2006]; Shiraishi 1990). In the process, the SI tried to establish footholds within the small Indonesian working class, based then in industries such as transportation and in the vital plantations sector. But the SI had to give way to the rising secular nationalist political tendencies as epitomised by the emergence of Soekarno, the future first president of the Republic of Indonesia. This was also the fate of the PKI, which would become the subject of intense colonial state repression and therefore reduced to a basically underground movement for two decades, before the outbreak of Indonesia's independence war following the end of the Japanese occupation in 1945.

Parallel experiences, in fact, can be found in many other Muslim-majority societies. Most strikingly, the inception of the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt in the 1920s was as much a response to British colonial domination as it was facilitated by the demise of the Ottoman Caliphate after World War I. These gave rise to new yearnings for a supranational state belonging to the *ummah*. But this response 'drew much of its support from classes that feared change, namely the petty bourgeoisie and the trading and artisan classes' (Pargeter 2010: 10), for whom colonial domination meant marginalisation and an uncertain future. Like the SI, the Muslim Brotherhood came to develop strongholds within other sections of society; thus it initially had a significant following within the labour movement (Beinin and Lockman 1998).

Such then were the typical underpinnings of early Islamic-based social and political movements in a range of Muslim-majority societies in the first decades of the twentieth century. It should be noted that in societies where Islamic politics played only a small role in the rise of nationalist movements – such as in Tunisia – inspiration was nonetheless drawn subsequently from traditions associated with Islamic movements that had contributed to galvanising dissent

[9] Interestingly, leading SI activist Abdoel Moeis is noted to have described the organisation in strikingly populist terms. For him, the SI was 'a reaction to an already long digested backwardness, to a long felt oppression and withholding of all rights'. It was, moreover, 'a movement of protest amongst masses of the "little man" and their "scream for rights, for rights, for *rights*"'. This must have facilitated the fact that SI 'boasted a membership of over two million' at the height of its powers (Van Dijk 1981: 24).

against colonial rule. Thus, the stream within Tunisian politics that would eventually give rise to the En Nahda party, in power for more than two years following that country's Arab Spring, has drawn much from the experience of the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood (Alexander 2010, 2012).

But as we see in Chapters 3 and 4, the representatives of Islamic political tendencies ultimately failed to dominate anti-colonial movements in much of the Muslim world where early post-colonial states tended to be secular nationalist and developmentalist in their outlook (Hadiz and Robison 2012). The most important tendencies within these anti-colonial movements, in fact, came to be dominated by secular elites drawn from the ranks of nationalist intellectuals and politicians who grew out of bureaucratic families, as well as small groups of professionals or military men that were cultivated within the colonial social order itself. These elites eventually gave rise to such nationalist parties as the National Liberation Front (FLN) in Algeria, the Ba'athists in Syria and Iraq, the Destour Party in Tunisia and the PNI (Indonesian National Party) in Indonesia. In the case of Egypt, the Muslim Brotherhood had to contend with the formidable pro-monarchist Wafd Party, although it was the Free Officers under Nasser who overthrew the monarchy and put an end to British domination, which gave rise to the dominant Arab Socialist Union.

All the post-colonial states dominated by such vehicles adopted economic nationalist agendas where domestic industry was to be protected and subsidised and thus the economy fell largely into the hands of state-owned corporations. This development continued the relative marginalisation of the traditional petty bourgeoisie (Hadiz and Robison 2012), this time by the new holders of state bureaucratic power. As Keyder (1987: 105) noted, such a statist model of economic development had already appeared in Turkey – the former centre of the last Caliphate – from the 1930s. Though Turkey never experienced direct colonial subjugation, the Kemalist revolution saw the emergence of a new secular nationalist state that was driven by reformers drawn from the military elite and the civilian bureaucracy and which, for decades, went on to suppress challenges that were ideologically framed through Islamic cultural references and which represented the interests of those sidelined since the triumph of the republic.[10]

In the early twenty-first century, however, those who articulate their grievances, aspirations and interests on the basis of references to Islamic ideals, especially of social justice and morality, represent a much greater cross-section of societal elements than ever before. These are now better ensconced in social classes emerging out of capitalist transformation and integration with the

[10] Kemalist ideology is formally made of up six principles introduced in 1931: 'republicanism, nationalism, populism, statism, secularism and something that can be translated as either permanent revolutionism or reformism' (Owen 2004: 20).