



THE AGA KHAN UNIVERSITY

eCommons@AKU

Exploring Muslim Contexts

ISMC Series

1-1-2009

Volume 1: The Challenge of Pluralism : Paradigms from Muslim Contexts

Abdou Filali-Ansary
Editor

Sikeena Karmali Ahmed
Editor

Follow this and additional works at: https://ecommons.aku.edu/uk_ismc_series_emc



Part of the [Islamic World and Near East History Commons](#), and the [Public Affairs, Public Policy and Public Administration Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Filali-Ansary, A. , Ahmed, S. (Eds.). (2009). *Volume 1: The Challenge of Pluralism : Paradigms from Muslim Contexts* Vol. 1, p. 128.

Available at: https://ecommons.aku.edu/uk_ismc_series_emc/5

THE CHALLENGE OF PLURALISM

EXPLORING MUSLIM CONTEXTS

Series Editor: Abdou Filali-Ansary

Books in the series include

*Development Models in Muslim Contexts:
Chinese, "Islamic" and Neo-Liberal Alternatives*
Edited by Robert Springborg

*The Challenge of Pluralism:
Paradigms from Muslim Contexts*
*Edited by Abdou Filali-Ansary
and Sikeena Karmali Ahmed*

The Possibility of Pluralism
Edited by A. C. Grayling

THE CHALLENGE OF PLURALISM

Paradigms from Muslim Contexts

EDITED BY ABDOU FILALI-ANSARY
AND SIKEENA KARMALI AHMED

EDINBURGH UNIVERSITY PRESS
IN ASSOCIATION WITH



THE AGA KHAN UNIVERSITY
INSTITUTE FOR THE STUDY OF MUSLIM CIVILISATIONS

The opinions expressed in this volume are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect those of the Aga Khan University, Institute for the Study of Muslim Civilisations.

© Editorial matter and organisation Abdou Filali-Ansary and Sikeena Karmali Ahmed, 2009
© The chapters, their several authors, 2009

Edinburgh University Press Ltd
22 George Square, Edinburgh
www.euppublishing.com

Typeset in Goudy Oldstyle by
Koinonia, Manchester and
printed and bound in Great Britain by
CPI Antony Rowe, Chippenham and Eastbourne

A CIP record for this book is available
from the British Library

ISBN 978 0 7486 4269 4 (hardback)

The right of the contributors to be identified
as authors of this work has been asserted in
accordance with the Copyright, Designs and
Patents Act 1988.

Contents

Introduction: Theoretical Approaches to Cultural Diversity <i>Abdou Filali-Ansary</i>	I
PART ONE: THE HERITAGE: HISTORICAL CONTEXTS	
1. Pluralism in Muslim Societies <i>Aziz al-Azmeh</i>	9
2. The Public and the Private in Middle Eastern History and Society <i>Sami Zubaida</i>	16
PART TWO: CONTEMPORARY THOUGHT	
3. Civil Society and Conflict Management: Bangladesh's Experiences <i>Amena Mohsin</i>	33
4. Pluralism and Liberalism in Contemporary Islamic Thought <i>Ridwan al-Sayyid</i>	49
5. Democracy, Pluralism and Political Islam <i>Adel Daher</i>	62
6. Islam, Conflict and Democracy <i>Akeel Bilgrami</i>	78
7. The Diversity of Cultures in the Crucible of Globalisation <i>Nur Yalman</i>	94
About the Contributors	110
Index	114

Introduction: Theoretical Approaches to Cultural Diversity

ABDOU FILALI-ANSARY

Pluralism, as a concept, has only recently emerged as an important category to consider for those who are interested in religion and politics and their relations in contemporary contexts. According to the *Online Etymology Dictionary*, it was attested as a term in philosophy in 1882 and, in political science, only from 1919. In 1933 it is recognised as referring to a “theory which opposes monolithic state power” and in the general sense of “toleration of diversity within a society or state”. One can add to this that major philosophical works dedicated to the concept of pluralism have been produced in the twentieth century, and are clearly typical of contemporary times and the issues that have emerged within them.

