Istanbul Sabahattin Zaim University

Examining Fault Lines Facing Muslim Societies

Nationalism

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Center for Islam and Global Affairs

Islam and Muslim Societies Studies [IMSS] 1

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Center for Islam and Global Affairs,
Istanbul Sabahattin Zaim University, Halkalı, Küçükçekmece, 34303

Tel.: +90-212-692-9689
Fax.: +90-212-693-8229
E-mail: ciga@izu.edu.tr
Web: ciga.izu.edu.tr

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Foreword

For decades, scholars and academics have been debating the causes behind the steep decline in wealth and power across Muslim-majority countries during the past two centuries. There are certainly many explanatory theories for the resulting strategic weakness of many of these societies, their relative political disintegration, and the abject failure in maintaining functioning states capable of providing their citizens with basic social and economic needs. With the arrival of the colonial European powers in the nineteenth century, the collapse of the Ottoman Empire in the early twentieth century, the rise of the nation-state system, and the imposition of the neo-liberal order by global powers, Muslim societies have had to contend with great challenges from a vastly disadvantaged position.

The Center for Islam and Global Affairs (CIGA) at Istanbul Sabahattin Zaim University (IZU) is pleased to present five studies on some of the most significant fault lines and perils facing Muslim societies today, namely the challenges of nationalism, sectarianism, secularism, and feminism or empowerment of women in Muslim societies. The papers in this booklet are the results of presentations given by four renowned scholars during past CIGA conferences. We hope that the ideas in the papers will stimulate more discussion, debate, and future research about these important topics.

Department of Islam and Muslim Societies Studies (IMSS)
Center for Islam and Global Affairs (CIGA)

Abstracts

Islam and the Challenge of Nationalism

Prof. Abdullah Al-Arian

Nationalism has long been considered a force that emerged as an existential challenge to the continuity of the global community of Muslims, or Ummah. Twentieth century responses to nationalism among Muslim thinkers and movement leaders tended to place Islam and nationalism on opposite ends of an ideological spectrum. Western scholars and policymakers have largely done the same, constructing a binary in which nationalism existed as a force that organized modern societies on a radically different basis, one that subsumed religious identity, beliefs and practices beneath a broader set of cultural identifiers. This paper interrogates some of the basic assumptions behind this thinking. It begins by offering an overview regarding the emergence of nationalism in the Islamic world as both an ideological project that challenged prevailing conceptions of identity and citizenship, as well as its role in shaping crucial historical developments that helped lead to the collapse of traditional empires and the rise of nation states. It then proceeds to discuss the evolving responses to the challenges posed by nationalism, whether from late nineteenth century intellectuals, or mid-twentieth century leaders of Islamic revivalist movements including the Muslim Brotherhood and its offshoots. The paper contends that these movements have not, on balance, reflected a fundamental opposition to nationalism or the reorganization of Muslim polities into new units based on different considerations as they have resisted the subordination of lived faith experiences beneath secular colonial and post-colonial state systems rooted in these constructed nationalisms. This can be observed through a number of historical examples of the Islamist movement's evolving response to the challenges of nationalism, most recently in its embrace of nationalist symbols and expressions during and after the Arab Spring uprisings. Indeed, the success of these movements to advance their activist missions has come to depend on their ability to reorient their ideological program to accommodate a contemporary political reality rooted in nationalism as the basic organizing principle.

The Challenge of Sectarianism: The Future of Sunni-Shia Relations

Prof. Nader Hashemi

In his critically acclaimed book, *The Shia Revival: How Conflicts within Islam Will Shape the Future*, Vali Nasr has suggested that traditional concepts and categories used to explicate the Middle East, such as modernity, democracy, fundamentalism and nationalism, no longer adequately explain the politics of the region. It “is rather the old feud between Shias and Sunnis that forges attitudes, defines prejudices, draws political boundary lines, and even decides whether and to what extent those other trends have relevance.”
In keeping with this argument, President Obama on numerous occasions invoked the phrase “ancient sectarian differences” to explain the turmoil and conflict in the Arab-Islamic world today. The “only organizing principles [in the region] are sectarian,” he claimed and this is because we are dealing with conflicts that “date back millennia.”
This raises the question how old is the feud between Shias and Sunnis and how far back in history can we trace the origins of sectarianism in the hope of illuminating the contemporary turmoil in the Middle East?
Rejecting the paradigm of “ancient sectarian hatreds” this paper locates the roots of sectarian conflict in late twentieth century and not in the seventh century. More specifically, the political context that illuminates the question of sectarianism is the persistence of political authoritarianism – as the dominant feature of the politics of the Middle East – and the crisis of legitimacy facing ruling regimes that has followed as a consequence. The political mobilization and manipulation of sectarian identities, it will be argued, is a key strategy for regime survival and it is within this framework that the question of sectarianism can be better understood. Drawing on the literature of “ethnic political mobilization” and the literature in international relations (that explains the regional rivalry between Saudi Arabia and Iran), the question of sectarianism will be analyzed as function of the “broken politics” of the Middle East and not due to irreconcilable theological differences between Sunnis and Shias. In short, the problem of sectarianism in the Middle East today is function of politics, not piety.

What Should be the Theoretical Ground of Interdenominational Harmony and Peace?

Prof. Mehmet Ali Büyükkara

Conflicts and controversies caused by denominations and several religious movements continue to be leading factors that disrupt social peace and stability in Islamic World, even lead to bloody disasters. In order to prevent the risk of confrontation, different theories and projects have so far been developed, legislation works have been improved, and, through the efforts of dialogue, certain results have been achieved.

One of the issues that must be discussed is the theoretical approach that should be applicable in this process. The first approach has a claim to return to the main sources of the religion. Through the return to a kind of supra-denominational idea, differences could be easily minimized and sectarian peace could be safely provided. In this approach, defining, designing, uniforming and centralist characteristics of modernism would evidently manifest itself.

In the other approach, a multi-cultural post-modern character is more apparent. All denominational-sectarian-communal formations are accepted as reality regardless of their righteousness or fallaciousness, and a certain consensus is tried to reach in a multiple and equal atmosphere apart from any theoretical and theological determinations and efforts of orientation.

In this paper, by comparing the above-mentioned theoretical and practical approaches, I will try to set forth what sort of approach can be consistent and more useful to provide sectarian peace and reconciliation in the current situation of the Islamic World.

Mapping the Secular: The Ummah and the Challenges of the 'Urban Divide'

Prof. Heba Raouf Ezzat

For more than a century the divide between the socio-political groups and parties in the Muslim world has been going along the ideological lines.

Though the Islamists never admitted that they are just another political force with yet another ideology, and often times emphasize their religious frame of reference as unique and superior, they never managed to formulate a different course of action. They actually -and in a pragmatic way- adopted and accommodated many modernist conceptions and tools, where they sometimes manipulated them in contrast to their own rationale, as in the case of the over- politicization of the civil and syndicate or unions' platforms, when they were deprived of legitimate political platforms of representations.

This paper argues that this divide is deceiving and obscures other significant divides that are more crucial and important, such as the rural/Bedouin/urban divide; the class divide, the civil/military divide (not relations), the non-egalitarian visions and various social practices against women, as well as the generational divide. All these factors have had greater impact on the political map, the social dynamics, and the very potential of reform (*Islah*) in society.

Based on the Egyptian context this paper would also reflect on the urban scene in Egypt as an example, with specific attention given to the urban-habitat divide and the rise of gated communities, and their implications on the future of a geographical divide that threatens the common good, as well as the wider security of the nation and the future of its civility.

Empowering Women and Youth in Muslim Societies

Prof. Asmaa Afsaruddin

This paper will give a brief discussion on Islam's role in empowering women as well as on showing particular solicitude for women and youth. It will further discuss the prominent roles played by women and young people in the recent pro-democracy movements during the Arab Spring and how democratic societies that provide free access to information through the Internet and social media are ultimately very empowering of these two groups. The paper will then proceed to outline some practical suggestions for empowering both groups in today's globalizing world marked by diminishing resources, political conflict, technological revolution, and population explosion. With regard to women, practical suggestions for enhancing their empowerment would be proposed. They include: validating women's traditional roles within the family without limiting their opportunities; confronting the issues of domestic violence and family abuse; acknowledging the importance of women's volunteer activities; increasing women's access to education in many disciplines; emphasis to learn inspiring stories of Muslim women through history who played prominent roles in their time; endowing scholarships for women in order to pursue opportunities in higher education and research; allowing women in mosque administrative committees and in the leadership of organizations that deal with Muslim issues, and to be part of the collective decision-making process. With regard to the youth, the paper would address the problem of the "youth bulge" in Muslim-majority countries that cannot provide commensurate employment and educational opportunities. Constituting nearly one fourth of the world youth population, Muslim youth are confronted by many political, socio-cultural, as well as economic challenges in the contemporary world. Without adequate attention to their needs, young people can become a destabilizing force or even radicalized. Among the practical suggestions the paper will offer is that Muslim-majority societies support the education of young people that provides a holistic Islamic education as well, by emphasizing the internal diversity of the Islamic tradition and its

historical emphasis on inclusion, tolerance, and magnanimity towards others. Wealthier Muslim-majority nations have a particular responsibility in sharing their wealth with more impoverished nations for the greater commonwealth of the global Muslim community especially the youth.

I. Islam and the Challenge of Nationalism

Abdullah Al-Arian

We have a major challenge in taking on such massive topics that one could spend an entire conference dissecting the various facets of just the question of sectarianism, secularism, or in my case, nationalism. Rather than attempt to tackle the entire question of Islam and the challenge of nationalism, I am going to try and restrict my comments to assessing the question of nationalism primarily from the perspective of the only actors that continue to consider it a "challenge," the last holdouts to the rise of nation-states, as it were: the Islamists.

What I plan to do is explore how the perception of nationalism has evolved over time from a phenomenon considered to pose an existential threat to the integrity of the Ummah, the global community of Muslims, to one that has been largely integrated into the activist missions of the majority of Islamist movements across the Middle East and North Africa regions. Ultimately, I argue that many contemporary analyses that continue to pit Islamism and nationalism on opposing ends of a spectrum of political ideologies are largely outdated, or suffer from sweeping generalizations that fail to distinguish between particular modes of Islamist activism, of which only a minority continues to express opposition to nationalism as a force of political and social organization.

Part of the problem with the way that this question is handled is the tendency to assume static definitions of the concepts in question. Without taking into account the historical context for the emergence and development of the various forms of nationalism and, in turn, the "Islamic" responses to them, we are left with an impression that this has been an ongoing struggle between the same two forces for the past two hundred years. Rather than viewing nationalism simply as a modern European concept without the proper antecedent in classical Islamic political thought to pave the way for its entry into modern Muslim societies, it would be more fitting to examine it in relation to the power hierarchies at work between nineteenth century empires.

If the responses across the Muslim empires are any indication, the concerns with the spread of European-style nationalism was not that it was seen as an affront to notions of a historical Islamic unity than it was about the fact that European empires exploited nationalist expressions on the part of minority groups within the Ottoman Empire in order to establish a greater degree of political and economic influence while undermining the sovereignty of the empire. This was particularly true of the Greek Revolt during the earlier part of the century, an event which continued to loom large over all subsequent expressions of nationalism that were interpreted as imperial attempts to subvert and dismember the Ottoman Empire.

Jamal ad-Din al-Afghani, viewed as one of the originators of the Islamic modernist movement, was also one of the most prominent critics of European imperialism in his day. He promoted a political response to Western encroachment grounded in the reassertion of Islamic values, eventually articulating what would come to be known as pan-Islamism: that is, the need to unite Muslim populations in the face of the external threats they faced. Pan-Islamism was eventually adopted as an ideological project guiding the policies of the Ottoman ruling elites during the reign of Sultan Abdelhamid II. It was viewed largely as an attempt to balance the rising tide of nationalist claims by the empire's non-Muslim populations by appealing to Muslim populations outside of the empire, and uniting those who remained within its borders, but had also begun to express political grievances along ethnic and cultural lines.

I think it's worth questioning the characterization of pan-Islamism as an anti-nationalist project. While it may have attempted to stem the tide of growing nationalist agitation, pan-Islamism was also a form of nationalist expression in that it packaged a set of common cultural identifiers within which to legitimize attempts to govern a population within a bounded territory.

In fact, al-Afghani's legacy defies the narrative that views pan-Islamism as requiring political unity of all Muslims in every place. He famously traveled through multiple empires, attempting to influence the rulers of Egypt, Qajar Iran, and the Ottoman Empire. In India, he wrote

favorably of the nationalist aspirations of Indian Muslims and Hindus in their struggle against British imperialism and made no references to a broader union among India's Muslims and those elsewhere. In Egypt, he supported the revolt led by Col. Ahmed Urabi under the banner of "Egypt for the Egyptians."

If the Islamic modernists believed that Muslim unity was an ideal that nevertheless allowed for Muslims to act locally on the basis of geographic, cultural, and linguistic solidarities, they would soon also come to accept that these national identities would become territorially bounded within states. Muhammad Abduh, Afghani's leading disciple and the prominent modernist reformer, was a supporter of the Urabi Revolt, for which he was promptly exiled. He also devoted the final years of his life as Mufti of Egypt to the standardization of the Egyptian legal code to be in keeping with the demands of a modern state.

But when we follow the thread of Abduh's disciples, scholars generally place them within the binary of secular nationalists and Islamic reformers. On one side we have Saad Zaghloul and the leaders of the Wafd Party who envisioned an independent Egypt freed from British imperialism, with a liberal parliament and a constitutional monarchy. They relied on Abduh's reformist ideas to free the nationalist movement from the shackles of religious traditionalism to construct a new political and social order. Other liberal nationalists emerged in other corners of the Arab world and beyond employing similar methods. On the other side, one sees a narrative develop around the more conservative voices who welcomed Abduh's call to return to the original sources of Islam, but did so in order to challenge the encroachment of European hegemony and the attempts to refashion state institutions in a way that was seen to undermine traditional Islamic institutions.

Because of these critiques, Rashid Rida has been characterized as a critic of the nationalist movement. But once again, I would caution against adhering to that kind of reading. Roughly two decades after Abduh's death, Rida was confronting a new reality: the defeat of the Ottoman Empire, the formalization of European claims to Arab lands, the territorial division of those lands along lines that suited colonial interests,

and ultimately the collapse of the caliphate. In the face of these challenges, Rida made appeals for the preservation of the territorial integrity of the Ottoman Empire's Arab lands and for the continuation of the caliphate. At the same time, he increasingly recognized that challenges to imperialism were being organized along nationalist lines.

