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Islam and Democracy: Beyond 'Compatibility' and Toward Cross-Cultural Democratic Dialogue

by

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Abstract

In this thesis I address the topic 'Islam and democracy.' I argue that rather than asking *whether* Islam and democracy are compatible, Western theorists should be seeking out *how* Muslims practice democracy. The ultimate aim of this thesis is to present a groundwork for meaningful and inclusive cross-cultural democratic dialogue to use as a basis for a global discourse on democracy. My main argument is that the 'Islam and the West' paradigm has occluded dialogue by miring the topic 'Islam and democracy' in debate over whether the two are compatible. Accordingly, the contents of this work are dedicated to (1) deconstructing the 'Islam and the West' paradigm and demonstrating its inadequacy as a viable approach to the topic 'Islam and democracy,' and (2) presenting arguments for, and exploring sites of, "Muslim democracy" and "post-Islamism" as starting points for cross-cultural dialogue between Muslim and Western societies and theorists.

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Introduction

There remains a deep-seated and systemic predisposition among Western societies to fear and distrust Muslims and Islam.[1] This phenomenon is popularly known as "Islamophobia."[2] Many have rightly identified this phenomenon, also called the "Islamic threat"[3] or "Green Menace,"[4] as mythical. That is, while the threat of terrorism perpetrated in the name of Islam is quite real, the hypostatization of the "triple threat" of Islam (political, civilizational, and demographic) is exaggerated to such an extent that many Western political scientists, pundits, and politicians still believe and perpetuate the notion that "Islam = fundamentalism = terrorism and extremism."[5]

A too powerful corpus of Western literature has gained from these undue fears and misconceptions about Muslims and Islam diluting or "deracinating" "Western" values at home or from afar.[6] Especially following the perceived victory of Western liberal democracy over Soviet communism, Western publics have internalized the notion that Islam, and most or all

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[1] See "Euro-Islam." Last viewed on January 20, 2010 at: http://www.euro-islam.info/category/publications/polling.

[2] For definitions and examples of Islamophobia in Western and non-Western societies see Mustafa Abu Sway. "Islamophobia: Meaning, Manifestations, Causes," in Hillel Schenker and Ziad Abu-Zayyad (eds.). *Islamophobia and Antisemitism*. Princeton: Markus Weiner Publishers, 2006, pp. 13 – 31.

[3] John L. Esposito. *The Islamic Threat: Myth or Reality?* New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992.

[4] John L. Esposito. "Political Islam: Beyond the Green Menace," *Current History*, No. 579 (Jan., 1994), pp. 19 – 24. See also Fred Halliday. *Islam and the Myth of Confrontation: Religion and Politics in the Middle East*. I.B. Taurus: New York, 1995.

[5] Ibid, pp. 24; 20.

[6][6] See, for example, Tony Blankley. *The West's Last Chance: Will We Win the Clash of Civilizations?* Washington, DC: Regnery Publishing, 2005.

Muslims for that matter, are a hurdle to overcome on a chimerical pathway to the attainment of so-called "universal" peace and security. As such, "Islam" has replaced Soviet Communism as the new and most dangerous threat to "the West" and "Western" values: the new world *other* to a "new world order."

In this thesis I address the topic 'Islam and democracy.' I argue that rather than asking *whether* Islam and democracy are compatible, Western theorists should be seeking out *how* Muslims practice democracy. The ultimate aim of this thesis is to present a groundwork for meaningful and inclusive cross-cultural democratic dialogue to use as a basis for a global discourse on democracy. My main argument is that the 'Islam and the West' paradigm has occluded dialogue by miring the topic 'Islam and democracy' in debate over whether the two are compatible. Accordingly, the contents of this work are dedicated to (1) deconstructing the 'Islam and the West' paradigm and demonstrating its inadequacy as a viable approach to the topic 'Islam and democracy,' and (2) presenting arguments for, and exploring sites of, "Muslim democracy" and "post-Islamism" as starting points for cross-cultural dialogue between Muslim and Western societies and theorists.

This thesis is composed of four chapters. In the first chapter I review literature that shaped and continues to sustain the popularity and predominance of the 'Islam and the West' paradigm in examinations of 'Islam and democracy' in Western academic and popular discourse, including most notably grand narratives espousing the "end of history" and the "clash of

civilizations." The second chapter is a deconstruction of the 'Islam and the West' paradigm in which I argue that rather than viewing Muslims as *other* and also evil, Western societies and theorists must divest themselves of the 'Islam and the West' paradigm in exchange for the language of multiple Islams and multiple Wests in recognition of the many and diverse religious, cultural, and socio-economic practices underway across and within Muslim and Western societies.

The third chapter examines arguments for and against the compatibility of Islam and democracy against the backdrop of multiple democracies (in line with democracy's essential contestability). Here I argue that if there is a democratic deficit, then it exists in the Arab Muslim Middle East and is not to be found in Islam or Islamic culture itself. I review sociopolitical and socioeconomic explanations of political culture and political economy to explain peoples' simultaneous support for Islamism and democracy. I find that quite apart from a purely religious proclivity, support for Islamism is seen as a means of achieving more accountable and productive government against despotic and authoritarian regimes who maintain control over the political, and hence democratic, culture of the region. Finally, in the last chapter, I examine how Muslims believe and participate in democracy. I lend special impetus to the "post-Islamist turn" as a prominent and fecund development that Western societies and thinkers should support. "Post-Islamists," I argue, as a genuine and home grown expression of democracy, offer the most potential legitimacy in bringing

democracy to regions hitherto suppressed by domestic regimes and Western governments who support 'the authoritarian they know over the theocrat (Islamist) they do not.'

I conclude that meaningful and inclusive cross-cultural democratic dialogue is the surest means of transcending the universal/particular divide and the incorrect assumptions about democracy and "Islam" that the 'Islam and the West' paradigm purports. As relations between Western and Muslim societies grow ever more tense, this work is both timely and important in that it attempts to bridge cultural and civilizational divides between the democratic theories and political conceptions of Muslims and Westerners (and those who ascribe to both identities) that place the onus on both Muslim and Western democrats to recognize the shortcomings of their own respective works in advancing common interests and investigating the theories of the *other*. Indeed, it is high time to leave behind the "clash of civilizations" and the "end of history" for an approach to global politics and living that is mutually sympathetic and understanding, one that approaches the *other* not only with respect and common humanity, but with a genuine and sincere "dignity of difference." [7]

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[7] Jonathan Sacks. *The Dignity of Difference: How to Avoid the Clash of Civilizations*. London: Continuum Books, 2002.

Chapter 1: The 'Islam and the West' Paradigm

In this chapter I examine the construction of the 'Islam and the West' paradigm and the grand narrative on 'Islam and the West' as a current of discourse that has sustained and perpetuated the idea that (1) "Islam" and Muslims are *other* and also evil, and that (2) democracy, or Western liberal democracy, is the solution to this problem.

Islomophobia

In recent studies Americans admitted to knowing virtually nothing about Muslim societies or Muslims' beliefs and practices.[8] Yet from the 1990s to the present, studies suggest that fundamentalism is pernicious, and Islamism dangerous.[9] The acuity of the Manichean character of the dualism ascribed to "Islam" and "the West" only heightened following 9/11. From post-Cold War manifestations, media commentators restated, redistributed and reconstructed "Islam" and located it in the "new world order." More current monikers ("axis of evil") contributed to and justified the need for a continuing "global war on terror."

A 2006 *USA Today/*Gallup poll found that, when asked what Americans admire most about Muslim societies, 57% of Americans answered

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[8] John L. Esposito and Dalia Mogahed. *Who Speaks for Islam? What A Billion Muslims Really Think*. New York: Gallup Press, 2007, p. viii.

[9] Edward E. Said. *Covering Islam: How the Media and Experts Determine How We See the Rest of the World*, 2nd Ed. New York: Vintage Books, 1997. For polls conducted throughout the 90s see Fawaz A Gerges. *America and Political Islam: Clash of Cultures or Clash of Interests*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999, pp. 7-8. For the most up to date pre-9/11 work see Paul Findley. *Silent No More: Confronting America's False Images of Islam*. Bettsville: Amana Publications, 2001.

"I don't know" or "nothing."[10] Yet almost half of all Americans polled believed that Muslims are too extreme in their religious beliefs, nearly half admit to a bias against Muslims, and nearly one quarter confess that they would not want a Muslim neighbor.[11] Over half of all Americans believe that American Muslims are not loyal to America, and respondents were twice as likely to believe that Islam fuels violence against non-Muslims since the 9/11 attacks - from 14% in 2002 to 33% in 2006. Finally, over one third of Americans (36%) believe that Islam is more likely than other religions to incite violence among its adherents.[12] More recent Gallup polling has confirmed these findings, with two-thirds of Americans disagreeing with the statement that 'most Muslims are accepting of other religions.' While less than three-quarters of Americans believe that Muslims want peace, more than a quarter disagree. 81% of Americans polled disagree with the statement that 'most Muslims believe that men and women should have equal rights,' and half disagree with the statement that 'most Muslims around the world are accepting of others.'[13]

'Islam and the West'

Within Western societies, the 'Islam and the West' paradigm has had a lasting effect on scholarship and popular conceptions of Arabs, Muslims, Islam, and especially the region (itself a political construct) known as the

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[10] Ibid, 1.
[11] Ibid, 1.
[12] Ibid, 6.
[13] *Religious Perceptions in America: With an In-Depth Analysis of U.S. Attitudes Toward Muslims and Islam*, Gallup, Inc., 2009. Last viewed on January 20, 2010 at: http://www.muslimwestfacts.com/mwf/125318/Religious-Perceptions-America.aspx.

Middle East. Many Westerners assert that this region that is said to breeds terrorism and instability worldwide, and is *the* source of global unrest and, consequently, so this argument goes, *the* region most in need of democratization (whether by way of instruction, installation, or imposition). The purported historical nature of the "clash" between "Islam" and "the West" predates the notion of "the West" altogether, extending to the religious, political, and confrontational dynamics between Christendom and Islam, Europe and Islam, and to Greek and Persian rivalries. Thus, the recent reinvigoration of Islam and Muslims as the prime enemy to "the West" exacerbated a well entrenched dynamic, a self/*other* dialectic, long embedded in Western societies' historical narratives. On this account, the Muslim *other* is not only different, but also because of the Manichean nature of this difference, the Muslim other is necessarily evil.

The 'Islam and the West' paradigm, or the "grand narrative" of 'Islam and the West,' is also sometimes referred to as "Orientalist" discourse in the namesake of Edward Said's work, entitled *Orientalism*. Said's theoretical approach takes after Michel Foucault, a French historian and philosopher who expounded upon the study of power, distributed through discourse, as forms of knowledge.[14] Said believed that the Occident constructs the truth of

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[14] Foucault argued that discourse is a method of regulating and disciplining populations. In other words, by establishing the confines of what is normal in relation to what is abnormal, certain truths or knowledges become acceptable and are thus accepted as knowledge, therefore bearing directly upon what is and what is not deliberated and discussed. The material effects of accepted discourse in journalism and the media, political rhetoric and popular and academic discussions manifest as 'common sense' or 'received wisdom.' Discourse therefore "structures a particular order of reality," bearing

the Orient, thereby denying the Orient agency in representing itself, defining its own history, deciding its present and future. For Said, "Orientalism" is "the whole network of interests inevitably brought to bear on (and therefore always involved in) any occasion when that peculiar entity 'the Orient' is in question."[15] Western societies are committed to the "Islam" and "the West," Orient and Occident relationship, according to Said, insofar as the Occident, or "the West," self-identifies as the protagonist of its historical narrative, an identity beset in direct opposition to the Orient as mysterious, backward and barbaric, and prototypically represented by the Muslim Arab, or "Islam."[16] *Orientalism* sought to expose the material effects of Orientalism as a field of discourse and examined the ways in which Western agents dominate the identity of, wield hegemony over, and therefore construct the truth of Muslims and Islam.

By the 'Islam and the West' paradigm I have in mind a self/*other* dialectic that conjures ancient, pre-modern and modern contexts as reconstructions of the binary "Islam" and "the West" that are continually redistributed through images of the Muslim *other*, whether through Ancient Greek constructions of Persian authoritarianism in polarity to Athenian

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even upon what is thinkable from what is unthinkable, and sometimes concealing or eschewing what is otherwise or as of yet unthought. Annita Lazar and Michelle M. Lazar. "The discourse of the New World Order: 'out-casting' the double face of threat." *Discourse & Society*, Vol. 15, Nos. (2-3), 2004, p. 224.

[15] Edward E. Said, *Orientalism*. New York: Vintage Press, 1978, p.3.

[16] To be clear, throughout this thesis I refer to this fictive notion of Islam as *other* and evil by parenthesizing Islam as "Islam." Likewise, I refer to the fictive notion of the West as it is framed in antithesis to "Islam" by parenthesizing the West as "the West." And so as not to give the impression of a monolithic or unitary Islam and the West, I refer instead to Muslim and Western societies, thus recognizing multiple Islams and multiple Wests.

democracy, the Crusades' defense of Christendom against the "Moslem" *jihad*, European colonialism's mission civilisatrice (civilizing mission), or the United States's continued invasion of and interference in the Middle East in particular, and across the Muslim world in general, as a ward to Islamic terrorism, one that has come to warrant suspicions of certain imperialisms.

The 'Islam and the West' paradigm draws from "Orientalism" in examining the identity of "the West" and the self/*other* dialectic between "the West" and "Islam" as follows: "the West" is modern and enlightened, progressive and prosperous, secular and liberal, the hallmark of "the civilized" and exemplar of "the universal," while "Islam," owing to the Manichean nature of this dyad, is ('fictioned' as) *other* - supposedly evidenced throughout history, constantly concerning the present, and written also into the future.[17] Not only are Muslims and "Islam" considered different and *other*, then, but also built into this dualism is the assumption that difference necessarily entails evil. In other words, and simply put, to many Western societies "the West" = good because "Islam" = bad, and Islam = "bad" because the West = "good." The construction of an enemy forges a common and collective identity that congeals around the idea that *we* have something to protect, and that *they* are a threat to that which is worthy of protection.

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[17] "One 'fictions' history," Foucault said, "on the basis of a political reality that makes it true, one 'fictions' a politics not yet in existence on the basis of historical truth." Michel Foucault. *The Archeology of Knowledge*. New York: Pantheon Books, 1972, p. 193.

Within the 'Islam and the West' paradigm, "Islam," and by extension Muslims, are therefore benighted, backward and barbaric, anti-modern, anti-secular, anti-liberal, and anti-Western. Owing to the nexus of terms that coalesces around "the West" as "civilized," Muslims and Islam are also understood to be inherently or disproportionately anti- or undemocratic. The Middle East is often typecast as the "heartland of Islam," as a political 'fiction,' an "imagined geography," as Said put it, a physical but also epistemic boundary that morphs to accommodate for the political face of the times, whether as the "arc of crisis" or "axis of evil."

New World Other, New World Order

The notion of Islam as *other* and therefore evil, and the idea of democracy as the panacea to the problematic (viz. "Islam") arose simultaneously - even concomitantly – with a specific historical context: the fall of the Berlin wall and the replacement of Soviet communism with "Islam" as the new world *other* to the "new world order." Indeed, the topic 'Islam and democracy' meets at the confluence of these industries of scholarship, what I call the 'Islam as *other'* industry and the 'democratization industry,'[18] respectively.

"Out of these troubled times," President Bush declared in 1991, "- a new world order – can emerge: a new era – freer from the threat of terror,

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[18] Ashok Swain, Ramses Amer and Joakim Ojendal. "The Democratization Project: Peace, Conflict, and Development" in *The Democratization Project: Opportunities and Challenges*, Ashok Swain, Ramses Amer and Joakim Ojendal (eds.). New York: Anthem Press, 2009.

stronger in the pursuit of justice, and more secure in the quest for peace."[19]

Bush recognized that "the world was not moving into 'an era of *perpetual* peace,' however, for 'The quest for the New World Order is in part a challenge to keep the dangers of disorder at bay.'" [20]   At the break of the Cold War the United States was left with the decision either to maintain its current levels of military spending and presence abroad, or to adopt more modest foreign policies. A summer, 1993 article in *Foreign Affairs* - the same issue in which Huntington's original "clash of civilizations" thesis was published – warned:

> If the American public has indeed decided that spearheading the creation of a new world order is not worth the candle, it will eventually need a wholly new strategy for pursuing security and prosperity. Otherwise the nation will find itself in the dangerous position of hinging its fate on objectives that have become unattainable, because the assets that it expects to achieve them with no longer exist.[21]

In the following issue of *Foreign Affairs*, one author, representative of public opinion at the time, supported not only the candle, but taking up the torch:

> Any individual or government concerned with pluralism, democracy and human rights must not be complacent about the rise of militant Islamic groups. Islam is *incompatible* with these values.... Support for democratic elections in

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[19] President George Bush, Address to Congress, 11 September 1990 (US Information Service) from Lawrence Freedman. "The Gulf war and the new world order," in *Survival*, vol. XXXIII, no. 3: (May/June 1991), p. 196.
[20] (Italics inserted),Ibid.
[21] Alan Tonelson, "Superpower Without a Sword," *Foreign Affairs*, Vo. 72, Issue 3 (Summer,1993), p.166

the Middle East is thus contradictory, because radical Islamic fundamentalists,

who are most likely to come to power, have no commitment to democracy.

Trying to distinguish between good and bad Islamic groups may be convenient

for U.S. policymakers, but it is impossible to determine which ones will keep

their promises of democracy and human rights. In practice, few do.[22]

The end of the cold war marked an important juncture in U.S. foreign policy

for the Middle East and elsewhere[23] as the Gulf war inaugurated a "test case

for a 'new world order' [that] was introduced almost as the Iraqi tanks rolled

into Kuwait on 2 August 1990."[24]

The 'Islam and the West' Paradigm

While Said and others argue that the construction of Islam as *other*,

barbaric and uncivilized, etc. traces back to 'Islam and Europe,' the Crusades,

and the inception of Islam (if not earlier), the notion of Islam as terroristic,

anti-democratic, and an affront to liberal values is contemporary, to be sure.

Hence, I assert that the modern origins of the 'Islam and the West' paradigm

are located in the historical context of the post-cold war world. In this section

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[22] Judith Miller. "The Challenge of Radical Islam," *Foreign Affairs*. Vol. 72, Issue 2 (Spring, 1993), p. 43. (Italics inserted)

[23] "The end of the Cold War and the 1990-91 war in the Persian Gulf have catalyzed a near flood of scholarly and policy-oriented analysis on the arms race or the proliferation of weapons in the Middle East.' The revival of a Middle Eastern peace process, with its focus-at one multilateral table-on questions of regional security, confidence building, initiatives to control the arms trade were usually cast in global terms, specific concern with the Middle East was manifest. Implicit in almost all of this work is an argument that events may have created a ripe moment for tackling both the visible manifestations and the underlying sources of some of the many conflicts in the region." Keith Krause. "Middle Eastern Arms Recipients in the Post-Cold War World," *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, Vol. 535, The Arms Trade: Problems and Prospects in the Post-Cold War World (Sep., 1994), p. 73.

[24] Lawrence Freedman, "The Gulf war and the new world order," p. 195; see also James Petras, "Gulf War and the New World Order," *Economic and Political Weekly*, (March 2-9, 1991), pp. 482 – 484.

I argue that in the wake of the perceived power vacuum created by the end of the Cold War, a group of highly influential U.S. neoconservative scholars proffered a number of overlapping yet ultimately incoherent theses to explain or predict the emerging "new world order" of the time. [25]

By extension, these authors are the framers of the 'Islam and the West' paradigm as well. And though their theses are incoherent as a whole, their overlap consists of the two industries of scholarship mentioned above: Islam as *other* and the democratization as the solution. These works and their proponents support the notion that Islam is *other* and also evil through the projection of Islam as a threat to not only "the West" but also to Western values. This projection of Islam as *other* and evil takes place through the distribution of terms that coalesce around particularistic understandings of "universal" and "the civilized."[26]

Second, these theses support the notion that democratization is the surest way of seeing to it that the Islamic threat does not infringe on Western

[25] For an in-depth study on how Bernard Lewis, Samuel Huntington, Daniel Pipes and other American scholars influenced the US and UK responses to al-Qaeda and 'radical Islam' see Richard Bonney, *False Prophets: The 'Clash of Civilizations' and the Global War on Terror*. Peter Lang: Oxford, 2008.