At the level of discussions within philosophy, theology and even social and political thought, this development is very recent. One can immediately add that it is also important. Pluralism has very quickly joined the group of major notions discussed by various thinkers interested in issues related to norms of political and social life, such as liberty, sovereignty, toleration and the like. Judging by the way it has gripped ongoing debates, it does not seem to be one of the buzzwords which come and go like fashions. This can be seen from the way it has pervaded intellectual debates. The feeling is that it signals some major developments affecting contemporary political contexts and, as a consequence, presents some serious challenges to the thinkers and political leaders of our time. This can be linked to conditions met within contexts where diversity takes new and unknown shapes, and is not of the familiar kind: the kind that was faced by most pre-eighteenth-century societies, where it was managed through some well-known and well-tested arrangements. The diversity in question, and the perspectives from which it is considered, is not the one between communities

with cultures, languages, and all sorts of visible features that mark human groups, and the issue is not to bring such communities under the aegis of an empire-like state. It is a diversity of religious and cultural traditions that shape worldviews and ways of conceptualising norms of collective life, and a condition where these traditions have to be accommodated within a framework that they cannot wholly determine, yet which cannot afford to ignore them. The prevailing condition, therefore, is one where religious and cultural traditions are, on one hand, no longer considered as ultimate frameworks for discussions about norms and values. The nation-state and its institutions define both the framework within which public life takes place, as well as discussions about the way to order it. Yet, on the other hand, the nation-state has to accommodate, in its own self perception, traditions which hold strong views about public life and the norms that should govern it. In consequence, the need to address diversity in new ways, and to explore new approaches to pluralism, does mark states that appear in societies which have gone through a degree of secularisation, and where norms that should govern collective life are no longer enforceable via authority of a religious type. In even discussing a concept like pluralism, we have already moved away from the idea that what is true, or good, can be defined and expressed in a single, “orthodox” way. We are, instead, in uncharted waters, asking how modern societies can accommodate diversity given the deeply entrenched beliefs that prevail in the many different groups of which it is composed? Furthermore, how can these groups come to engage in interactions that go beyond toleration, where tolerance is felt to be “... too thin a foundation for a world of religious difference and proximity”? Toleration, says Diana Eck, “... does nothing to remove our ignorance of one another, and leaves in place the stereotype, the half-truth, the fears that underlie old patterns of division and violence”.¹ In a strikingly similar judgement, Mohamed Talbi estimates that toleration is insufficient for our present condition; we need to go well beyond it, and find a “plateau” at which mutual respect and full acknowledgement of difference are attained.²

At this stage, we can see the link between both the emergence of the notion and the centrality it has quickly claimed and the condition, the social and political context, that prevailed in the modern developed world. One can ask: what relevance does pluralism have for contexts where one religion seems to still prevail, if not at the level of political and social arrangements, then at least at the level of the collective imaginary? In other words, what relevance may pluralism have where religion defines the prevailing worldviews and the framework for ethical thinking? Why, particularly in Muslim contexts, at a time when many are wondering whether this religion is compatible with secularism, democracy and human rights, bring to the fore a notion such as pluralism?

It is easy to point out, at this stage, that predominantly Muslim societies

have indeed undergone substantial change since the late nineteenth century. The arrangements that, until then, allowed these societies to face religious and cultural diversity³ were swept away by nationalist movements and the emergence of the nation-state. Moreover, Muslims have found themselves, in an age of globalisation and mass communication, projected into and confronted with a world in which they realise their difference as a group, as well as the fact of diversity within their own ranks. If, as one needs to make clear from the outset, the issue here is not with Islam as a religion, but with what attitudes and challenges one can observe and discuss where the relevant contexts are predominantly Muslim, then pluralism becomes a burning issue.

But here we need to pause. Having recognised recent awareness of pluralism as a principle and a concept that could and should guide our handling of the new challenges presented by diversity, as well as its relevance to various contexts, including those where particular interpretations of specific religious prescriptions are held as authoritative, we need to ask ourselves: what resources do we have, at the level of ethical, moral principles, to engage in the exploration of the concept and its potential usefulness for our present condition? In other words, do we need to put aside conceptions and views from the religious traditions in order to fully engage in the exploration of pluralism?

