Muslims and Modernities:
From Islamism to Post-Islamism?

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Abstract

This article problematizes the complexity of Muslim approaches to the question of modernity. It challenges both a hegemonic voice of a singular and superior Western modernity and an essentialist Islamist response to modernity. It examines the alternative approach of multiple modernities. This approach calls for a critical dialogue and negotiation between tradition and modernity, expedites the possibility of emerging Muslim modernities, and a gradual shift from Islamism toward post-Islamism in the Muslim world.

Introduction

Muslims encountered Western modernity through European colonialism. "Colonialism was not a simple or benevolent transfer of Western modernity to a backward society or culture, but a multifaceted colonial and capitalist encounter of the highest order" (Abu-Rabiʻ 2004, 128). The Muslim response to this challenge has taken many forms: secularism and modernism, Islamic reform, and traditionalism in the form of many faces of Islamism.

While the secularist modernists perceive Western modernity as the solution to the current crisis of Muslim societies, the traditionalists see it as the major problem; the solution, they argue, is a return to Islamic traditions. However, a return to the Islamic tradition is a modern response to the crisis of Muslim societies in postcolonial era. As Ibrahim Abu-Rabiʻ (2004, 17) argues, Islamism "is a multi-layered" and "not a purely religious phenomenon." It is the "product of modern European colonialism in the Muslim world and the failure of the modern nation-state to accommodate protest movements in their political systems." Traditionalism in the form of Islamism is a modern

phenomenon; it does not represent the tradition, it reinvents the tradition.

Interestingly, the Western Orientalists argument resonates the Islamists perception of a fundamental clash between Islam and modern notions of democracy, secularism and human rights. The classical Orientalists such as Ernest Renan and the contemporary Orientalists such as Ernest Gellner, Bernard Lewis and Samuel Huntington argue that there is a fundamental irresolvable clash of values between Islam and modernity.

The Muslim response to the question of modernity, however, was not limited to the radical modernist secularism and traditionalist Islamism. A third group of Muslims calls for an alternative approach to the question of Muslims and modernity. This approach calls for a critical dialogue and negotiation between tradition and modernity and expedites the possibility of emerging Muslim modernities. It challenges both a hegemonic voice of a singular and superior Western modernity and an essentialist Islamist response to modernity. This is an invitation to acknowledge multiple modernities, the emerging Muslim modernities, and a gradual shift from Islamism toward post-Islamism. This essay examines the complexity of Muslim approaches to modernities and sheds light on the Muslim responses to modernity in the form of Islamism and post-Islamism.

Islam and Modernity: Orientalism and Islamism

Orientalism

Western Orientalism suggests that the absence of democracy and the crisis of modernity in the Muslim world is the fact of "Muslim Exceptionalism," Islamic tradition and modernity are incompatible, and the public role of Islam would ultimately result in autocracy. Modernity, rationalism, and democracy are Western in origin and uniquely suited to the Western culture. According to Ernest Gellner (1991, 2), Muslim societies are essentially different from others in that "no secularization has taken place in the world of Islam." In *Postmodernism, Reason and Religion*, Gellner (1992) argues that Islam has been exceptionally immune to the forces of secularization and modernization has actually increased this immunization. Likewise, Bernard Lewis (1990) and Samuel Huntington (1996) argue that Western culture is unique and essentially differs from other civilizations in general and Islam in particular. According to Huntington (1996, 70), while "in Islam, God is Caesar," in the West "God and Caesar, church and state, spiritual and temporal authority have been a prevailing dualism."

For Huntington (1996, 217), "the underlying problem for the West is not Islamic fundamentalism. It is Islam, a different civilization whose people are convinced of the superiority of their culture and obsessed with the inferiority of their power. According to Asef Bayat (2007, 6), three factors have con-

tributed to the currency of such an "exceptionalist" view in the study of the Muslim countries. "The first is the continuing relevance of Orientalist/essentializing thought in the West." The second is "the persistent authoritarian rule" in the Middle East supported by the West. And the third is the emergence of "Islamist movements that have often displaced socially conservative and undemocratic dispositions." Likewise, Casanova (2001, 1050–1051) argues that for the Orientalists modernity is a "civilizational achievement of the Christian West and therefore not easily transferable to other civilizations other than through Western hegemonic imposition, or through the conversion to Western norms."