[26] "Since September 11 George W. Bush has repeatedly declared that 'this [war on terror] is the world's fight. This is civilization's fight.' 'The civilized world', he observed in a speech to Congress on 20 September 2000, 'is rallying to America's side.' In his 2002 State of the Union Address he declared that 'the civilized world faces unprecedented dangers,' and speaking of Iraq's weapons of mass destruction (WMD), that 'this is a regime that has something to hide from the civilized world. In his introductory statement to the 'National Security Strategy' issued in September 2002, Bush noted that the 'the allies of terror are the enemies of civilization'. 'America's purpose', the president declared in his 2003 State of the Union Address, 'is more than to follow a process – it is to achieve a result: the end of terrible threats to the civilized world'. A year later he reminded his audience that 'families and schools and religious congregations' were 'unseen pillars of civilization' which must remain strong in America and be defended." Richard Crockatt. *After 9/11: Cultural Dimensions of American Global Power.* New York: Routledge: 2007, p. 11.

civilization, and therefore "the universal," and "the civilized" by association. In other words, neoconservatives among others appropriate a particularistic set of Western norms and understandings are appropriated into the 'Islam and the West' paradigm as a "standardized relational pair" such that "Islam" is bad (or evil) and "the West" is good (or "civilized"/"universal):

> [t]he membership category civilized world constructs in our corpus an implied and hence unexpressed 'standardized relational pair' with an implicit or virtual 'other world'. This tacit 'other world' possesses opposite category-bound predicates (i.e. 'terror') and opposite category-bound activities (i.e. the 'war against civilization'). Indeed, it would put into practice civilization's negation, namely the Other's counterculture or terror, if the Other would prevail in its 'war against civilization'. As the antithesis of the civilized world, it is implied by every mention of that category, just like the mere mention of good brings to mind its antonym bad.[27]

That is, because Western theorists believe that Islamic or Muslim understandings of 'democracy,' 'freedom,' 'equality,' etc. differ drastically from popular Western liberal, capitalist, neo-conservative and/or neo-liberal understandings, they deny the universal applicability of these supposedly "universal" terms to Muslims and Muslim theorists. [28] Thus, the use of the term 'democracy' as it is appropriated by a (Western) understanding of the "universal" is undemocratic, and 'democracy' becomes a term of exclusion rather than a genuinely globally attainable and applicable concept.

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[27] Tanja Collet. "Civilization and civilized in post-9/11 U.S. presidential speeches. *Discourse & Society*, Vol. 20, No. 4 (2009), p. 455. See also Patricia L. Dunmire. "Preempting the future: rhetoric and ideology of the future in political discourse," *Discourse & Society* Vol. 16, No. 4 (2005), p. 481.
[28] Lazar and Lazar. "The discourse of the New World Order," pp. 223 – 242.

The first of these grand narratives was published shortly after the fall of the Berlin Wall. In 1989, Francis Fukuyama predicted the "end of history", or "the end point of mankind's ideological evolution and the universalization of Western liberal democracy as the final form of human government."[29] Following a Hegelian view of History as a unidirectional, evolutionary process undertaken by human societies as a whole, the "end of history" was a normative argument "concerning the justice or adequacy of liberal democratic political institutions"[30] as "the only coherent political aspiration that spans different regions and cultures around the globe."[31] Having defeated communism, in other words, "the West" realized the pinnacle of human achievement and, following the same path, others could cross the finish line and join 'the West' in waiting for the rest of humanity to catch up.

In all, Fukuyama argued, the Muslim world was lagging significantly behind. Though he lamented the lack of some "struggle for recognition [and] the willingness to risk one's life for a purely abstract goal"[32] among Western liberal populations, "Islam," he remarked, remained successful in repelling liberal democracy thus far (though he suggested that 'Islam' may be amenable to the penetration of liberal ideas in the future).[33] Modernity,

[29] Francis Fukuyama. "The End of History?," *The National Interest*, Vol. 16 (Summer, 1989), p. 4.
[30] Francis Fukuyama. "Reflections on *The End of History*, Five years later," *History and Theory*, Vol. 34, No. 2, Theme Issue 34: World Historians and Their Critics (May, 1995), p. 27.
[31] Francis Fukuyama. *The End of History and the Last Man*. New York: The Free Press, 1992, p. xiii.
[32] Francis Fukuyama. "The End of History?," p. 18.
[33] "[I]t remains the case that this religion has virtually no appeal outside those areas that were culturally Islamic to begin with. The days of Islam's cultural conquests, it would

liberalism, and democracy, according to Fukuyama, is a Western preserve

endemic to a Western culture:

> Modernity has a cultural basis. Liberal democracy and free markets do not
> work everywhere. They work best in societies with certain values whose
> origins may not be entirely rational. It is not an accident that modern liberal
> democracy emerged first in the Christian west, since the universalism of
> democratic rights can be seen as a secular form of Christian universalism…. But
> there does seem to be something about Islam, or at least the fundamentalist
> versions of Islam that have been dominant in recent years, that make Muslim
> societies particularly resistant to modernity.[34]

Fukuyama therefore perpetuated a singular conception of modernity ushered

in and defined by Western norms and trajectories. He catalyzed a

particularistic vision of democracy as the only *universal* form of government,

one to which Islam was particularly averse because Islam*ic* law and Islam*ic*

institutions were illiberal and inhospitable to democracy as a whole.[35]

Samuel Huntington's "clash of civilizations" thesis, published shortly

thereafter (1993),[36] identified culture as the most important distinction

among people. Language and religion were the central elements of culture

and civilization.[37] According to Huntington, as the abstract unit of culture,

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seem, are over… Indeed, the Islamic world would seem more vulnerable to liberal ideas
in the long run than the reverse, since such liberalism has attracted numerous and
powerful Muslim adherents over the past century and a half. Fukayama, *The End of
History and the Last Man*, pp. 45-46.

[34] Francis Fukuyama "The West has won." *The Guardian*. 11 October 2001. Last viewed
on December 12, 2009 at www.guardian.co.uk/waronterror/story/0,567333,00.html.

[35] Francis Fukuyama. *The End of History and the Last Man,* pp. 45 – 46.

[36] The original essay, published in Foreign Affairs, expanded into a book three years
later. For the original article see Samuel Huntington, "The Clash of Civilizations?" *Foreign
Affairs.* Vol. 72, No. 3 (Summer, 1993), pp. 22 – 49.

[37] Samuel P. Huntington. *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order.*

civilizations are the most accurate method of depicting post-Cold war politics and world order (hence the full title of his book, *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order*). Huntington reset the stage between "the West" and "the Rest" (or *us* and *them*) by identifying the division between "Islamic" and "Western" civilizations as particularly hostile. "Islam," he believed, is the most clear and present danger to "the West" and to "Western" values. Huntington described an "intercivilizational quasi war" underway between "Islam" and "the West" dating back to the Iranian Revolution,[38] though on his longer account of history "Islamic" and "Western" civilizations have been at war since at least the Crusades, if not the inception of Islam itself. Huntington believed that Muslims "see the world in dualistic, us-and-them terms," in "parallel concepts of "jihad" and "crusade.""[39] "Islam's borders are bloody," he asserted, "and so are its innards."[40]

According to Huntington, "the West" is in its "*universal* state," one "*marked by democracy*."[41] As civilizations adopt democracy - "*the political form of Western civilization*"[42] – "the power of the West gradually declines relative to that of other civilizations:"[43] "the ability of the West to impose Western concepts of human rights, liberalism, and democracy on other civilizations also declines and so does the attractiveness of those values to

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New York: Simon & Schuster, 2003, pp. 42, 47, 59, 254, 255-256
[38] Ibid, 206.
[39] Ibid, 210-11
[40] Ibid, 257-8
[41] (Italics inserted)
[42] Ibid, 55 (italics inserted).
[43] Ibid, 63.

other civilizations."[44] Though like Fukuyama, Huntington sees Western civilization as inaugurating modernity, he believes that "Islam" cannot emulate "the West" in order to come to grips with an indigenous form of modernity. Since Huntington views the West as unique, any attempts made by other civilizations to westernize will invariably fall short.[45]

In addition to this struggle with an indigenous form of modernity, democracy is impossible until the separation of religion from state is in place; democratic culture is impossible without the subordination of community-based identities and allegiances to a liberal individualism: "the long-term effect of the operation of democratic politics is probably to broaden and deepen individual liberty," Huntington assumed. "Liberty is, in a sense, the peculiar virtue of democracy; hence, if one is concerned with liberty as an ultimate social value, one should also be concerned with the fate of democracy."[46] For Huntington and many others, the separation of Islam and politics, mosque and state, is a necessary prerequisite to democratization. Hence, a curious equation results from these assumptions. Islam is incompatible with democracy because it is "evil" and incapable of adopting democratic values. Consequently, the West must prescribe democracy to "Islam" under the assumption that if Muslims swallowed, grinned and bore it, then democracy would cure the composition and physiology of "Islam."

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[44] Ibid, 92.
[45] Samuel P. Huntington. "The West Unique, Not Universal." *Foreign Affairs,* 75:6 (Nov./Dec., 1996), p. 37.
[46] Samuel P. Huntington. "Will More Countries Become Democratic?" Political Science Quarterly, Vol. 99, No. 2 (Summer, 1984), p. 199.

Liberal tolerance would placate Islam and permit democratic governance and human rights.

While Huntington preaches toleration and other broad and common values, he nonetheless insists that unless Western – and more accurately U.S. – hegemony is rekindled, world order will devolve into destruction and chaos. The decline of the West spells doom for humanity. And in this sense, the "clash of civilizations" is a foregone conclusion, a work of self-fulfilling prophecy: "So long as Islam remains Islam (which it will) and the West remains the West (which is more dubious), this fundamental conflict between two great civilizations and ways of life will continue to define their relations in the future even as it has defined them for the past fourteen centuries," he concludes.[47]

Huntington's title and a significant portion of the support for his book rests on the phrase of modernist historian Bernard Lewis who, in "The Roots of Muslim Rage" first published in *Atlantic Monthly* in 1990, concluded:

> we are facing a mood and a movement far transcending the level of issues and policies and the governments that pursue them- *this is no less than a clash of civilizations* – the perhaps irrational but surely historic reaction of an ancient rival against our Judeo-Christian heritage, our secular present, and the worldwide expansion of both. It is crucially important that *we on our side* should not be provoked into an equally historic but equally irrational reaction against that rival.[48]

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[47] Ibid,212
[48] (italics inserted), Bernard Lewis. "The Roots of Muslim Rage," *Atlantic Online*, 1991, p. 9.

As Richard Martin observed, "that balancing cautionary note"[49] was lost with the subsequent post-911 publication of *What Went Wrong?,* in which Lewis warns that *we on our side* must heed the likelihood that "the suicide bomber may become a metaphor for the whole region."[50] Like Huntington's demising narrative, Lewis foretold the worst for relations between "Islam" and "the West." Given the present trajectory of the Islamic world - denied domestic freedoms but inspired by a revolutionary zeal, motivated by humiliation, frustration, overstated confidence, and above all a contempt for "the West" and "Western" success - Lewis wrote that "there will be no escape from a downward spiral of hate and spite, rage and self-pity, poverty and oppression, culminating sooner or later in yet another alien domination."[51]

In sum, Western liberal democracy's perceived victory over Soviet style communism rendered the three worlds paradigm an inaccurate depiction of global politics and world order that left many searching for a viable replacement.[52] "Islam" came to the fore of the Western social imaginary[53] through the "clash of civilizations" as the new *other* to the new

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[49] Richard C. Martin "September 11: Clash of Civilizations or Islamic Revolution?" in Amy Benson Brown and Karen M. Poremski (eds.). *Roads to Reconciliation: Conflict and Dialogue in the Twenty-First Century*. Armonk, NY: M.E. Sharpe, 2005, p. 74.

[50] Bernard Lewis, *What Went Wrong: Western Impact and Middle Eastern Responses*. London: Phoenix, 2002, p. 178.

[51] Lewis, *What Went Wrong*, p. 178

[52] Indeed, the end of the Cold War "shattered long-held assumptions about political categories based on levels of economic industrialization, political development, or both. Students and scholars of the third world are clamoring to redefine and rediscover their field of expertise and to either rethink their longstanding presuppositions entirely or to reformulate them according to the new realities of the international arena." Mehran Kamrava. "Political culture and a new definition of the Third world," *Third World Quarterly*, Vol. 12, No. 4, 1995, p. 691.

[53] A social imaginary, according to Charles Taylor, is more than just the "immediate background understandings which makes sense of our particular practices." It is, in

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world order.[54] At a time when the "third wave"[55] revived hope of the spread of democracy, "end of history"[56] appeared palpable. On all accounts, "Islam" was propitious for the *othering*, and democracy was the panacea to the entire problematic. Ultimately, the "clash of civilizations" bested the "end of history" as the most popular characteristic of post-cold war order in popular and academic discussions of the future of global politics (although many still aspire to "end of history" reasoning in attempting to overcome the "clash of civilizations" and in paying lip service to democratizing "Islam," Muslim-majority states, and in particular the Middle East).

The overlapping elements of the grand narratives that laid the groundwork and constitute the assumptions contained within the 'Islam and the West' paradigm sustain the idea of Western liberal particularism as the "universal" and "the civilized." Thus, Western liberal theories dominate and define the meanings of secularism and secularization, modernity and modernization, and democracy and democratization inasmuch as they need to follow Western trajectories and models in order to be complete or successful. Otherwise, Muslim, Islamic, and Islamist notions of democracy are

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essence, the way that the individual conceptualizes their "social existence, how they fit together with others, how things go on between them and their fellows, the expectations which are normally met, and the deeper normative notions and images which underlie these expectations." Charles Taylor. *A Secular Age.* Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2007, pp. 171 – 176.

[54] Esposito, "Political Islam," pp. 19 – 24.

[55] The "third wave" began in1974 with Portugal and whet the appetites of democrats around the globe into the 80s and early 90s. "The current era of democratic transitions constitutes the third wave of democratization in the history of the modern world" Huntington wrote. See Samuel P. Huntington. "Democracy's Third Wave," in *Journal of Democracy* Vol. 2, No.2 (Spring, 1992), pp. 12.

[56] Francis Fukuyama. "The End of History?" *The National Interest*, Vol. 16 (Summer, 1989), p. 4.

illegitimate, anti-modern, religiously fanatical, and undemocratic simply by

virtue of the pejorative adjectival use of "Muslim" or "Islam" that is ascribed

to them.

Chapter 2: Moving Beyond the 'Islam and the West' Paradigm

In this chapter I offer a number of criticisms of the 'Islam and the West' paradigm. Part of the criticism are intended as a way of transcending the theoretical binaries that often divide scholarship on Islam and the Middle East into those called "Orientalists," or those accused of constructing the truth of the Orient, from those labeled Arab or Muslim "apologists," or those who remove the onus on Arab and Muslim societies for their plights and conditions unduly by assigning disproportionate blame elsewhere. Another interrelated part of this criticism is intended as a means to proceed with cross-cultural dialogue, as a way for Western societies to think about how to move from conceiving of Muslims and Arabs as *other* to how to consider all interlocutors as partners in dialogue.

I suggest the adoption of the language or conceptual framework of multiple Islams and multiple Wests in recognition of the many and diverse dynamic cultural, religious, and traditional[57] practices associated with Islam and the West. I also employ the terminology of multiple Wests and multiple Islams in view of the many and diverse political conceptions and political parties that different interpretations of Islam motivate and support (what are called "Muslim Democracies"),[58] and to leave open the possibility that Western interlocutors will not fall back upon Western liberal democracy

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[57] Indeed, one of the main problems with associating traditionalism with "Islam" is derived from neglecting the fact that traditionalist is itself quite a dynamic concept. What is tradition today, in other words, is often different, if not drastically so, from what was considered traditional from the same community one hundred years ago.
[58] Reza Vali Nasr. "The Rise of Muslim Democracies." *Journal of Democracy* Vol. 16, No. 2,, 2005, pp. 13 – 27.

habitually as a standard model of practice, and to consider alternative political conceptions in lieu of Western liberal democracy as the "end of history."

Contrary to Huntington, Lewis, Fukuyama and others, I argue that Islam and the West are unstable and immutable constructs and that, as such, they are inadequate analytical categories. Neither a monolithic Islamic civilization nor a monolithic culture of Islam exists. A Western civilization and a properly or uniquely Western culture are also redressed. As such, I find that the 'Islam and the West' paradigm is not a suitable analytical framework with which to approach the topic 'Islam and democracy.' Instead, the recognition of multiple 'Wests' and multiple 'Islams' must be adopted in order to allow for a hybridity of cultures and aspects of civilizations (understood as amorphous and inessential) to come to the fore of discussion. Doing so paves the way for the transition of the identification with the Muslim *other* as evil to an identification of *others* as partners in dialogue. In so doing the aim is moving beyond the need for the *other* as such and moving towards the identification of dialogical partners as part of a greater community of interlocutors that strive towards an inclusive identity of *us* rather than identifying with *others* always and only as *them*.

Confronting the Clash

Though erroneous, Huntington offered a gratifying thesis with which to explain acts of violence like 9/11 and what is misleadingly called *Islamic* terrorism. Distraught by and fearful of continued terrorist attacks

perpetrated in the name of Islam, many Westerners and Western societies,

were contented by the notion of "Islam" and Muslims as *the* problem. Yet *The*

Clash of Civilizations was, as one author noted, quite simply a work of

international relations "with politics taken out"[59] that satiated the thirst for

blame and fed the desire for revenge without investigating the deeper and

more nuanced aspects of this presupposed antinomy:

> It was as though Americans needed to place the events of 9/11 into an easily
>
> accessible drama – one in which every historical actor had a role to play – and
>
> the drama that seemed most suited to the American psyche at the time began
>
> with a classic Sophoclean prologue: two unseen forces – "Islam" and "the West"
>
> – hurtling toward each other in a catastrophic yet inevitable conclusion,
>
> determined by the gods long before.[60]

But does it make sense to speak of a "clash of civilizations" in the first place?

Are civilizations reliable units for political analysis and scientific

measurement? To the contrary, in this section I offer a number of reasons

why civilizations are inadequate analytical constructs for political analysis

and why the clash of civilizations is a deceptive and ultimately inaccurate

depiction of world order.

For one, as many have noted, "the world is not scurrying to draw itself

up into neat civilizational battle-lines" at all.[61] Culture and civilization have

not proved to be substantial reasons for war, and nor are they significant

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[59] Ervand Abrahamian. "The US Media, Huntington, and September 11," *Third World Quarterly,* Vol. 24, No. 3 (Jun., 2003), p. 535.
[60] Reza Aslan, *How to Win A Cosmic War: God, Globalization, and the End of the War on Terror.* Random House: New York, 2009, pp. 159-60.
[61] Brian Beedham. "A Fading Hell," *Economist*, Vol. 352 Issue 8130, (July, 1999), pp. 10 – 12.

hindrances to it. Contrary to Huntington's "clash" thesis, civilizations are not defined by religious identities and, in any case, conflicts between religions and cultures are not on the rise with the end of the cold war at all.[62] Religious conflicts are in the minority.[63] If it makes sense to speak in terms of religious categories whatsoever, then Christian conflicts far outweigh others, including those involving Muslims.[64] Muslim societies overall share neither an equal or proportionate propensity towards peace and/or conflict, nor do they exhibit an overtly violent or authoritarian politico-cultural disposition. Indeed, nationalism is a much more accurate determinant when it comes to identity politics and reasons to go to war in the post-Cold war world.[65] It is therefore incorrect to ascribe to Islam or to Muslims characteristic violence, let alone to assert the existence of a monolithic Islamic civilization.

The use of "Islam" as a descriptor of 'evil' indicates that all Muslims share or participate in a homogenous 'system' of beliefs and practices, values and cultures, traditions and customs. A common corollary is that there is such a thing as an "Islamic heartland." The Middle East is constructed as the centripetal tie for all Muslims, ostensibly because it represents the roots of the history of Islam, the birthplace of Mohammad and the language of the Quran, home to the holy cities and housing the Kaaba. It is also where the

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[62] Jonathan Fox. "Religion and State Failure: An Examination fo the Extent and Magnitude of Religious Conflict from 1950 to 1996," *International Political Science Review*, Vol. 25, No. 1 (Jan., 2004), p. 64.
[63] Ibid, p. 70.
[64] Ibid, p. 65.
[65] Stephen M. Wait, "Building Up New Bogeymen," *Foreign Policy,* Vol. 106 (Spring 1997), pp. 177-89. See especially p. 84.

Ottoman Empire, the last historical empire in history, declared the end of the Sultinate in Turkey following the First World War. While all of these reasons are legitimate, many attribute to the Middle East and its cultures, to its political or juridical structures, an "essence of Islam" that bespeaks all Muslim-majority states and, for that matter, all Muslims. But these presumptions and prejudices that subscribe to the notion of a monolithic Muslim or Islamic essence are false. There is no one true Islam, one true Islamic culture. Neither Islamic civilization, nor Islamic culture, is an accurate depiction of post-cold War politics. Huntington's reference to an "Islamic civilization" is an undue generalization, and the Middle East as the "Islamic heartland" is a reductive fallacy.