Rida wrote that "the contemporary notion of patriotism expresses the unity of the people of different religions in their homeland, and their cooperation in defending the homeland they share. They cooperate to preserve its independence, to win it back if it was lost, and to develop it." "The type of patriotism that should adorn a Muslim youth is that he be a good example for the people of the homeland, no matter what their religious affiliation, cooperating with them in every legitimate action for independence, for developing science, virtue, force, and resources on the basis of the Islamic law of preferring the closest relations in rights and duties. In his service of his homeland and his people he must not, however, neglect Islam which has honored him and raised him up by making a brother to hundreds of millions of Muslims in the world. He is a member of a body greater than his people, and his personal homeland is a part of the homeland of his religious community. He must be intent on making the progress of the part a means for the progress of the whole." *Fatwas*, *al-Manar*, vol. 33 (1933), pp. 191-92.

The idea that one's allegiance to their nation did not necessarily come at the expense of their allegiance to the greater Muslim community was not a new one and has roots in classical Islamic thought. The difference here, of course, is that the nation was taking on a new sense 1) as territorially bound within a state structure and 2) being increasingly defined at the popular level/organized elite politics rather than established political authority.

Shades of Rida's sentiment can be seen in the mission of Hasan al-Banna, founder of the Muslim Brotherhood. Before we even delve into his statements and actions, the very establishment of an organization such as the Society of the Muslim Brothers signaled a recognition that the imagining (or re-imagining) of Muslim identity was now taking place at the level of society beyond the increasingly contentious domain of

political elites or the increasingly limited domain of religious officials. The Society was founded in 1928, just four years removed from the deepest crisis to afflict the Ummah in its history—the collapse of a caliphate that had stood for thirteen centuries. It's hard to overstate the impact that this moment had. The vacuum that was created had two major immediate effects: 1) removing a common frame of reference that bound the global community of Muslims and leaving them essentially open to being re-categorized along different lines; i.e. nation states; 2) paved the way for a bottom-up process of political contestation by lay actors: in this case, a schoolteacher in Ismailia with no formal religious training launched a movement to preserve Egyptian society's Islamic character and to instill Islamic values into the state's emerging institutions.

So back to the original question: was it nationalism to which the first organized popular expression of political Islam was objecting? It wouldn't appear so. While Banna was explicitly critical of colonial attempts to redraw the boundaries of the Arab territories across the former Ottoman Empire and expressed particular ire for the Zionist settlement of Palestine, he agreed that Muslims should, to borrow a contemporary slogan, "think globally but act locally." He was critical of the partisanship of the liberal parliamentary experiment and the corruption of the monarchy but he stopped short of questioning the legitimacy of the Egyptian state and was content operating within the bounds of the state. In fact, he stood for parliamentary elections on more than one occasion and wrote public letters to the king imploring him to implement Islamic reforms within the Egyptian state and to lead the Muslim Ummah by example. As the movement expanded beyond Egypt, it developed local branches that were determined purely along national lines: a Sudanese Ikhwan, a Syrian Ikhwan, a Jordanian Ikhwan, and so forth. As the only one without a state to which it could be confined, the Palestinian Ikhwan was subsumed beneath its neighboring branches, which is the exception that proves the rule.

In effect, what the Muslim Brotherhood was resisting was not so much nationalism as its secular variation that had come to dominate the state building process. The leading intellectuals who were articulating the

vision for the Egyptian state were not only the leaders of the Wafd Party, but figures like Ali Abd al-Raziq, (who argued that the Ummah was never intended to be united politically) and Taha Husayn, who believed that Egypt's future lay in adopting a Western European model for social and political organization. From that moment, the battle lines were drawn and those advocating for an Islamic character to the modern nation state would find themselves marginalized, on the outside looking in. The state would continue to privilege a narrow reading of nationalism that limited the place of Islamic values in its institutions. I hesitate to call this a "secular" approach to the state, considering that the state nevertheless moved to exercise control over official religious institutions, such as the move to nationalize Al-Azhar, one of the oldest independent institutions of Islamic learning.

Had the emerging post-colonial states truly adopted a liberal system, perhaps the future course of Islamist advocacy would have been different. Islamist parties would have more passionately embraced their role as Muslim Democrats in the same way that Christian Democrats were emerging in Europe after World War II. But that's not what happened. Instead, the 1950s and 1960s saw the replacement of liberal elites with the radical nationalism of military governments and mass political parties like the Ba'ath Party and their subsequent repression of all political trends within society.

Which brings us to Sayyid Qutb. Don't worry, I'm not going to argue that Qutb was secretly a nationalist. Among other things, Qutb wrote, "Islam, then, is the only divine way of life which brings out the noblest human characteristics, developing and using them for the construction of human society…those who deviate from this system and want some other system, whether it's based on nationalism, color and race, class struggle, or similar corrupt theories, are truly enemies of mankind!" So, there is no doubting that, by the 1960s, the Islamist political trend skewed away from its tacit acceptance of nationalism as the basis for the contemporary political organization of Muslims. But what I would add to that is in our reading of the evolution of Islamic political thought, we must take the context into account. I do not intend

to challenge Nazih Ayubi's thesis in *Overstating the Arab State*, but it is important to note that his is a political-economy analysis. If we are going by a different metric, namely, the state's determination to impose a particular definition of the nation, then it is hard to overstate the extent to which these radical nationalist regimes worked to force a singular vision of the state and its national character onto their societies, a project that faced vehement rejection from large segments of these societies, most prominently among the Islamist movements. In other words, as long as Gamal Abdel Nasser, Hafez al-Assad, and Saddam Hussein would dictate what it meant to be Egyptian, Syrian, or Iraqi, these groups wanted nothing to do with those national identities. In fact, Abdel Nasser not only wanted to define Egyptian identity, but Arab identity more broadly, which meant Islamists at this juncture were not only critical of their respective nationalist projects, but openly rejected Arabism as a project, something we don't really see in prior eras. The 1967 defeat served as a critical breaking point, an event that proved to Islamists that Arab nationalism was an insufficient basis upon which to rally the Ummah.

From here, one can follow two distinct threads to the question of Islamism and nationalism. On the one hand, there are those who internalized the Qutbist critique and the post-1967 Islamist literature with its condemnation of nationalism as typified in these authoritarian regimes, viewing them as irredeemable and therefore to be opposed purely through the lens of the Ummah. Groups like al-Gama'a al-Islamiyya, al-Takfir wal-Higra engaged in armed conflict with the state. That Higra, emigration, which involved the total boycott of the state and the retreat to the caves of upper Egypt, became viewed as the only viable option is indicative of a deep-seated but perhaps unsustainable rejection of one's nation. Another form of emigration which proved to be more durable was the engagement in a kind of pan-Islamist resistance as seen in the Afghan jihad of the 1980s and the subsequent formation of al-Qaeda as an extra-territorial expression of anti-nationalism.

On the other hand, the bulk of the Islamist movement would continue to seek opportunities to insert itself within the national context. One of the unintended consequences of the attempts by authoritarian

rulers to impose a powerful state onto their societies is it established a fixation among Islamists with state power in an unprecedented way. The Muslim Brotherhood benefited from the liberalization policies of the Sadat regime to expand their presence in the social services sector, gain control of student unions and professional syndicates, and ultimately pursue representation in parliament during the early Mubarak years.

If attempted participation within the bounds of the nation state becomes the key feature of Islamist movements by the late 1980s, it was quite jarring for those of us who are familiar with that history to hear the conversations that were being had in the wake of the Arab Spring: would Islamist parties play by the rules? Would they affirm their commitment to the state? To democracy and equal citizenship? To the international system and treaty obligations?

It is surprising that in all of the discussions about the potential assumption of political power by Islamist parties in the wake of the Arab Spring uprisings in 2011, there were no real attempts to apply our knowledge of prior experiences. But I want to mention two cases that should have been informative for Islamists after 2011, if they could only have looked beyond themselves.

The first is Algeria. Following a brief political opening in 1990, the Islamic Salvation Front (FIS) contested local, provincial, and national legislative elections and was poised to win a majority in parliament. The Algerian military intervened, canceling the elections, banning the FIS and arresting its leadership. A civil war ensued with atrocities committed on all sides. The FIS gave way to the Armed Islamic Group (GIA), a militant movement that sought to overthrow the government. Over the next six years, 150,000 Algerians were killed in the fighting as the military sought to restore order by clamping down on all opposition, ending the possibility for any kind of inclusive political system.

The second case is Sudan. Since he emerged onto the scene in the 1960s, Hasan al-Turabi developed an experimental model of Islamist activism that tried its hand as a movement of elitist intellectuals, a party of the masses, and a partner to military regimes. The National Islamic Front asserted its Sudanese nationalist character even as it worked to

implement the Shari‘a as part of the Numeyri regime’s Islamization policies in the early 1980s. Following the failure of that experiment, the NIF yet again backed another military leader, this time quietly sponsoring the coup that brought Omar al-Bashir to power in 1989, making Turabi the most successful Islamist to achieve political power in the Sunni world. But in 1992, Turabi delivered a speech to the Royal Society of Arts in London in which he declared “the failure of the nation-state model,” arguing that it had done little to benefit Muslim society and that even after the establishment of the modern nation-state the bulk of Muslims had remained largely extraterritorial in their associational sympathies. He acknowledged that the nation-states of the twentieth century had not replaced a pristine and homogenous Islamic Ummah. This is quite remarkable. Turabi is stating this, not from prison or exile, but rather at the height of his power as the ideological head of a state. He had come face to face with power and come to a startling realization.

What the Algerian and Sudanese experiences of the 1990s demonstrated was that it was not possible to graft an Islamic character onto a nation state without dramatically altering the very character of the state, and possibly undermine the basis of its constructed national identity. Two decades later, Egyptians would learn this lesson the hard way. The Morsi presidency was akin to an organ transplant in which the host body rejects the organ. Although the Muslim Brotherhood had demonstrated its commitment to operating within the nationalist paradigm, and had done so faithfully for three decades (not only out of convenience or opportunism during the 2011 revolution), it became clear that insofar as it could incorporate nationalism into its Islamism, the state refused to incorporate Islamism into its conception of the nation, leaving Egypt in a state of civil crisis, though not outright war. However, Libya, Syria, Yemen, and Iraq continue to reel from civil conflicts and resulting in the collapse of states that continue to insist on top-down imposition of exclusionary conceptions of the nation.

Islamist movements face one of two choices: wholehearted embrace of the nationalized model of Islamism that has culminated in the Ennahda experiment and the Justice and Development Party in Morocco

(PJD) (viewed as a success or a total capitulation, depending on who you ask), or a total rejection of that model and the proposition of establishing something else on an entirely different basis. The counterpoint to Ennahda and PJD is the Islamic State that has emerged out of the ashes of the Iraqi and Syrian national projects, and has found sympathy from the wounded though not totally collapsed national projects across the region, and indeed, the world. Perhaps this is just the cautious historian in me, but I am not quite as ready to declare the end of the nation state just yet. And I believe that it has faced far more formidable threats than any posed by an Islamic project to this point, and managed to weather those storms.

I will conclude on this note: Pew Research Center recently released a study of official state religions, finding that 20 percent of countries around the world have an official state religion. More than half of those—27 out of 43 countries—have Islam as their declared state religion. Of course, as we survey this rogue's gallery of military dictatorships and autocratic monarchies, one would be hard pressed to find in such declarations anything more than a cynical ploy to maintain legitimacy and continue to forge a national identity capable of maintaining power over a pliant population. But the fact that Islam figures into the nationalist projects of states that would otherwise be happy to rid themselves of it as a force of social cohesion and national identity speaks to its capacity to endure all attempts to constrain, exploit, or otherwise displace it. The voices of opposition persisting in their struggle for empowerment within their respective national contexts might do well to recall that.

II. The Challenge of Sectarianism: The Future of Sunni-Shia Relations

Nader Hashemi

This paper deals with the topic of sectarianism (*ta'ifiyya*) in Muslim societies. I seek to provide a broad overview of this subject that explains this phenomenon as a by-product of the politics of authoritarianism in the Middle East. Before doing so, however, I would like to situate the topic in the context of the broad themes of this conference relating to the status and future prospects of the Muslim Ummah (community).

"We live in scoundrel times," observed the late Eqbal Ahmad. Commenting on the state of the Muslim world at the end of the 20th century, he rightly noted that this "is the dark age of Muslim history, the age of surrender and collaboration, punctuated by madness." Reflecting on his own life as a Pakistani Muslim dissident intellectual, he noted that "I have been a lifelong witness to surrender, and imagined so many times- as a boy in 1948, a young man in 1967 ... and approaching middle age in 1982, that finally we have hit rock bottom, that the next time even if we go down we would manage to do so with a modicum of dignity."[1] These observations were made at a particularly dark moment for the Arab-Islamic World. It was 1993, after the devastating Gulf War and at the time of the signing of the Oslo Accords between the PLO and the state of Israel, which the late Edward Said accurately described as a "Palestinian Versailles."[2] Had they lived, what would Eqbal Ahmad and Edward Said say about the condition of the Arab-Islamic world today?

It is uncontroversial to affirm that since these observations, the social conditions of Muslim societies have gotten dramatically worse. With the exception of the 2011 Arab Spring, which provided a brief moment of hope, the region has moved from a period of steady decline to free fall. We are in the midst of the bleakest moment facing Muslim societies in modern history, marked by the ascendance of authoritarian and despotic

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[1] Stuart Schaar, *Eqbal Ahmad: Critical Outsider in a Turbulent Age* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2015), 120.

[2] Edward Said, "The Morning After," *London Review of Books*, October 21, 1993.

regimes and the crushing of democratic movements and civil societies. One has to reach deep into history, perhaps as far back as the Crusades or the Mongol sacking of Baghdad, to find a similar moment as black and as bleak as the current one that we are witnessing.

One event perfectly embodies the abysmal condition of the contemporary Muslim world. It happened earlier this year during the month of May, on the eve of Ramadan, not far from the birthplace of the Prophet Muhammad. Most people are aware of this event because it was widely covered by the global media. Its moral significance, however, and what it reveals about the state of Muslim societies has received less coverage and commentary.

On May 21, 2017, over 50 leaders from across the Arab-Islamic world gathered in Saudi Arabia. The purpose was to meet one man who travelled from the other side of the world to deliver a speech to the heads of state of these countries. I am referring to Donald Trump's visit to Saudi Arabia to participate in the Arab Islamic American Summit, his first foreign trip abroad since becoming the president of the United States. Joining him on this trip were his closest advisors, members of his cabinet, prominent political and business leaders, and members of his family.