Here we have to note that awareness of diversity, and wonder at its existence, can be traced back to the earliest expressions that human memory has kept. That it is this awareness which opened eyes or stimulated the minds of those whom we consider to be the first philosophers is taken as a serious explanation of the birth of philosophy, drama and fine expressions of high culture. However, such a “discovery” of diversity in social forms and, more generally, in human attitudes did not lead, solely to attitudes of puzzlement and to a waking that became (or brought) wisdom. Such discovery happened often in contexts where confrontation prevailed. Eliminating diversity, fighting its expressions, may be considered a main feature of human history. With the ideal of pluralism as way to deal with the fact of diversity, difference, otherness, we may be opening new avenues for co-existence and positive engagement with living cultural and religious traditions.

When it comes to points of view, attitudes and forms of understanding that have emerged among humans, their sheer diversity is even more striking. Our spontaneous attitude is to suppose that there is one, and only one, way to face reality and to react to it. “How can one be Persian?” was the question asked by the Parisian, following Montesquieu.⁴ What he was asking was: how can one be different? In fact, we all ask that question when we come face to face with the Other, and we spend all of our lives attempting to cope with it, attempting to understand difference. Sometimes we are tempted to reject it. A whole spectrum of attitudes derived from and in response to the notion of diversity

pervades our lives. When it comes to customs and attitudes and the beliefs that underpin them, the range of differences is striking. “The human capacity for belief is virtually limitless,” says Malcom B. Hamilton. “Religious conceptions and beliefs [one can add political and ethical beliefs] seem limited in their diversity and strangeness only by the limitations, whatever they might be, that the human mind is subject to.”⁵

The perplexity caused by such ideas is thought to be the origin of questions about the meaning of life, and the sophisticated explanations generated by religions and philosophies in response to these questions. These explanations in turn became the frameworks that inform attitudes and behaviours among individuals and within communities. Early on in the history of human civilisation, probably as early as when world religions were emerging, answers were sought to deal positively with what was simultaneously a source of challenge and an opportunity for understanding. Arriving relatively late in this process (Islam being a “post-axial age” religion), the Qur’an offers, in a very condensed series of formulae, a striking vision of principles that are directly relevant to our approaches to pluralism. In Sura 5, Ayat 48, a pluralist vision of the world is explicitly proposed:

Unto every one of you We have appointed a [different] law and way of life. And if God had so willed, He could surely have made you all one single community: but [He willed it otherwise] in order to test you by means of what He has vouchsafed unto you. Vie, then, with each other in doing good work! Unto God you all must return; and then He will make you truly understand that on which you were wont to differ.

If one reads the verses for their direct and immediate meanings, one can identify five principles that define how to address humanity’s diversity of beliefs, customs and regulations:

1. Each community has been given a way of life and a system of rules (content and methods).
2. The diverse ways of life and systems of rules are a means of testing the capacity of each community to face challenges.
3. Had God willed it, He would have made of humanity a singular community.
4. What is requisite is competition in doing good – not fighting about differences.
5. God is the final arbiter and it is He who will uncover the ultimate truth behind the differences between communities (at the end of time).

Expressed in neutral or secular terms, the outcomes that such principles could have would read as follows:

1. Diversity is a fact and ought to be accepted as such.
2. The various forms of life are like experiments for building the good life.
3. Each community should make the best of its own customs and habits.
4. No community can claim to possess the ultimate, most valuable, form of life.
5. The final word on these matters cannot be reached in history.

Of course the neutral or secular terms are based on a reading that takes the verse out of its context, placing it outside of Qur'anic scriptures, which mentions other communities and the need for the Prophet to arbitrate the affairs of each community with reference to its own endogenous regulations, customs and practices. In their historical context, it is likely that the principles expressed the claim for legitimacy for the advent of a new revelation, thereby creating a system that was different from, and expanded on, the existing ones. Such a reading is not proposed as a manner of understanding what these verses conveyed to those who heard them, nor is it the only way in which these verses can be interpreted. What such a reading does is extend the boundaries that are clearly drawn by the verse's proposed principles. One should add that this reading does not pretend to express the final Qur'anic word on the issue of diversity, since one can find other verses where the finality of Islam is proclaimed. It does, however, give valuable directions about how the fact of diversity is to be understood and managed.