Islam and Islams

As Talal Asad has long argued, "Islam is not an analytical category:" "A Muslim's beliefs about the beliefs and practices of others *are* his own beliefs. And like all such beliefs, they animate and are sustained by his social relations with others:"[66]

> Islam is neither a distinctive social structure nor a heterogeneous collection of beliefs, artifacts, customs, and morals. It is a tradition…. A tradition consists essentially of discourses that seek to instruct practitioners regarding the correct form of purpose of a given practice that, precisely because it is established, has a history…. An Islamic discursive tradition is simply a tradition of Muslim discourse that addresses itself to conceptions of the

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[66] See Asad, Talal. *The Idea of an Anthropology of Islam*. Center for Contemporary Arab Studies: Georgetown University. 1986, pp. 14-15.

Islamic past and future, with reference to a particular Islamic practice in the present.... [I]t will be the practitioners' conceptions of what is *apt performance*, and of how the past is related to present practices, that will be crucial for tradition, not the apparent repetition of an old form.[67]

Asad's characterization of Islam as a discursive tradition lends itself to two readings. The first pertains to the many and diverse cultures and religiosities in Muslim societies across the globe. As such, the Islam of Fez differs from the Islam of Jakarta. As do the many forms of Islam within and between Fez and Jakarta. For this reason, a host of scholars encourage the conceptual and discursive use of the language of multiple "Islams"[68] in place of speaking for a singular or unitary Islam. It is therefore important to ask "who speaks for Islam?" before ascribing any one characteristic, custom, belief, or practice to Islam or to all Muslims. Multiple Islams therefore recognizes the many different and multifarious local and particular traditions, cultures, beliefs, customs, and practices across and between Muslim societies. Multiple Islams recognizes the religious and spiritual diversity of individuals, communities, societies, and peoples who speak for Islam.

The second reading calls to mind a distinction Fred Halliday has made between what people mean when they invoke 'Islam' as a socio-political movement from Islam as a religion. Islam as a religion, Halliday says, "exists as a system of belief about the supernatural and related questions of morality, destiny and meaning" and is therefore the exclusive purview of

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[67] Ibid.
[68] Edward W. Said. "Impossible Histories," *Harper's Magazine*; Vol. 205, Issue 1826 (July, 2002), pp. 69 – 74.

"believers and theologians."[69] As for Islam as a socio-political movement, Halliday says, "I do not believe there is much to be gained by regarding the many socio-political realities that the term applies to as part of a single phenomenon."[70] "As an object of social and political analysis, or as a force in international affairs there is little that can be explained, praised or denounced by reference to a unitary 'Islam,'"[71] since "'Islam' as an object of study must first be dissolved in order to be made concrete in the study of particular events, times and places."[72]

Likewise, Asad writes that insofar as "forms of interest in the production of knowledge are intrinsic to various structures of power they differ not according to the essential character of Islam... but according to historically changing systems of discipline."[73] In other words, evoking a monolithic notion of "Islam" denies Muslims' cultural, traditional, social, economic, and religious particularities across the Muslim world and the entirety of the globe, regardless of a religious, laic, or secular orientation. Addressing "Islam" as the totality of Muslim cultures or socio-political beliefs is unjustified and often misleading. Though referencing a single Islam could represent the totality of all Muslims as a metaphysical unity of the ummah, more often than not "Islam" in the singular leads to reductive or generalizing claims about the inherent nature of "Islam" or the "culture of Islam" as "X,"

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[69] Halliday, Fred. *Islam and the Myth of Confrontation: Religion and Politics in the Middle East*. I.B. Taurus: New York, 1995, p.2.
[70] Ibid.
[71] Ibid, p. 1.
[72] Ibid .
[73] Ibid.

whatever that may be. In this sense, multiple Islams does away with the socio-political typologies of those who are identified with and who identify as one or another interpretation of Islam, as well as doing away with the notion of speaking in terms of a singular Islam with a uniform belief or 'system' altogether.

Who Speaks for Islam?

That being said, there are many typologies ascribed to various socio-political movements that draw inspiration or motivation from Islam. The effort on the part of Western scholars to categorize Muslims as this or that persuasion of Islam is no doubt what has provided for the fecundity of the 'Islam as *other*' industry of scholarship. Attempts to pigeon hole Muslims depending on socio-political leanings and/or fidelity or affinity to Western or Western liberal leanings, beliefs, and practices usually amounts to demonstrating either a dissonance or harmony with the interests of Western governments.

As a caveat, it is necessary to note that the adjective "Islamic," as it is applied across the board, whether to modernists, reformists, traditionalists, or terrorists, does little to clarify how Muslims behave or act. Indeed, reference to an "Islamic" variant of either violence or politics undoubtedly obscures more than it elucidates: there is nothing especially Islamic about any one kind of violence or politics. Thus, neither those who self-identify as, nor those who are identified as archetypically Muslim, represent all or majority Muslim opinion. Though Muslims are called Islamic

fundamentalists, Islamists, jihadists and/or Islamic terrorists, all of these

categories imply different things in different contexts and in many cases also

differs depending on the author or institution that is invoking them.

Nonetheless, a review of the scholarship on Islams (though rarely conceived

or explicitly referred to as such) is warranted if only to clarify present terms

of use.

'Islamic fundamentalism' is somewhat of a misnomer.

Fundamentalism "generally urges passive adherence to literal reading of

scriptures and does not advocate change of the social order, instead focusing

on reforming the lives of the individual and family,"[74] and most closely

resembes the evangelical movements that emerged in the 1910s and became

popular by the 1920s, from which the namesake 'fundamentalist' is

originally derived. Islamist movements expound modern reinterpretations

and readings of old texts and scriptures, however, and are therefore not

fundamentalist, because they do not take a literal, or 'fundamental,'

interpretation of the Qur'an as their bases of politics and ideology. Islamist

movements, unlike fundamentalist movements, are modern, both a product

of, and a reaction to, modernity.[75] The term Islamist is therefore more widely

used and alludes to "a political perspective centrally informed by a set of

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[74] Ali R. Abootalebi. "Islam, Islamists, and Democracy," *Middle East Review of International Affairs*, Vol. 3, No. 1 (Mar., 1999). Last viewed on Febrary 6, 2010 at: http://meria.idc.ac.il/journal/1999/issue1/jv3n1a2.html.
[75] Robin Wright. "Islam, Democracy and the West," *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 71, No. 3 (Summer, 1992), pp. 131 – 145.

religious interpretations and commitments."[76] Islamism amounts to a set of political ideologies with varying political ideals, goals, and aspirations, all of which are specifically determined by one or another interpretation of Islam.

There are many disagreements over when "political Islam," or "Islamism," emerged, who qualifies as an "Islamist," and why. Suffice it to say that "political Islam" is synonymous with Islamists, or those for whom Islam plays a central role in politics. Academic literature is also replete with divisions between moderate and radical Islamists. As far as I am concerned, radical Islamists seek the imposition or the "shar'a-tization" of the state on a mostly unwilling populace. Moderate Islamists seek out a more inclusive and progressive politics. An Islam*ic* state "is not theocratic but ideological" in that the "rights and duties of its citizens shall be determined by the extent to which they identify themselves with this ideology,"[77] ostensibly in a freer and more inclusive manner than radical Islamists permit.

Of course, no consensus exists on what constitutes a moderate Islamist, let alone a progressive or liberal Muslim, Drawing from An-Na'im's work, for many moderate Islamists the shari'a is perhaps "not the appropriate vehicle for Islamic self-determination in the present context" because it is "not divine." Rather, since many moderate Islamists recognize that "it is the product of *human interpretation* of those sources," the shari'a is instead viewed as a guiding symbolic doctrine, one that is malleable to the

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[76] Wittes, "Three Kinds of Movements," p. 7.
[77] Khalifa Abdul Hakim. "Islam and Democracy." Last viewed on February 6, 2010 at: http://muslim-canada.org/ch19hakim.html. This article is a chapter from his book *The Prophet and His Message*. Lahore: Institute of Islamic Culture, 1987.

context of the times rather than being used as a concrete narrowly interpreted set of rules and practices.[78] Yet again, we encounter problem of typology, since whether any given Muslim's interpretation is liberal, progressive, modern, or otherwise, depends also on interpretation. The difference, then, is in the methodology and praxis, and less so in the vision or philosophy behind the state. Radical Islamists, we can conclude, seek out authoritarian means of seeing to the implementation of a narrow interpretation of an Islam*ist* state, while moderates are more inclusive in their means of realizing an Islam*ic* state.

While less pertinent to the present discussion, other distinctions warrant consideration. Lines are also drawn, for example, between those who use terrorism and violence to attain their desired ends from those who do not, although likewise these distinctions are unhelpful for the most part. The term "jihadist" applies to a number of groups - al-Qaeda, Hezbollah and Hamas among them - although many radical Islamist groups and political parties may or may not renounce violence, may or may not participate in the political system, may or may not offer charitable and social services, and may or may not control an armed militia on the side at the same time. Then a further distinction exists between those jihadists who target the "near enemy," or what they consider domestic regimes that are un-Islamic (reminiscent of al-Jihad and the assassination of then Egyptian President

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[78] Abdullahi Ahmed An-Na'im. *Toward an Islamic Reformation: Civil Liberties, Human Rights and International Law*. Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 1990, p. 185.

Anwar Sadat), from those, like al-Qaeda, who are bent on destroying the "far enemy" in the name of *jihad* waged against what is considered "the West," principally in the form of U.S. imperialism.[79]

The inspiration, influence, and motivation that Muslims draw from modernists, salafists, reformers, traditionalists, moderate and radical Islamist theorists, *inter alia*,[80] vary significantly. Categorizing one or another Muslim or group of Muslims as such should be only as a loose system that is grossly misused and mostly incapable of recognizing the different contents and contexts of Muslims' interpretations, theories, beliefs and practices against the backdrop of the academic or popular works that encapsulate and spur them.

A final distinction, broached here briefly but seminal to later discussions of 'Islam and democracy,' is a distinction between Islamism and what Asef Bayat has called "post-Islamism." According to Bayat, "post-Islamism"

> has opened up a productive space where pious sensibilities are able to incorporate a democratic ethos. The growth of such "post-Islamism" out of the anomalies of Islamist politics represents an attempted fusion of elements hitherto often seen as mutually exclusive: religiosity and rights, faith and freedom, Islam and liberty. The daring logic is to turn the underlying principles of Islamism on their head by emphasising rights instead of duties, plurality in place of a singular authoritative voice, ambiguity instead of

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[79] Fawaz A. Gerges, *The Far Enemy: Why Jihad Went Global*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005.

[80] For a lengthier discussion on these typologies see Asef Bayat. "Islamism and Social Movement Theory," in *Third World Quarterly*, Vol. 26, No. 6 (2005), pp. 891 – 908.

certainty, historicity rather than fixed scripture, and the future instead of the

past.[81]

Accordingly, Muslims have "incorporated into their faith notions of

individual rights, tolerance, gender equality, and the separation of religion

from the state. By their persistent presence in society, they compelled

religious and political leaders to undertake a paradigmatic "post-Islamist"

shift."[82] Hizbollah, he remarks, "has transcended its exclusivist Islamist

platform by adapting to the pluralistic political reality of Lebanon," while

Saudi Arabia "has witnessed the emergence (whose fate is uncertain) of a

"post-Wahhabi" trend that seeks some form of compromise between Islam

and democracy." In Tajikistan, too, "the Islamic Renaissance Party has been

integrated into that country's secular political process," and so has the

Justice & Development Party in Morocco. Of course the Justice &

Development Party (AKP) that rules in Turkey also represents "a developed

post-Islamic trajectory where pious sensibilities are blended into the secular

democratic polity" that "represent some important conscious and reflective

adjustments in Islamist politics in the past decade, even if there are

significant variations in the depth, scope, and pace of change."[83] These "post-

Islamists" are, as Bayat notes, the hope of many in that they represent what

many regard as a legitimate and authentic movement away from rhetoric of

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[81] Asef Bayat. "Democracy and the Muslim world: the "post-Islamist" turn." 6 March,
2009, Last viewed on April 1, 2010 at:
http://www.opendemocracy.net/article/democratising-the-muslim-world,
[82] Ibid.
[83] Ibid.

the Islamist state towards an Islamic state conceived of under the auspice of democracy and pluralism.

Islams and Wests

In a comparable, though different way, multiple Islams apply to multiple Wests as well. "Western" is a cultural convention or political construct, what I have referred to above as a social imaginary or imagined community. Insofar as Western individuals self-identify with this "imagined community," Western individuals and communities internalize and interpret their social imaginaries and what it means to be 'Western' quite differently. Accordingly, the West of Toronto is different from the West of Nice, for example, and the same goes for the Wests in between and across Toronto and Nice.[84]

Though both uses of 'Western' and 'Islamic' connote civilizational categories, we must be careful when making statements about this or that being properly Western or this or that being properly Islamic. In order to acknowledge the need for due care in arriving at certain terminology and adjectival use for what is 'Islamic,' some refer to Marshal Hodgson's distinction between Islamdom (as a noun) and Islamicate (as an adjective) to differentiate religion and civilization from the societies they are made up of, respectively, though this terminology has not been widely adopted.[85] Sometimes we must refer to the adjective 'Islamic' for situations wherein

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[84] We must distinguish between certain characteristics of the adjective West*ern* from aspects that are religiously Islam*ic*, but I maintain nonetheless that this multiples thesis holds true for both Islams and Wests.

[85] For a discussion of Hodgson's distinction, see Jandora, *States Without Citizens*, pp. xii.

Muslims self-identify with this or that element of state or society, belief, and practice. However we may evade potential confusion altogether by utilizing the term 'Muslim societies.' The term 'Muslim societies' recognizes all societies comprised of Muslims, in line with multiple Islams, regardless of their secular or religious orientations.

The need for a terminology or paradigm shift away from "Islam" to Islams and from "the West" to "Wests" is as much in need as is a shift away from Western and Islamic civilizations to the corrective found in the pronouncement of Islamic and Western societies. As I mentioned above, the 'Islam and the West' paradigm extends its historical narrative to 'Islam and Christendom,' and 'Islam and Europe' as a function of the "culturalist" [86] theses that support monolithic "Islamic" and "Western" civilizations and cultures. In all cases, these historical narratives suspend "Islam" and "the West" in antithesis, thereby excluding Islam and Muslims from Western narratives and also from the formation of a global democratic discourse. It is important that interlocutors transcend this binary identity of 'Islam and

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[86] I borrow this term from Michael Thompson. Thompson distinguishes between "culturalist" and "materialist" approaches. Whereas "materialist" approaches give explanatory power to the economic factors of the economic interests of international actors and their relationships with domestic elites, "culturalist" theses "emphasize the inherent differences of cultural values and the outlook of various actors." I will examine both factors throughout this thesis, and I find that politico-cultural as well as socio-economic factors contribute to democratic deficits, although authoritarian suppression, Western support for the 'authoritarian you know over the theocrat (Islamist) you do not,' and popular pressure exerted on elites for democracy, are all encompassed within these categories. Thus the "materialist" and "culturalist" theses carry some merit, though reductive and generalizing statements like the 'Islam and the West' paradigm makes are culturally essentialist rather than culturally sensitive. Since they do not take culture as fluid and changing, then, this kind of use of culture is untenable as academic practice. See Michael J Thompson, "Introduction," in *Islam and the West: Critical Perspectives on Modernity*. Michael J. Thompson (ed.). Oxford: Rowman & Littlefield, 2003, p. 4.

Christendom' and 'Islam and Europe' that contribute to the construction and

reproduction of the 'Islam and the West' paradigm as a central point of

academic and popular discussion. Simply identifying the use of these

binaries is a primary method of transcending the reflexive tendency to

reference them. Next, identifying the epistemological leap of Muslim as *other*

to Muslim as evil as wholly unnecessary and illegitimate is a welcome

corrective to the *us* versus *them* logic that has carried on throughout the cold

war to the current *mise en scene* of global politics that replaced Soviet

communism with Islam as the new world *other* to the "new world order."

Thus, as one author notes, for many Western scholars and societies,

"behind all the arguments about Islam and politics remains the twinfold

assumption that (1) Christianity defines "true" religion, and Islam as religion

must, or should, resemble Christian models, and (b) all religion is premodern

and antirational while the state is both modern and rational."[87] In this

context "the West" retains Christianity, the "true" religion, while "Islam" is

vilified as a bastardization of Judaism or Christianity. What is more,

Christianity and "the West," or "Judaeo-Christian civilization" altogether

foretokens the modern and the rational, having spawned the modern and

rational state. Islam is (as per this antithesis) an invalid or illegitimate

religion, therefore also incompetent to or incapable of forming the basis of a

modern, rational state.

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[87] Bruce B. Lawrence. *Shattering the Myth: Islam Beyond Violence*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1998, p. 16.

As for 'Islam and Europe,' the relationship between these two categories is punctuated by conflagration, as indicated even in the exclusivity of the title, which separates "Islam," and therefore Muslims, from participation in the identification or formation of what is considered to be politically, culturally, religiously, and essentially "European." And this separation not only applies to European history, but to the European present. All of this separation occurs the fact that during both Medieval and contemporary periods Muslim and European societies were and are often overlapping, if not also conceptually and culturally fluid, in many ways. Asad notes, however:

> The populations designated by the label 'Islam' are, in part at least, the physical descendants and cultural heirs of the Hellenic world- the very world in which 'Europe' also claims to have its roots. Yet 'Islamic civilization' must somehow be denied a vital link to the very properties that define so much of what is essential to 'Europe,' for otherwise a civilizational difference cannot be postulated between them.[88]

One way to move beyond these exclusive and exclusionary categories and historical narratives of 'Islam and Christendom' and 'Islam and Europe' that sustain the identification of Muslims and "Islam" as *other* and also, or by extension, evil, is to recognize Muslims and Islam in what are otherwise considered "properly" Western collective memories, and to deconstruct what it means to be Western according to a framework of multiple Wests. In other

[88] Asad, Talal. "Muslim and European Identity: Can Europe Represent Islam?" in Elizabeth Hallam and Brian V. Street (eds.), *Cultural Encounters: Representing "Otherness"* New York: Routledge, 2000, p. 10.

words, Western education needs to recognize the hybridities of history, culture, philosophy, beliefs, and practices within and between Muslim and Western societies throughout history on a longue duree account. Indeed, a plethora of sites of hybridities exist from which to draw.

Although often Western historical narratives have represented Islam through opposition to Christendom, the European civilizing mission, or the need to teach or install democracy in the Muslim world, neither Christendom, European, or "Western" societies were or are "immune from change" throughout the interaction of Western and Muslim societies.[89] The direction of influence between Europe and the Muslim world, or between Muslims and Christians, otherwise put, was never unilinear in any case, since influences, teachings, beliefs, and practices were always - and still are - interactive.

In recent centuries Western, or more specifically Western European and American direct penetration, domination, and influence in Muslim societies is far starker than the reverse. Yet during the Dark Ages of Europe, roughly from the ninth to the fifteenth centuries, Muslim societies were at the helm of "civilizationl" advances across expansive stretches of Asia, North Africa, and what is today Southern Europe. At this time Christian societies drew almost exclusively from debates and interpretations home first to the Muslim world. The early canonical texts and teachers foundational to Western political theory gleaned from discussions that demonstrate a great borrowing and learning from the Muslim world. From philosophy – Alfarabi,

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[89] Lawrence, *Shattering the Myth*, p. 27.

Avicenna, and Maimonedes, from whom thinkers like Spinoza drew considerably – to architecture, mathematics, and politics, Christian and European learning benefited largely from advances of the Muslim world, without which Greek philosophy and education, for example, would have never reached Western societies whatever. Geographically, during this time fourteen of the thirty-four countries of modern Europe were completely or partially ruled by Muslims for a century or more.[90] In many and undervalued ways, then, Western societies' later successes and achievements, what is often referred to as Western Enlightenment and modernity, was ushered in by intellectual and cultural advances that owe a great deal of gratitude to Muslim societies' then far advanced understandings of the world.

Common geographies and histories, shared languages, religions, and traditions demonstrate an undervalued area of comparative political theory that need to be explored further, an explanation that will draw upon the hybridities between the cultures, beliefs, traditions and practices of Western and Muslim societies. Such an explanation is timely, given ever-greater Muslim immigration into and participation in Western societies, and the greater integration of Muslim and Western societies into the globalized world. At the moment t is polarized by the notion that "Islam" and "the West" are clashing or bound to "clash." Rather than conceiving of Muslims as a "triple *threat*," however, it may be more auspicious to global peace, security,

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[90] Richard W. Bulliet. *The Case for Islamo-Christian Civilization*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2004, pp. 6-7.

justice and all of these global values that we articulate and sanctify differently, but most importantly for a developing sense and understanding of common humanity, to consider a threefold *opportunity* - civilizational, political, and demographic – in order to forge new ties with Muslim societies and cultures, beliefs and practices, in their manifold particularity. Thus, the usage and adoption of the language of multiple Islams and multiple Wests focuses on sameness and hybridity while drawing upon difference with dignity.