The leaders of the Muslim world rolled out the red carpet for Trump. It is not an exaggeration to say that he was given a hero's welcome. They danced together, they celebrated together, the American country singer Toby Keith played music for them, the Harlem Globetrotters performed, huge images of Trump's photo were projected on buildings and billboards, and leading Islamic clerics blessed the event with statements of approval invoking the authority of God and the legacy of the Prophet Muhammad.[3]

This spectacle demands a conscientious pause. It is pregnant with meaning in terms of its moral and political significance. The abysmal state of the Muslim world in 2017 was on display here. Remember, we are talking about the most rabid, anti-Muslim president in the history of

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[3] William Hartung, *Donald Trump's Dangerous Love Affair with Saudi Arabia and its Impact on Mideast Security* (Denver, CO: Occasional Paper No. 6, Center for Middle East Studies, December 2017).

the United States of America. Trump's bigotry runs deep.[4] He campaigned on a platform of Islamophobia, xenophobia and anti-Muslim bigotry that broke new records in terms of the promotion of hatred and the demonization against Islam and American Muslims. As a direct result of his statements, there was a significant spike in hate crimes against American Muslims, which rose to historic new heights.[5]

Trump promised to create a special database on Muslims to monitor their behavior. He promised to consider the closing of mosques, he openly called for the banning of all Syrian refugees from entering the United States, implying that collectively they were all potential terrorists, and he said he would not rule out doing to American Muslims what was done to Japanese Americans during World War II—putting them in internment camps, if the circumstances were warranted.[6] His close advisors took anti-Muslim bigotry to a new level by openly stating that Islam is not even a religion, it is a political ideology. The implication was that if true, Islam could be officially banned in the United States because the principle of religious liberty does not apply to Muslims who do not follow a valid religion. In Trump's own words: "I think Islam hates us" and I am "calling for a total and complete shutdown of Muslims entering the United States."[7]

One of his first acts as president was implement these policies. He issued Executive Order 13769, banning Muslims from seven Muslim majority countries from entering the United States. Every U.S. court that examined

[4] Lisa Desjardins, "Every moment in Donald Trump's long and complicated history with race," https://www.pbs.org/newshour/politics/every-moment-donald-trumps-long-complicated-history-race.

[5] American Civil Liberties Union, "Hate groups increase for second consecutive year as Trump electrifies radical right," February 15, 2017, https://www.splcenter.org/news/2017/02/15/hate-groups-increase-second-consecutive-year-trump-electrifies-radical-right.

[6] Meghan Keneally, "Donald Trump Cites These FDR Policies to Justify Muslim ban," *ABC News*, December 8, 2015, http://abcnews.go.com/Politics/donald-trump-cites-fdr-policies-defend-muslim-ban/story?id=35648128.

[7] Jenna Johnson and Abigail Hauslohner, "'I think Islam hates us': A timeline of Trump's comments on Islam and Muslims," *Washington Post*, May 20, 2017. For more background and details, see The Bridge Initiative: www.bridge.georgetown.edu.

that topic found this policy violated the U.S. constitution, specifically because it was based on a clear intent to discriminate against religion, in this case Islam. In other words, Trump was condemned for Islamophobia by an independent judiciary on three occasions. How did the leaders of the Islamic world respond to all of this? They embraced Donald Trump.
To my knowledge, not one government withdrew their ambassador from the United States or summoned the American ambassador to register a protest. In fact, the exact opposite was done – Trump's Muslim ban was explicitly justified by some Muslim leaders. The Secretary-General of the World Muslim League, Mohammed bin Abdul Karim Al-Issa, said that all statements and decisions by Trump were not directed against Islam or Muslims but against extremists. Saad Bin Ghoniem, a Saudi cleric, took it a step further by affirming that "Oh Allah, Trump is one of your servants," please guide him "to serve the best interests of Muslims." Official statements from the governments of Saudi and the United Arab Emirates echoed these sentiments.[8]
Adding to this spectacle are the advisors and confidants that Trump brought with him to meet with the leaders of the Arab-Islamic world. Many of the people are open and outspoken anti-Muslim bigots with close ties to the Islamophobia industry. Steven Bannon, Sebastian Gorka, and Stephen Miller were all in attendance, the latter of whom – one of the key architects of Trump's Muslim Ban—not only accompanied the U.S. president to Saudi Arabia but reportedly wrote the speech that Trump delivered to the 50 heads of state from across the Muslim world.[9]
Not one Muslim leader had the courage, integrity, or decency to decline the invitation to meet with Trump based on his open, unambiguous,

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[8] Ben Farmer, "Donald Trump says Muslim countries must take the lead in fighting extremism," *The Telegraph*, May 21, 2017, http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2017/05/21/donald-trump-rally-muslim-leaders-battle-good-evil-saudi-speech/; Jason Le Miere, "Trump 'Servant' of Allah, Saudi Cleric says before Visit," *Newsweek*, May 11, 2017, http://www.newsweek.com/trump-muslims-allah-saudi-arabia-607658.

[9] Dan Merica, "Travel ban architect writing Trump's speech on Islam," CNN.com, May 19, 2017, http://www.cnn.com/2017/05/19/politics/stephen-miller-islam-travel-ban-speech-writing/index.html.

unequivocal and explicit Islamophobic and anti-Muslim comments. No one issued a statement of condemnation, repudiation, or rejection that it was morally unacceptable and a clear violation of Islamic ethics to embrace a man who was an unrepentant Islamic bigot—and we now know after the events in Charlottesville, Virginia this past summer—he is also sympathetic to Neo-Nazis and the KKK. The silence was deafening.

The explanation for this behavior by the leaders of the Arab-Islamic world is not difficult to fathom. They preside over authoritarian political systems and rule, not by the consent of the governed, but via state repression, intimidation and torture. Meeting with Trump and his Islamophobic entourage, it was hoped, would solidify their autocratic rule at home. In other words, the loyalty of these Muslim leaders is first and foremost to their political thrones than it is to any sense of democratic values or Islamic ethics. Had he lived until today, Niccolo Machiavelli would have certainly concurred.

To this depressing picture facing the Muslim Ummah, I could provide detailed description of what is happening in other parts of the Islamic world. A few events stand out: a mass politicide in Syria, the ongoing colonization of Palestine, an enormous humanitarian crisis in Yemen, the abominable depredations of ISIS and finally, the ethnically cleansing and persecution of the Rohingya Muslim minority in Myanmar. This is merely a short list that highlights the travails and trauma facing Muslim societies in the early 21st century.

This brings us to the question of sectarianism. It has now emerged as a dominant theme shaping the politics of many Muslims societies, especially in the Middle East. The proliferation of Muslim-on-Muslim violence is a reflection and reminder that these are the dark days of Islam. Never in Islamic history have we seen this type of bloodletting on such a massive scale, often undertaken by assailants who perform these acts of violence in the name of Islam and by invoking verses from the Qur'an. How can we begin to make sense of this development?

Toward an Explanatory Theory of Muslim Sectarianism

Major world leaders, public intellectuals, policy analysts and media commentators have sought to explain the current instability in the Middle East as a function of ancient blood feuds rooted in primordial hatreds and antagonisms between Sunnis and Shiʿas. These conflicts, we are told, have been brewing beneath the surface since the dawn of Islam. Authoritarian strong men had managed to keep a lid on these enduring rivalries, but with the unravelling of their control as a result of the Arab uprisings, this alleged perennial feature of Muslim societies—rooted in unyielding intolerance—has surfaced to the top, producing the current chaos and turmoil across the region.

One of the most prominent proponents of this view has been none other than U.S. President Barack Obama. On several occasions, Obama has spoken of "ancient sectarian differences" as a means of explaining the conflict in the Middle East. These "ancient divisions," he asserts, propel the instability in the Arab world, which is "rooted in conflicts that date back millennia," he said, and it was this issue that was the key organizing principle among Muslims today.[10]

Other prominent American politicians, both Republican and Democratic, have made similar claims, as have mainstream television personalities, foreign policy experts, and journalists. *New York Times* columnist Thomas Friedman has famously claimed that the "main issue [in Yemen today] is the 7th century struggle over who is the rightful heir to the

[10] "Statement by the President on Syria," August 31, 2013; "Remarks by the President and First Lady on the End of the War in Iraq," December 14, 2011 and "Remarks of President Barack Obama – State of the Union Address," January 12, 2016. Available at: www.whitehouse.gov. See Karla Adam, "Obama ridiculed for saying conflicts in the Middle East "date back millennia." (Some don't date back a decade.)" *Washington Post*, January 13, 2016: https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/worldviews/wp/2016/01/13/obama-ridiculed-for-saying-conflicts-in-the-middle-east-date-back-millennia-some-dont-date-back-a-decade/.

Prophet Muhammad–Shiites or Sunnis."[11] Many Muslims have also fallen into this trap and subscribe to variations of this thesis.

Do these observations help us understand sectarian conflict in the Middle East today? The problem with the "ancient sectarian hatred" thesis is it assumes something constant about religion and politics and its propensity to produce violence while failing to explain the stark variation of civil conflict over time and in geography. In other words, it fails to answer the "why now" question. Why has sectarian conflict in the Middle East increased at this particular point in time and not before, and why in some places but not others.

In this context, going back to the year 2006 is revealing. A widely respected poll based on face-to-face surveys of 3,850 respondents in Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon, Morocco, Saudi Arabia, and the United Arab Emirates revealed that the "public of the Arab world is not looking at the important issues [in the Middle East] through the Sunni-Shi'a divide," Shibley Telhami, the lead author of this study noted. "They see them rather through the lens of Israeli-Palestinian issues and anger with U.S. policy (in the region). Most Sunni Arabs take the side of the Shi'as on the important issues." Furthermore, the study also noted that the two most popular politicians in the Sunni Arab world were two Shia political leaders: Hassan Nasrallah and Mahmoud Ahmadinejad.[12] How can we interpret these results?

The Sectarianization Thesis: A Social Theory of Sectarianism

In a book I recently co-edited, we challenge the lazy and Orientalist reliance on "sectarianism" as a catchall explanation for the ills afflicting the Middle East today. We propose the term *sectarianization*: an active process shaped by political actors operating within specific contexts,

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[11] Thomas Friedman, "Tell Me How This Ends Well," *New York Times*, April 1, 2015, http://www.nytimes.com/2015/04/01/opinion/thomas-friedman-tell-me-how-this-ends-well.html

[12] Jim Lobe, "Arabs Less Worried About Iran, Poll Finds," *The Electronic Intifada*, February 8, 2007, https://electronicintifada.net/content/arabs-less-worried-about-iran-poll-finds/6745.

pursuing political goals that involve the mobilization of popular sentiments around particular identity markers. Class dynamics, fragile states, and geopolitical rivalries also shape the sectarianization process. The usual term *sectarianism* is typically devoid of such reference points. It tends to imply a static given, a trans-historical force—an enduring and immutable characteristic of the Arab-Islamic world from the seventh century until today.

The theme of political authoritarianism is central to the sectarianization thesis. This form of political rule has long dominated the politics of the Middle East and its corrosive legacy has deeply corrupted the polities and societies of the region. Authoritarianism, not theology, is the critical factor in the sectarianization process. Authoritarian regimes in the Middle East have deliberately manipulated sectarian identities in various ways as a strategy for deflecting demands for political change, perpetuating their power at home, and projecting it across the region. This anti-democratic political context is essential for understanding sectarian conflict in Muslim societies today, especially in those societies that contain a mix of Sunni and Shia populations. To paraphrase the famous aphorism from the Prussian General Carl von Clausewitz about "war as a continuation of politics by other means," –in our reading– sectarian conflict in the Middle East today is the perpetuation of political rule via sectarian identity mobilization.

Religious Sectarianism and Political Mobilization

To make better sense of the politics of sectarianization, we rely on the literature on ethno-religious political mobilization. In the social sciences, at least three schools of thought seek to explain this phenomenon: primordialism, instrumentalism and constructivism.[13]

Constructivism adopts a middle ground between primordialism and instrumentalism. Its proponents argue that religious identity is not fixed,

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[13] Ashutosh Varney, "Ethnicity and Ethnic Conflict," in Carles Boix and Susan Stokes (eds.), *The Oxford Handbook of Comparative Politics* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009), 274-294.

but is rather a political construct based on a dense web of social relationships that form in the context of modernity.[14] Like primordialists, constructivists recognize the importance of seemingly immutable features of ethnic/religious identity, but they disagree that this inevitably leads to conflict. On the other hand, constructivists share with instrumentalists the view that elites and leadership play a critical role in the mobilization process. Disagreement emerges, however, over the degree to which these identities can be manipulated. In brief, constructivists do not believe that ethnicity/religion is inherently conflictual, but rather that conflict flows from "pathological social systems" and "political opportunity structures" that breed conflict from multiple social cleavages beyond the control of the individual.

With this framework as a backdrop, sectarianism in the Middle East today becomes more intelligible. Sectarian identities could not be mobilized unless differences in beliefs and historical memory compelled religious groups into collective action around particularistic identities. Therefore, two critical questions emerge: why are these conflicts intensifying now and why in this particular region of the world? In other words, what explains the flaring of sectarian conflict at specific moments in time and in some places rather than others? Sunni-Shiʿa relations, for example, were not always conflict-ridden, nor was sectarianism a strong political force in modern Muslim politics until recently. How did Syrians and Iraqis with different sectarian identities manage to coexist for centuries without mass bloodshed? How did these pluralistic mosaics come unglued so precipitously? What are the key forces driving sectarianization?

The level of intensity of sectarian conflict also varies geographically where Sunni and Shiʿa populations coexist. What factors explain this variation? While the role of religious leaders and political entrepreneurs

[14] Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origins and Spread of Nationalism* (New York: Verso, 1983); Crawford Young (ed.), *The Rising Tide of Cultural Pluralism: The Nation-State at Bay?* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1993). For a comparison and contrast between instrumentalism and constructivism, see Ashutosh Varney, "Ethnicity and Ethnic Conflict," 285-288.

is particularly salient in answering these questions, Vali Nasr, in his analysis of the topic, suggests that we must examine the agency of state actors in identity mobilization.

In the past, theories of ethnic conflict have generally treated the state as a passive actor in identity mobilization. The standard narrative held that competition from within society among contending ethnic groups would inevitably shift to the arena of the state as these sub-state actors vie for control of various state institutions as a means of enhancing their power over rival groups. The intensification of these struggles would eventually lead to the weakness, collapse, and failure of the state. Drawing on research from South and Southeast Asia, Nasr has suggested, however, that "far from being passive victims of identity mobilization," states have a logic of their own and "can be directly instrumental in … manipulating the protagonists and entrenching identity cleavages. Identity mobilization here is rooted in the project of power acquisition by state actors, not necessarily the behavior of societal elites or community actors. These state actors do not champion the cause of any one community but see political gain in the conflict between the competing identities."[15]

Nasr's insight helps deepen our theoretical understanding of identity mobilization, in that it pushes the conversation beyond alleged primordial differences and manipulation by religious authorities, to focus attention on state behavior and state-society relations.