As such, it is not *Islamic fundamentalism* but the *fundamental* essence of Islam that makes it incompatible with modernity. Similarly, for Bernard Lewis (1988) the inevitable fusion of religion and state is something that historically and intellectually attach to Islam. Implicit to his argument is that "Islamic mind" and modernity are mutually exclusive. In his critique of cultural essentialism, Nasr Hamed Abu Zeid (2002) challenges this Orientalist perception: "To speak about an 'Islamic Mind' in abstraction from all constrains of geography and history, and in isolation from the social and cultural conditioning of Islamic societies, can only lead us into unrealistic, even metaphysical, speculations." Instead, we need to "look for the root of this panic reaction," meaning "the crisis of modernization and complicated relationship between the Islamic world and the West."[1] Ibrahim Abu-Rabi' (2010, xvii) echoes Abu Zeid: "In many Muslim countries, hopes for a healthy process of modernization were dashed in the 1960s and 1970s." More specifically, "The petrodollars and the U.S. patronage made the post-colonial Muslim states more dependent on the global market and less on its people. It also released the forces of "puritanical Islam" and "militant Salafiyyah", which endorse violence to eliminate the "modern jahiliyyah" both at the local and global arenas. (Abu-Rabi' 2010, xvii–xviii)

Islamism

"I prefer to use the term 'Islamism' rather than 'fundamentalism' or 'political Islam,'" argues Ibrahim Abu-Rabi' (2010 xxiii), because "the term 'Islamic fundamentalism' or revivalism might not be adequate to describe the social and political phenomenon that we call the Islamic movement." For Abu-Rabi' (2004, 373), "the Islamic movement is basically a social/political movement, which adopts a religious ideology with the primary aim of bringing the whole of society under the rule of the Shari'ah." Hence, "Islamic movement is primarily a social movement."

"In Edward Said's words," Abu-Rabi' (2010, ix) argues, "we need to under-

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1. See Mojtaba Mahdavi, "Universalism from Below: Muslims and Democracy in Context," International Journal of Criminology and Sociological Theory 2(2), (December 2009): 276–291.

stand the many 'political actualities' that the 'return to Islam' embodies." In this approach, Islamism is not a cultural and civilizational product of the Islamic tradition. Instead, "Islamism is both a social and political movement with a clear religious worldview" (2010, xxiii). It is true that "Islamism was initially established by charismatic religious leaders who, more or less, had a well-defined mission: the establishment of an Islamic state or society." (2004, 372), but, one must contextualize the Islamists call for the establishment of an Islamic state in the modern context. In doing so, Abu-Rabiʿ (2010, vii) echoes Susan Buck-Morss (2003, 49–50) and argues that for the "critical theorists" Islamism is "a political discourse…far more than the dogmatic fundamentalism and terrorist violence." Islamism, he argues, is also a powerful force "against the undemocratic imposition of a new world order" and "against the economic and ecological violence of neo-liberalism, the fundamental orthodoxies of which fuel the growing divide between rich and poor." Modern Islamism is "primarily the product of the modern capitalist system created by several Western powers over the past two centuries." It seeks "alternative ways of imagining and building new Arab and Muslim societies" (Abu-Rabiʿ 2010, ix).

Abu-Rabiʿ (2010, ix) challenges the Orientalist definition of Islamism:

> The Islamist political imagination, contrary to Oilver Roy's argument, is not driven by the historical events of the distant past (i.e., early Islam) as much as by the events taking place in the modern world, such as the creation of the modern world system, the emergence of imperialism, and the moral and political bankruptcy of most, if not all, of the ruling elites in the postwar Arab world.