The idea here is to transform the extant, small but incipient communities of interlocutors in dialogue into mainstream academic and popular culture. The multiple Islams and Wests thesis is the surest means of overcoming the 'Islam and the West' paradigm and the *us* versus *them* logic or approach that conceives of the *other* as necessarily evil. Meaningful and inclusive dialogue that recognizes the *other* as a necessary epistemic category is important insofar as the self can only know itself against a backdrop of *others*, but that the *other* need not entail evil. This recognition should be kept at the forefront of dialogue for as long as popular cultures of Muslim and Western societies do not receive it favorably. The multiples thesis is thus the surest means of bringing about the kind of disposition and the type of language that is required to meaningfully and inclusively engage the *other* as partner in dialogue, in the space or transition between self and *other* in culture, religion, and so on, and a common *we* in the restoration or

reinvigoration of a culture of diversity and sameness, respect and "dignity of difference."

Due to the prevalence and domination of the 'Islam and the West' paradigm on discourse on 'Islam and democracy,' neo-conservatives and others continually construct Islam (qua "Islam") in light of the most defamatory and crude constructions of Muslims as *other* and therefore also evil. This construction is the result of ignorance on the part of Western societies as to the diverse and multifarious beliefs and practices, customs, classes, traditions, religiosities, and secularities of Muslims worldwide. In "Orientalist" verbiage, the "the West," Western governments and Western scholars misrepresent "Islam," constructing an image of Muslims that is undue and deleterious. in speaking for "Islam," "the West" has occluded the agency and ability for Muslims to write their own past, act freely in their present, and decide the terms of the future. The modern relationship between "Islam" and "the West" is the result of a self/*other* dialectic that posits "the West" as civilized and progressive, Enlightened, modern and rational, secular and liberal, in antithesis to "Islam," where the West is "the West" because it is not/negation (~) "Islam." Journalists, pundits and politicians, academics, faith, and political communities - significant segments of Western societies - construe "the West" as the *good* guy. *We* ("the West") are fighting *them* ("Islam") to protect not only *our* values and *our* culture, but culture as a whole: not just *our* civilization, but also (universal) Civilization.

I have argued above that rather than viewing "Islam" and "the West" as stable and monolithic categories, Islam and the West are unstable and inadequate analytical constructs that are better portrayed in their particularities, as multiple Islams and multiple Wests. Cultural and political commentators should view Islams and Wests in light of the fluid and dynamic discourses and markers of identity that are available to and adopted by those who self-identify with the disparate and diffuse societies and communities, those whose component parts are indeed greater and more meaningful than what is attributed to their sums. Where Western particularities are assumed to usher in an "end of history," and where the "clash of civilizations" postures Islam as the threat to the realization of a presumably just or peaceful world order, authors derive their respective conceptions of the universal directly from their particularistic Western assumptions.

Researchers and analysts must overcome universal/particular dynamics for meaningful and inclusive cross-cultural democratic dialogue to ensue. Otherwise, interlocutors will rely on their respective cultural particularities and preferences, occluding Muslim, Islamic or Islamist discourses from participation in the formation of a global democratic discourse (*global* rather than "*universal*," that is, because the latter is now functionally appropriated and overcome by Western particularities). Because Western particular notions of modernity, secularism, liberalism, and democracy have defined what it means to be "universal" and "civilized," "the

civilized" and "the universal" are outmoded categories that serve primarily to exclude *other* societies from defining these terms and processes for themselves.

In conclusion, the (Western) "universal" prevents the democratization of global democratic discourse and cross-cultural democratic dialogue. Hence, we must seek out *global* cross-cultural democratic dialogue rather than aspiring towards a *universal* conception of democracy (where again the latter assumes that an "end of history" exists based on one model or trajectory to follow). We must move toward a *global* democratic discourse that recognizes multiple Islams and multiple Wests and the contribution of multiple cultures, ideologies, and worldviews within and across Western and Muslim societies, among others. Yet global democratic discourse is only successful once cross-cultural democratic dialogue sufficiently relates to the *other* his or her conceptions of democracy, thereby moving beyond *other* as 'evil' to *other* as partner in dialogue.

Transcending the universal/particular distinction and moving towards *global* cross-cultural dialogue requires both an epistemic and dialogical component. First, and intricately related to the fear and ignorance of Islam as *other* and evil, is the unnecessary and unfortunate conceptual leap to which the framers and followers of the 'Islam and the West' paradigm subscribe and commit. The 'Islam and the West' paradigm is premised on the equation that *other* is different and therefore evil. This Manichean element, whose effect is to automatically deny mutual recognition between Western

and Muslim societies and theorists, is unwarranted. By proxy and by popularity, few notice the repetitiveness of this paradigm and the untenable conceptual leap built into it. Undoubtedly, identifying this leap contributes to freeing the self/*other* dialectic from the custody of the 'Islam and the West' paradigm, and vets for ideological leanings without compromising otherwise valuable scholarship in both sides of the "Orientalist"/"apologist" divide. Next, recognizing the *other*, the culture of the *other* and the democratic conception of the *other* as equally potentially legitimate and valid is long overdue and much in need. But before dialogue and discourse may proceed completely unhampered, that is, by the 'Islam and the West' paradigm's prevalence on 'Islam and democracy' and the question over whether the two are compatible, it is necessary to ask whether the notion of compatibility makes sense, given the idea of multiple Islams and multiple Wests, in the first place.

Chapter 3: Is Islam Compatible With Democracy?

In this section I review arguments for and against the compatibility of Islam and democracy. I do so in an attempt to separate legitimate issues and concerns about democratic transitions and practices of Muslim-majority states from those facile generalizations and other essentialisms and ethnocentrisms derived from the 'Islam and the West' paradigm and the grand narratives that frame it. This chapter, like the last, aims to lay the groundwork for meaningful and inclusive cross-cultural dialogue on democracy. After vetting for undue claims about the inherent nature or culture of Islam as incompatible with democracy, I argue that there remain those who suspect that Muslim societies are nonetheless undemocratic or illiberal.

I argue that no such exceptionalism can be attributed to Islam proper. Furthermore, I argue that if a democratic deficit exists, then it does so in the Arab Middle East, though not for lack of want on the part of these aspiring democrats, and only to the extent that other Muslim regions exhibit clear signs of democracy and liberalization. Consequently, I identify aspects of political economy and political culture that explain the lack of democracy in some Muslim-majority states, most notably in the Arab Middle East. I examine evidence that Muslim-majority states, societies, and individuals - whether traditionalist, progressive, Islamist or "post-Islamist" - yearn for and routinely participate in democratic and liberal practices according even [*sic*] to Western liberal standards of gender equality, freedom of speech, and

association. In much of the Middle East and North Africa, thwarted attempts for democratization and liberalization stem not from culture, but more specifically from a political culture shaped and controlled by autocrats, supported tacitly by Western governments (and the U.S. in particular), as a result of the naïve notion and/or excuse that 'it is better to support the autocrat you know than the theocrat (Islamist) you do not.'

From Test To Contest, From Text to Context

The most significant yet nuanced factor in the ongoing nature of the debate over whether Islam is compatible with democracy stems from the confusion and disagreement over what the terms 'Islam' and 'democracy' intend in the first place. The compatibility question solicits interlocutors, knowingly or not, to provide a definition of what Islam *is* and what democracy *is*. They may do so either through explicit mention or through the consistency and usage of the terms 'Islam' and 'democracy' and what values and beliefs to which they ascribe to and with which they identify. In order to prove any alleged (in)compatibility, a host of different definitions have been offered and utilized throughout this debate. The result, and the current state of the discourse, is a hodgepodge of arguments proffered by theologians, historians, political scientists, sociologists, anthropologists, pundits, and politicians of a wide array of political and ideological stripes, many of whom neglect to define for themselves, let alone for their readers, what they mean by the terms 'Islam' and 'democracy' in the first place.

As an essentially contested concept, democracy – whether understood as 'freedom and equality,' 'rule of the people,' 'majority rule,' and so on – should not require a fixed and determinable definition, and I will therefore offer a minimalist definition here. Indeed, one of the major problems within the topic 'Islam and democracy' is that the 'Islam and the West' paradigm has anchored democracy to one specific "test" (Western liberalism) and one specific interpretation of a "text,"

namely the Western canon as the only acceptable form of democracy, and a rigid interpretation of the Qur'an uttered by marginal and radical groups and taken by Western scholars as the only or leading version Islam. Rather than examining philosophies and democratic theories of *others* based on their "contests" of meaning and their historical, socio-political and religious "contexts,"[91] then, many adhere to the notion that "Islam" and democracy are simply, essentially, and inherently incompatible. Yet, due to the fact that "[f]ixed and singular Democracy is no more than a specific value system unable to speak to diversity and difference," "contexts allow for the re-reading of old and revered texts in order to situate meaning in relation to time and place."[92]

As Larbi Sadiki argues, there is *Democracy* with an upper case D, and there are *democracies,* just like there is *Islam* (with an upper case I) and there are *islams.* For Sadiki "the refashioning of Democracy as an

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[91] Larbi Sadiki. *The Search for Arab Democracy: Discourses and Counter-Discourses.* Columbia University Press: New York, 2004, p. 375.
[92] Ibid, 384

antifoundationist[93] ethos opens up possibilities for Muslims to partake in its global contesting and interpreting. Similarly, the rethinking of Islam as a communicative tradition should bode well for adopting democratic forms of government."[94] Yet the "opening of such possibilities," he remarks, "hinges on transcending the complexes of righteousness underpinned by fixity and singularity," and as such "the discoursing and interpreting of Democracy and Islam must go beyond the search for a universally applicable "'Truth' that tests correctness of the 'self' and the 'other'."[95] Sadiki argues that "[t]est must cede to contest," meaning that "[t]he accent ought to be on partnership and humility towards learning from and with the other. Thus "Truth" translates into truths that share not only in co-learning in a pluarally dispersed discourse, but also in expanding the boundaries of toleration and interpretation that are essential for breaking with the fixity, singularity and univocality of foundationalism. Text must therefore yield to context."[96]

As Sadiki explains, "[t]ests exist only within a system of oppositions, and oppositions curtail or completely deny intersection, much less collaboration or communication across difference. Both Orientalism and Occidentalism are guilty of this."[97] Whereas "tests are congealed standards

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[93] What Sadiki has in mind by antifoundationalism is not the already defined political doctrine but rather a politics wherein we literally remove the foundational structures – texts and teachings – that underpine a singular conception of "Democracy," i.e. the "Western" canon or tradition of political philosophy and instead make room for alternative conceptions that are not reliant upon one cultural, philosophical, or political stream or discipline for legitimacy.
[94] Ibid, 375.
[95] Ibid.
[96] Ibid.
[97] Ibid.

that do not speak to change of time and place," it is important to remove the foundations of assumptions and focus on hybridities of cultural particularities that accommodate for a shared vision of the global. Islam and Democracy must make way, in other words, for islams and democracies, rather than remaining fixated on Islam and Democracy – the source of the compatibility quagmire:

> Muslims and democrats are increasingly being turned into hybrid citizens who defy precise or simple definition. Their identities are neither singular nor fixed. They are protean with multiple layers of identity or containing sub-identities within them. To describe them as hyphenated citizens in a globalizing world is no exaggeration…. Similarly, democrats are hyphenated citizens of this world, belonging to a multitude of backgrounds, classes, ethnic groups, nationalities, politics, and faiths (theistic and nontheistic). This illustrates strongly how Democracy, like Islam, is being increasingly problematised in relation to time and place…. If in the first moment Islam ceases to be "Oriental", in the second moment Democracy ceases to be "Occidental"…. But this eventually hinges on an important premise on the basis of which Islam and Democracy are rethought as provisionalism…. If each of these two ideals is to be rethought as an ethos of inteterminacy, there has to be a parallel ethos of dialogue across difference. An ethos of dialogue presupposes engagement with not disengagement from difference.[98]

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[98] Ibid, 380 – 384.

Democracy's Essential Contestability, Liberalism's Mythical Universalism

Sadiki's work demonstrates that where "Islam is no longer just "Oriental," "Democracy eases to be only "Occidental"."[99] Not only multiple islams, but multiple democracies, are central to transcending the universal/particular distinction and forging meaningful and inclusive cross-cultural dialogue between Western and Muslim societies. Multiple democracies include, but are not limited to, "illiberal democracy," "semi-authoritarian democracy," and "cyberdemocracy," "radical democracy," "consociational democracy," and "associative democracy,"[100] etc. The 'democracy' that those who self-identify with "the West" most often and most readily assume is, as aforementioned, a liberal conception, though it is often disguised as Democracy (capital D) proper, advertised as a universally applicable form.

The point is that no one has the right to define for Muslim societies and peoples what democracy means, other than the societies and peoples in question. Of course, some general definition is necessary, otherwise

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[99] Ibid, 380.

[100] John O. Voll "Islam and Democarcy: Is Modernization a Barrier?" in *Modernization, Democracy and Islam* (ed.) Shireen T. Hunter and Huma Malik. Westport: Prager, 2005, pp. 82 - 95. For definitions see Marina Ottaway, *Democracy Unchallenged: The Rise of Semi-Authoritarianism.* Washington, DC: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 2003; Elaine Ciulla Kamarck and Joseph S. Nye, Jr., (eds.). *Governance.com: Democracy in the Information Age*. Washington, DC: Brookings Institution, 2002; Chantal Mouffe, (ed.). *Dimensions of Radical Democracy: Pluralism, Citizenship, Community*. London: Verso, 1992; C. Douglas Lummis, *Radical Democracy*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1996; Arend Liphart, "Introduction," The Belgian Example of Cultural Coexistence in Comparative Perspective," in *Conflict and Coexistence in Belgium,* Arend Lijphard (ed.), Research Series 46, Berkeley: University of California, Institute of International Studies, 1981, pp. 1 – 12; Paul Q. Hirst, *Associative Democracy: New Forms of Economic and Social Governance*. Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1994.

democracy means nothing other than 'good governance,' by which a benevolent dictator could be democratic if desired or elected by a majority (indeed, some may submit to this position, although rigorous democratic theory of this type is outside of the present scope). Yet dictatorship is not democracy. Thus, I define democracy in the most general terms possible: by way of its literal meaning - 'rule [kratia] of the people [demos]' – or its intended consequence – 'freedom and equality' – but societies understand these terms differently. That said, it is important to acknowledge the ways in which liberal democracy positions itself as Democracy – as the "end of history," "the universal" and "the civilized" – thereby appropriating 'democracy' as a term of exclusion.

Although it advertises itself as "beyond culture," liberalism is not an easily universalizable doctrine and is, in fact, very much embedded in and the product of cultural beliefs.[101] Many disputes erupt over the extents and reaches of liberalism in its variety of applications and disputes, for example, the primacy of the individual vs. the community, the right vs. the good, among other distinctions. A general definition holds, however, that liberalism "celebrates the right of the individual to live according to his or her own ideas about the pursuits and purposes that make life valuable, even when the majority disapproves."[102] What these pursuits and purposes are, what the value of life has become, revolves around a core set of "Western" ideals and is

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[101] Wendy Brown. *Regulating Aversion: Tolerance in the Age of Identity and Empire*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2006, pp. 22-23.
[102] Trevor Allan. "Liberal Democracy" *The New Oxford Companion to Law*. Last viewed on February 23, 2010 at: www.oxfordreference.com.

couched in claims and references to a "Western" history. Some of these may be positive indeed – bringing suffrage, and end to child labor, unions, an awareness of racism and civic equality, and a yearning for a certain (material) quality of life that includes (among other things) access to education, health, and legal rights.

Liberal conceptions of citizenship centre on the relationship between the individual and the state. "Individuals are incorporated into the state universally rather than consociationally." [103] Rather than being "linked to the state through membership of a particular cultural community," individuals "stand as singular citizens in the same direct relationship to the state." This historical liberal conception is derived from social contract theory, in which "the state is the product of a process of deliberation among undifferentiated individuals and no account is taken of the customs, traditions and institutions which may constitute a particular people prior to the social contract."[104]

Despite the commonly held notion of liberalism as "beyond culture," liberal values and pursuits are contentious. Western societies, many believe, believe in a success valued and gauged in monetary and material terms, to the detriment of spiritual and grounded pursuits. Liberal, for many, means capitalism and individualism, free market (neo-liberal) economics, globalization and multinational corporatism. Freedom means not only being able to do what one wants with one's own body, but this freedom is extended

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[103] Andrea T. Baumiester. *Liberalism and the 'Politics of Difference.'* Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2000, p. 26.
[104] Ibid.

increasingly to a younger and more public audience. Thus many both inside

and outside of "the West" portend the degradation of Western values as what

exactly it means to be free and equal are lost to a plethora of broad and

general terms that amount to "respecting" others' beliefs and practices

through "tolerance" rather than through genuine understanding.

Although liberalism shares with value pluralism this notion of

tolerance, the limited state, and negative conceptions of liberty, "value

pluralism does not privilege liberalism."[105] The liberal injunction of being

"beyond culture" in its ability to ensure value pluralism is, in fact, a myth – a

myth as monumental for the 'Islam and the West' paradigm as the notion the

Islamic threat:

> After all, non-liberal societies need not deny the truth of value pluralism.
> Recognition of the value other ways of life does not imply that a particular
> society cannot insist upon the preservation of the specific ranking of
> incommensurable values which 'are embedded in and necessary for the
> survival of a particular way of life that is itself worthwhile.' Indeed, given 'that
> not all values *can* be pluralistically combined and that some become very pale
> in too much pluralistic company', pluralist liberal societies, in all their
> diversity, will only reflect a limited range of possible values. Such societies are
> therefore entitled to seek to preserve their ways of life.[106]

Modern manifestations of liberalism conflate religion, ethnicity, race, and

culture through the "culturalization of politics"[107] wherein a

[105] Ibid, 184.
[106] Ibid.
[107] Mahmood Mamdani. *Good Muslim, Bad Muslim: America, the Cold War, and the Roots of Terror*. New York: Pantheon, 2004.

reduction of political motivations and causes to essentialize culture (where *culture* refers to an amorphous polyglot of ethically marked religious and nonreligious beliefs and practices) is mobilized to explain everything from Palestinian suicide bombers to Osama bin Laden's world designs, of mass death in Rwanda and Sudan, and the failure of democracy to take hold in the immediate aftermath of Saddam Husseins' Iraq.[108]

Recall that George Bush stated that the problem of the Middle East "reminds us of the *nature* of our enemy."[109] The solution, liberalism holds, is to overcome culture altogether. "It is a basic premise of liberal secularism and liberal universalism that neither culture nor religion are permitted to govern publicly; both are tolerated on the condition that they are privately and individually enjoyed."[110] Where liberalism is placed "beyond culture," liberal democracy becomes the only acceptable form of democracy, the only one capable of mediating between the communists and the Islamists, the secular nationalists and any other minority religious or ideological parties. The chimerical solution that Western liberal democracy offers the Middle East is both a value system as well as an election process, a substantive and procedural equation for a society otherwise overrun by religion, religious culture and its accompanying strife. Liberalism therefore ameliorates

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[108] Brown, *Regulating Aversion,* p. 20.
[109] Wendy Brown. "Neo-liberalism at the End of Liberal Democracy," *Theory and Event* Vol. 7, No. 1, (2003). The Bush quotes refer to "President Speaks to the American Israel Public Affairs Committee," Washington, DC, Office of the Press Secretary, 18 May, 2004. www.whitehous.gov/news/releases/2004/05/20040518=1.html; and "Remarks by the President on the War on Terror," Fort Bragg, NC, 28 June 2005. www.globalsecurity.org/wmd/library/news/iraq/2005/iraq=050628=whitehouse01/htm.
[110] Brown, *Regulating Aversion*, p. 20.

difference by promoting the notion that we "tolerate" one another, in other words "liberalizing" differences themselves:

> Contemporary liberal political and legal doctrine thus positions culture as its Other and also as necessarily antagonistic to its principles unless it is subordinated – that is, unless culture is literally "liberalized" through privatization and individualization. Moreover, liberalization is taken to attenuate the claims of culture by making what are otherwise authoritative and automatically transmitted meanings, practices, behaviors, and beliefs into matters of individual attachment. Liberalism presumes to convert culture's collectively binding powers, its shared and public qualities, into individual and privately lived choices. Liberalism, in other words, presumes culture and politics to be fused unless culture is conquered - politically neutered - by the universal, hence noncultural, principles of liberalism. Without liberalism, culture is conceived by liberals as oppressive and dangerous not only because of its disregard for individual rights and liberties and for the rule of law, but also because the inextricability of cultural principles from power, combined with the nonuniversal nature of these principles, renders it devoid of judicial and political accountability. Hence culture must be contained by liberalism, forced into a position in which it makes no political claim and it established as optional for individuals. Rather than a universe of organizing ideas, values, and modes of being together, culture must be shrunk to the status of a house that individuals may enter and exit. Liberalism represents itself as the sole mode of governance that can do this.