Conclusion

The key claim of this paper is that sectarianism fails to explain the current turmoil and political disorder in the Middle East. This widely held view, based on the alleged enduring Sunni-Shia chasm, clouds rather than illuminates the complex realities of the politics of the region which are better understood in a series of developmental crises (both political and economic) that the region has been facing since WWII. The policies of

[15] Vali Nasr, "International Politics, Domestic Imperatives, and Identity Mobilization: Sectarianism in Pakistan, 1979-1998," in Nader Hashemi and Danny Postel eds., *Sectarianization: Mapping the New Politics of the Middle East* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2017), 81-82.

leading Western liberal democracies toward the Middle East have only exacerbated these developmental problems.

While it is true that religious identities are more prominent in the politics of the Middle East than before, it is also true that these identities have been deliberately politicized by state actors in pursuit of political gain. The politics of authoritarian regimes is the key framework of analysis for understanding this problem. In other words, there is a symbiotic relationship between pressure from society down below, which demands greater inclusion, respect, and representation, versus the refusal by ruling elites from above to share or relinquish power. This produces a crisis of legitimacy that needs to be carefully managed by autocratic regimes. The politics of sectarianism or *sectarianization*–the deliberate manipulation of religious identities–is a result of this political dynamic.

Notwithstanding the rhetoric we hear from Sunni monarchies in the Middle East or from presidents-for-life in the various Arab republics, ruling elites are not embedded into a particular sectarian identity. The driver of politics is a not a defense of theological doctrine or loyalty to the collective interests of a religious sect. The core allegiance for ruling elites is to their political thrones and their various clients, whether Sunni or Shia, who can help sustain their power.

As Madawi Al-Rasheed has astutely observed: “sectarianism is not an inherent historical quality of the masses in the Arab-Islamic world.” There are “sectarian entrepreneurs and religious scholars who continue to flourish in the present” by manipulating these identities in the interest of ruling regimes often at their request. Sectarianism, in other words, is a modern political phenomenon that is nourished by persistent dictators whose rule depends on invoking these old religious identities that become lethally politicized when needed. In short, sectarianism does not explain the current turmoil in the Middle East, dictatorship does.

III. Introducing Theoretical Paradigms for Interdenominational Harmony and Peace

Mehmet Ali Büyükkara

The Muslim Ummah is exhausted by conflicts caused by sectarianism, warring denominations and negative rivalry between religious movements. Such strives continue to be leading factors disrupting social peace and stability in the Islamic world, often leading to bloody disasters. In order to minimize the risks of confrontations, different theories and projects have been developed, legislative bills have been introduced, and modest results have been achieved through dialogue.

But one of the issues to be primarily discussed is deciding which theoretical approach should be applicable in this process. The first approach has a claim to directly make use of the main sources of the religion by disregarding denominational traditions. It is asserted that by returning to a kind of supra-denominational idea, fundamental differences could be easily minimized and sectarian peace could safely be ensured. In this approach, defining, designing, uniform and centralist characteristics of modernism may evidently manifest itself.

In the other approach, a multi-cultural post-modern character is apparent. All denominational-sectarian formations are accepted as reality regardless of their righteousness or fallaciousness, and a certain consensus is tried to be reached in a multiple and equal atmosphere apart from any theoretical and theological determinations and efforts of orientation.

In this paper, by comparing the above-mentioned theoretical and practical approaches, I try to set forth a solution which can be consistent and more serviceable to provide sectarian peace and reconciliation in the current state of the Islamic world.

1. Modern Paradigm

a. The Characteristics of the Modern Paradigm

As is known, Islamic denominations are the institutionalized forms of interpretative differences related to the Qura'nic revelation and the Prophetic tradition. Because of this nature, they are fully based on human foundations. The modern religious discourse tries to reveal the groundlessness and futility of these fractionalizations. By doing this, the modernism applies directly to the first authentic Islamic sources (namely the Qur'an and the Sunna) by overlooking the denominational traditions from past to present. The Qur'an, which is the common holy scripture of all Muslims, is naturally acknowledged as the main source of reference in this process. The main principles of the Qur'an, such as *tawhid* (oneness of Allah), *'adâla* (justice), *musâwât* (equality), *hurriyya* (freedom), *salam* (peace) are underlined, and all Muslims are invited to meet on the grounds of these principles.

The Qur'anic verses that forbid division and disruption are in the foreground in this discourse. The following verses are very important from this point of view: "*Of those who have divided their religion and become sects, every faction rejoicing in what it has*" (al-Rum, 30/32). "*Indeed, those who have divided their religion and become sects - you, [O Muhammad], are not associated with them in anything. Their affair is only left to Allah; then He will inform them about what they used to do*" (al-An'am, 6/159). "*Hold firmly to the rope of Allah all together and do not become divided*" (Al-i İmran, 3/103).

The modern paradigm has been usually employed within two different religio-political discourses:

b. The Modern Paradigm as an Ideological Tool of Pan-Islamism

The aforementioned references and the discourse of "Muslim Unity" are the sources of a language that has been widely used by Islamic scholars, thinkers and politicians since the middle of the 19th century. We witness the strong traces of this emphasis in the works of famous Islamist personalities such as Jamaluddin Afghani (d.1897), Mehmet Akif

(d.1936) and Muhammad Iqbal (d.1938). The verse "*the believers are but brothers*" (al-Hujurat, 49/10) is significant in this context. "*And obey Allah and His Messenger, and do not dispute and thus lose courage and then your strength would depart*" (al-Anfal, 8/46) is another important argument.

Several resistance organizations in places under the imperialist occupation or Islamist *da'wa* movements in seemingly independent Muslim countries have successfully used these kinds of arguments in order to weaken divisive sectarian and ethnic factors hindering Islamic unity. We can point to *Ikhwan al-Muslimoon* (Muslim Brothers) movement in the Arab world and the Jamaat-i Islami movement in the Indian sub-continent as the organizations that promoted this pan-Islamist discourse in the 20th century. It is almost certain that this discourse has played a crucial role both in the recent history and the present day to curb sectarianism and its devastating consequences.

c. The Modern Paradigm as an Ideological Tool of Nationalism

We also see that nationalist movements tend to prefer the same supra-denominational discourse. It has often been applied to break the sectarianism that wreaked havoc on the idea of the nation when the modern nation-states began to be established in the 20th century. These new states arose in a multi-faith and multi-denominational atmosphere of the Middle East. The politicians and ideologists pursuing the creation of Turkish, Arab and Iranian nation-states always defended the idea of a supra-denominational Islam. For example, the Ministry of Religious Affairs (*Diyânet*) was designed as an upper institution above all denominations in the early years of modern Turkey.

In this context, there is a remarkable difference between nationalist and pan-Islamist discourses. Contrary to pan-Islamism, nationalism always expressed itself with a secular laicistic rhetoric. The Republic of Turkey, for instance, banned the tariqas, closed the dervish lodges, ended the madrasa system and monopolized the prevalent education within the scope of the Law on Unification of Education (*Tevhid-i Tedrisat*). The

Turkish state has always defended these steps as positive and beneficial developments for both “our country and our religion.”

This assessment has some notable reflections such that denominations, sectarian communities, and religious groups destroyed the original understanding of the religion that purely manifested itself in the Golden Age of Islam (*Asr-ı Saadat*). They were also infected with politics in the course of time. Instead of referring to the divine message, they sanctified the human agency with excessive reference to their own scholars. Thus, the broad coverage space of the Qur’an-originated Islam was narrowed within the scope of denominational creeds and rulings. Accordingly, they always fueled sedition, conflict and confusion. Fortunately, this denominational mentality was disabled, so the religion of Islam was liberated due to the state’s secularistic/laicistic policies. The accusations of "obeying ancestral religion" (al-Baqara, 2/170) and "worshiping their own desires" (al-Furqan, 25/43) are often accompanied by these allegations. This argument leads the criticism of sectarianism to a more serious dimension.

d. The Problems of the Modern Paradigm

Here, there are several factors to consider:

1) The modern rhetoric, even if well-intentioned, is far from being a unifying function, contrary to what might be thought. Because the criticism often goes beyond the scope of sectarianism to the level of the criticism against denominations and religious groups. This is quite infuriating and often dishonorable for the members of these formations. The praise and advocacy of secularism is a position that does not particularly correspond to the traditional religious circles, but leads to a perception that the proposed solutions are in fact non-religious options. This reminds us of the state's supreme authority and evokes a type of social engineering.

2) The factor of "the nation," because of nationalist reflexes, this factor sometimes becomes a criterion for the meritorious or worthless nature of a denomination. To set an example, it is often said that Sunnis, Shi'is, or Alevis living in one country are more reasonable, more likable, more agreeable, etc. among each other, when compared to the followers of the same denominations living in another country. They are allegedly unlike others, because they coexist and live in the same country, drink the same water, breathe the same air, share the same history and culture. From this point, the nation-state tries to raise the consciousness of the nation, which would supersede the religious or denomination dimensions. However, denominations have an identity that cross over borders. They are more rooted in history than the modern identity of the nation. For example, if you try to break the bond of Turkish Shi'is with the holy cities of Najaf in Iraq or Qum in Iran just because they are citizens in another country, this attitude would not make the person a more loyal citizen, but rather may alienate them from their government. On the contrary, it may actually destroy the culture of the people living together and undermines the social contract.

3) The same nationalist policy sometimes may trigger or directly impact the emergence of the so-called "national-denominations," which are, of course, artificial formations. This kind of "national" or "nationalist" organizations are often established with government's support and under the auspices of the state. They usually appear as alternatives to the mainstream groups, which are considered to be unreliable by the state. The nation-state wants to control a

denominational or communal formation over such constructions.[1]

4) The supra-denominational approach of the modern paradigm advocates that the problems Muslims are facing today must be solved “on the axis of reason (*aql*) and revelation (*wahy*)”. In this sense, it is not desirable to confront the dogmatic aspect of Islam, which is, in fact, the natural consequence of being a religion. The claim that no irrational component can be found when Islam is concerned is very controversial. Such a judgment may serve as a theoretical basis for “bending” the religious dogmas. Hence, traditionally-rooted sects have always looked skeptically at this approach and generally not accredited. It is not possible to say that the Islamic beliefs and the principles of Shari'ah consist only of the Qur'an. And yet, the well-known proposition of the modern discourse as "Islam is the Qur'an" does not have more different conception than that of the traditional Salafiyya doctrine, which suggests that “the religion is the Sunna and the Sunna is the religion” (al-Barbahari, *K. al-Sunna*). The first scholars of the modern Islamic discourse had made the call “to return to the original sources”. However, they then understood that the *hadith*, one of these main sources, was also one of the reasons for the modern challenges they struggled to solve at this time. Thus, this call to return to the original sources was restricted to the Qur'an. However, this method was a kind of extravagant. These scholars and thinkers who wish to revive the Ummah

[1] One of the examples of such cases arousing curiosity is the establishment of the Turkish Orthodox Patriarchate in Ankara in 1922. The aim was to break the influence of the Ecumenical Patriarchate of Istanbul in the new Turkey. This new Ankara-based Orthodox community was held exempted from population exchange act signed between Greece and Turkey. Furthermore, some churches, buildings and charitable foundations belonging to the Istanbul Patriarchate were forcibly transferred to it. This privileged but artificial church, despite all this, it has never been recognized as a legitimate church by the Communion of the Eastern Orthodoxy.

by eradicating sectarian fanaticism have neither gained the confidence of traditional religious circles, nor properly explained their intentions in the public sphere. So, the reform has always remained limited to small efforts. Undoubtedly, these efforts have come about with the goal of preventing divisions. But they could not correctly read the current psycho-social texture of the matter and went too far. For example, in Muslim India, they left behind a century-old religious and social problem like the Ahl-i Qur'an – the Ahl-i Hadith division, whose intense clashes still persist in the region.

5) The appeal of the modern paradigm alone is not enough, despite all its fascination, for claiming to advocate the top Islamic principle of “the Unity of God” (*al-tawhid*) in terms of sectarian rapprochement and peace. The thesis that the belief in *al-tawhid*, *al-nubuwwah* and *al-akhirah* as the three main Islamic principles constitutes a common ground for different denominations does not seem to be adequate to attain that goal. It is well-known by the specialists that, especially in syncretic-featured denominations, belief in monotheism, prophethood and afterlife is highly integrated with ambiguous and blurred speculations. This is why such formations uncompromisingly differ from each other and also from the mainstream ideas. Moreover, the appeal for “the common ground” grants the mainstream trends the right to identify or describe the beliefs of minority groups, differently from their own definitions. Certainly to many this may be disturbing.

2. The Postmodern Paradigm as an Alternative

a. Characteristics of the Postmodern Paradigm

The controversial nature of the main sources of religions, as well as several worldly and spiritual experiences of religious people have so far paved the way for religious divisions and sectarian formations. The same separations will continue thereafter for similar reasons and repeat itself in different forms. In the face of existential problems, a human being, who is not fully satisfied with rational solutions, will continue to rally around several groups in pursuit of various religious and spiritual solutions. The vast gap left by modern and secular ideologies, which are trying to remove religion from public life, will be filled by sects and denominations - perhaps faster than their old counterparts- due to opportunities offered by postmodernism. In these circumstances, it is inevitable that civil religious formations will rise against authoritarian or dominant official religious institutions and authorities.

In this respect, postmodernism encourages community feelings. Since every religious group creates its own truths, creeds and lifestyle, the postmodernist circles accept denominational and group conflict as a natural reality. For this reason, they do not need to put forward generic aphorisms like “everybody who believes in Allah, the prophethood and the hereafter remains within the circle of Islam and gets the salvation.” Because, according to the postmodern paradigm, the common/general concepts that connect all people have no longer been functional. What is prevalent must be typical definitions and descriptions made by each personal or group entity. Nobody else should be allowed to attribute value or to set norms and forms for others.

The modern paradigm, on one side, tries to nullify the functions of denominations and religious groups by asserting that "religion is personal", but, on the other side, wants to impose a dogmatic and subjective ideology as an alternative to sectarian/denominational teachings in the name of "the axis of revelation and reason." From here on, it actually aims to destroy individuality by raising a collective consciousness. This is an obvious contrast when viewed from the

postmodern perspective. The postmodern paradigm has always been distrustful of rational, normative, holistic and centralist character of modernism.

b. The Advantages of the Postmodern Paradigm

Therefore, the postmodern paradigm is not as frightening as the modern paradigm in terms of denominations and religious groups.

1) Postmodernism distinguishes itself in view of its attitude to restrict common reasoning and to undermine reasonable solutions. It highlights cultural autonomy and downsizing of the state. Its emphasis is on rights, rather than on the law. This encourages multiple religious education and common/customary law options. These altogether lead to open an empty space for protecting the identities, institutions and achievements of major religious formations like Shi'ism.

2) On the other hand, this approach provides an important assurance of the sustainability of smaller sectarian structures in the face of the so-called large denominations. It also provides a shield against the probability of oppression and discrimination.