For Abu-Rabiʿ (2010, xx), "Islamist political imagination is not simply controlled by the paradigm of the first ancestors" (xx). He challenges Roy's (1994, 12) argument that "there is an Islamic political imagination dominated by a single paradigm: that of the first community of believers at the time of the Prophet and of the first four caliphs." For Abu-Rabiʿ (2010, xx), "this argument is untenable for the simple reason that there is too much that is contemporary in the Islamic movement to constitute one single paradigm, even if that paradigm was the ideal way of the Prophet and his Companions."

Moreover, Abu-Rabiʿ (2010, ix) quotes Immanuel Wallerstein (2003, 120–1) to make his argument crystal clear: Islamism

> is simply one variant of what has been going on everywhere in the peripheral zones of the world-system. The basic interpretation of theses events has to revolve around the historic rise of antisystemic movements, their seeming success and their political failure, the consequent disillusionment, and the search for alternative strategies.

In other words, for Abu-Rabiʿ (2010, xi) Islamism must be examined "in

the context of the massive social, economic, political, and structural trans-
formations initiated by modernity since the inception of imperialism." It is a
major "ideological response" to massive social and political changes in mod-
ern Muslim societies. As such,

> We cannot juxtapose Islamism and modernity or argue in binary terms.
> Islamism in this sense is a product of modernity and its imposition on the
> Arab world. That is to say, its presence in the modern Muslim world has been
> made possible by modernity, although in the final analysis, Islamism hopes to
> replace modernity as an historical and philosophical system with an Islamic
> Weltanschauung. (Abu-Rabi' 2010, xi)

Hence, the Islamist solution is "not to re-embody an Islamic past as much
as to build a modern and aggressive Islamic political and economic system
that reflects Islamic ideals." (2010, x) That is why Islamism is a challenge to
both the state's autocratic modernization and the "official" interpretation of
the religious authorities allied with the state (2010, xviii).

Abul A'la Maududi of Pakistan, Hassan al Banna and Sayyid Qutb of Egypt
and Ayatollah Khomeini of Iran are among the classic examples of modern
Islamism whose Islamist alternatives are modern responses to modern prob-
lems.[2] Khomeini's theory of *velayat-e faqih* (the Guardianship of Jurist), for
example, is an example of an alternative Islamist vision of state and society
to the Pahlavi's modern secular autocracy and the orthodoxy of the official
apolitical religious establishment in pre-revolutionary Iran. He introduced
and reinvented the traditional concept of the *velayat-e faqih* into the existing
modern structure of state. His concept of Islamic state puts God sovereignty
above and beyond the people's will.

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2.   According to Abu-Rabi' (2010, xiv), "Islamism is a multifaceted phenomenon." It can
     be categorized into three main forms of "pre-modern, modern, and contemporary."
     The Wahabiyyah movement (Wahhabism) is a classic case of the first, while the Ikhwan
     or the Muslim Brotherhood (Ikhwan) and its founding fathers, Hassan al-Banna and
     Sayyid Qutb are example of the second, and the Jama'ah al-Islamiyyah and Jihad of
     Egypt, Rashid al-Ghannoushi of Tunisia and Sayyid Muhammad Hussain Fadlallah
     of Lebanon are examples of the third. For Abu-Rabi' (2010, xiv), the contemporary
     Islamism was a response to the crisis of Arab nationalism, the collapse of Nasserism and
     the supremacy of security states and the conservative Arab leaders of the Persian Gulf
     who were supported by petrodollars and the US. But the contemporary Islamism is not
     monolithic and can be divided into three main streams: the first is the Muslim Brother-
     hood, which "opted for a truce with the security state" and at the same time called for
     free elections. The second stream were the *jihadists,* who embraced armed struggle to
     change the status quo. (xvi) The Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in 1980 and "the decade
     of jihad in Afghanistan" contributed to the rise of this stream (xiv–xv). The jihad in
     Afghanistan paved the way for the jihadist who returned to their countries to launch a
     jihad against their own states and/or to "launch an international movement for jihad,
     which is known as al-Qaeda nowadays." (xv) The third stream "represented the average
     Muslims, who hoped for a better life" (xvi). One could argue that it was this stream, the
     average and ordinary people, who played a role in the Arab Spring in 2011.