Yet all of this is of course nonsensical, since, again, "liberalism *is* culture." It is not enough to admit that liberalism promotes one type of culture, or that it is made up of national cultures, or that there is a "pure liberalism" that

distinguishes itself from its republican, communitarian, libertarian, etc. components.

"Rather," Brown says, "the theoretical claim here is that both the constructive and repressive powers we call those of culture – the powers that produce and reproduce subject's relations and practices, beliefs and rationalities, and that do so without their express choice or consent – are neither conquered by liberalism nor absent from liberalism," for liberalism "is not only itself a cultural for, it also is striated with nonliberal culture wherever it is insititutionalized and practiced."[111] That is, liberalism

> is also always institutionalized, constitutionalized, and governmentalized," and thus there is a "double ruse" at play "on which liberalism relies to distinguish itself from culture – on the one hand, casting liberal principles as universal; on the other, juridically privatizing culture – ideologically figures liberalism as untouched by culture and thus as incapable of cultural imperialism. In its self-presentation as the sole political doctrine that can harbor culture and religion without being conquered by them…. liberalism casts itself as uniquely tolerant of culture from its position above culture…. Both the autonomy and the universality of liberal principles are myths.[112]

It is therefore not enough to posit "Orientalist" leanings when assuming that critiques of Islamic doctrine or Islamic democracy are at hand. Indeed, it is more than just the "Orientalist" camp, but also a significant liberal following, that equates liberal democracy with "end of history," if not because it is the

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[111] Ibid, 22.
[112] Ibid, 23.

"end point of mankind's ideological struggle," than because it is "beyond culture." Of course, the product of culture, liberalism's claims are ethnocentric.

The point is not how one defines liberal, socialist, radical, consociational, or this or that kind of democracy. The definition is really beside the point: *that* Democracy (with a capital D) is defined as X, where X more often than not is assumed as Western liberal democracy. The essential contestability of democracy is lost when (Western liberal) democracy is postured or concretized as Democracy as such, and democracy becomes a term of exclusion rather than essentially contestable. Like Islam and the West, there are multiple democracies, each with its own merits and drawbacks. Yet none of the merits or drawbacks, none of the definitions, for that matter, is the sole purview of Western societies and governments to decide. And neither should Western societies and governments expect that a Western liberal trajectory will be exemplary for Muslim societies' conceptions of democracy, where culture is not only privileged in society, but where oftentimes religion is invited into politics and government.

"Islam Is Compatible With Democracy"

Arguments for the compatibility of Islam and democracy take a number of different forms, some of which are the product of traditional Islamic texts and teachings, and some of which resemble a more Western centered lexicon. Thus, the evocation of religious texts and traditions, historical events and political practices that have or *could* underscore

groundwork for pluralistic, progressive, liberal, and democratic Islamic

governance[113] are often proffered as an indication that Islam is compatible

with democracy, and in other cases supporters interpret democracy into

Islam "whether the word *democracy* is used or not."[114]

    "We are all born free, which makes freedom our destiny," one author

writes: "This is reflected strongly in the Qur'an's understanding of human

free will, which distinguishes man from the rest of God's creation. The notion

of free will," he continues, "necessitates freedom of choice, and this is why

the Qur'an so emphatically states [There is no compulsion in religion] (Al-

Baqarah 2: 256)."[115] Moreover, he continues, the Qur'an "also encourages the

free formation and mobilization of social and political groups when it says

[And let there be a people among you who invite to good and enjoin what is

fair, and forbid what is wrong] (Aal 'Imran 3: 104)."[116]

    Islamic terms and Qur'anic injunctions, legal and juridical traditions –

shura (mutual consultation), ijtihad (interpretation) and 'ijma (consensus)

chief among them - are provided as evidence of the universal applicability of

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[113] Robin Wright. "Islam and Liberal Democracy: Two Visions of Reformation," *Journal of Democracy* Vol. 7, No. 2 (1996), pp. 64 – 75; Laitha Kubba, "Islam and Liberal Democracy," *Journal of Democracy*, Vol. 7, No. 2 (1996), pp. 86 – 89; John L. Esposito and John O. Voll. *Islam and Democracy*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996, pp. 11 – 51; Robert W. Hefner. "Public Islam and the problem of democratization," *Sociology of Religion* Vol. 62, No. 4 (Winter, 2001), pp. 491 – 515.

[114] John L. Esposito and James P. Piscatori. "Democratization and Islam." *The Middle East Journal*, Vol. 45, No. 3 (Summer, 1991), p. 440.

[115] Sohaib N. Sultan. "Forming an Islamic Democracy." 27 September 2004. Last viewed on February 6, 2010 at:
www.islamonline.net/english/introducingislam/politics/Politics/article04.shtml.
[116] Ibid.

democracy in an Islamic[117] or Islamist[118] contexts. Islamic legal theory

makes a distinction between the sacrosanctity of faith and religion in the

'ibadat, including the five pillars – profession of faith, prayer, fasting,

almsgiving and the pilgrimage – and worldly affairs, from the *mu 'amalat*,

which encompasses aspects of public, economic, political and family life.[119]

The latter is adaptable to temporal and local requirements, so long as the

result conforms to the word (*nass*) and spirit (*maqasid*) of the *shari'a*.

Elements of the *maqasid* that require revision must be amended in order to

align them with the higher objectives of the *shari'a* (*maqasid al-sharia*).[120]

Those adaptable elements (*al-mutaghayyir*) are subject to the rules of

Islamic jurisprudence (*ijtihad*), and those that are not explicitly addressed in

the texts or traditions are resolved through the development of legal theories

based on method and case (*fiqh*) or through the judgments of the ulama

(*fatawa*).[121] *Fiqh* represents the fluidity of the product of human thought and

the elaboration of the *Sharia* in the revealed and immutable path, or "the

state of juridical reflection reached by Muslim scholars at a certain time and

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[117] Esposito and Piscatori, "Democratization and Islam," p. 440; Ibrahim, Anwar. "Universal Values and Muslim Democracy" in the *Journal of Democracy* Vol. 17 No. 3 (2006), pp. 5 – 12.
[118] El-Solh writes that on the question of democracy Islamists can be divided into three groups: those who reject democracy outright, those who believe Islam is inherently democratic, and thus democratization and Islamization are "more or less an identical process," and, finally, those who believe that parliamentary or representative democracy closer to the Western model is acceptable. See Raghid El-Solh. "Islamist Attitudes Towards Democracy: A Review of the Ideas of al-Ghazali, al-Turabi and 'Amara," *British Journal of Middle Eastern Studies,* Vol. 20, No. 1 (1993), p. 58.
[119] Kramer, "Islamist Notions of Democracy" p. 4
[120] Ibrahim, "Universal Values and Muslim Democracy," pp. 5 – 12.
[121] Ahrar Ahmad, "Islam and Democracy: Text, Tradition, and History," *American Journal of Islamic Social Sciences*, Vol. 20, No.1 (Winter, 2003), p. 28.

in certain context in light of their study of the *Sharia*… *Fiqh*, by remaining

faithful to the function and purpose of the *Sharia*, has to be dynamic, in

constant elaboration since evolution is the defining character of our

world."[122] *Fatwa* is a legal decision or verdict with two essential aspects: "it

must first and above all, be founded on the sources and on the juridical

deductions and extrapolations arrived at by the *mujtahidin* who practice

ijtihad when the sources are not clear or explicit (that is, when they are *zanni*

or when there is no relevant text). It must also be formulated in the light of

the context of life, the environment, and the specific situation that justifies its

being made – and which is in fact its cause."[123]

Government and political policy are included under the *mu 'amalat* as

a means to the attainment of the collective good (*al-maslaha al- 'amma)*.

Rulers use *Maslaha* to change conditions of *riba*, or interest, for example,

which are otherwise explicitly denied in Islamic texts. *Al-maslaha al-mursala*

is 'undetermined' as that which the Quran and Sunna neither accept nor

reject. "Facing new situations and problems," writes one analyst, "the ulama

may not be able to find specific responses in the Qur'an and the Sunna. In

such cases, and guided by the light of Revelation and the example of the

Prophet, they have to formulate judgments that will protect the best interest

of people without betraying the frame of reference…. [They therefore]

require the total and constant commitment of the ulama if they are to make it

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[122] Tariq Ramadan. "Ijtihad and Maslaha: The Foundations of Governance," in *Islamic Democratic Discourse*. M.A. Muqtedar Khan (ed.). Lexington Books: Langham, 2006, p. 3
[123] Ibid, p. 15

possible for individuals to live as Muslims in all times and places…"[124]

Differences of opinion (*ikhtilaf*) and freedom of thought and conscience

(*ikhtilaf*) are also accounted for; and reform (*islah*) and renewal (*tajdid*) are

shown to be "as old as the history of Muslims."[125]

Mutual consultation (*shura*), though often construed of as a practice

exclusive to the ulama, is found in the *Surat al-Shura*, which, contrary to

practice, does not explicitly deny everyone that right.[126] Consensus of the

community (*ijma'*) is given expression, not only in the Qur'an, but also in the

exemplary method by which the Prophet sought the advice of his

Companions and family. The Constitution of Medina is likewise viewed as a

"democratic tendency," first because of the constitution's "corporatist

structure," and also due to its use as an "institutional political order through

a written agreement allowing diverse entities to function with some degree

of cooperation and autonomy;" "[p]luralist implications;" the right to

challenge an oppressive government; and "the significance of human agency

as a transforming force" all "indicate a system of individual integrity and

responsibility that is wholly consistent with democratic norms," so this

argument goes.[127]

No shortage of text or tradition prohibits the support of the inclusion of

Qur'anic illustrations and exegetical illustrations into democratic and

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[124] Ibid, p. 3-4
[125] Salim Mansur. "Muslims, Democracy, and the American Experience" *Middle East Quarterly* Vol. 12, No. 3 (Summer, 2005) pp. 67 – 76.
[126] Ahmad, "Islam and Democracy," p. 23.
[127] Ibid, pp. 24 - 25

democratic-type practice. The translation and appropriation of terms, however, fails to bind language to action, or intention to circumstance, for a number of reasons. For one, interpretation is fallible and contentious, and no claims to one or another interpretation, no matter how indefatigable, unless recognized and practiced by a majority or significant portion of a Muslim community, is going to prove conducive to democratic practice beyond reasonable doubt. As one author writes, "the weakness in the modernist approach is the assumption and expectation that a new textual interpretation or modern hermeneutics applied to the reading of the Qur'an will enable the Muslim world to be reconciled culturally and politically with the relentlessly revolutionary process of change." [128] In addition, textual interpretations are "part of a cultural enterprise and for any interpretation, whether modern, traditional, or something other, to become absorbed into majority thinking requires that society is receptive to new ideas."[129] The argument for 'text and tradition' is rightly suspect, therefore, since, furthermore, it follows from the logic that "even though most of the interpretations of Islam that are prevalent today augur poorly for freedom of religion and belief, a more correct interpretation based on the sacred text and valid traditions, finds Islam highly supportive of freedom of thought and religion and easily in accord with the principles of human rights."[130]

But who decides what a "more correct" interpretation means? Surely

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[128] Mansur, "Muslims, Democracy, and the American Experience," pp. 68-9.
[129] Ibid.
[130] See Mohsen Kadivar. "Freedom of Religion and Belief in Islam," in Kamrava, Mehran (ed.). *The New Voices of Islam.* I.B. Tauris: New York, 2007.

"whilst the possibility of an Islamic model of democracy should not be ruled out, it is in danger of becoming meaningless, as in Soviet style 'socialist democracy', if its practice blatantly contradicts the core understandings of democracy in denying real participation or rights to sections of the population."[131] In short, Islamic legal theory may support democracy, but it may denounce democracy too. Theoretical arguments for the compatibility of democracy, though compelling, are relatively weak for purposes of cross-cultural dialogue unless coupled with contemporary, empirical evidence of some sort. Of course, this weak basis for dialogue is not to deny sites of democracy at the grass roots (town hall meetings, political debate, community participation), but it is to say that Islamic democracy remains disputable for as long as theories are not put into practice in a more concrete, overarching and profuse fashion.

"Islam is Incompatible with Democracy"

On the other end of the spectrum, many Western scholars deride Islam and democracy as incompatible. The deplorable empirical record of democratization in Muslim-majority states relative to the plenitude of non-Muslim states that enjoy democratic rule is evoked as evidence of un- or anti-democratic beliefs and practices in Islam.[132] Islamists are suspected of pandering to aspiring democrats simply because the former want to come to power through elections only to reject other central tenets of democracy -

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[131] John Anderson. "Does God Matter, and If So Whose God? Religion and Democratization" in *Democratization*, Vol.11, No.4, (August 2004), p. 206-7.
[132] Daniel Pipes. "Islam and democracy can coexist." *National Post.* 22 April, 2008.

gender equality, pluralism, and minority rights, for example - once voted in to power. Many point to the Arab Muslim Middle East, what is often termed the "heartland" of the Muslim world, as case in point: not one Arab Muslim state is democratic. Furthermore, where Muslim-majority states are democratic by election, they are illiberal in orientation. Little indication exists that illiberal regimes will oversee a transition to liberal democratic governance and practice any time soon.[133]

Zartman, among others, believes that two powerful "currents" of thought today– democracy and political Islam – are not necessarily incompatible, but that "as currents of political philosophy, and so of practice, both Western democracy and political Islam are systems of thought and action with their own integrity, neither containing the precepts of the other."[134] Others point to the purported historical paucity of Islamic political theory that expounded upon "freedom," "liberty," and other terms often associated with democratic fundamentals.[135] In the post-colonial period, another author states, the "paraphernalia of democracy" was abstracted from the West without "adding to its content" or imbuing indigenous meaning into its form.[136]

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[133] Lebanon is one exception. See below.
[134] William Zartman, "Democracy and Islam: The Cultural Dialectic." *The Annals of American Political Science*, Vol. 524, (Nov., 1992), pp. 181-183.
[135] "Sunni political thought focused on providing religious legitimacy to the powers that be, and its main interest was to apply divine law in the political system." See, Meir Litvack. "Islamic Democracy vs. Western Democracy: The Debate Among Islamists" in *Middle Eastern Societies and the West: Accommodation or Clash of Civilizations?* Meir Litvack (ed.). Tel Aviv: The Moshe Dayan Center, 2006, p. 211.
[136] Baghat Korany. "Arab Democratization: A Poor Cousin?" *in PS: Political Science and Politics* Vol. 27, No. 3, (Sept., 1994) pp. 512-513.

While many commentators suggest that this lack or inhospitable nature is inherent to Islam, at other time authors suggest that Islam and Muslim history is more than equipped to lend itself to democratic rule, but that serious alterations and adjustments need to be made to popular or traditional interpretations before Islam can be conducive to democracy. Daniel Pipes enigmatically notes that a number of possible interpretations of Islam exist but that "the Sharia harks back to a decidedly antidemocratic sensibility in everything from its emphasis on God's will (not popular sovereignty) to its privileging of Muslims over non-Muslims. For Muslims to develop functioning democracies," he writes, "requires that they put aside the Sharia or transmute it into something quite different from what it is understood to be today."[137] Prominent critics like Bernard Lewis state that "Islamic values by and large are not conducive to the establishment and maintenance of any of these [democratic] institutions,"[138] owing to three basic social inequalities sanctioned and "sanctified by holy writ" within Islam: the relationships between master and slave, man and woman, and between believer and unbeliever (*dhimmi*), which are likely to occlude any potential democratic practice to foster any time soon.[139]

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[137] See the debate between M.A. Muqtedar Khan and Daniel Pipes on Pipes' website at http://www.danielpipes.org/1167/debate-islam-and-democracy. Last checked October 25, 2009.
[138] Stefan Voigt. "Islam and the Institutions of a Free Society," in *The Independent Review,* Vol. 10, No. 1 (Summer, 2005) p. 79.
[139] See Lewis, *What Went Wrong?* p. 83.

David Bukay claims that "The Islamic world is not ready to absorb the basic values of modernism and democracy" at all.[140] Drawing from decades' old arguments by Faris Jadaane[141] and others, Bukay paraphrases these authors in asserting that Islamic law regulates a Muslim's beliefs and activities in "every area of life," that "the Muslim society of believers will attain all its goals only if the believers walk in the path of God."[142] Based on these general comments, he opines, "Islam may be compatible with democracy, but it depends on what is understood as Islam."[143] By this logic, does it not also depend on what is understood as democracy?

In order to adopt democracy and acquire a democratic (or Democratic) culture, then, Islam - Muslim-majority states, and Muslims themselves – are prescribed a path of secularization. Many scholars urge Muslims to follow the Turkish, or laic, model of the strict separation of mosque and state, and to develop political parties akin to Europe's Christian parties, since the democratic record across the Muslim world, "with the exception of Turkey, is one of almost unrelieved failure:"[144]"Surely the more relevant implication of the Turkish experience is that Islamic beliefs may have to be overridden or denied embodiment in social and political

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[140] David Bukay. "Can there be an Islamic Democracy?" in *The Middle East Quarterly*, Vol. 14, No. 2 (Spring, 2007). Last viewed on February 10, 2010 at: www.meforum.org/article/1680.

[141] Jaris Jedaane, "Notions of the State in Contemporary Arab Political Writing," in G. Luciani, (ed.). *The Arab State*. London: Routledge, 1990, pp. 247 - 283.

[142] Ibid.

[143] Ibid.

[144] Bernard Lewis. *The Crisis of Islam: Holy War and Unholy Terror.* New York: Modern Library, 2003, pp. 117-118.

institutions if democracy is to rise in Muslim-majority countries."[145] For

democratization to work in Muslim-majority countries, "there must arise a

modus vivendi between Islam and a social system in which individual

freedom and social and political pluralism are accepted.... Islamic beliefs

need to be reconciled to democracy.... if democratic transitions are to be

achieved."[146]

Clearly, "Islam" is on trial for its supposed compatibility or

incompatibility with 'Democratic' norms and procedures. Of course the

failure of these normative claims is that they do not recognize or leave room

for alternative or *other* substantive conceptions that exist outside of

particular Western liberal conditions and contexts. The centricity on Western

norms as a precondition for democracy, in other words, is simply unfounded.

As discussed above, Islam is not fixed and determined, but fluid, diverse, and

multiple. Between ad hominems and straw men arguments regarding the

supposed compatibility of a mythical Islamic monolith, between

"Orientalism" and "apologism," what one intends by Islam and Democracy

largely determines whether they are compatible.

As another author put it, "Muslim exceptionalism seems... to reside in

the ways we raise questions about these matters." [147] And it is therefore

precisely the type or kind of approach to 'Islam and Democracy' that

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[145] Stanford Lakoff. "The Reality of Muslim Exceptionalism." *Journal of Democracy,* Vol. 15, No. 4 (Oct., 2004), p.135.
[146] Ibid, pp. 138-139.
[147] Abdou Filali-Ansari. "Muslims and Democracy" in *Islam and Democracy in the Middle East* Larry Diamond, Marc F. Plattner, and Daniel Brumberg (eds.). The Johns Hopkins University Press: Baltimore; London, 2003, p. 197.

determines (or undermines) how we deploy and use the terms 'Islam' and 'democracy' as variables that are necessarily compatible or incompatible. Both theoretical arguments for and against the compatibility of 'Islam and Democracy' begin with the presuppositions that either they are or are not compatible. Rarely held in question are what Islam and democracy (or Islams and democracies) constitute, as interlocutors are so intent on demonstrating (in)compatibility that they largely allow their predetermined terms of use to entail their conclusions before they properly formulate their premises according to the text and context in question.

Is Islam Compatible with Democracy?

Are Muslim societies disproportionately undemocratic compared to non-Muslim societies? What lies beyond the 'Islam and the West' paradigm – facile generalizations and ethnocentric claims - to explain the alleged democratic deficit in the Muslim world? Insofar as cultures are fluid and dynamic, the common denominator in Muslim-majority countries – Islam – would suggest that perhaps Muslim societies are indeed exceptional. In the following sections, however, I find that it is rather the Arab Middle East that is exceptional, but not because of a particularly Islamic or Arab political culture. I take a synthetic approach to political culture and political economy to explain the perceived democratic deficit that refutes claims to Muslim exceptionalism and places the deficit in the hands of the Arab Muslim Middle East and North Africa. I find that rather than Islam or the political culture of Muslims, per se, colonialism, authoritarianism, and continued Western

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penetration and domination contribute predominantly to the lack of democracy in the Arab Muslim world. Moreover, evidence suggests that if liberalizing and democratizing movements could persist by removing the illegitimately dominative and coercive elements aforementioned, they would do so indeed. As such, I argue that Western societies and governments must support indigenous democratic transitions rather than supporting the 'authoritarian you know over the theocrat you do not.' Included in this category are Islamist parties of all stripes and persuasion. Indeed, incorporating the Islamists into the democratic process appears the most likely method of transforming theocratic autocrats into believing and lasting democrats.