3) In addition, civil society, as an indispensable instrument of postmodernism, opens up several opportunities with which denominations freely present themselves to the public. Hence, their demands can be easily carried to all social spheres including politics.

4) "Everyone is right in his/her own way" as the famous motto of the postmodernist relativism is to be the philosophical foundation of multi-religious education.

5) The call of modernism to "become united" turns necessarily, by this relativism, into a call to "come together." The dialogue

opportunities become more efficient around this appeal. If the governments operate their political systems well, which are based on a multi-religious, multi-sectarian, multi-national, multi-lingual and multi-cultural state model, supported by a social contract, such as the case in Canada, Australia and India, this would appear to be the least problematic models in terms of the religious and denominational settlement and peace. However, in the case of India, which is confronted with chaotic problems from time to time, shows that a multi-cultural political and justice system, as well as collective freedom opportunities alone, are not enough for social peace. There is also a need for serious civil engagement and dialogue processes in order to promote social harmony and the culture of coexistence and tolerance. Of course, fair economic sharing and equal opportunity are also essential to these objectives.

c. The Problems of the Postmodern Paradigm

Despite all of these advantages, the postmodern paradigm and the politics related to its policies constitute a source of problems for denominations and religious groups:

1) The traditional ties of believers with the past, which the modern approach arrogantly seeks to ignore, are welcomed with respect in the postmodern approach. It may positively be seen that this tie is an identity-enhancing element and is put under the protection of the postmodernists. However, the same approach, while respecting the past and the tradition on one hand, leads to the destruction of denominational discipline and hierarchy on the other hand by rejecting the conception of authority or directly disrespecting the authority. The religious groups in question are, of course, not pleased with this development, because the lower identities are now secretly seeking freedom and thus destroying denominational and sectarian institutions. In other words, the postmodern approach, which normally respects the past and the

tradition, opens the door to heterodoxies and protest movements and, therefore, betrays the past and the tradition.

2) For the postmodernism, it does not seem possible to accept the definite and unchanging elements of religions and denominations. Contrary to the controversy of the modern discourse claiming that "the truth is only one and it is only in its hands", the relativity brought about by the postmodernism and its ambiguous and slippery ground are very disturbing as well in terms of traditional religious structures, especially mainstreams. Decomposition of values, directionlessness, irregularity, dissociation and degeneration are really damaging.

3) The insistence of the religious groups to be loyal to their strict beliefs brings up the labels like "radical" or "fundamentalist" to the agenda in the postmodern environments. This creates unnecessary prejudices in society and forces the groups into double standards and hypocritical policies.

4) Postmodernism has another daunting problem that it has to confront. "Collective identities" are taken under protection of postmodernism for the sake of cultural pluralism. Does this kind of conservation of the group rights limit the rights of "individual identities" and the authenticity of differentiation in the long run? We can interpret this issue as a dilemma of liberalism in the postmodern situation. The Ottoman *millet* system, which was based on religious and denominational tolerance, which is highly resembling the postmodern multicultural political model, gave freedom to the non-Muslim minorities (*millets*) to freely live their beliefs through a type of self-governance that it recognized. The minorities were able to enforce their own laws with their own courts. The freedom of collective worship and, the rights to establish foundations (*waqfs*) and to hold properties were also guaranteed. It is stated that everyone in the compartment of

his/her own *millet* is generally happy and comfortable. However, the administrations of the *millets* were using their privileges to suppress and repress the protests or dissident interpretations that they regarded as perverted, as was the case of Sabbatai Zevi (d.1676) who claimed to be the Jewish Messiah. In other words, an individual's freedom of belief within a *millet* remained out of the broad tolerance officially recognized by the Ottoman rule for the legal entity of that *millet*. The relations of these *millets* with the majority of Muslims also went on under the rules determined by the state. For example, they were exempted from military service in return for the *jizya* tax. Marriages between the *millets* were not allowed. The construction of the new worship places was subject to legal permission. It seems unlikely that the *millet* system of the Ottomans constitutes an ideal example for the present time from the point of denominational peace even though it was an advanced system under the conditions of that historical period and it succeeded to keep different religious and sectarian communities at peace for centuries. Another handicap of the *millet* system was that, although the rights of different Islamic sects for education and giving *fatwa* were officially protected, the state had an official denomination, the "Sunni-Hanafi" school of law. The system did not have adequate equipment in terms of the social contract and equal citizenship. The Lebanese confessional system, which is often said to be an imitation of the Ottoman *millet* system, has now reached deadlock. Because of this, it is worthy of careful examination in this context. We can confidently say that the Prophet Muhammad's Medina charter with the Medinian Jews seemingly produced a more useful solution compared to the *millet* system of the Ottomans from the point of public participation in defense of the homeland under contemporary circumstances. The principle that Medinian Jews and Muslims must help each other in order to defend their homeland when it is under attack seems to be more progressive

than "the military exemptions of non-Muslim minorities" in terms of "equal citizenship and common national vision".

Conclusion

We must first emphasize that the issues we have assessed in this paper are significant indicators that the modern enlightened-universalist paradigm seems to be no longer functional. All the efforts of constructing an "official" and "supra-denominational" religion purified from the traditional elements have come to nothing.

In fact, the presentation of the modernist paradigm with an Islamist rhetoric, especially in the 20th century, has contributed to the formation of a "united *Ummah*" conception by overcoming sectarian barriers. In this way, mutual hatred and prejudices have also been reduced to a certain extent. However, in spite of these advantages, we cannot talk about an acceptable success. Ultimately, the Islamist revolutionaries of Iran have, unfortunately, failed to go beyond establishing a sectarian state. This is a complete frustration for the 20th century Islamism.

Islamism, on the other hand, has failed to prevent Salafi sectarianism. Moreover, it has somewhat been trapped in the narrow vortex of the exclusivist Salafism, which generated small, clandestine and violent fractions from within, especially in the 1990s. It has fallen far behind in achieving the unifying pan-Islamist goals, and also not accomplished its ideals.

The nationalist presentation of the modernist paradigm, on the other hand, has been rather functioning as an instrument of the secularist nation states. It has restricted religious freedoms in the name of so called "authentic Islam," so that the denominational religious communities are offended, and the pious citizens are alienated from their governments. It has also distorted the internal dynamics of the denominations by creating official or national sectarian structures. Calling for the artificial conception of "the Qur'an and the reason-centered religion," it has attempted to make the traditionalist sections of the society an instrument of "engineering" in religion.

On the other hand, the postmodern paradigm, with its features such as avoiding determining the norms, restricting the field of practical reason, emphasizing rights instead of law, cultural autonomy, multi-religious education and opening doors to customary law practices, has generally been found to be safer and caring in terms of religious groups and denominations. In addition, civil society, as a postmodern device, has created an opportunity for denominations and religious groups to freely present themselves and their demands to the public and have spread their representations to all social spheres including politics.

However, the ambiguous and slippery floor of the postmodernist interpretations is undoubtedly disturbing from the viewpoint of the traditional religious foundations. The loyalty of the religious groups to their strict beliefs is considered to be reason for being called radical or fundamentalist from the postmodern point of view. This is also another disturbing point.

Another disadvantage is that postmodernism leads to the destruction of the denominational discipline and hierarchy by rejecting or disrespecting the concept of authority. It is another problem that the “collective” religious identities, which are produced by cultural pluralism mixed with postmodernism, eradicate the rights of “individual” religious identities. This is the weakness point of the old Ottoman *millet* system for today's multi-cultural world, although it was an advanced system under its own historical conditions that kept together different religious/sectarian communities at peace for centuries.

The *millet* system also is not sufficiently equipped with the right instruments for today's world in terms of the social contract and equal citizenship. The Lebanese confessional system, which is often said to be an imitation of the Ottoman *millet* system, is now in a deadlock, but is worthy of careful examination in this context. Another noteworthy example is the Islamic Republic of Iran. Despite its partly constitutional pluralism, it is acting as a repressive sectarian nation-state somewhat carrying the typical modern and secular character of the other Middle Eastern states. The examples of Lebanon and Iran show that a constitutional and legislative settlement according to sectarian priorities

is not a factor providing denominational reconciliation and equality of citizens. Then, what is the most favorable form of government in terms of denominational peace?
Regardless of whether they are majority or minority, religious groups such as sects and tariqas should be officially recognized and the freedom of religion and conscience should be guaranteed. In this process, the principle of secularism should not be considered as an obstacle. This only takes place in the forms of government in which the constitution is composed entirely on a social contract based on natural rights and equal citizenship.
As a form of government**, deliberative democracy** must be examined and evaluated in terms of the subject we deal with despite all its difficulties in implementation, since this kind of democratic practice prefers a citizenship that combines communities with different beliefs. In other words, this makes it easier for people to not only become full citizens without giving up their identities, but also with a protection against similar policies.
As an alternative thesis, the deliberative democracy system criticizes classical liberal democracy for its lack of equal coverage of all citizens and accuses it of reducing democracy to a sort of electoral competition. On the contrary, the deliberative democracy system advocates creating a model in which all citizens can negotiate common problems under equal and free conditions, and proposes that this should be institutionally developed. Thus, it provides a strong communication network between the individual and the state, tolerating different beliefs and securing both the individual and collective rights of their believers who have not achieved majority, as well as creating a legitimate ground for the inclusion of group identities in the governmental processes.
Besides the constitutional recognition of denominations and freedom of religion including the rights of worship, organization, education, expression and broadcasting, there must be some other things to be done. It is important in terms of denominations and religious communities to institute social justice and equality, improve life standards, strengthen democratic instruments and civil society institutions, as well as advocate

free political participation and ensure general security. Furthermore, education and school curricula may need to be revised in order to remove prejudices and mutual hatred. The power of the media can also be used in this vein. Dialogue among communities and denominations must also be encouraged. The frame of hate crime must be clearly drawn, where sectarian discrimination must be defined, rejected, and outlawed. Hence, necessary institutions should be established for effective prosecutions against such crimes and their perpetrators.

IV. Mapping the Secular: The Ummah and the Challenges of the ‘Urban Divide’

Heba Raouf Ezzat

The question concerning the relationship between cities, faith and identity has been mostly neglected in the debate about the Islamic Ummah and its future.
Most of the research on the Ummah was directed toward the society from a spherical approach, the economic cooperation from a structural approach, and the political conditions from a geo-political perspective. This paper aims to highlight the theoretical importance of the spatial dimension of the Ummah in a challenging historical moment that marks the rise and globalization of urbanity and how this shapes the human, social, economic and political relations in the Ummah.

Thinking of the Ummah has been an important issue in Muslim thinking, debates and academic research for the last century. Muslim scholars in all fields of study—whether juristic or social—are trying to introduce to social sciences terms and notions that would enlarge the scope of understanding the role of religion beyond the borders of the territorial nation state. This was combined by a concern in recapturing the Caliphate right after its fall.[1] Soon enough, the concept of the Caliphate drew more attention than the concept of the *Ummah*, which was taken for granted as clear and with no need for revision, as it was assumed to be anchored in culture, consciousness, and identity construction and reconstruction, or easily compared with the notion of people from a legal approach that placed the discussion within the wider frame of sovereignty.[2] Yet the scale of global changes introduced new concepts to

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[1] منى أبو الفضل، الأمة القطب، القاهرة: مكتبة الشروق الدولية،2005؛ د. السيد عمر، حول مفهوم الأمة في قرن: نقد تراكمي مقارن، في: د. نادية محمود مصطفى، د. سيف الدين عبد الفتاح (إشراف عام)، الأمة في قرن، عدد خاص من حولية أمتي في العالم، القاهرة: مركز الحضارة للدراسات السياسية، دار الشروق الدولية، 2002، الكتاب الأول.

[2] See for example:
عبد الرزاق السنهوري، فقه الخلافة وتطورها لتصبح عصبة أمم شرقية، تحقيق توفيق الشاوي ونادية عبد الرزاق السنهوري، ط 4، بيروت: مؤسسة الرسالة، 2000؛ محمد رشيد رضا، الخلافة، القاهرة: مؤسسة هنداوي، 2015.

the study of identity and trans-border notions, though "methodological nationalism"[3] prevented social sciences for long from seeing the unfolding changes, as well as the challenges, of the rising network society coupled by the expansion of the overarching hegemonic structures.[4]

What is even more striking was the grip that the conceptual variable of the nation/territorial state had over the political imagination of Islamism, replacing the call for a return of the caliphate with the use of the "Islamic State."[5]

The 'geographical imagination' of the modern world—shaped by colonialism—created a rationalist mood of modernism altogether that influenced the political thinking across the borders of ideology and philosophical underpinnings of methodologies, though it was subject to scrutiny and investigation lately.[6] This is assumed to be the major challenge facing the Muslim social scientist, preventing them from grasping the complexity of the conditions of the *Ummah*, and how to approach them. Beyond comparative politics, political economy and international relations, research should draw on recent critical studies in the fields of sociology of religion, and urban sociology.[7]

Martin Shaw described the methodology in the 'ancien régime' of social sciences as very much 'domesticated', which obscured different aspects of the notion of "global civil society" for example[8] (a very relevant concept to any discussion of the *Ummah*). Yet one can see form the Arab world that the rationale of, and the concern behind, these

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[3] Helmut Anheier, Mary Kaldor, and Marlies Glasius ,"Introducing Global Civil Society," in: Anheier, H., Kaldor, M. and Glasius M.(eds.) Global Civil Society Yearbook. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001,pp.17-18.

[4] Bauman draws the attention that one cannot talk about liquidity without understanding the hard power of dominant structures. See: Zygmunt Bauman, Liquid Modernity, Cambridge: Polity Press, 2000.

[5] هبة رءوف عزت، الخيال السياسي للإسلاميين، بيروت: الشبكة العربية للأبحاث والنشر، 2015.

[6] Stephen Daniels, Geographical Imagination, *Transactions* of the Institute of British Geographers, New Series, Vol. 36, No. 2(April 2011), pp. 182-187.

[7] Saskia Sassen, Territory, Authority, Rights: From Medieval to Global Assemblages, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2006.

[8] Marin Shaw, 'The Global Transformation of the Social Sciences', in :M. Kaldor, H. Anheier and M. Glasius (eds), Global Civil Society, Oxford: Oxford University Press,2003, p.37.

arguments was fundamentally 'spatial'. The implication is that we simply need to 'expand' the methodology and conceptualization of the social and human sciences in order to match the cosmopolitan scale of the civil society.

Yet civil society is in itself a very ethnocentric concept, that is bounded by its own history, as well as its strong bond with the modern territorial state imaginary. Civility is defined in a very "secular" manner,[9] which means that going beyond the state necessitates reforming the whole conceptual system beyond its secular foundations.