In his vision of the Islamic state, "the rulers are subject to a certain set of conditions in governing and administrating the country, conditions that are set forth in the Noble Quran and the *Sunnah* of the Most Noble Messenger" (Khomeini 1981, 55). Similarly, Ali Khamenei (2002), Khomeini's successor, describes the exclusive merits of the Islamic state: When the 12th Shiite *imam* known as *Mahdi* return from his occultation, he argues, he will rely on the pious to lay the foundation for a universally popular government; "but this popular government is *totally different* from the governments that claim to be popular and democratic in today's world… The world's democracies are based on propaganda, whereas the democracy of the Lord of the Age, [*imam* Madhi] religious democracy, is totally different." In reality, however, what makes this polity different from the world's democracies is that the political power in the form of the *velayat-e faqih* belongs to a male clerical Muslim jurist (*faqih*). The scope of people's rights and the degree of people's inclusion are subject to the interpretation of the *faqih*. The nature of people's sovereignty remains ambiguous and instrumental in the hands of political authorities. Islamist vision of politics and state is therefore essentializes Muslim culture and traditions; it echoes the Orientalist stereotype of "Islamic Exceptionalism." Although different in power relations, both Orientalist and Islamist discourses advocate cultural essentialism. These particularist approaches undermine the possibility of a modern democratic Muslim society and polity (Mahdavi 2009).

Multiple Modernities and Universalism from below

The world of cultural essentialism is small, but not always small is beautiful (Booth 1999, 5–7). The world of monist hegemonic universalism is big, but not always big is the better; it is big but not inclusive enough to appreciate diversity. The third alternative is a bottom-up, minimum, inclusive universalism (Mahdavi 2009). This approach promotes multiple modernities. It is a "politics of I-that is-an- other," meaning "the universal 'I' totally embraces the universal 'an other'" (Booth 1999, 57–65). It suggests that there are several different moral lives and yet they "can be judged on the basis of a universally valid body of values." Values can be "combined in several equally valid ways" and cannot be "hierarchically graded." In other words, there are universal values that constitute "irreducible minimum" and once "a society meets these basic principles; it is free to organize its way of life as it considers proper" (Parekh 1999, 131–143).

Universalism from below is a result of open and un-coerced cross-cultural dialogues between and within various moral values. We need to appreciate other forms of rationality and advocate true dialogue among equal moral values. Such an inclusive and non-hegemonic universalism, Michael Walzer (1994, 7–9) argues, is a reflection of the character of human society: it is

universal because it is about humans; and it is particular because it is about society. In other words, "it is every one's morality because it is no one's in particular; subjective interests and cultural expression have been avoided or cut away." Walzer (xi, 6) invites us to read George Orwell's analogy to make sense of his argument: "'There is a thin man inside every fat man,'" George Orwell once wrote. In the same way, "there are the making of a thin and universalist morality inside every thick and particularistic morality."

This "thinness does not describe a morality that is substantively minor or emotionally shallow. The opposite is more likely true: this is morality close to the bone." It implies that an "inevitable dialectical" interplay between the relatively thin universal values and the thick particular society. The inclusive and grassroots universalism, in sum, suggests that "the other is an alien: an other is all of us" (Booth 1999, 31).

Universalism from below is an alternative third way to the question of Muslims and modernities. This alternative path, to use Fred Dallmayr's (2002, 97) words, "acknowledges the beneficial or emancipating dimensions of modernity while refusing to canonize its defects." Likewise, Charles Taylor (1992, 11, 22–23) differentiates between wholesale advocates and radical opponents of modernity—"boosters" and "knockers" of modernity, respectively. Taylor's alternative third path is not a "half-hearted" compromise favoring a "simple trade-off" between the advantages and costs of various aspects of modernity, but "to renew serious reflection on the meaning of modernity and its possible future directions."