Muslim or Arab Exceptionalism?

"The "democracy gap" persists in every region where there are Islamic countries," notes one author: "Among the 20 majority-Muslim countries in Africa, for instance, only one is rated Free, nine are Partly Free, and ten are Not Free. By contrast, among the 33 non-Islamic countries in Africa, 8 are Free, 14 are Partly Free and 11 are not Free."[148] Similar trends exist between Muslim and non-Muslim majority states of Asian and post-communist states. A 2001 Freedom House survey found that 121 out of 192 countries, or 63 per cent of the world's states, were considered electoral democracies, while 11 of 47, or 23 per cent of Muslim-majority countries were electoral democracies. Subsequent studies in 2003 and 2008 show continuing trends, if not notable

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[148] Karatnycky, "Muslim Countries and the Democracy Gap," pp. 104.

stagnation, in democratic achievements of Muslim societies in recent years.[149] Indeed, it appears as though since Muslim-majority states are disproportionately undemocratic compared to non-Muslim majority states that therefore Islamic interpretations facilitate political cultures that inhibit democratization. Yet a majority of Muslims worldwide lives in democratic arrangements. These arrangements include Western and non-Western societies with Muslim minorities, and especially the largest of Muslim-majority states - the 250 million Muslims in Indonesia; 150 million Muslims of Bangladesh and India; 70 million Muslims in Turkey and 60 million Muslims of Nigeria - all of whom are citizens of electoral democracies.[150]

Whatever measures researchers take and whichever methodologies they use to determine whether states are democratic or not (meaning whether or not they "Western" or liberal biases in their methodologies or not), that a majority of Muslims are democratic worldwide is convincing proof that "Islam" is not inherently opposed to democracy. The fact that some Muslim-majority states are disproportionately undemocratic is more the product of economic factors, political cultural traits, the suppression of expression, and religious, cultural, and political oppression that are grounded in regions wrought by modern historical pasts that include colonialism, authoritarianism, and continued imperialism.

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[149] See http://www.freedomhouse.org/template.cfm?page=130&year=2009
[150] Ibrahim, "Toward Muslim Democracies," *Journal of Democracy*, p. 6; Karatnycky, "Muslim Countries," p. 104.

To demonstrate a strictly Muslim or Islamic exceptionalism, researchers often overlook or do not apply across the board economic considerations that span Muslim-majority states - for example how material considerations effect political stability and security. Rather, many focus on the Arab Middle East to the exclusion of the Muslim world proper. Yet the disparity between Arab and non-Arab regimes is stark, however, and vindicates Islam further. That is, when factoring for the assumption that greater wealth is likely to entail greater democratic practice, the sixteen Arab countries turn out to be democratic "underachievers," while many non-Arab Muslim states are democratic "overachievers" (suggesting factors other than Islam entail undemocratic practice).[151] Indeed, when expectations of Arab states' Gross Domestic Product per capita (GDPpc) are factored in relative to other states' patterns of democratization, many non-Arab Muslim-majority states are relatively less developed than other successfully democratized and democratizing states around the world. One way of interpreting this ambivalence is that despite less wealth, Muslim-majority states exhibit stronger democratizing tendencies than wealthier and more developed non-Muslim states, and significantly greater democratizing tendencies than both resource-poor states as well as oil-rich Arab and Gulf states. For the latter, oil rich rentier states especially, "no taxation" means "no representation," yet for non-Arab Muslim states a fecund movement of "Muslim Democracy" abounds.

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[151] Stepan and Robertson, "An "Arab" More than "Muslim" Electoral Gap," p. 35.

Of thirty-one non-Arab Muslim countries, eleven are electoral democracies.[152] While non-Muslim states are three times more likely to be democratic than Muslim states, no Arab state is democratic;[153] no Arab government, with the exception of Palestine (though not a full member of the UN because it is not a sovereign state) and Lebanon demonstrate strong democratic currents. Indeed, "the non-Arab Muslim world has for the last thirty years been much more electorally competitive than the Arab Muslim world."[154] Within the Middle East the only democratic states are non-Arab or non-Muslim: both Turkey and Israel are relatively stable democracies exhibiting relatively high levels of political liberalization and political equality as well as electoral competitiveness. Prior to 1974 (civil war broke out in 1975), Lebanon, the only Middle Eastern state with a sizable Christian population, demonstrated three consecutive years with strong political rights,[155] and following the establishment of a unity government in November of 2009, Lebanon likewise appears relatively stable and demonstrates substantial potential for democratic progress, and this despite the recent war between Hezbollah and Israel in 2006 that severely damaged Beirut's infrastructure.

As for Iran, democratic spirits abound in Iran's modern history pre- and post-Khomeini, and recent elections exhibited a popular ardor for

[152] Karatkycky, "Muslim Countries," p. 104.
[153] Karatnycky, "Muslim Countries," p. 105.
[154] Alfred Stepan and Greame B. Robertson. "Arab, Not Muslim, Exceptionalism," *Journal of Democracy* Vol. 15, No. 4 (2004), p. 140.
[155] Stepan and Robertson, "An "Arab" More Than "Muslim" Electoral Gap," p. 32.

democratic transparency and accountability in the face of a theocratic and politically oppressive regime. Thus while Israel, Turkey, Iran, Lebanon (and one may include Palestine) partake in democratic practices, and while Muslim-majority states outside of the Middle East present fecund democratic movements, the deficit lies in the Arab Muslim Middle East. To what may we attribute this democratic deficit?

A Synthetic Approach to 'Islam and Democracy': Political Culture and Political Economy Examined

As noted above, Islam does not engender a singular culture or conception of modernity that could inhibit democratic practice, However, given the proliferation of arguments that Islam inhibits the growth of institutions and personal commitments that are conducive to democracy; that the Arab Middle East is unified culture or a "heartland of Islam" that speaks for Muslim authenticity; and, following from the observation that there is some homogeneity in the political culture of the Arab Middle East and North Africa, it is worthwhile to examine whether Islam influences political culture, and to that end, to what extent political culture determines what resists or facilitates a democratic culture. In this section I investigate how factors associated with political culture[156] and political economy[157] that

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[156] As I have mentioned, the kind of political culture I have in mind is a democratic civic or political culture. I agree with Almond and Verba that democratic institutions alone do not assure that democracy will flourish, that nations need to develop a democratic civic culture. In this context, I borrow their example of political culture as a citizens' understanding of and/or attitudes towards the institutions, regulations and roles, rules, procedures and norms, of the political system. See Gabriel Almond and Sidney Verba

speak to the topic 'Islam and democracy.'

Following from works that consider a more cross-disciplinary approach, that recognize the "needs to involve the exploration of the cultural workings of politico-economic regimes" and "cultural sociology as well as on studies focusing on collective representations and symbols, memory or discourse,[158] I examine below the political values that "support or undermine a particular set of political institutions," or in more abstract terms, "the particular distribution of patterns of political orientations – attitudes toward the political system and its various parts, and attitudes toward the role of the self in the system."[159] To what extent, for example, is there a common political culture in the Arab Middle East? How is that political culture formulated and expressed? How do political economy and political culture help to explain the condition and current expressions and sites of democracy, or the lack thereof? What do the explanations for a lack of democracy in the Arab Middle East offer in terms of a lasting and viable solution?

Supposedly "Arab" or "Muslim" attributes - collectivism, tribalism, and primordialism - are reputed to foster or facilitate authoritarianism or an

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1963 *The Civic Culture: Political Attitudes and Democracy in Five Nations*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1963, p. 13.

[157] Political economy refers to how institutions - rules, procedures, and norms - restrict or enable the behavior of agents, within the context of the state and state-control of shared resources. See

James E. Alt. "Comparative Political Economy: Credibility, Accountability, and Institutions," in Political Science: State of the Discipline II. Katsnelson and Milner, (ed.). New York and London: W.W. Norton and Co. 2002, pp. 149-171.

[158] Frank Trentmann, "Political Culture and Political Economy: Interest, Ideology and Free Trade," *Review of International Political Economy*, Vol. 5, No. 2 (Summer, 1998), pp. 217-25, in particular pp. 237-238.

[159] Anderson, "Democracy in the Arab World," p. 78.

authoritarian political culture. It is noteworthy that these arguments

resemble those of radical Islamists who declare democracy as an alien

Western invention and import, and who therefore discard democracy as

unknown and unknowable to Arab and Muslim ways of life. Of course, this

argument neglects to consider that any peoples can and should be able to

determine for themselves what democracy means, whether it is understood

as 'freedom and equality' or 'rule of the people,' by election, consultation,

consensus, negotiation, discussion or otherwise.

Due to the likelihood that political culture, like culture, can be used as

a catchall explanatory device for political behavior, detailed theoretical

debates on the study of political culture reflect scholars' state of unease with

respect to the vitality and appropriateness of the use of political culture to

explain and predict political and economic behavior. Some argue that

political culture is a nebulous concept, that its "conceptual untidiness and

empirical difficulties" render it unhelpful, but that, at the same time, "political

culture is an important variable" and that "it cannot be reduced to other

factors such as economics, institutions, or externalities; it is necessary,"

therefore, "for helping explain how authoritarianism is losing its legitimacy.

The political culture concept, then, must be "brought back in" – but

carefully."[160] Rather than reductive and essentialist characterizations,

special focus on multiple approaches must take into consideration

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[160] Michael C. Hudson. "The Political Culture Approach to Arab Democratization: The Case for Bringing It Back In, Carefully." In *Political Liberalization & Democratization in the Arab World*, Vol. 1: Theoretical Perspectices. Rex Brynen, Bahgat Korany & Paul Noble (eds.). Boulder; Lynne Reiner Publishers, 1995, p. 64.

"structures and institutions (formal and informal) [that] will help explain the powers of and constraints on politicians."[161]

Others are rightly skeptical and argue that political culture "can be very seductive, particularly to policymakers looking for short, neat explanations of the complexities they face."[162] On this account political culture should not be discarded altogether, but there are more important considerations, like economic, political and social institutions, that should be given evidentiary primacy over focus on fitting factors into the rubric of political culture entirely.[163] Finally, a middle position might hold that cultural attitudes both influence political realities while also being influenced by political and economic contexts. "Hence, Arabs may be deferential to authoritarian rule not because of some ingrained cultural disposition, but as a consequence of a quite rational responses to authoritarian repression."[164] On this view, if an opportunity presented itself, a more democratic political culture would likely follow.

In this section I therefore take on this middle position, a synthetic approach to 'Islam and democracy' by way of politico-cultural explanations and studies about the political economy of democratic or liberal participation. As I argue below, this middle position seems to accurately reflect political realities. As for undemocratic political culture, authoritarian

[161] Ibid, 74.
[162] Lisa Anderson, "Democracy in the Arab World."
[163] Ibid,
[164] Rex Brynen, Bahgat Korany, and Paul Noble. "Introduction: theoretical Perspectives on Arab Liberalization and Democratization," *Political Liberalization and Democratization in the Middle East*, p. 7.

regimes and those governments that support them are most culpable for the authoritarian nature of political cultures – not the threat of Islamism, and not the beliefs of Muslims themselves. If the opportunity presented itself, in other words, a move towards democratic political cultures would most probably ensue, given the evidence I present below. I argue that cultural change is path dependent to the extent that societies may be traditional and conservative, pre-industrialist, and religious, but that a change in regime from authoritarian rule to democratic orientation would likely result in a change in political culture that sustains progressive and pluralistic practices.

Recent studies of modernization and traditional values find evidence of both significant cultural changes as a result of economic development as well as the persistence of distinctive cultural traits, despite modernization. While modernization and economic development facilitate "a shift from absolutist norms and values toward values that are increasingly rational, tolerant, trusting, and participatory," cultural change is also path dependent to the extent that cultural, traditional, and religious values endure in many cases, despite modernization.[165]

Wealthier societies' attitudes thus differ drastically from low-income societies in a number of different ways: religious, cultural, political, and social. Across nations, industrialized societies with thriving service sectors develop "*secular-rational* orientations to authority" and "self-expression

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[165] Ronald Inglehart and James Baker, "Modernization, Cultural Change, and the Persistence of Traditional Values," *American Sociological Review*, Vol. 65 (Feb., 2000), p. 19.

values" that reflect the nature of service sector work and its accompanying demands for autonomous decision-making processes.[166] This cultural priority shift has a lot to do with the transition from materialist to postmaterialist values undergone inter-generationally in recent decades as a result of rising levels of material quality of life coupled with lower levels of existential insecurity experienced in many industrializing societies.[167] "Traditional" orientations to authority, however, reflect or correspond with what are called "survival values" characteristic of societies that "tend to emphasize economic and physical security above all other goals, and feel threatened by foreigners, by ethnic diversity and by cultural change,"[168] which include as social and political correlates low rates of tolerance for homosexuality and gender equality.

The implication is that societies that can afford to take survival for granted undergo a priority shift from economic and physical security to emphasis on subjective notions of quality of life.[169] Despite conventional modernization theory, which posits that with modernization and education there comes a concomitant curvilinear regression of religious belief, cultural change is in fact not linear. In post-industrial societies, culture takes a turn

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[166] Ibid, 23; Ronald Inglehart. "*Modernization and Postmodernization: Cultural, Economic, and Political Change in 43 Societies.* Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1997.
[167] Ibid, 26; Ronald Inglehart. *The Silent Revolution: Changing Values and Political Styles in Advanced Industrial Society.* Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1977; Ronald Inglehart. *Culture Shift in Advanced Industrial Societies*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1990; Inglehart, *Modernization and Postmodernization*, 1997.
[168] Inglehart and Baker, "Modernization, Cultural Change, and the Persistence of Traditional Values," p. 34.
[169] Ibid, 22

from tradition, through modernization and industrialization, to a new set of values ("self-expression" values) instilled through post-industrial, post-materialist phases of modernization. With pre-industrial, traditional societies, however, culture can, to some extent, be predictable. Patterns of high levels of religiosity directly correlate to high levels of national pride, for example.[170] Religious participation is twice as strong in poorer countries than it is in richer countries.[171] Thus the transition from agrarian to service sectors accompanies a shift from "survival" to "self-expression" values.

The transformation of Arab Middle Eastern states and economies to highly industrialized labor forces is unlikely in the near future, however. Furthermore, since higher percentages of the labor force employed in the service sector are more indicative of this shift in values than is a rising GDP,[172] Arab and Muslim-majority states with viable oil sectors are even more unlikely to undergo this accompanying shift to "self-expression" values, since self-expression values are typically cultivated through a service labor force. Political culture does not alone explain why democratic cultures in the Arab Muslim Middle East are not thriving. Existential security and agrarian economies withhold transitions to the kinds of modernization that allow for a political culture itself to be free, to the extent that people may assemble, speak, feel, and believe freely; and conduct, express, and cultivate their selves

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[170] Ibid, 29.
[171] Pippa Norris and Ronald Inglehart. *Sacred and Secular: Religion and Politics Worldwide.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007, p. 58.
[172] Inglehart and Baker, "Modernization, Cultural Change, and the Persistence of Traditional Values," *American Sociological Review*, Vol. 65 (Feb., 2000), p. 34.

to the greatest possible personal or individual capability society offers, which arrives under conditions of economic self-sufficiency and material qualities of life that allow communities to be capable of making democratic transitions without concern for their material or political safety or wellbeing.

That said, we should be careful not to expect modernization to entail "self-expression" values in Arab or Muslim-majority states as if it were a natural progression, or as if "self-expression" would entail the same conversations and concerns that affect and permeate Western societies. In other words, "self-expression" should neither be equated with progress nor with the polar opposite of "survival values." Indeed, to do so would be no different from subscribing to "end of history" doctrines or catchall political culture approaches detailed above. Nor is such a drastic change in values likely in many Arab and Muslim-majority societies. Unlike Western societies, whose generations are successively more liberal and focused on equality of individual rights, Muslim-majority states of the Arab Middle East exhibit persistent traditionalism and religiosity (also, and again, despite modernization).[173] We may infer that by "self-expression" values what is meant is a kind of open and pluralistic society where "self-expression" is permitted (or tolerated) without fear of physical or existential concerns.

Indeed, religiosity and traditionalism should not be seen as an impediment to democracy per se. Studies suggest in any case that religious belief is not the only factor in determining national political culture. "The

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[173] Norris and Inglehart, *Sacred and Secular*, p. 154.

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basic values of Nigerian Muslims are closer to those of their Christian

compatriots than they are to those of Indian Muslims," for example.[174] Rather

than Islam playing a necessarily negative role in democratization, it is more

instructive to investigate the institutions through which national political

cultures are formulated and distributed: authoritarian regimes with control

of the education system and mass media influence the transmission of

symbols of religion and national culture and are therefore instrumental to

the formation of national identities and heritages.[175] Of course, Islam and

Islamic rhetoric are often co-opted by the regime in order for the ruler to

garner political legitimacy. While this only exacerbates assumptions about

Islam as a prime factor in inhibiting democracy, as it happens the co-optation

of religion by the state actually militates against arguments for this alleged

compatibility, indicating instead that behind what looks to be religious

reasoning and justifications is a puppeteer of the regime's choosing. Thus

where authoritarian regimes shape and contour political culture, the

emergence of a viable and sustainable democratic culture is unlikely.

An opening up of the political system to allow for pluralism and

participation, coupled with campaigns for democratic governance and

democratic practice is an auspicious method of advancing a democratic

culture. Yet for as long as authoritarians are more concerned with regime

stability than regime (democratic) change, and for as long as Western

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[174] Ibid, 37.
[175] Ibid.

governments support said authoritarians, such democratic transitions are unforeseeable. It appears as though democratic culture may be on the horizon in many Middle Eastern and Muslim-majority states if and only if and to such an extent that an opening presents itself.

Explaining Democratic Deficits in the "Lagging Third"

As demonstrated above, Western scholars, pundits and politicians often perfunctorily identify religious, traditional, cultural, and economic traits that are inhibitive to (Western liberal) democratic practices as facets of Arab*ic* or Islam*ic* (political) culture. Not only does this lack of care or reflection deny Arabs and Muslims the ability to define these terms (what is Islam*ic* and what is democrat*ic*) for themselves, but it also eschews the extent to which this perceived deficit is the result of factors other than Arab*ness* or Muslim*ness*. Thus, as many have noted "[i]f there are in a range of Islamic countries evident barriers to democracy, this has to do with certain other social and political features that their societies share... Though some of these features tend to be legitimized in terms of Islamic doctrine, there is nothing specifically 'Islamic' about them."[176] In this section I outline many of these other economic, social and political features.

I have argued that when analyzing the topic 'Islam and democracy' from the vantage point of political economy and political culture we should look to the "structures and institutions (formal and informal) [that] will help

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[176] Halliday,. *Islam and the Myth of Confrontation*, p.116.

explain the powers of and constraints on politicians."[177] What might some of these constraints be? For one, relative to other parts of the world, Muslim societies are underdeveloped as well as undereducated,[178] and those with a higher education are often suborned as employees of a bloated state apparatus. Regimes of Muslim-majority states, especially those of the Arab Muslim Middle East, are mainly authoritarian and repressive, and in many cases Western states are complicit in this oppression out of a preference for 'autocrats over theocrats' (or Islamists) as a function of maintaining control over the resources and politics of the region. Furthermore, democracy is sometimes unpopular because Western penetration and Westernization has entailed fears of "Westoxification," both exacerbating Islamicization and popularizing radical variants of Islamism as legitimate forms of resistance to the *jahilliyah* of the state or the domination of the Great Satan - "the West." The result is that democratization is associated with Westernization and secularization, the former of which is considered morally depraved and the latter tantamount to atheism.[179]

Many of these constraints and malaises are the direct or indirect product of historical conditions that have led to the hampering of contemporary changes to political culture to entail a democratic political culture. Within the greater Middle East and North Africa, the British and the French redrew the boundaries of the former Ottoman Empire upon its

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[177] Ibid, 74.
[178] Karatnycky, "Muslim Countries," p. 105.
[179] Esposito & Mogahed. *Who Speaks for Islam?* p. 39.

dissolution following the First World War. The artificial borders corresponded poorly, however, with then Ottoman provinces and territories, many of which had been in place for centuries. The effect of segregating and dislocating certain economic, social, political, familial, sectarian, territorial and community identities and allegiances was disastrous for a number of reasons.