This allows us when we are exploring the different issues and problems of the Arab and Muslim world to re-invent the notion of the *Ummah*, not in the shadow or in comparison with nationalism, but in relation to the Urban, allowing us to "locate" problems on the stage of everyday life, and trace the structural transformations of Globalization and Capitalism and their impact on the 'spaces of the *Ummah*'.

These global social sciences should not only go beyond the ethno-centric bias of the Western imagination, but also beyond the "liberal" bias of the notions and institutional forms usually promoted by the modernist models. If scholars are exploring "citizenship beyond the state,"[10] the notion of the *Ummah* can contribute to that debate if based on a multilayered understanding of the many interconnected dimensions of the word: the *Ummah* of faith, positioned within a political *Ummah* of social contract that includes non-Muslims (the constitution of Madina), within a notion of humanity (*Bashariyya*) that engages humanity in global common good and/or conflict.

What we need to elaborate further on in this reflection is that methodological nationalism was for long paralleled with methodological secularism, excluding faith and spirituality from its horizons of significance of study of identity, shaping space, civic virtues and social networks. Hence the urban is not neutral. The modern city was intended

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[9] Britta Baumgarten, Dieter Gosewinkel, and Dieter Rucht, "Civility: Introductory Notes On The History And Systematic Analysis Of A Concept", *European Review of History*, 18: 3, (2011),289- 312.

[10] John Hoffman, Citizenship beyond the Sate, London: Sage, 2004.

to be a space for liberation from tradition and religion, where individuals are free to choose and establish contractual bonds of association (if compared to traditional societies and medieval contexts). This secular frame collapsed, as many similarities between the medieval and the modern are highlighted nowadays by scholars,[11] let alone the failed rational/order promise that was not fulfilled in cities that are witnessing the rule of 'destructive order' as
Zygmunt Bauman calls it.[12]

I have suggested earlier that a notion like the *Ummah* can be re-conceptualized to help address the many gaps in current social theory from a comparative political theory approach, and it will need to gain more spatial elements to relate to urban sociology of globalization and global conditions of the Muslim interlinked and connected communities.[13] The *Ummah* is not only a moral/faith bond but a reality of multiple private and public dimensions. In combining both the societal dimension with the spatial one, we will be able to address the gap that we have in the study of both the *Ummah* and the 'Islamic city'.

My use of the concept of the *Ummah* attempts to also highlight the informality and asymmetry of many social and spiritual trans-territorial actions that can be found under the wider umbrella of *Ummah* in cosmopolitan spaces of agency, which allows deeper consideration of varieties of urban experiences horizontally, opposite to the widely dominant hierarchical imaginary of religious experiences. Hence the majority/minority approach to Muslim countries and Muslim minority could be brought to a new level of complexity.

Tracing back the current interest, the engagement with the concept of the *Ummah* as an analytical and theoretical tool and its implications for the study of international relations started in the 1980s

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[11] Nezar Al Sayyad & Ananya Roy, Medieval Modernity: On Citizenship and Urbanism in a Global Era, Space and Polity, Vol. 10, No. 1, 1–20, April 2006.
[12] Zygmunt Bauman, "Urban Space Wars: On Destructive Order and Creative Chaos", Citizenship Studies, 3:2-1999, pp.173 -185.
[13] Heba Raouf Ezzat, "The Ummah: From Global Civil Society to Global Public Sphere," in: Denisa Kostovicova and Marlies Glasiuis, Bottom-Up Politics: An Agency-Centered Approach to Globalization, N.Y.: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011,pp.40-49.

with the launching of a 10 year project titled "International Relations in Islam" that came out in Arabic in 9 volumes and brought onboard dozens of researchers from different generations and different social sciences, including the Islamic sciences. Yet, not a single contribution addressed the urban scene in the Muslim world.[14] What is even more striking is that the following project of the same research circle that brought together 50 scholars from around the world to study that modern history of the *Ummah* on all levels did not have any chapter in the 6 volume-publication on cities and urban developments in the Muslim world, but rather addressed intellectual debates, studied social networks and international relations issues.[15] Even Arab Marxists neglected the relation between the formation of the Arab post-colonial state, Arab nationalism and the city.[16]

Even when contemporary Western scholars like Ernest Gellner attempted to use the *Ummah* as an abstract conceptual variable while examining civil society, he declared that civil society requires political centralization and socioeconomic decentralization. Only when this monopoly has been constructed, as Gellner states, can segmented social conflicts and localism be overcome. However, the creation of a nation-state does not necessarily lead to the flourishing of civil society. Gellner contrasts the image of the *Ummah* to the modern modular man society.[17] This attempt could not grasp the potential of such a concept has to address the paradoxes of modern rationality and standardization and add a normative dimension to (global) civil society, let alone support the efforts to build a notion of global ethics.[18]

The task of scholars of Islamic political thought and theory is to turn the concept of *Ummah* into an applicable and operational one, and

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[14] Nadia Mostafa (ed.), International Relations in Islam, Cairo: International Institute of Islamic Thought,1997. (9 Volumes-in Arabic)
[15] Nadia Mostafa (ed.), The Ummah in a Century, Cairo: Al Hadara Centre for Political Research, 2003.(6 Volumes-in Arabic)
[16] Nazih Ayubi, Overstating the Arab State: Politics and Society in the Middle East, London: I.B.Tauris,1995.
[17] Ernest Gellner Conditions of Liberty: Civil Society and its Rivals, London: Penguin, 1996.
[18] Kimberly Hutchings, "Thinking Ethically About the Global in 'Global Ethics'," *Journal of Global Ethics*, 10 (1) 2014: 26-29.

build a theory of global justice according to that, promoting human civility in the city and the "global public sphere."

The City and the Ummah

Cities do not only consist of streets and buildings where societies settle in order to meet their various needs; cities provide the stage for everyday life where humans develop their identity or opt for their inherited, chosen or hybrid notions of the Self and the world. Lewis Wirth was right to describe the city as a "way of life," regardless of the context of modern cities he was examining.[19] The city in the modern imaginary has been defined from diverse aspects; the city as an embodiment of the Philosophical, a manifestation of the intellectual and abstract of a culture,[20] the city as *civitas* or *urb*—where civic virtues are expected to flourish and power structured, managed or contested.[21] The city is also a theatre stage for social drama,[22] a space for presentation of the self in the workplace and spheres of economic nature,[23] or in the everyday life that is the existential domain of defining the Self and Being. The city is a commodity, its spaces are subject to production and consumption, and its land and built environment transformed, transferred and recycled, gentrified or de-gentrified, circulating between domestic as well as global forces and diverse classes.[24]

Building—as Heidegger reminds us—cannot be separated from dwelling and thinking. Building used in the German *bauen* means cherish, protect, preserve, care for, and cultivate. The idea of dwelling in today's world has come to mean mere building, construction of walls with bricks

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[19] Louis Wirth, Urbanism as a Way of Life. American Journal of Sociology , 44 (1),1938, p.5.

[20] Henri Lefebvre, Writings on Cities, translated by Eleonore Kaufman and Elizabeth Lebas, Oxford: Blackwell, 2006, pp.175-176.

[21] Engin F Isin, 'Historical Sociology of the City'. In *Handbook of Historical Sociology*, edited by Gerard Delanty and Engin F. Isin (eds), London, UK: Sage, 2003,pp.312–25.

[22] Lewis Mumford, "What Is a City?", Architectural Record, 1937.

[23] Erving Goffman, The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life, Massachusetts: Anchor Press,1959, pp.111-121.

[24] Lefebvre, Henri, The Production of Space, New Jersey: Wiley, 1992.

that cut our relationship with the soil and prevents us from cultivating society and nature and minimizing our sense of being in the full humane sense. For Heidegger, there are four main elements in the universe which are: divinities, sky, earth and mortals. Mortals as living between the earth and the sky, are dwelling and have a basic relationship with other elements.[25]

Dwelling is all in the nature of the universe. It is the natural form of human existence. The arts of building should make "dwelling" possible, and nurture the ethical dimension of individuals by *living for* not only *living with*. This is the bond that grows from daily engagement with others to develop and become an identity. Hence, when we address different divides and gaps in the *Ummah* today, the spatial/urban can neither be ignored as it is the domain for relations and deliberations, and the ground of conflicts and confrontations. Nor can it be overlooked when we are addressing the transformations Muslim individuals and communities are facing in a global age.

The city was historically the icon of urban civility—compared to the Bedouin civility in Al-Muqaddima of Ibn Khaldun, the hub of morality (or decay of morality) in Al Farabi's works on civil politics and the virtuous city, and the progress of the civil and the political in the eye of the philosophers and thinkers of the Enlightenment.

In the Quran, the city was distinguished from other forms of human settlements, and the Madina of the Prophet was an example of a multicultural and multi-faith community. Notions that describe distance, and morals that were attributed to sharing space and living close represent a foundational dimension of the early Islamic era and the Prophetic effort of *Ummah* formation and state building.[26] Hence, posing questions about the present and future of the Muslim *Ummah* could not be separated from asking "what is an Islamic City?" and how have cities in the Muslim

[25]Martin Heidegger, Poetry, Language, Thought, translated by Albert Hofstadter, Harper Colophon Books, New York, 1971.
[26] Hazem Ziada, "Preliminary notes on Islamic Political Space: Madina in Qur'anic Discourse", Journal of Islamic Architecture, 1:2011, pp. 199–209.

world developed as the changes the *Ummah* is undergoing and the challenges it is facing are very much linked to the state of the urban.

It is important in this endeavor to realize that our current understanding of the city itself has been shaped by Orientalism. Janet Abu-Lughod noticed that many Orientalist scholars (mainly of French origin) were not able to grasp the essence of an Islamic city. Her criticisms to the previous studies were twofold. The first criticism concerns the focus on only a few examples, notably from North Africa and Damascus, and generalizing them as ideal prototypes for what an Islamic city would look like. Such a view (according to Abu-Lughod) reduces extensively the diversity which has always been present among different cities across the Muslim Lands—a diversity which was the natural result of differences in their respective cultures, their climates and the available natural resources.

As for the second criticism, it concerns the focus of previous studies on the outer physical aspects of the cities in Muslim lands and, thus, reducing again their definition of an Islamic city to the presence of specific artistic, ornamental, and architectural features. In other words, they did not dig deeper into the underlying socio-political values which have led to such arrangements—an analysis which she attempted to make. For her, Muslim cities are a complex of forms that are built and rebuilt in response to particular forces. What matters is examining which forces drive the construction and destruction processes in that city. Abu-Lughod takes terrain, technology of production, distribution and transportation, a system of social organization, and a legal political system as shaping, not determining, Islamic cities.[27]

Orientalist readings of an Islamic city have greatly been affected by Weber's ideas on the city, where universality and superiority are given to the European/Western model of cities. There has been an approach of "absence" in the study of Islamic cities, whereby scholars are critical of the lack of elements such as organization, rationalization, and routine of

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[27] Abu-Lughod, J. L. (1987). The Islamic city- Historic Myth, Islamic Essence, and Contemporary Relevance. International Journal of Middle East Studies, 19 (2), pp.155-176.

everyday life. Though all these dimensions existed in the Islamic city historically, they took different forms and manifested themselves in other types of networks and authorities that the orientalist approach blinded the researchers from seeing.[28]

A sociologist like Armando Salvatore succeeded in seeing that the civilizing process is far from linear. In his study of the sociology of Islam, Salvatore examined the unique and ambivalent ways through which civility was crafted and remained intact in the Muslim world. The very notion of civil society—a recurring theme in the analysis of Islamic societies and their claim they should progress along the line of the modernizing process—is deconstructed as a modern concept and re-introduced based on a reading of the mode of Islamic civility and rationale of the Muslim community. The approach of "Islamdom"—borrowed from Marshall Hodgson—is used to clarify religious, civilizational and socio-historical dimensions of the sociology of Islam.[29] The Westphalian state is not, according to Salavatore, the ideal frame for progress nor for analysis of Islamic civility. Divergent forms of comprehending the knowledge-power equation need to be synthesized from the analysis not imposed in the research approach.[30]

As Islam poses a challenge to established modern sociological categories, or the modern "sociological imagination" in C. Wright Mills' terms,[31] Salvatore highlights the "initial paradigmatic limitations of Western sociology," which does not come as a surprise for those who studied the formation of the European intellectual and academic mind

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[28] Sami Zubaida ,Max Weber's "The City" and the Islamic City. Max Weber Studies , Vol.5.2/6.1, 2005,pp.111-118,; Bryan Turner, Weber and Islam, N.Y.: Routledge, Kegan and Paul, 1987.

[29] Armando Salvatore, The Sociology of Islam: Knowledge, Power and Civility, Oxford: Wiley Blackwell, 2016.

[30] Armando Salvatore, "The Exit from a Westphalian Framing of Political Space and the Emergence of a Transnational Islamic Public", *Theory, Culture, Society* , Vol 24 (4) 2007, 45-52,

[31] C. Wright Mills, The Sociological Imagination, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1959.

along the lines of secularism for more than a century.[32] Under the niche of positivism, the sociology of religion compared all faiths to Christianity, and all histories to the European image. This is a predicament caused by Christianity and challenged by the resurgence of Islam as well as other religious traditions since the early seventies of the twentieth century.[33] Salvatore understands civility as spatial and temporal trajectories, and depends on a corpus of shared social knowledge. Hence, civility is intrinsically plural and prone to metamorphosis through individual and collective agency.

The power-knowledge equation combines different elements such as the wide network of Sufi brotherhoods, the flexibility of Shari'a law, the socio-economic balancing of the *waqf* system, and the continuous chain of Hadith through the *Isnad* system as a compass for verified knowledge through narration and sustaining a knowledge community, among others. All of these elements combine with other characteristics specific to each region in creating a civilizing process which is described by Salvatore as having "the Islamic ecumene at its center," as being "largely self-sustaining," as not depending on "the need to store, process and centralize information for the sake of maximizing surveillance, control, and regulation," and where "civility was based on a fragile balance of social connectedness, individual autonomy, and cultural distinction among social layers" to create a culture of common good and civic virtues.[34]

But history is not the only level where we can see Muslim civility and its complex urban networks of power and knowledge. Our historical moment in a globalized world is also introducing us to an urbanity that re-defines how the *Ummah* can be "imagined." Peter Mandaville elaborates further on the Muslim Global Public Sphere, which is

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[32] Owen Chadwick ,The Secularization of the European Mind in the nineteenth Century, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1975.

[33] William Sims Bainbridge and Rodney Satrk ,The Future of Religion: Secularization, Revival and Cult Formation, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985; William Sims Bainbridge and Rodney Satrk, A t Theory of Religion, New Jersey: Pater Lang, 1987.