In an easy leap, many are tempted to link the present to the past, and pose questions such as "Can Islam accommodate difference, pluralism, etc.?" questions formulated in the same vein as "Can Islam accommodate democracy, human rights, women's equality, etc.?" Such questions assume that the grand, overarching narratives in which reflections of "Islam" can be encapsulated – where Islam is a monolithic block encompassing an entire system and an entire history – can provide definitive answers to our concerns about what we can learn from a religious tradition and the impact it has upon the consciousness and behaviour of millions. But this is not the approach adopted in this volume.

This volume offers a collection of essays in which historians and philosophers discuss historical moments, intellectual endeavours and ways of thinking that sought to be creative while remaining within a framework that is close to what we have earlier listed as the five proposed principles from Sura 5, Ayat 48 of the Qur'an. Such essays are exploring ways through which one can overcome the impasses stemming from questions about the "essence" of Islam and its contrasting nature to other religions and traditions, and, in doing so, they enhance our understanding of attitudes to cultural diversity in Muslim contexts.

The purpose of this publication is, therefore, to shed light on historical moments and perceptions which, in one way or another, engage positively with the fact of diversity, and which seek to enact, in words or deeds, formulae

that make the most of the variety of situations human beings confront in real life. The endeavour is not an apologetic one: that is, the point is not to say that Muslims, after all, have been pluralist all along; or that their thinking and behaviour was, in opposition to what some historians have told us, in favour of what we nowadays call pluralism. Neither is it to negate the opposite, that positive attitudes to diversity were marginal or insignificant. The purpose is to reconsider moments in history and expressions of thought with fresh eyes, and seek understanding of what could be original ways of facing the fact of diversity—perhaps by taking up in some way, the challenge offered by the Qur’anic verses mentioned above.

NOTES

1. Diana L. Eck, “What is Pluralism?”, *The Pluralism Project at Harvard University*. www.pluralism.org
2. Mohamed Talbi, *Plaidoyer pour un Islam moderne*, Casablanca: Le Fennec, 1998.
3. Of which one can find a very fine description in Louis de Bernières’ novel *Birds Without Wings*, New York: Random House, 2005.
4. “Monsieur est Persan? C’est une chose bien extraordinaire! Comment peut-on être Persan?”, Charles de Secondat Montesquieu, in *Lettres persanes*, Paris: Impr. nationale, 1986.
5. Malcolm B. Hamilton, *The Sociology of Religion: Theoretical and Comparative Perspectives*, 2nd edition, London and New York: Routledge, 2001.

PART ONE

*The Heritage:
Historical Contexts*

CHAPTER I

Pluralism in Muslim Societies

AZIZ AL-AZMEH

A widely-held and disseminated thesis maintains that so-called “Muslim societies” possess a rigorous generic unity and internal coherence of such import that the question of pluralism within them – its presence, its absence, its legal, social and political forms and otherwise – is one which may credibly be treated in a general way of broad applicability. The assumption made implicitly or explicitly is that “Muslim societies” form a self-consistent unit which may be summarised by a small number of definitively constituted features transcending space, time and circumstance, features that are at once derived from, and fore-closed by, Muslim scriptures and the early historical experience of Muslims.

Of course, such a thesis may be held to be sustainable if one maintained, first, that Muslim societies have preserved a continuity, homogeneity and immobility so prodigious as to set them apart from other human societies; and second, if one held that religion as defined by minimal dogma and expressed in traditional Muslim law, as popularly understood, was and still is the ruling instance which defines the lives of Muslims everywhere. Finally, if one put forward a third proposition, that Muslims have, as a consequence of what has just been said, always been at one regarding a number of essential matters, including the question of pluralism as defined today, that there is an identifiable and common “Muslim position” on pluralism.