Modernity is a complex and dynamic relationship between polity, society, economy and culture, and each society has a different institutional and intellectual configuration. Each society moves along different path towards modernity and represents different versions of modernity. In Charles Taylor's (1999, 16–19) words, we must appreciate "multiple modernities." While *alternatives to modernity* and democracy are risky and perilous, *alternative modernities* and democracies are constructive and useful. Universalism from below is the combination of universalism and politics of difference. "The two are not necessarily incompatible, though their simultaneous success is bound to pluralize democracy in a radical way. It will produce a number of different "roads" to modernity and democracy and a variety of modernities and democracies "at the end of the road" (Walzer 1994, ix).[3]

Muslims and Modernities: Beyond the false binary of Islam-Modernity

The great political achievement of modernity, Fred Dallmayr (2002, 95–96) argues, is dis-aggregation of traditional holistic worldviews and decentralization of power structures monopolized by privileged traditional elites.

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3. See Mahdavi, "Universalism from Below."

The major shortcoming of modernity, however, may actually be a corollary of its primary achievement: radical disenchantment and dis-aggregation or division of domains. The solution to this problem, Dallmayr reminds us, is not to repeat what has been already experienced in the past: nostalgia for ancient forms of spirituality, political abuse of tradition, "the concentration of power in a few hands, the collusion of political and religious domination, and the exclusion of women and marginalized classes from the public sphere." The solution is a third alternative, which at once "resists the lure both of totalizing synthesis and radical segregation or mutual negation." Tradition and modernity are not holistic sacred concepts; they are unfinished projects. A successful completion of these projects relies on the active participation of the people. It is the people who should ultimately decide how much religion could/should play a role in public sphere, given the prevailing socio-cultural and historical context. This approach challenges both determinism of cultural essentialism and hegemonic universalism of colonial modernity.

The question, as Asef Bayat (2007, 10) points out, is not whether Islam is or is not compatible with modernity and democracy, "but rather under what conditions Muslims can *make* them compatible." There is nothing essentially and inherently autocratic or democratic in Islam; it is the people, socio-political agents, who determine the nature of their polity. In the end, "religion is expressed by means of human ideas, symbols, feelings, practices, and organizations" (Beckford 2003, 2). Moreover, Muslim societies are not peculiar or unique in their religiosity; they should not be measured by "the 'exceptionalist' yardstick of which religio-centrism is the central core" (Bayat 2007, 6). Muslim societies hold hybrid identities, which include various degrees of religious affiliation, national cultures, socio-economic structure, historical experiences, and political settings. In short, the essentialist, scripturalist, ahistorical approach to the study of Muslim society and politics is misleading. The question of Islam and democracy is not "as much the question of texts as the balance of power" (Bayat 2007, 13).

In their empirical study, Norris and Inglehart (2004, 154–155) demonstrate that "when political attitudes are compared far from a clash of values, there is a minimal difference between the Muslim world and the West" and they are "similar in their positive orientation toward democratic ideals." More importantly, "support for democracy is surprisingly widespread among Islamic publics, even among those who live in authoritarian societies." The empirical evidence, as Norris and Inglehart argue, urges "strong caution in generalizing from the type of regime to the state of public opinion." Authoritarian politics, Islamist or otherwise, do not represent the state of Muslims' public opinion (Mahdavi 2009).