As Saad Eddin Ibrahim has pointed out, the Middle East, or the "lagging third" of Muslim-majority states, has yet to democratize despite the fact that it was the first region of the Muslim world to experience modernization and demonstrate real liberal and democratic potential following Napoleon's invasion of Egypt in 1789. In 1866, Egypt received its first parliament and drafted its first written constitution, "long before many European countries had these things. This was no fluke," Ibrahim reminds us, "but it rather was a methodical step taken by the modernizing ruler Ismail Pasha (r. 1863 – 79) who was immediately emulated by Tunisia's Muhammad III as-Sadiq (r. 1859 – 81) and Iraq's Dawood Pasha (r. 1830 – 69)."[180] Thus three Arab Middle Eastern lands – technically parts of the Ottoman Empire but in fact each with a substantial amount of political autonomy – all started down a path of modernization that led them toward the embrace of liberal-democratic reforms.   Further reforms were evident throughout the 1920s and 30s, wherein Egyptian and other Arab and Muslim theorists "drew inspiration from European liberal political and

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[180] Ibrahim, "Toward Muslim Democracies," p.7.

philosophical thought" (however, "the liberal experiment ultimately failed"

because, as some argue, such reform was soon viewed as a form of "colonial

liberalism," fraught with tendencies of "imperial liberalism" that proved

exclusionary and contradictory to local Arab and Muslim custom and

identities).[181] Rather than starting down a path of reforms amenable to Arab

and Muslim culture, beliefs and practices, reforms took on a strong

propensity towards Westernization, leading ultimately to their rejection.

Thus colonialism was both cause of and repellant for the continuation

of liberalizing trends. It was seen, however, as more so a form of casuistry

than custom. Though French and British interference may have inspired

reform, such reforms also thwarted indigeneity, the result of which has led to

grave suspicion over the rhetoric of democracy and democratization.[182]

Furthermore, since these democratizing trends were interrupted across the

region, the Middle East has been left without a strong democracy in close

proximity or contiguity from which to glean inspiration, other than Israel or

Turkey, neither of which is Arab. To the contrary, many Arab regimes have

used Israel as a reason not to democratize, and many blame Israel for its

negative contribution to Arab political culture. And Turkey's Kemalist or laic

model of the separation of mosque and state is viewed as anathema to the

political constructs desired by proponents of democracy throughout the

Middle East, as exhibited in studies below.

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[181] Abdeslam M. Maghraoui. *Liberalism Without Democracy: Nationhood and Citizenship in Egypt, 1922 – 1936.* Durham: Duke University Press, 2006, p. 4.
[182] Eva Bellin. "The Robustness of Authoritarianism in the Middle East: Exceptionalism in a Comparative Perspective. *Comparative Politics*, Vol. 36, No. 3 (Jan., 2004), p. 150.

Another negative effect of colonialism was the watershed of authoritarian regimes that followed from the granting of independence following British and French mandates. In a contemporary context, as Eva Bellin has correctly identified, the Middle East is "exceptional in that the Cold War's end has not signaled Great Power retreat from patronage of authoritarianism, as has been the case in Latin America, Africa, and elsewhere in the world."[183] A number of repercussions associated with the Great Power's historical presence and patronage in the region continues to militate against the establishment of democratic norms.

Finally, Islamism is often considered a response to authoritarianism whose undemocratic impulses "demobilized much of the traditional constituency for democratic activism, the secular and educated elements of the middle class."[184] Indeed, the coups that brought to power secular nationalist regimes saw to the subsequent co-optation of Islam. In political rhetoric and through political suppression, jailing and sometimes torturing Islamist opposition, Islamic institutions were seized and subordinated by the state. The present manifestation of radical Islamism is a reaction to that suppression, the 'near enemy,' while post-Islamism, discussed below, is a model that has managed to transcend this historical past in its quest for a democratic future.

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[183] This quote is from an unpublished manuscript refered to in Stepan and Robertson, "An "Arab" More than a "Muslim" Electoral Gap," p. 42.
[184] Ibrahim, *Towards Muslim Democracies*, p. 7.

Democratic Potentialities in the Arab Muslim Middle East

Failed democratic experiments occurred throughout the 80s and 90s. Yet, however unsuccessful, they amounted to sufficient pressure on Arab leaders to produce slight political reforms and nominal elections. As one author notes, "these moves did not represent a genuine commitment to democratization, but were rather a strategy for deflecting criticism and containing pressures for change."[185] The region remains peppered with "remnants of so many of the democratic experiments – from the spectacular crash and burn of Algeria's liberalization to Tunisia's more subtle but no less profound transformation into a police state, from Egypt's backsliding into electoral manipulation [and repression of Islamic movements] to the reluctance of Palestinian authorities to embrace human rights.[186] Using the technique of limited democratization to deflect criticisms aimed at the regime and the desired response has effectively contained pressures for change, producing a number of noticeable trends throughout the region.[187]

Procedural democracy thus fairs far better than its substantive counterpart. A recent study found that between 1989 and 1999, over 80 elections took place across the Middle East, all of which resulted in high voter turnouts. There was a 69% turnout in Jordan's 1993 parliamentary elections,

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[185] Mark Tessler and Eleanor Gao. "Gauging Arab Support for Democracy," *Journal of Democracy*, Vol. 16, No. 3 (July, 2005), p. 93.
[186] Lisa Anderson, "Politics in the Middle East: Opportunities and Limits in the Quest for Theory," in *Area Studies and Social Science: Strategies for Understanding Middle East Politics.* Mark Tessler with Jodi Nachtwey and Anne Banda (eds.). Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1999, p. 6.
[187] Korany and Noble, "Introduction: Arab Liberalization and Democratization, p. 7.

a 76% turnout in the PNA's (Palestinian National Authority) first ever 1996

national elections, 75% in Morocco's local council elections, and 87% in

Turkey's parliamentary elections.[188] Clearly, Arabs go through some of the

motions, voting and choosing candidates, yet significant debates on varied

commitments to and understandings of democracy, social justice, human

rights, and good governance are replaced by ballots alone. What is more,

many of the elections are illegitimate. At best, it is "more a case of

ta'addudiyya (multipartyism) than of *dimuqratiyya* (democracy):" more an

indication of a given regime's responses to political and economic crises and

pressures than it is an altruistic gesture of power sharing.[189]

As such, democracy is, for the most part, a top-down process whose

directionality appears irreversible so long as regimes and elites carry

considerable control over the democratic process itself, including what

democracy means and how it is made available or distributed. There is thus

little hope for bottom-up democratic change. Trends towards

democratization and liberalization are uneven across the region. Pressure for

change emanates from pockets rather than representatives of constituents as

a whole.[190] What this suggests is that a homogenous political culture of

neither authoritarianism nor democracy prevails. Rather, authoritarianism is

the case. Democrats are frequently and variously challenging that rule.

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[188] Anoushiravan Ehteshami. "Is the Middle East Democratizing?, *British Journal of Middle Eastern Studies*, Vol. 26, No. 2 (Nov., 1999), p. 204.
[189] Korany and Noble. "Introduction: Arab Liberalization and Democratization," p. 7.
[190] Ibid

Islamist parties, legal and illegal, are deeply entrenched and influential partly as a result of and as a response to of all of the above. Islamist parties are often considered threats or hindrances to democracy. As one author notes, "[a]s long as the region's Lebanons remain too weak to control their Hezbollahs, there is little hope that full democracy or meaningful equality under law can blossom."[191] Yet Islamism need not necessarily be viewed as a detriment to democracy: many Islamist groups garner considerable legitimacy as social movements in addition to the seminal role they play as political parties or aspiring political actors. Islamist political parties, where legalized and permitted to participate in the democratic process, will play a relatively formative role in national and regional political arenas because Islamists advocate for democratic governance of the kind that aspiring citizens desire. Islamists not only speak the language of Islam, in other words, they also speak the language of democracy.

In conclusion, while many Muslim-majority states are democratic "overachievers," the Arab Muslim Middle East - though not for lack of a strong and determined want of democracy, is "underachieving." Regimes are primarily responsible for fostering an authoritarian or democratic culture through the transmission and formation of national cultures through education system, the media, and other institutions of state. Political culture is thus largely a function of regime control, and a democratic culture is lost as

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[191] Wittes, "Three Kinds of Movements," p. 8.

a result of the existential threats and political pressures emplaced upon aspiring democrats where and when they challenge the stability of the regime that suppresses them. A colonial past, an authoritarian present, and continued Western support for 'the authoritarian you know rather than the theocrat you do not' are the predominant reasons for deficits in democracy across the region. Exceptionalism is decidedly not a result of indigenous Islam*ic* or Arab*ic* political culture. What this brief study of the political culture and political economy of the topic 'Islam and democracy' reveals is that Muslim democratic participation worldwide shows that Islam and democracy are in fact compatible. The "lagging third" has long demonstrated the impetus towards progressive and democratizing trends. What is at issue is not whether Islam and democracy are compatible, but how Islam and democracy are compatible.

Chapter 4: How Is Islam Compatible with Democracy

The compatibility problem represents Western theorists'
misunderstanding about how Muslims are democratic. Thus, in this chapter I
introduce a number of surveys and polls revealing *how* Muslims – both
secular or Islamist - are democratic. The findings in this chapter indicate that
Muslims of all stripes exhibit democratic and progressive qualities. Islamist
and secular parties' adherents share common values regarding, for example,
equality for women in the workplace, social tolerance for racial diversity, and
preferences for pluralistic and inclusive politics. The appearance of "Muslim
democracies" is South East Asia in particular - political parties with
centralizing and pragmatic policies - also confirm the emergence of
successful indigenous forms of democracy, or those considered authentic or
genuine rather than alien or the result of Western importation. The aim of
this section is to demonstrate the overlap and fluidity between Islamist
democratic platforms and Muslims' democratic beliefs and practices.

It is safe to say that Islamic or Islamist democracy makes Western
liberal theorists and governments uncomfortable for a number of reasons.
The Muslims world does not share with Westerners the conception of
civilization and "the civilized." Islamist parties are generally anti-Western
from the get go, and an Islamist accession to power will entail a loss of
Western influence in the Muslim world. Finally, if Islamic or Islamist
democracy is proven to be successful, effective and legitimate, Western
liberal theorists will need to consider the fact that Western liberal democracy

is neither at the "end of history" nor "beyond culture." Instead, Western

liberal democrats will have to face the fact that, articulated as "the universal"

or "the civilized," Western liberal democracy is oppressive. This realization

would indeed shatter the liberal myth and would require a serious

reconsideration of how to move beyond Western governments' conceptions

of Western liberal democratic discourse as the universal or "end of history."

Worse still, however, it would require that Western liberal democratic

theorists reevaluate the meaning and worth of liberal discourse in light of its

oppressive tendencies, and it may entail a recognition that religion plays a

formative role in political reasoning within and across all cultures, albeit

differently. Of course, neither popular conceptions of Western liberal

democracy nor popular conceptions of Islamism are without their faults.

Cross-cultural democratic dialogue would be mutually beneficial to both

Western and Muslim societies. The point here is that the realization that

Western liberalism effectively oppresses indigenous and legitimate

democratic movements from sprouting from the grass-roots would induce

the kind of thinking that may eventually pressure Western governments into

reeling in their support for the 'autocrat they know over the theocrat they do

not.' The studies below are fruitful starting places for the kind of cross-

cultural democratic dialogue that must be encouraged as a catalyst for

opposition against Western governments and their misplaced support.

Muslims and Democracy

In this section I examine how Muslims are democratic with specific reference to Muslims' views on the place of Islam in politics as well as Muslims' views on democracy's general benefits and drawbacks. It should be noted that, with reference to Muslims' perceptions of the relationship to democracy and religion, there are mixed findings as to the extent to which religion and democracy play are mutually beneficial. These findings do not preclude the role that religion plays in the lives and societies of Muslims worldwide, but attests once more to factors that have to do with political culture and political economy. I conclude with a fuller discussion of how post-Islamism reflects the contemporary changes underway across Muslims societies in striving for a more pluralistic as well as democratic political systems.

How Muslims are Democratic

In a recent Gallup World Poll including interviews of tens of thousands of respondents in 35 Muslim-majority nations, when asked what they admired most about Muslim societies, most responded "people's sincere adherence to Islam."[192] A majority of those wanted sharia as "a" source of legislation, while in Jordan, Egypt, Pakistan, Afghanistan, and Bangladesh majorities wanted sharia as *the* "only source" of legislation.[193] Throughout a sample of the Muslim world, the ratio of respondents among men and women

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[192] Esposito & Mogahed. *Who Speaks for Islam?* p. 6.
[193] Ibid, 48.

who wanted sharia as "the only source" differed considerably, not between

the sexes, but across the Muslim world: In Jordan, 54% of men and 55% of

women wanted sharia as the only source of legislation. In Egypt, 70% of men

and 62 % of women wanted sharia. In Iran, the figures were 12% of men and

14% of women, and in Indonesia, 14 % of men and women wanted sharia as

"the only source" of legislation.[194] Muslims who want the sharia as either *a,*

or *the,* source of law or as either *a*, or *the,* guiding reference to the

constitution also had very different views about what that statement entails:

> Though the definition of *Sharia* refers to the principles in the Quran and
> prophetic traditions, some expect full implementation of classical or medieval
> Islamic law; others want a more restricted approach, like prohibiting alcohol,
> requiring the head of state to be a Muslim, or creating *Sharia* courts to hear
> cases involving Muslim family law (marriage, divorce, and inheritance). Still
> others simply want to ensure that no constitutional law violates the principles
> and values of Islam, as found in the Quran.[195]

In addition to a strong desire for Islam in politics, many respondents

indicated that "political freedom and liberty" and "freedom of speech,"

including statements about associations including the desire for a "fair

judicial system" and that "citizens enjoying many liberties" are what they

admire about the US and the West (despite severe suspicions over the

genuineness of U.S. commitments to the democratization of the Muslim

world). Across genders and socio-economic classes, Muslim countries "reveal

a complex and surprising reality:" studies indicate that "[s]ubstantial

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[194] Ibid, 48-9
[195] Ibid, 52.

majorities in nearly all nations surveyed (95% in Burkina Faso, 94% in Egypt, 93% in Iran, and 90% in Indonesia) say that if drafting a constitution for a new country, they would guarantee freedom of speech defined as "allowing all citizens to express their opinion on the political, social, and economic issues of the day."[196] On the other hand, they indicate that "lack of unity, economic and political corruption, and extremism" are what they least admire about the Arab and Muslim region.[197] The Gallup Poll therefore demonstrated that

> Although many Muslim and Western governments talk about democracy, self
> –determination – as understood by the majority of those polled – it does not
> require a separation of religion and state. Poll data shows that large
> majorities of respondents in the countries surveyed cite the equal importance
> of Islam and democracy as essential to the quality of their lives and to the
> future progress of the Muslim world.[198]

Within the Arab world, studies suggest overwhelming support for democracy.[199] For instance, the Arab Barometer survey reports 86% of respondents believing that democracy is "the best form of government," and 90% believing that democracy would be a "good" or "very good" system of governance. Additional findings were instructive for analyzing *how* democracy is valued. 83% of respondents believed that reforms should be implemented gradually, while 31% believed that democracy would negatively affect the economy, and 33% believed that democracy is bad for

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[196] Ibid, 47.
[197] Ibid, 34.
[198] Ibid, 35.
[199] Tessler and Gao. "Gauging Arab Support for Democracy," pp. 83 – 97.

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maintaining order. 62% of respondents interpreted competition and disagreement among political groups to be positive for their country, while 64% believed that that the government should make laws according to the people's wishes.

What democracy means to Muslims is also instructive for how they are democratic. While in Algeria, Palestine and Jordan, half of those surveyed indicated that democracy means "freedom to criticize the government" or "to change the government through elections," half stated that democracy amounted to the ability for a government to "provide basic necessities like food, clothing, and shelter for everyone" or to "decrease the income gap between rich and poor." Analyzing this data, Amaney and Tessler suggest that an "instrumental conception of democracy" characterizes these and other studies of how Muslims are democratic.[200] For example, when asked to think about problems with governance, 51% of respondents described economic problems like poverty, unemployment and inflation, versus 5% who mentioned authoritarianism outright.

> One way to read this is that Arab-world majorities support democracy, at least in part, because it promises to make governments more accountable and more attentive to the concerns of ordinary citizens, particularly their economic concerns... it is not so much that democracy is the "right" political system in a conceptual sense, but rather that democracy is a "useful" form of

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[200] Amaney Jamal and Mark Tessler, "Attitudes in the Arab World," pp. 98 – 99.

government that has the potential to address many of a country's most pressing needs.[201]

The study also indicates that there is a significant variance between Arab Muslim respondents on the matter of religion in politics. 56% agreed with the statement that 'men of religion should have influence over government decisions,' while 44% disagreed. Of those who agreed that democracy is the best form of government, 54% of respondents believed that 'men of religion should play an important role in government decisions,' while 46% disagreed. There is thus a clear division amounting to almost half who support an institutionalized political role of religion and half who do not.[202]

Even more significantly, an examination of another dimension of *how* Muslims are democratic reveals significant commonalities across the Arab world regarding preferences for either Islamic or secular democracy and the values between them. The normative or substantive elements of democracy selected for the study in question included respect for political diversity among political leadership; social and/or racial tolerance; and gender equality, measured by questions regarding equal job opportunities and wages. Almost all correspondents demonstrated overwhelming support for democratic values, the importance of political leaders' acceptance for political diversity, and high rates of social and/or racial tolerance.[203] Finally, equality for job opportunities and wages was "moderate to good," only falling

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[201] Ibid.
[202] Ibid, 102.
[203] Ibid, 103.

below the two-thirds percentile (66%) in the case of Islamic democracy in Algeria, but even then over half responded positively to gender equality in the workplace.[204]

Clearly, preferences are based on the fact that political systems of governance "are not shaped to a significant degree by religious orientations or attachments."[205] Second, "not only does religiosity not lead men and women to be less supportive of democracy, it does not lead them to be more supportive of a political system that incorporates an Islamic dimension."[206] Indeed, studies of support for Islamism and democracy in Egypt and Jordan conducted by Jamal in a previous study demonstrate that, in fact, poor socioeconomic conditions are a stronger determinant of support for Islamism than are politico-cultural conditions.[207] In any case, religion plays only a minimal role in one's political orientation.

Whether Muslims exhibit a preference for Islamism or secularism, and *how* they interpret democracy appears to stem from an admixture of socioeconomic and politico-cultural conditions, and more so by the latter than the former.[208] Last, given the disproportionate cross-national support for Islamism and secularism across Jordan, Algeria, Kuwait, Morocco, and Palestine,[209] Jamal and Tessler's findings support Inglehart's study that

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[204] Ibid.
[205] Ibid, 108.
[206] Ibid, 105.
[207] Amaney A. Jamal. "Reassessing Support for Islam and Democracy in the Arab world," *American Peace Society* Vol. 169, No. 2 (Fall, 2006), pp. 51 – 63.
[208] Ibid
[209] Ibid

implicates ruling elites' and authoritarians' roles in fostering a political culture of authoritarianism (or, conversely, thwarting a political culture of democracy). This gives further recourse to move away from generalized statements about Islam, Muslims, and Islamism, and to investigate, on a case-by-case, nation-by-nation, party-by-party basis,[210] how these socioeconomic and politico-cultural concerns are expressed, attended to, and succeed or fail to raise awareness or support for democratic transitions and practices.

Democratic attitudes in the Arab and Muslim world reflect values of respect and tolerance, racial and political diversity, social tolerance and gender equality, a yearning for strong leadership that is accountable and pluralistic, across supporters for both Islamism and secularist parties. It is not religion, and not so much traditional or cultural factors, but socioeconomic conditions that determine support for Islamism and/or secularism,[211] further indicating that greater political opportunity and economic welfare would likely facilitate a shift to an open, progressive, pluralistic and democratic political culture. It is interesting to note that democracy does not correlate directly to a prototypical Western understanding. Defining the term 'democracy' as this or that form of government while ignoring the democratic conceptions of the *other* is moot, while also supporting my belief that cross-cultural dialogue is the surest means to realizing *how* Muslims are democratic and *why* they are democrats.

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[210] Greg Sorensen, *Democracy and Democratization*. Boulder: Westview Press, 1993, p. 19, from Bahgat and Noble, "Introduction," p. 4.
[211] Jamal, "Reassessing Support for Islam and Democracy in the Arab world," pp. 51 – 52.

From 'How Democratic is Islamism?' to 'How Islamism is Democratic'

As a result of the support Islamist politics and rhetoric enjoys, Islamist parties have been particularly successful over the last few years, matching and sometimes even beating their secular opponents in national and municipal elections. As we saw in the previous sections, Islamism and democracy garner widespread legitimacy, sometimes simultaneously. In the first and second chapters I examined fears of Islamists' "true" accession to power as a means to establish an Islamist or Islamic state. But do Islamists have "true intentions" for democratic practice, or are their "true intentions" to impose one interpretation of Islam on an unwilling populace? If the latter is accurate, will Islamist's "true" intentions - the establishment of an Islamist or Islamic state - slowly give way to newer intentions for the founding of a democratic state? Is it likely that democratic political culture will be fostered in Islamist circles through some measure of political normalization and meaningful and inclusive participation?