This is not the place to present my arguments for rejecting all the foregoing theses, not least those derived from the deepest possible aversion to anachronism on my part, and sustained by the realisation that Muslims have clearly, like everyone else, lived in a bewildering variety of settings with attendant social and religious arrangements, none of which can be reduced to unity – though the ideological presumption of unity does indeed exist, and we see it gathering

strength every day. My position also derives from the realisation (and its consequences), that religion as defined by medieval jurists, or by a naïve reading of the Qur'an which is not that of the traditional jurists who were practical men, has not historically in any meaningful or real way been the primary and distinctive cement of Muslim societies.

Putting aside these cautionary remarks, however, I propose that it would not be meaningful to speak of pluralism in the historical experience of Muslim societies if we are to take the term "pluralism" in the sense that it has come to acquire in the historical experience of the modern world as reflected in democratic political theories. Pluralism is more than simply a vicarious recognition, no matter how well-meaning, of the various pluralities that exist in all societies – linguistic, ethnic and regional, ideological, associational (including religious associations), generational, socio-economic and otherwise. Deriving ultimately from canon law, where it designated the holding by a single person of more than one ecclesiastical benefice or office, pluralism has come to acquire a variety of senses in democratic political thought. Of particular significance to my argument is that pluralism has spanned the spectrum of possible interpretations between individualism and corporatism, in a variety of combinations and with a variety of emphases, all of which crucially sought to transpose social plurality to the level of politics, and to suggest arrangements which articulate plurality with a single political order in which all duly constituted groups and individuals are actors on an equal footing, reflected in the uniformity of legal capacity. Pluralism in this sense presupposes citizenship.

Clearly this is premised upon the social and political developments of modern societies, and is generically different from late antiquity and medieval socio-political arrangements, of which classical Muslim norms and socio-political arrangements formed an integral part. I wish to strike yet another cautionary note at this point, with regard to what I have termed the corporatist interpretation of pluralism as it is propounded today, which is one in which the term "corporatism" is used in a highly metaphorical sense: by this I refer to the notion that some societies – and most particularly, in the public mind – Muslim societies, are so constituted that the only pluralistic arrangement possible for them is that of constructing a coalition of communities of blood or of birth, in which individuals participate in the political process as members of such communities of birth and of blood as Muslims, Christians, Pathans, Tajiks, Hazaras, Shias, Sunnis, Kurds, Turkomans, Assyrians, and so forth. Clearly blueprints for the creation of an Iraqi polity today, for instance, are so conceived.

Ultimately, this conception is derived from memories of Balkanisation in the nineteenth and late twentieth centuries, served up in the seemingly benign terms of a multiculturalist model of American provenance. It is one which displaces civil pluralism in favour of communalist pluralism. In my view, it is

destructive of the political fabric of nation-states, and a recipe for civil war, or what we might term a “cold civil peace”. Ideologically, this conception belongs to anti-modernist, irrationalist and romantic philosophies of society and of nation, generated mostly in Germany in the nineteenth century; these imply a conception that particular social or national groups have certain invariant predispositions, such as the predisposition of Europeans for science, reason and civic pluralism, or the predisposition of Muslims for fanatical or at least unthinking attachment to their religious scriptures literally and simply-mindedly understood. Correlatively, there is also in this conception the implication that the same groups are characterised by congenital incapacities, such as the congenital incapacity of Muslims to think of political arrangements in terms of civic pluralism, and to rest forever content with an arrangement of public affairs ruled by a medieval legal system.

Having mentioned the medieval Muslim legal system, it is appropriate now to move to a consideration of some relevant questions raised by classical Muslim law and practice. I will not add to what is continuously said, and rightly so, about the tolerance of medieval Muslim polities and of Muslim law towards non-Muslims, though my attitude towards these matters is historical rather than apologetic, and seeks less to make a rhetorical point in defence of Islam than to consider medieval practices of tolerance in the context of their time and in their ostensible implications for today. Clearly, medieval Muslim polities made arrangements for a relative form of self-rule by Christians and Jews, represented by their spiritual leaders, and provisions for freedom of worship. These communities were regarded as communities under protection, *dhimma*, at once socio-religious collectives and units of taxation, and many of their members rose to high office or became purveyors of specialist goods, such as medical care for members of court, translation and natural science, although these activities were by no means of course the preserve of non-Muslims. *Dhimma* was not primarily a theological regime; there were indeed some polemical and theological (in addition to historical) views on which Christianity and Judaism were regarded as valid but nevertheless incomplete forms of revelations which Islam completed. However, the mainspring of this arrangement was social, political and economic.