[34] Salvatore, The Sociology of Islam, op.cit.131-197.

emerging as a trans-local, non-statist forms of community, strongly rooted in the notion of the *Ummah*, yet transforming this concept towards a new imaginary that bridges the older historical divisions of East and West with the rising number of Muslim citizens living in and from Western countries (Mandaville:187-181). One can say that this is only a part of the global scene, but Mandaville's point is that Muslim transnational grass root politics should not be celebrated as part of a postmodern carnival, or as an ontological fad (Mandaville:189).

The shift from the ontological to the epistemological analysis of the organic/spiritual/humanist implications of the concept of the *Ummah* for theorizing spheres of globality is highly important. The literature on the domestic public sphere mechanisms and contours in the Muslim world can help in this direction. If the international system is marked by hegemony and resistance, the struggle in the public spheres dominated by authoritarian regimes teach us something about resisting global hegemony.

Back to the concept of the *Ummah*, one should highlight the organic nature of Muslim society. By organic, we do not refer to primordial affiliations or traditional society as seen by Weber—opposed to rationalist society. Such a uni-linear modernist mode of thinking and ideal-typical classification does not reflect the complex relation in Islamic history between progress and authenticity. This relation is based on the dynamic balance between the centrality of the Quran as a revelation guiding Muslim life paralleled with the life experience of the Prophet Muhammad on one hand, and the *Ijtihad* idea (religious reformation) that is ordered by Islam and that is seen as a cyclical process to cope with change in time and place.

The ideal type of cities for the Islamic civilization was constructed to place the urbanity in a stable scheme simplifying the complexity and diversity. Islamic urban studies became a recognized and distinctive area of study only in the 1980's.[35] Edward Said's book

[35] Goddard, Cedrik Christopher. 'The Question of the Islamic City'. MA Thesis, Institute of Islamic Studies. McGill University, 1999, pp. 84-85

Orientalism which appeared in 1978 had an impact on Islamic urban studies. Firstly, it allowed the Middle Eastern cities to be taken in their own context. Secondly, it opened the way to multiply urban research in the Islamic Middle East and North Africa which would reveal a more complex picture than as represented by the prototypes of the previous studies.[36] From the 1980's on, Islamic cities were explored within their context by their several and specific aspects. Islamic urban studies achieved a more appropriate frame by the contributions of other social sciences such as sociology, anthropology and geography which broadened the perspective of the traditional historians and religious scholars. In the frame of urban studies, Islam is not taken as only a religion nor as the single factor shaping the urban space in Muslim societies. It is highlighted as a frame of historical sociology, but as only one of many factors shaping the city, especially during colonialism and in the postcolonial era of late capitalism and globalization.

The Urban Divide

The urban divide that we see as a real threat to the essence of civility, upon which the notion of the Islamic *Ummah* was founded, and in reference to which it can revive, can be seen on many levels:

1. *The urban divide as the gap between the Islamic city in history and the Muslim city today*. This historical urban divide caused by colonialism manifests itself in the palimpsests of the Islamic city that looks like a manuscript or piece of writing material on which later writings have been superimposed on effaced earlier ones. The scene of the city in many Muslim societies is divided between different histories and stories, narratives and imaginaries. This has an impact on the rupture of the historical ties, forms of association as well as similarities that existed between the different cities in the Muslim world that allowed notions of hospitality and morality to flourish beyond cultural specificity. Over the last century, the structure and architecture of the city has become

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[36] Ibid., p. 116.

increasingly market oriented and consumerist. In other words, the similarities are increasingly global rather than Islamic.

2. *The urban divide as the tensions between the civil and the military*. The city is not anymore an *urb* that is distant or distinct from the camp or the castle. The new military urbanism, as Stephen Graham calls it, is spreading through Islamic cities as part of globalization, but also part of the rise of the surveillance culture and securitization of the public sphere.[37]

3. *The urban divide as the gap between the classes*. The rise of poverty is not only statistical, as poverty has always existed and was historically addressed by diverse mechanisms in Muslim communities. The dilemma today is the spatial apartheid based on separation between classes. The rise of suburbs started almost forty years ago in different mega cities in the Muslim world, but the distance is growing and now we are seeing an expansion of gated communities and their marketing across borders, creating a new urban blend of a multinational and cross-cultural nature. We are even witnessing the divide of cities, not simply neighborhoods. The New Capital in Egypt is just an example, where both the rich and the elite of the armed forces are leaving the old capital behind and creating their own 'green zone.'[38]

4. *The urban divide of urbicide, where in war zones the disempowered are targeted and cities are fully destructed*. The war in Syria is an example of that urban divide where the cities are split between East and West zones, the "enemy" dehumanized, and genocide is taking place by new weapons.[39]

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[37] Stephen Graham, Cities under Siege: The New Military Urbanism, London: Verso, 2010, pp.226-262.

[38] Ursula Lindsey, The Anti-Cairo, Places Journal, March 2017. https://placesjournal.org/article/the-anti-cairo/

[39] Deen Sharp, Urbicide and the Arrangement of Violence in Syria, in: Dean Sharp and Claire Panetta, Beyond the Square: Urbanism and the Arab Uprisings, N.Y.: Terraform, 2016, pp. 118-141; Saskia Sassen, When the City Itself Becomes a Technology of War, Theory, Culture & Society 2010 (SAGE, Los Angeles, London, New Delhi, and Singapore), Vol. 27(6): 33-50.

The four dimensions above require a new mapping of the concept of the *Ummah* to frame a theory of justice that encompasses the different levels and introduces a vision for change in the Muslim world. Localizing global action in a cosmopolitan city means that there is a relation created between the local and the trans-local, sharing one moment and one space. This can have implications that were not thoroughly considered. The evaluation and documentation is devoted to the outcome of the global action rather than the local implications of it on the context of socio-cultural life in a city with a specific history, or the opposite. This inert-action needs more attention, and new conceptual tools to understand the modes of diverse relations between the nation and any *Ummah* in a specific moment and locale,[40] otherwise the notion of the Ummah will either be historicized, nationalized or even worse: fall in the abyss of tribalism and lose its inclusive and humanist horizons of significance.[41]

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[40] Fernand Braudel's notion of time between long and short duration is highly important here, as well as the notion of post normal times that Ziauddin Sardar has been writing about recently. See:
Fernand Barudel, On History, translated by Sarah Matthews, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1980,pp.25-54; Ziauddin Sardar, Welcome to Post-normal Times, Futures, 42, 5, June 2010.

[41] The tribalism meant here is the negative trend of 'Assabiyya not in Khaldunian sense but in the Jahiliyya definition that Islam came to change.
On the power of the tribal imagination see:
Robin Fox, The Tribal Imagination: Civilization and the Savage Mind, Massachusetts : Harvard University Press, 2011.

IV. Empowering Women and Youth in Muslim Societies

Asma Afsaruddin

Introduction

It is often assumed that notions of political agency and citizenship, particularly when applied to women, were born only in the twentieth century. Such an assumption belies scholarship that has delved into the history of early Islam, particularly with a view to excavating the roles of women during the early, formative period. Scholars of Islam who deal with issues of gender have argued instead that women's political agency and citizenship may be understood to have existed from the very inception of Islamic society. The reasons advanced by a number of them may be summarized as follows.

When the Muslim polity (*Ummah*) was established in Medina in the Arabian Peninsula by the Prophet Muhammad in 622 CE, women's citizenship in this polity was formally recognized through a process known as *bay'a* or the proffering of allegiance. Both men and women emigrating from Mecca to Medina had to take a special public oath to indicate their formal induction into the Prophet's community and affirm their loyalty to it. The terms of the oath were similar for both, except that the women were not obliged to militarily defend the community. Early biographers like Ibn Sa'd (d. 845) provide us with extensive details about some of these remarkable women who made the arduous trip between Mecca and Medina, often under very dangerous conditions and sometimes with irate male relatives in pursuit. A number of these women came on their own, leaving behind families and oppressive social circumstances to seek spiritual fulfillment in the new Muslim community. They found the Qur'anic message of the complete equality of men and women before God and the recognition of their independent moral and social status highly empowering. Some Muslim feminists today consider

the *bay'a* to represent the political enfranchisement of Muslim women from the very beginning of Islamic history.[1]

Women remained visible and active in the public sphere at least through the first two centuries of Islam, taking their cue from the women Companions of the Prophet.[2] During the lifetime of the Prophet, women were active in communal life, learning and transmitting the Qur'an and hadith, taking part in humanitarian activities, such as running makeshift hospitals in the mosque in Medina, attending the prayers there, and tending to their families. A few women, like Umm 'Umara, even acquired fame as formidable warriors. We also know of at least one woman — Umm Waraqa — who was appointed a prayer leader by the Prophet over her mixed household because she was the most learned in the Qur'an among her family members. Women remained visible and active in the public sphere at least through the first two centuries of Islam, taking their cue from the women Companions of the Prophet.[3]

Women's natural presence in the public sphere in this early period is rather dramatically underscored by the fact that 'A'isha, the Prophet's widow, assumed a prominent political role when she led a revolt against the fourth caliph, 'Ali ibn Abi Talib in 656 CE. for not having brought the assassins of his predecessor to justice. She made a public speech in the mosque at Medina, rousing supporters to her side. This vocal role stands in sharp contrast to current cultural practices in a handful of ultra-conservative societies today (namely, Saudi Arabia and a number of the Gulf countries) where women are forbidden to even be physically present in mosques.

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[1] For further discussion, see Barbara Stowasser, "Women and Citizenship in the Qur'an" in Amira Sonbol, ed., *Women, the Family, and Divorce Laws in Islamic History* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1996), pp. 23-51

[2] Leila Ahmed, *Women and Gender in Islam: Historical Roots of a Modern Debate* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1993).

[3] See Asma Afsaruddin, "Early Women Exemplars and the Construction of Gendered Space: (Re-)Defining Feminine Moral Excellence," in *Harem Histories: Envisioning Places and Living Spaces*, ed. Marilyn Booth (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 2010), pp. 23-48.

A rapid whirlwind tour through time yields the following historical highlights pertaining to women's political activity. 'Umar, the second caliph, appointed a woman Shifa' bint 'Abdallah, as the public inspector of markets in Medina, roughly equivalent to today's office of a city mayor. Throughout the pre-modern period, wealthy, elite women continued to exercise considerable social clout through charitable activities and the endowment of public foundations, such as *madrasas* (higher educational institutions) and hospitals. This was a natural consequence of their ability to inherit and freely dispose of their wealth. Women in imperial households, from the 'Abbasid to the Ottoman periods (a period spanning the eighth till the early twentieth centuries) exerted quite a bit of political control behind the scenes and were recognized as important political players by their male peers.[4] Religious scholarship was also a field in which women's contributions were seminal, although largely unheralded today.[5]

Women's Modern Political and Social Activism

In the modern period, organized women's movements began to develop in the Arab world, notably in Egypt, around 1919. These movements were tied to women's nationalist activities seeking liberation from European colonizers. Women, like men, began demonstrating in the streets against British colonialism and struggled for independence. Women's explicit political activities of this nature were encouraged by men in the service of the nation, although gender activism, which was an inevitable outgrowth of nationalism, was regarded with quite a bit of suspicion. Huda Sha'rawi, an upper-class Cairene woman from a

[4] Leslie Peirce, *The Imperial Harem: Women and Sovereignty in the Ottoman Empire* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993).

[5] For example, Asma Sayeed, *Women and the Transmission of Religious Knowledge in Islam* (Cambridge, Eng.: Cambridge University Press, 2015).

prominent family who established the Egyptian Women's Union in the 1920s, was instrumental in obtaining the vote for women in Egypt.[6]

Since the 1970s, there has been a resurgence of feminist movements in a number of Muslim-majority countries, fueled to some extent by the United Nations Decade of Women (1975 - 1985). However, the rise of rightwing Islamist movements during this period seriously affected the scope of women's activism in some cases, most particularly in Iran and Afghanistan. On the other hand, Islamic revivalism has also made possible the emergence of what may be termed Islamic feminism or Islamic feminisms, practiced by devoutly Muslim women — and men — who claim that Islam itself provides a platform for effecting changes in women's lives and securing for them greater social participation.[7]

More recently, a distinctive feature of the pro-democracy movements known as the Arab Spring that swept through a large swath of the Arab world starting in 2010 was the significant participation of women in them. Whether they were protesting, organizing, providing humanitarian services, ensuring food delivery and blankets, blogging, hunger-striking and indeed dying for the cause, women assumed a central role in the Arab spring. In Tunisia where it all began, women were visible in the massive demonstrations of early to mid-January in that country's Jasmine Revolution. The women were sometimes accompanied by their husbands and children; on other occasions they initiated demonstrations of their own, marching on Bourguiba Avenue in Tunis.

In Egypt, a passionate young woman, Asma Mahfuz, posted a video on Facebook calling for a demonstration against the government in Tahrir Square on January 25, and set the ball rolling for the protest movement there that eventually ousted Hosni Mubarak. According to

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[6] For an account of her life, see Huda Shaarawi, *Harem Years: The Memoirs of an Egyptian Feminist*, translated and introduced by Margot Badran (New York: The Feminist Press at the City University of New York, 1987).

[7] See my discussion of two prominent contemporary Muslim feminists in "Islamic Feminisms: Gender Egalitarianism and Legal Constraints," in *Social Difference and Constitutionalism in Pan Asia*, ed. Susan Williams.(Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), 319-352.

estimates, at least 20% of the crowds that flocked to Tahrir Square in the first week of the uprising were made up of women. Women also took part in large numbers in anti-government demonstrations in the Egyptian port city of Alexandria.

The trend continued across the Arab world. In Syria, women blockaded roads to demonstrate for the release of their husbands and sons from prison while facing the armed secret police of President Bashar al-Assad. Thousands of women gathered near the town of Bayda and blocked off a coastal road to protest the arrest of their demonstrating male relatives by the police. Syrian women also held exclusively female marches to demand democracy and changes in governmental policy.

In Libya, women's protest rallies have been a critical factor in removing a number of cities from the control of Col. Muammar Gaddafi, such as Dirna in the western part of the country. In Yemen, women came out in appreciable numbers in the capital Sanaa, and in other cities like Taiz, and Aden against the government and to attempt to force that country's ruler to step down from office. At the foreground of the protest movement there stood a young mother of three, Tawakul Karman, Yemen's fiery female activist, who organized weekly protests in front of Sanaa University. She was jailed for her activism, and when she was not in prison herself, was often engaged in trying to get other protesters out of jail. On April 15th, Yemeni president Ali Abdullah Saleh decided to invoke conservative cultural norms and chided women for mixing inappropriately with men during the large demonstrations occurring in the capital Sanaa, as well as in the cities of Taiz and Aden. Saleh's reprimand however backfired and increased the women's resistance to him and his government. Women began to come out in unprecedented numbers throughout the country, and even in the countryside, day after day. They in fact accused the president of sullying their honor by implying that they were behaving in an unseemly manner. The demonstrating women turned Saleh's attempt to invoke cultural mores about women's seclusion from the public sphere into a rallying cry against him.