"There is nothing specifically 'Islamic,'" argues Fred Halliday (1996, 116),

which hinders democratic polity in the Muslim societies; though some of these obstacles "tend to be legitimized in terms of Islamic doctrine." Any argument about incompatibility or compatibility between Islam and democracy adopts "the false premise that there is one true, traditionally established 'Islamic' answer to the question, and this timeless 'Islam' rules social and political practices. There is no such answer and no such 'Islam'." For Halliday (1994, 96), Islam is so broad that "it is possible to catch almost any fish one wants. It is, like all the great religions, a reservoir of values, symbols and ideas from which it is possible to derive a contemporary politics and social code: the answer as to why this or that interpretation was put upon Islam resides therefore, not in the religion and its text itself, but in the contemporary needs of those articulating Islamic politics."

Both Western Orientalists and Islamists, to use Talal Asad's (1997, 190–191) remarkable insight, share "the idea that Islam was originally—and therefore essentially—a theocratic state;" but, for the Islamists "this history constituted the betrayal of a sacred ideal that Muslims are required as believers to restore;" and for the Orientalists "it defines a schizophrenic compromise that has always prevented a progressive reform of Islam." The reality, however, is that the Islamic state is not so much product of some Islamic essence as "it is the product of modern politics and the modernizing state."[4]

In sum, three discourses of Western hegemonic universalism, Orientalism and Islamism present a false dichotomy of Islam and modernity. These discourses reduce the complex picture of Muslim societies into a simple and naïve binary of the clash of civilizations. They single out and essentialize both Islam and modernity; ignore many faces of Islam and modernity; and undermine diversity and plurality of Muslims, Islams, and modernities. We must acknowledge that Western modernity is an amalgamation of colonialism and democracy. We need also to delink modernity from its historical experience of Western modernity, and welcome and facilitate the rise of multiple modernities. The emerging post-Islamist social and intellectual movements in the Muslim World have already contributed to the rise of multiple modernities. Post-Islamism contests Orientalism, hegemonic universalism and Islamism. It challenges, to use Charles Taylor's words, "boosters" and "knockers" of modernity. It acknowledges two opposing faces of Western modernity, i.e. domination and emancipation, colonialism and democracy, genocide and human rights. It also rejects cultural essentialism and the nativist discourse of Islamism. Moreover, post-Islamism challenges the authenticity, possibility and the religious foundations of the Islamic state.

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4.   See Mahdavi, "Universalism from Below."

For Asef Bayat (2007 and 2013), post-Islamism "represents both a *condition* and a *project*." It refers to a *condition* where Islamism "becomes compelled, both by its own internal contradictions and by societal pressure, to reinvent itself." It is also a *project*, "a conscious attempt to conceptualize and strategize the rationale and modalities of transcending Islamism in social, political, and intellectual domains." Post-Islamism signifies the impact of secular exigencies on a religious discourse.[5] Post-Islamism has been used as historical and analytical categories in reference to diverse politico-intellectual and social trends such as the Centre Party/*Hizb al- Wasat* and the younger generation of the *Ikhwan al-Muslimeen*/Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt, the Justice and Development Party (AKP) in Turkey, civil Islam in Indonesia, Imran Khan's Movement for Justice/*Tehreek-e-Insaf* in Pakistan, the *Hizb al-Nahda*/Renaissance Party of Tunisia, and various forms of Muslim reformist trends in postrevolutionary Iran (Mahdavi 2011).

Post-Islamism is a radical call for a critical dialogue between sacred and secular, faith and freedom, revelation and reason, tradition and modernity, religiosity and rights, and local and global paradigms. As Bayat (2007, 2013) argues, the post- Islamist discourse is neither anti-Islamic nor un-Islamic. Nonetheless, in the post-Islamist discourse, Islam is neither *the* solution nor *the* problem. Like Islamism, it encourages the public role of religion in civil society and political society. However, unlike Islamism, it challenges the concept and legitimacy of *Islamic state*. The state is a *secular* entity and cannot be Islamized (Mahdavi 2011). Islamic state in theory is an oxymoron; it is, to use Wael Hallaq's (2013) concept, "the impossible state." Islamic state, as Abdullahi An-Na'im (2008) argues, is a modern postcolonial invention. Islamic state is a secular entity ruled by Islamist elites who act and speak on behalf of their human interpretation of Islam. They may act in accordance with semi/quasi democratic or authoritarian principles. The fact remains is that political leaders, not abstract dogmas, speak or act for the state. The concept of Islamic state, in sum, marks a distinction between post- Islamism and Islamism (Mahdavi 2011). An-Na'im's (2008, 267) words probably best represents the intellectual basis of post-Islamist discourse: "Instead of sharp dichotomies between religion and secularism that relegate Islam to the purely personal and private domain, I call for balancing the two by separating Islam from the state and regulating the role of religion in politics."