As I argued in the section 'Who Speaks for Islam?' many of these questions about Islamists rely on generalizations and are premised on the notion that Islamists are a fluid and monolithic category unto themselves. But as I have explained, Al-Shabaab, for example, is much different from the Muslim Brotherhood of Egypt or Jordan. On the whole, moderate Islamists who seek out an Islamic state differ drastically from radical variants hoping for an Islamist state. In this section I examine Islamist's democratic track records and their aspirations for an Islamic state. I find that Islamist

participation should be invited, not occluded. I argue, contrary to statements about the supposed dangers that may accompany Islamist accessions to power, that there are real benefits to including all Islamists in the political process and that most Islamists demonstrate genuine intentions to participate in the political system. It is therefore up to the regimes to see to the legalization of Islamist parties and to permit and invite more meaningful and inclusive participation from a diversity of political parties. By extension, it is up to Western governments who support these authoritarian regimes to exert pressure on the regimes that suppress democratic movements and offer incentives for increased Islamist participation if the regimes in question comply.

Islamists have demonstrated success at the poles in addition to garnering considerable repute as both political and social movements throughout the Muslim world, sometimes operating as both militias as well as charities in addition to holding representative posts in the political arena. It is widely observed that "Islamists speak the language of the people by using religious idioms that the common Muslim can relate to because he or she has been socialized in it since childhood."[212] Despite continued political repression and general oppression, especially throughout the Middle East, Islamist parties persevere as democratic opponents; however, there is

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[212] Mohammed Ayoob. *The Many Faces of Political Islam: Religion and Politics in the Muslim World*. Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 2008, 10.

widespread fear that meaningless ballots will give way to a possible

profusion of bullets, or that participation will incite violence.

Yet Islamists have been untested, untried, and are therefore unable to

prove that they are incapable of presiding over the democratic process. For

the most part, Islamists are simply not given the opportunity. The Islamist

Islamic Salvation Front (FIS), represented by two leaders, one radical, and

one moderate – won in the first round of elections in 1991 elections. But the

military intervened before the second round, effectively overthrowing the

FIS, and sparking a ten-year civil war that killed over 150,000 people. Hamas

defeated the secular Fatah party in 2006, resulting in a preemptive Hamas

seizure of the Gaza strip and a Fatah governed West Bank. It is important to

note that in both cases an Islamist party was elected in legitimate elections

that went unrecognized by Western governments. In the case of Hamas, an

effective boycott by the U.S. and Israel severely inhibited Hamas' ability to

represent and tend to the needs of its constituents such that, at present, a

three state reality militates against the possibility for a two state solution or

the continuation of the peace process.

Limited Islamist victories have been more peaceful. Saudi Arabia's

2005 polls showed a strong moderate Islamist victory resulting in Mecca and

Medina's municipal councils. A Shiite alliance prevailed in Iraq's general

elections in late 2005, taking 128 of 275 seats, and in Egypt, the Muslim

Brotherhood, though outlawed as a political party, ran its candidates as

nominal independents and took 20% of parliament's seats. In Turkey, the

Islamist Justice and Development Party (AKP) won the November 2002

parliamentary elections with 262 seats - four shy of the plurality required for

the AKP to rewrite the constitution. To ensure that Islamists to not garner

majorities or prevail, many elections held throughout the Middle East and

elsewhere are illegitimate, as voting tallies readily indicate. In Egypt,

President Mubarak won the 1990 election with 94% of the vote, and 88.6%

in 2005. In Tunisia, President Ben Ali won by 99.4 percent of the vote in 1999

and by 94.5 in 2004.[213] It is therefore difficult to determine how popular

support for Islamists is, but all indications point to a strong masse of support.

As I mentioned above, many regimes lead Islamists parties through

the lower levels of the democratic process by a string, effectively placing a

ceiling on Islamist participation at the higher levels of government and

policy-making. This phenomenon has been called "semi-authoritarianism" [214]

and "electoral authoritarianism,"[215] and is characteristic of Arab regimes that,

beginning in the 90s, matched the Islamist turn to electoral candidacy and

the Islamist desires to participate as legal political parties with some limited

forms of political liberalization and participation in government. As one

scholar notes, "incumbent regimes have decided to allow lawful Islamist

parties access to larger spheres of publicity and public action, but without

any concomitant access to policy making," thus "Islamists from legal parties

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[213] Esposito and Mogahed. *Who Speaks for Islam?* p. 30.
[214] Hamzawy and Brown, "A Boon or a Bane for Democracy?," *Journal of Democracy*, pp. 52.
[215] Malika Zeghal, "Participation without Power," *Journal of Democracy,* Vol. 19, No. 3 (July, 2008), p. 31.

can sit in parliament (where they have little law-making power) but not the cabinet."[216] The tactic of limited participation and liberalization is an effective measure that gives Islamists and other opposition parties just enough of a taste of procedural democracy to ensure few political debates take place of any quality or depth regarding substantive improvements to the democratic process or that foster a greater democratic political culture. The uncompetitive and undemocratic nature of these elections lead many to consider the possibility that Islamists are unlikely to win future elections, and that the Hamas accession to power will be the last substantial and legitimate political victory for Islamists for a while.[217]

This phenomenon of "semi-authoritarianism" prompts questions about the likelihood that Islamists will be able to tolerate these losses, and whether they will resort to bullets where ballots have failed them. But there are good reasons to believe that Islamists will remain committed to the democratic process. For one, Islamists participate in part to protect themselves from authoritarian regimes and the ruling elites who support them. As cases of Muslim Brotherhoods in Jordan and Egypt demonstrate, the media and the public sphere - mosques and coffee shops home to daily confabulation - are effective mediums to report political suppression: playing

[216] Ibid, 32.
[217] Hamzawy and Brown, "A Boon or a Bane for Democracy?" p. 52.

the game in politics allows Islamists to remain in the public eye while

mounting support for opposition to the regime they oppose.[218]

Indeed, many understandings and interpretations of democracy

indicate economic concerns. Democracy is viewed as "instrumental," as a

model of good governance. Another reason for Islamists to remain faithful to

the democratic process is to be accountable and visible to constituencies as a

political and social movement that seeks social justice, political reform, and

greater community involvement.[219] Islamist platforms reflect these concerns:

in Morocco, the PJD's platform is heavily focused on the reform and

modernization of the country's economic and social sectors.[220] In Egypt and

Jordan, limited Islamist participation has not amounted to much, since the

Jordanian monarchy and the Mubarak regime's ruling elites retain a great

measure of control over how much participation is accorded to the Islamists.

However, in Egypt, the MB's recent policy proposal included detailed

analyses of political, social, and economic reform "that called for a higher

council of religious scholars to evaluate government decisions according to

Islamic law;" and in Sudan and Yemen, Islamist parties have had to make

some notable compromises with some unlikely bedfellows.[221]

Islamist participation therefore appears consistent and stable enough

to warrant the statement that Islamists are genuinely committed to the

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[218] Ibid, 54.
[219] Ibid, 53.
[220] Wittes, "Three Kinds of Movements" pp. 9-10; See also Hamzawy and Brown, "A Boon or a Bane for Democracy?" p. 54.
[221] Ibid, 32.

democratic process. These fears of 'one man, one vote, one time,' are unsubstantiated. The idea that Islamists are not committed to the democratic process is the product of the same forces that drive the 'Islam and the West' paradigm: namely, ignorance, fear of alternative non-liberal lifestyles and conceptions of democracy, and poor scholarship and journalism.

Despite their commitments to democratic participation, there are legitimate concerns that Islamists will be severely disadvantaged, if not remain stagnantly disenfranchised, through open participation in and acquiescing to the current state of the democratic process. The question then becomes how do we as democratic nations lend support to democratic movements? As is, Islamists are unable to articulate a succinct and cogent theory of the state, let alone offer a viable theory of democracy or a working conception of citizenship because Islamists are offered few opportunities to contribute to major policy decisions. Their platforms often do not attend to the rights of non-Muslim minorities, women, and tolerance for dissenting secular views, and those that do remain a theoretical exercise. For this reason, most Islamist literature is speculative, and what actually works remains indeterminable. Also, Islamist claims are very general and ideological so as not to cause friction that could lead to fracture within the Islamist ranks.[222] In maintaining a broad strokes approach to governance that is heavily laden with ideology, Islamists approaches risk warding off secular parties now loath to reach across the isle to explore middle ground.

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[222] Hamzawy and Brown, "A Boon or a Bane for Democracy?" pp. 50 – 51.

There are fears that frustration over successive losses, political alienation, or the realization of this "semi-authoritarian" or "electoral authoritarian" trap may result in violence if democracy does not appear to produce or represent Islamists' interests. Thus, some argue that political participation may actually catalyze political violence. After Hamas acceded to power via democratic elections, for example, the seizure of Gaza sparked unprecedented levels of inter-Palestinian rivalry. Islamist violence in Lebanon and Iraq also surfaced despite democratic elections.[223] In spite of all of these concerns, however, Islamists nonetheless share "a respect for the institutional framework of the state in which they operate; acceptance of plurality as a legitimate mode of political existence; and a gradual retreat from ideological debates in favor of a growing concentration on pragmatic agendas that are primarily concerned with influencing public policies."[224]

In Morocco, the Islamist PJD party's recent social and economic policy proposals largely cohere with the state's justifications for the Islamic legitimacy of the state to monitor and regulate religious institutions.[225] In a country whose Monarch is constitutionally defined as the "Commander of the Faithful," political contention over how to interpret these justifications and policies are an avenue to participation in the political system that has led to some measure of pluralism. By acquiescing to the Monarch's claim over Islamic legitimacy, political discussions advance claims about what

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[223] Ibid, 51.
[224] Ibid
[225] Zeghal, "Participation Without Power," p. 34.

constitutes Islamic legitimacy in the first place, leaving open the possibility

for meaningful opportunities for policy formation and substantive

conversations about democratic or political norms of governance. Thus

although political violence is a concern, there are scant reasons to think that

democratizing states facilitate political violence or that Islamists will discard

ballots for bullets. Islamists are no doubt being strung through the

democratic process at arms length, but the more normalized Islamists

become through political participation, the more detailed the policy

proposals get. The more exposure and experience Islamists acquire with

electoral competitiveness and political normalization, the more likely is the

emergence of a pluralistic democratic political culture that may develop from

below.

In conclusion, whether Islamism is democratic will depend on the

extent to which Islamists are permitted meaningful and inclusive

participation in the political process. For as long as authoritarians and

Western patrons suppress democratic movements, fix elections, and stagnate

voices of opposition from Islamist or secular opponents alike, indigenous

democratic models are not even capable of even being tested, and indigenous

democratic political cultures are not capable of coming to fruition. Thus,

Western governments should be placing pressure on authoritarian regimes

to see to a transition of power whereby in the least "self-expression" values,

by which an open political system that is free from fear for belief, speech, or

political involvement, is assured. While a high level or diplomatic approach is

in the waiting, however, I have advocated for cross-cultural dialogue as the surest means of overcoming the predominance of the 'Islam and the West' paradigm, the self/*other* dialectic that sees Muslims and "Islam" as *other* and also evil, and the approach that questions first whether Islam and democracy are compatible without taking note of the fact that a majority of Muslims are democrats. How Islam is compatible with democracy is at issue, and cross-cultural democratic dialogue beckons in part as a result of the many and diverse understandings of democracy that follow from Muslim and Western societies.

I have also suggested that movements that invite pluralism and openness, despite their liberal or illiberal leanings, Western or non-Western orientations, collectivist or individualist societies, religious or secular beliefs and practices, will be most fruitful to engage. Asaf Bayet has coined the term "post-Islamists" as those who engage with Islam and rights, and I suggest that, more than converting "traditional" Islam to "moderate" or "liberal" Islam, "post-Islamists" represent the most legitimate if only because they appear the most representative of Muslims beliefs and practices, freed from imposition of Western "tests."

The Post-Islamist Turn

Rather than fusing religion and responsibility or duty as Islamism has in generations past, a post-Islamism looks to fuse Islamism and rights.[226] Both a

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[226] Asef Bayat, "Islam and Democracy: What is the Real Question?" *ISIM Papers*, Volume 8. Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2007, p. 19.

condition and a project, in the first instance post-Islamism refers to a political and social condition, in which after a phase of experimentation, the appeal, energy, and sources of legitimacy of Islamism get exhausted even among its once-ardent supporters:" [227]

> Islamists become aware of their system's anomalies and inadequacies as they attempt to normalize and institutionalize their rule. The continuous trial and error makes the system susceptible to questions and criticisms. Eventually, pragmatic attempts to maintain the system reinforce abandoning certain of its underlying principles. Islamism becomes compelled, both by its own internal contradiction and by societal pressure, to reinvent itself, but does so at the cost of a qualitative shift. The tremendous transformation in religious and political discourse in Iran during the 1990s exemplifies this tendency.[228]

As such, post-Islamism appears to be a near approximation to "liberal Islam" but it is instead voiced and constructed as a home grown stride for freedoms and equalities that is exercised by Muslim agency and initiative.

> It is an attempt to turn the underlying principles of Islamism on its head by emphasizing rights instead of duties, plurality in place of singular authoritative voice, historicity rather than fixed scriptures, and the future instead of the past. It wants to marry Islam with individual choice and freedom [or "self-expression values"], with democracy and modernity, to achieve what some have called an "alternative modernity". Post-Islamism is expressed in such beliefs that "we don't mind demolishing mosques in order

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[227] Ibid, pp. 18-19.
[228] Ibid, 19.

to build freeways", in acknowledging secular exigencies, in freedom from rigidity, in breaking down the monopoly of religious truth.[229]

Post-Islamists are the kinds of interlocutor Western theorists should be seeking out in comparative political theory and cross-cultural democratic dialogue. While they adopt a discourse of rights that speaks also to a Western lexicon, the marriage of Islam with this rights scheme ensures that Islamic and Islamist democratic theory remains true to the majority populations who would and do ascribe to it. It is an expression of democracy that comes from within Muslim societies. The fact that it is relatively free of Western imposition, ideationally, conceptually, and ideologically, serves to the benefit of Western interlocutors too, for whom Western liberal democracy appears to pose a grave threat to itself as it postures itself "beyond culture" and is thus in need of repair in redress of its oppressive nature and tendencies.

In this chapter I examined how Muslims are democratic. The findings suggest that Muslims believe in democracy in a plethora of ways and for a number of reasons. Support for Islamist and secularism are more so determined by socio-political and economic reasons, as is democracy, and the extent to which religion should or should not play a seminal role in the shape of that democracy is different within and across Muslim-majority countries and the Middle East and North Africa in particular. Contrary to concerns that Islamism poses a threat to the democratic process, a yearning for progressive and democratic politics appears to be the case in predominant numbers

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[229] Ibid

across Muslim societies. The factor that appears most prohibitive of a shift to a democratic civic culture is not Islamic or Arab culture, but a political culture that is contained and controlled by authoritarians and Western governments who support the 'authoritarian they know over the theocrat they do not.'

Conclusion

I have argued that, instead of asking *whether* Islam and democracy are compatible, Western theorists, pundits and politicians, journalists and people of all political orientations engage in *how* Muslims are democratic. The end goal has been to provide an entrance point into comparative political theory and cross-cultural democratic dialogue with Muslim societies and interlocutors in order to arrive at a global discourse on democracy. I have argued that proponents of the 'Islam and the West' paradigm have occluded opportunities for such dialogue and discourse by inundating the topic 'Islam and democracy' with literature based upon the incoherent yet overlapping grand narratives that surfaced at the fall of the Berlin Wall to proclaim the "end of history" and "clash of civilizations," and that their overlap was deleterious to relations between Muslim and Western societies in that they proclaimed the notion of "Islam" as the problem and (Western liberal) Democracy as the solution. This notion of Islamic threat and Western liberal democracy as "beyond culture" continues to date.

Yet, as I have demonstrated, the 'Islam and the West' paradigm is an inadequate conceptual framework. The "end of history" is simply unfounded,

as is the "clash of civilizations." Western liberal democracy does not represent such an "end" (indeed, if everyone used up resources at the rate of the citizens of the U.S., the world would have been in peril long ago) and neither does it lie "beyond culture." For its part, the "clash of civilizations" is a self-fulfilling prophecy that relies upon a specious notion of civilizations and cultures as fixed and determinable rather than fluid and hybrid. As a corrective, I have suggested the adoption of the language of "multiple Wests," "multiple Islams" and also "multiple democracies." While the former recognizes the diverse experiences Western and Muslim societies undergo in their cultural, ideological, and ideational developments, the latter recognizes the essential contestability of democracy and, in the present context, the need to move beyond the notion of liberalism as "beyond culture." Again, *how* Muslims are democratic is most important for the future of dialogue and interaction between Western and Muslim societies.

Cross-cultural democratic dialogue is required in order to transcend the universal/particular distinction and 'Islam and the West' paradigm (Fukuyama's universalism and Huntington's and Lewis's particularism). It is not enough to expect that the notion of "Muslim democracies" and theories of the "post-Islamists" will eventually find their way into Western literature and resonate with Western readership. Bringing Islam and Islamic politics and theories of democracy into Western curriculum, teaching the act of dialogue as well as a comparative model of democracy that operates outside of the traditional Western canon and its hold on the universal/particular divide is

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important in order to instill in both students and educators the notion that the universal/particular divide is not a rigid and essential category, that transcending this binary does not mean leaving this distinction behind altogether, but instead realizing the cultural foundations of certain conceptions of democracy while also highlighting their hybridity in being particularistic across cultures. In other worlds, Muslims and Westerners share in innumerable particularistic so-called "Western" qualities, and exhibit overlapping and hybrid cultures, beliefs and practices, in addition to agreeing on any number of universal maxims. Dialogue and comparative theory are the tools that will flush out these sites of sameness and difference. So long as the *other* is approached with a "dignity of difference," mutual respect and sympathy, drawing from these sites of sameness and difference can only lead to a mutual understanding that forms the backbone of global discourse.

I have suggested beginning with dialoguing with those who fit into the broad category of "post-Islamist" in part because this "turn" that segments of Muslim-majority populations are taking is viewed as an "unfolding historic process" that, if supported (where and when asked) by Western theorists and societies (without their undue interference), the need to identify with "Islam" as *other* and evil will be demonstrably untrue among the West, and the 'Islam and the West' paradigm itself will cease to be a legitimate or popular representation of our post-cold war world. Indeed, the "implication" of the post-Islamist movement is that "any initiatives for sustained democratic

reform in Muslim societies world must have the agency of people in these

societies at its very heart. Even the most painstaking reform efforts will yield

little outcome if democracy is led - and seen to be led - from outside, even

more so if through coercion and conquest."[230]

Western theorists should not only support, but also must learn from

the changes underway among "Muslim democracies" and within "post-

Islamist" designs. For too long the hubris of Western liberal democracy has

dug Western societies into a trenchant predisposition to view Muslims and

the non-Western world as inferior and merely 'catching up.' But in many

ways Western societies have themselves fallen behind and have grown

incapable of seeing beyond liberalism. Instead, many Western societies and

thinkers ignore liberalism's oppressive tendencies and erroneous

assumptions, and in dictating to others how the world works and how the

game is played, such theorists and societies are doing themselves and the

rest of the world a grave disservice.

For, all the while, religion and religious belief is increasingly the rule,

and the strict separation of religious institutions and state is the exception. It

is high time for Western liberal discourse to not only confront the notion that

it is incapable of formulating a universal discourse based on particularistic

ethnocentric assumptions, but that the liberal myth has, for too long,

occluded meaningful and inclusive dialogue and a global discourse that is,

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[230]Asef Bayat. "What is Post-Islamism." Last viewed on April 2, 2010 at:
http://www.nuansa.nl/uploads/P8/7I/P87IoX7-_K1eGvjZVUdvnA/What-is-post-
islamism.pdf

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certainly more likely than the status quo, capable of bringing sustainable and lasting peace and prosperity to all corners of the globe. Identifying the solution in this context means taking responsibility for those aspects of "the West" that are correctly identified as deleterious to what may otherwise have been very altruistic Western or liberal intentions – sustainable and lasting peace and prosperity among them. For what peace and prosperity - or freedom and equality, rule of the people - mean is not the purview of an Enlightened few, but for all members of societies to vie for, define, implement, and cherish. In order to free 'democracy' from the grips of its Western exclusionary discourse we must first recognize the *other* as partner in dialogue and the concepts and understandings, political and democratic theories of the *other* as equally potentially worthy and valid in today's globalized and increasingly interdependent world.

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