In Bahrain, women were among the first wave that descended on Pearl Square in the capital – some with their children – to demand change.

Zainab al-Khawaja, the woman who went on hunger strike to protest the beating and arrest of her father, husband and brother-in-law, emerged as a kind of rallying figure in the anti-government demonstrations. A number of Bahraini women were seized by the authorities, including at least nine doctors and four nurses. Despite the fact that the riot police treated some women harshly, the women stood their ground and were said to have waved their flags in their faces. These intrepid women were undaunted in their determination not to be stopped in their quest for political and social empowerment for themselves and for their fellow citizens from all walks of life.

Causes of the Arab Spring and Women's Participation

The causes that led to the general uprising of course apply to the women protestors as well and to the large number of young people who took part in these demonstrations. Among such causes are high rates of unemployment for the educated classes, neoliberal policies of privatization and union-busting, corruption in high places, soaring food and energy prices, economic hardship caused by the shrinking of employment opportunities, particularly in the Gulf oil states and Europe (on account of the 2008 global financial meltdown), and decades of frustration with authoritarian styles of governing. In their roles as workers and professionals as well as family caregivers, women have suffered directly as a consequence of these problems; in addition to watching their children and husbands suffer, too. Young adults have also suffered on account of large-scale unemployment and diminished opportunities for socio-economic advancement.

It is not surprising that women in Tunisia have been at the vanguard of protest movements and social change since the independence movement to end French colonial occupation in the late 1940s. Tunisian women have a relatively high literacy rate (71%), represent more than one-fifth of the country's wage earners, and make up 43% of the nearly half a million members of 18 local unions. Most of these unionized women work in the education, textile, health, city services, and tourism industries.

Unlike in Tunisia, only about a quarter of Yemeni women can read and write, only 17% have finished high school, and only 5% are wage earners, though most work hard all their lives, many on farms. Still, in urban areas such as Aden, Taiz or Sanaa, middle and upper-middle class women have an important place in the professions and business, or as schoolteachers, and more than a quarter of college students are women. Many of these women have been among the pro-democracy leaders.

These trends hold for other parts of the Islamic world as well – educated women and youth in urban areas have better chances for employment and are consequently more empowered to undertake social and political reform in such societies.

Looking to the Future

A. Empowering Women

In general, women and young people in the twenty-first century have benefitted from this generation's advances in education and the professions, and by the rise of the Internet and social media. Women can assert leadership roles in cyberspace that they often cannot in competition with men in the city square and other concrete public spheres. These developments have also empowered young people who similarly benefit from increased access to education and to the Internet and social media.

Looking forward – there is still a long way to go before women can begin to achieve parity with men in terms of their social and economic rights. There is no doubt that the general consciousness of Muslim publics must be raised so that Muslim-majority societies embrace notions of women's empowerment wholeheartedly and are made to realize that women's contributions to their societies are indispensable. Given the fact that Muslim-majority societies largely remain highly religious, religion must remain a salient factor in the empowerment of women (as well as of youth) and sound religious arguments can be crafted in support of this position. In the words of Amina Wadud who has passionately critiqued the position of women in most of the Muslim-majority societies today:

The results of the double standards between women and men are apparent when levels of human development are measured. From matters such as educational level, public health, mortality rates, representation in the political process, and others, the United Nations development statistics indicate that women's status in Muslim countries remains far below the status of Muslim men. Is this the natural order? Is this a reflection of the divine decree? In short, are there any indications in the primary sources of Islam, the Qur'an and Sunnah, that women's humanity should be so oppressed? The basic theory underlying Islamic gender reform movements is justice founded upon the ideal that *Islam does not oppress women*. …No one – not even the staunchest conservative patriarch – proposes that Islam oppresses women.[8]

This foundational position — that Islam does not and cannot oppress women — provides the jumping-off point for improving women's position in Muslim-majority countries today; to do otherwise is to commit grave injustices towards women, as Wadud and many other Muslim feminists clearly maintain today.

Samana Siddiqui from the Sound Vision Foundation has suggested some practical measures for empowering Muslim women that focus on raising their visibility and their status as moral exemplars for their communities. She recommends that stories of Muslim women, both from the past and the contemporary world, should be woven into Friday public sermons and other public discourses. She says "Friday sermons are an indispensable tool for mass Islamic education. They offer the best platform to address the community as a whole on not just women's rights, but generally, how women are the fabric of a solid Muslim community."[9]

There should furthermore be public validation and support for women's traditional roles as mothers and wives. Attention should be paid to the establishment of easily accessible and affordable day care centers,

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[8] Amina Wadud, *Inside the Gender Jihad: Women's Reform in Islam* (Oxford: One World Publications, 2006), 97.

[9] https://www.soundvision.com/article/10-ways-to-empower-muslim-women-in-your-community

to the provision of better health services, maternity care, and generous maternity leaves. For Muslim-majority societies, the family remains the basic and the strongest unit within them. Recognition of the importance of the various roles that women play in their complex lives is a first essential step toward ameliorating the situation of women in a number of these societies.

Women should also be well-represented in the administrative leadership of mosques and Islamic centers. Siddiqui insists that women should be included in critical decision-making bodies because their input is part of the kind of consultative administrative style or *shura* that directly affects the well-being of the overall Muslim community. If offered resistance, she recommends that one should invoke the example of the Prophet who welcomed women into the mosque in Medina and included them in various arenas of critical decision-making. Such prophetic examples are meant to create a powerful mandate for women's inclusion in various spheres of society.

And finally, issues of domestic violence and family abuse should be addressed head on. There is nothing more demoralizing or traumatic than violence in the family that disempowers women and causes them untold harm. This kind of violence and abuse is of course completely antithetical to fundamental Islamic values that are meant to promote domestic harmony and stability (Qur'an 30:21; 2:187). Nevertheless, such abuses do occur and need to be tackled urgently. Women need to be provided with critical information about how to address such issues, especially when young children are involved, and women's shelters must be created where they can take refuge. The state must be proactive in taking critical measures to combat such situations and bring the offending parties to justice.

B. Empowerment of Youth

With regard to youth, the first problem is a demographic one. The Muslim world is experiencing a "youth bulge."[10] In 2010, people under 30 comprised about 60 percent of the population in Muslim-majority countries. A younger population means a bigger labor force for which higher investment and capital is needed. Left untapped, it can become a destabilizing force. Constituting nearly one fourth of the world youth population, Muslim youth are experiencing a critical time with multiple political, socio-cultural as well as economic challenges in the contemporary world at all levels.

In 2010, youth unemployment in the Middle East was 25 percent; in North Africa, 24 percent. Such levels should give concern. When young people lack opportunity, they grow restless. Dependency robs them of their dignity; without an economic stake in society, they can lose their sense of belonging and become hostile to the state. From 1970 to 2000, eight out of 10 countries experiencing new civil conflict had populations in which 60 percent were under 30.

Access to education is improving in a number of Muslim-majority countries, but many young people still find that their qualifications do not match the opportunities available, so there must be a focus on vocational and technical training. 23 percent of the world's population is Muslim, but the 57 members of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation conduct just 8.3 percent of global trade. Structural reforms must be carried out so that the private sectors in the OIC countries become more dynamic. Public services need to be reformed and widespread corruption needs to be weeded out.

Another overriding concern is the potential vulnerability of Muslim youth to the blandishments of those who wish to recruit them into the ranks of extremist militant groups. Here the importance of a religious education cannot be overemphasized so that young people are brought up

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[10] The problem of a "youth bulge" is addressed in the World Bank report titled "Striving for Better Jobs: The Challenge of Informality in the Middle East and North Africa," published in 2011.

to be secure in their knowledge of mainstream Islamic beliefs and practices. The inculcation of religious values has to play a prominent role in providing direction and meaning to young people's lives and immunizing them against the possible lure of militancy.

The efficacy of such an approach is already evident in a school in Pakistan that seeks to re-educate young boys who were rescued from militant camps in order to be rehabilitated within mainstream society. Called the Sabaoon (meaning "the first light of dawn" in Pashtoo) School, it is located in the frontier town of Malakand and funded by UNICEF and the Pakistan government. Run on the same principles as any normal boarding school, with the children learning the same curriculum taught in other schools in the area, Sabaoon also employs a team of child psychologists who work closely with the children to help them learn the error of their ways.

All of the boys were captured by the army or police in raids on Pakistani Taliban training camps. The boys spend anywhere from six months to two years at Sabaoon. A few have spent as long as three years in rehabilitation. Sabaoon's team of psychologists, social workers and military advisers share one main objective: to ensure that its graduates do not return to militancy, and from all accounts, they have been quite successful.[11]

Conclusion

To conclude – education that inculcates religious and humanistic values and provides practical skills must remain the highest priority for women and youth in Muslim-majority societies today (as is true for men of course as well). Education, a fundamental Islamic value, is the gateway to realizing one's true potential as a human being in which we need to invest our resources, time, and energy.

Beyond education, women and youth need to be provided with practical skills to earn a living and the opportunities for employment must

[11] See article by Yumna Rafi, "Bringing them home: Pakistan's child deradicalization centre offers second chance," *Dawn*, September 23, 2015; available at https://www.dawn.com/news/1208602

be created as the situation demands. This does not mean that women's traditional roles as nurturers and care-givers within their families are to be undervalued and undermined – on the contrary, allowing for human flourishing for all in Muslim-majority societies means that all dimensions of human life are equally valued and protected.

In an age of extremism, young people need to be protected particularly from the deleterious effects of radical messages posted on the Internet and purveyed by those who wish potentially to recruit them into militant groups. A sound and rigorous religious education along with a strong network of family members and friends is the best antidote to virulent messages of hatred and bigotry directed at them. Although the challenges should not be underestimated, Muslim-majority societies can find deep resources within their own religio-intellectual-moral heritage to effectively meet them, especially in relation to women and youth.

Biographies of Contributors

Asma Afsaruddin is Professor of Near Eastern Languages and Cultures in the School of Global and International Studies at Indiana University, Bloomington. Her research interests include Islamic religious and political thought (both modern and pre-modern); Islamic intellectual history; Qur'an and hadith; and gender in Islam. She is the author and editor of seven books, including Contemporary Issues in Islam. She is a member of the Board of Directors of the American Academy of Religion and was previously the Kraemer Middle East Distinguished Scholar in Residence at the College of William and Mary (2012) and a fellow with the American Research Center in Egypt (ARCE), Cairo and the American Research Institute of Turkey (ARIT), Istanbul. Professor Afsaruddin's research has been funded by grants awarded, among others, by the Harry Frank Guggenheim Foundation and the Carnegie Corporation of New York, which named her a Carnegie Scholar in 2005.

Abdullah Al-Arian is an associate professor of History at Georgetown University's School of Foreign Service in Qatar. He received his doctorate in History from Georgetown University in 2011, where he wrote his dissertation on the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt during the decade of the 1970s. Dr. Al-Arian received his master's degree in Sociology of Religion from the London School of Economics, and his BA in Political Science from Duke University. He is co-editor of the Critical Currents in Islam page on the *Jadaliyya e-zine.* He received several awards that allowed him to conduct field research in many countries. His first book, entitled *Answering the Call: Popular Islamic Activism in Sadat's Egypt,* was published by Oxford University Press in 2014. He is currently writing

a book that explores the relationship between nationalism and Islamism or the tendency of Islamic political movements to adopt the nation-state paradigm in pursuit of their activist mission in six Arab countries. He is also a frequent contributor to the Al-Jazeera English network as well as other websites and publications and has been a frequent commentator on many media outlets around the world.

Mehmet Ali Büyükkara graduated from Marmara University from the Faculty of Theology in 1990. He completed his master's degree at the same university in the field of Hadith in 1993 and received his doctorate in the history of sects in 1997 from Edinburgh University, UK. He became an associate professor in 2000 and a professor in 2006 at the Faculty of Theology at Çanakkale Onsekiz Mart University. He also served as vice dean, and the chairman of the Department of Islamic Sciences at Marmara University in 2009. He joined the Faculty of Theology and Istanbul Şehir University Faculty of Islamic Sciences in 2012 as a professor and dean. In 2020, he re-joined Marmara University in the Faculty of Theology. His interests include Shi'ism, Salafism, contemporary Islamic movements, religion-politics relations besides classical theological schools. Büyükkara has many publications in this field in local and foreign languages, among which are books such as Struggle for Imamate and Bani Hashem, Saudi Arabia and Wahhabism, Occupation History of Kaaba, Ahl al-Bayt and Ahl-i State, and Contemporary Islamic Movements.

Heba Raouf Ezzat is on the faculty of the political science department at Ibn Khaldoun University in Istanbul. She was an Assistant Professor of Political Science and Deputy Director of the Center for Humanities and Interdisciplinary Studies at Cairo University, and Adjunct Professor at the American University in Cairo. She was also a Visiting Fellow at Oxford University, University of Westminster, University of California at Berkeley, Georgetown University, and Oxford's Centre for Islamic Studies. Dr. Ezzat received her BA, MA, and PhD degrees from the University of Cairo in political science in 1987, 1995, and 2007 respectively. She has researched and written on many topics including global civil society, building global democracy, women and politics in Islam, faith and citizenship, and political and social movements in Islam. Some of her publications include *Women, Ethics and Religion* (Co-authored with Nawal Saadawi in the form of a debate, 2000), *On the Future of Women and Politics in the Arab World*, a chapter in *Islam in Transition: Muslim Perspectives* (edited by John J. Donodue and John L. Esposito, Oxford University Press, 2006), and *The Political Imagination of Islamists: A Conceptual Analysis"* (in Arabic, 2nd ed. 2015).

Nader Hashemi is the Director of the Center for Middle East Studies and an Associate Professor of Middle East and Islamic Politics at the Josef Korbel School of International Studies at the University of Denver. He obtained his doctorate from the Department of Political Science at the University of Toronto and previously was an Andrew W. Mellon Postdoctoral Fellow at Northwestern University and a Visiting Assistant Professor at the UCLA Global Institute. He is the author of *Islam, Secularism and Liberal Democracy: Toward a Democratic*

Theory for Muslim Societies (Oxford University Press, 2009) and co-editor of *The People Reloaded: The Green Movement and the Struggle for Iran's Future* (Melville House, 2011), *The Syria Dilemma* (MIT Press, 2013) and *Sectarianization: Mapping the New Politics of the Middle East* (Oxford University Press, 2017). He is frequently interviewed by PBS, NPR, CNN, Al Jazeera, Pacifica Radio and the BBC and his writings have appeared in the New York Times, Newsweek, Wall Street Journal, The Globe and Mail (Toronto), CNN.com among other media outlets.

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