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5.   The historical roots of post-Islamism can be traced back to the nineteenth century. For example, Ali Abd al-Raziq (1888–1966) in his classic book *Islam and the Foundations of Power* (1925), argued that the Quran does not offer any system of government and the post-Prophet political systems had no basis in Islamic *fiqh* (jurisprudence); they were expedient tyrannical structures adopted by the Arab oligarchies (Mahdavi 2011).

Conclusion: From Islamism to Post-Islamism?

In this essay we have argued that the relations between tradition and modernity, local and global paradigms, and religion and democracy are not simple relations of mutual exclusion. Neither the hegemonic Western universalism nor cultural essentialism of Islamism captures the complexity of Muslim societies. The challenge is to find a theoretical stance that is equally free from the self-congratulating arrogance of the hegemonic universal West and the self-misleading illusion of the Islamist particular paradigm (Mahdavi 2009). Such an alternative approach is a call for a grassroots and homegrown universalism from below to materialize Muslim modernities and Muslim democracies. The emerging post-Islamist trends in the Muslim world may contribute to the alternative path.

The Arab Spring and Iran's pro-democracy Green Movement symbolize a post-Islamist turn in the Muslim world. There was no clear demand for a "religious government" during the mass uprisings in the Middle East and North Africa in 2011. Neither the Muslim Brotherhood of Egypt, nor the *Hizb al-Nahda*/Renaissance Party of Tunisia sought to establish an "Islamic state." The Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt, or its sponsored political arm, i.e. *Hizb al-Hurriya wal-Adala*/the Freedom and Justice Party, and the *al-Nahda* Party in Tunisia did not seek to replicate an Islamic state modeled after Ayatollah Khomeini's doctrine of *velayat-e faqih* in postrevolutionary Iran. Indeed the Freedom and Justice Party explicitly stated it does not wish to implement a theocracy, which is characterized by a "government of the clergy or by divine right" (Freedom and Justice Party 2011). The same however, cannot be said of the *al-Nour party* in Egypt—the political arm of *Al-Dawa Al-Salafiyya*—and the *Salafi* movement in general. Nonetheless, the *Salafi* organization does not represent the real picture of the Arab Spring. Most importantly, popular slogans in the Arab streets were human dignity, rights, liberty, and social justice, not Islamic state. The popular mode, however, was not anti-religion; the Arab Spring, "dearly upholds religion" (Bayat 2013, 260). The Arab Spring does not reject the public role of religion; it challenges the false dichotomy of religion and secularism. It transcends the religious-secular divide to a social movement against authoritarianism and in the service of democratization. It demonstrates a shift from Islamism to post-Islamism because it highlights the citizens' rights, which taps into issues of minority rights, issues of gender and issues surrounding religious freedom.

While Islamism is more concerned with a fulfilling of duties and responsibilities to the divine state, post-Islamism seeks to merge and marriage *rights* with *duties* of *all* citizens. The *al-Nadha* statements contain numerous "buzz phrases" such as the need for a "thriving democracy with mutual respect", the desire for a "culture of moderation," the guarantee of "equality for all citi-

zens" and the "affirmation of political pluralism" (Ennahda 2011). Moreover, statements of the Freedom and Justice Party highlights its attitudes towards freedom of religion, "rejecting sectarian strife" and recognizing importance of allowing Christians to build churches (Freedom and Justice Party 2011). As is revealed alongside similar statements however, "*Shari'a* law remains the frame of reference" (Freedom and Justice Party 2011).

Although, there are legitimate concerns about the practice of the Muslim Brotherhood in post-revolutionary Egypt,[6] the *al-Nahda* Party has shown its genuine desire for democracy. It has implemented reforms where religion and democracy should "respect but not violate on each other's rights" (Brody-Barre 2013, 214). The *al-Nahda* "rejected a Khomeini type revolution and viewed a civil and democratic state as compatible with the spirit of Islam" (Bayat 2013, 261). Moreover, both Rachid al-Ghannouchi and the Prime Minister Hamadi Jebali of the *al-Nahda* Party used the concept of *dowla madaniyah*/civil state, instead of *almaniyah*/secularism (which carries anti-religious baggage) to distance the post-revolutionary Tunisian state from a religious state (Stepan 2012, 94–97). It is also worth noting that al-Ghannouchi, the head of the *al-Nahda*, and Moncef Marzouki, a secular minded human right activist, have been able to work together in the postrevolutionary Tunisia. Muslim democrats often point to the key Quranic concepts of *showra*/consultation, *ijma'*/consensus and *adala*/justice to support democracy. Rachid al-Ghannouchi explicitly argues "his party should embrace the historic specificity that Tunisia for more than sixty years has had the Arab World's most progressive and women-friendly family code." (Stepan 2012, 94–97) This perhaps shown by the *al-Nahda's* inclusion of women into the constituent assembly (Chrisafis 2011).

Post-Islamism can be labeled to a vast amount of different socio-political positions, some arguably more democratic than others. Post-Islamism remains a broad and multifaceted movement. The Muslim Brotherhood denounces theocracy but remains socially conservative. Their stance on women is a case in point. The *Hizb al-Wasat*/Center Party, which speaks clearly of equality of religion and equality for women and men is a clear example of more progres-

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6.   See, for example, the Muslim Brotherhood's response to the "End Violence to Women" campaign. The campaign, initiated by the UN sought for the "elimination and prevention of all forms of violence against women and girls" (United Nations 2013). The response of the Muslim Brotherhood, was to label this initiative "misleading and deceptive" and "contradicting the principles of Islam" (Muslim Brotherhood 2013). Among some of the main issues were "granting equal rights to homosexuals", "full equality in marriage legislation", "cancelling the need for husband's consent with regards to travel and work" and "granting rights to adulterous wives and illegitimate sons" (Muslim Brotherhood 2013). Such statements from the Muslim Brotherhood raised serious concern among the public, which did not represent the egalitarian principles that initially inspired the Arab Spring/revolutions.

sive trend within a post-Islamist turn in Egypt (*al-Wasat* 2011). Similarly, the *al-Nahda* Party has demonstrated its commitment to a post-Islamist transformation in the contemporary Muslim societies. The same applies to a group of post-Islamist thinkers and activists in post-revolutionary Iran (Mahdavi 2011).

The success of the post- Islamist turn, in sum, depends in part on a critical dialogue and mutual understanding between various forms of religious and secular citizens. Let us remember that neither the French *laïcité* nor a complete separation of religion and state is required for democracy. What is needed for both democracy and religion to flourish is "a significant degree of institutional differentiation between religion and the state." More specifically, what is needed is the "twin tolerations" that is "religious authorities do not control democratic officials who are acting constitutionally, while democratic officials do not control religion so long as religious actors respect other citizens' rights" (Stepan and Linz 2013, 17).

The following words from an open letter capture the core of this argument: On 21 December 2012, a group of Iranian Muslim dissents wrote an open letter to the leaders of postrevolutionary Egypt, warning them not to repeat "the bitter experience of the Islamic Republic of Iran" (Bazargan et.al, 2012). The main message of the letter is that "those who truly love freedom and care about religion" do not "advice the separation of religion and politics" but are deeply worried and concerned about the fusion of "religious institutions and the state."

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