Nevertheless it must be stressed that this regime grew unstable over time and to the modern mind it was inequitable in its legal underpinnings – therefore not what we might understand by “pluralistic” today. In classical Muslim polities – and by “classical” I do not mean the historically obscure foundational period of early Islam, but the classical caliphates of Damascus, Baghdad and elsewhere which might be characterised sociologically as sultanic regimes – high office and social advancement, for Muslims and non-Muslims alike, depended largely on the personal favour and sometimes the disposition and whim of the ruler, or of his appreciation of immediate political advantage and disadvantage. It would be

anachronistic to think of this as based on an institutionalisation of notions of citizenship or equality of opportunity, which are modern phenomena. Bouts of persecution and enforced conversion existed, though they were infrequent, and by the standards of the Middle Ages Muslim polities were benign and tolerant and knew little of the long-term hysterical fear and persecution of outsiders experienced by their European contemporaries obsessed with demons, witches, Moors, Saracens, Cathars, Jews and lepers. It is instructive to remember that, on conquering England, William the Conqueror thought he was combating Saracens. Situations of war apart, wars of defence such as the Crusades or of conquest like those of Mahmoud of Ghazni, such xenophobic energies among medieval Muslims were generally reserved for combating dissidents within the Abode of Islam.

Turning to legal arrangements, we must be concerned not with Shari'a, which is in historical fact not a code of law but a principle that betokens good order generally, like the Greek *nomos* or the Sanskrit *dharma*. We must be concerned, rather, with the specific body of rulings, precedents and law-making procedures and general principles called *fiqh*. This is a body of law which, apart from matters concerning rituals and devotions, takes as its principal point of departure the notion of an individual's capacity to enter into contract, and this contractual capacity applies to individuals irrespective of religious community affiliation, or indeed of gender, the only conditions being majority and sanity. Yet upon the exercise of this generalised conception of right was superimposed a system of differential restrictions, for like all systems of pre-modern law, classical Muslim law recognised that persons coming under its purview, not being citizens, enjoyed only those rights that befitted their station. Legal personality was, first of all, restricted to the free elements of the population, and excluded slaves, who had a status not unlike that under Roman law. Women were less equal than men with regard to inheritance and other aspects of personal status, although the extent of this inequality, and the field to which it applied, varied among Muslim legal schools, women having for instance greater freedom in suing for divorce according to the classical Hanbalite school, or a more equitable share of inheritance among Twelver and Sevenser – Ismaili – Shias following the Ja'fari school. In fact, legal reforms in Iraq following 1958 used Ja'fari precepts to modernise inheritance law before the conservative reaction of the Ba'ath regime overturned this. Women were also disadvantaged procedurally, in that their legal witness had a quantifiably smaller legal force that was half that of men (and a disadvantage they shared with non-Muslims).

It would therefore not be right to speak in terms of toleration. The system of protection for non-Muslim communities in return for capital taxation, before it was set in stone of legal treatises, had been established by the early Arab warrior-caste which initiated the Muslim conquests that eventually led to the Umayyad

dynasty and later, the Abbasids, initially as a mechanism for the socio-political and economic incorporation of local populations by the polity. It implied no recognition of disputational differences, as was the case at the time of the English revolution and its consequences, reflected in the toleration that John Locke suggested should be extended to non-conformist Protestants, but denied to Catholics. It assumed, rather, a set of quasi-natural differences. This integration of local, predominantly Christian, populations into early Muslim polities was subsequently elaborated and integrated into a set of legal rulings which were, as I have already indicated, economically equitable and socially differentialist; rulings which also allocated special dress to Christians and Jews (for these were societies where, as in others, persons of different official, professional, regional and other groups were instantly recognisable by their specific dress), in addition to various rituals of daily abasement, though these remained largely unused and were deployed as the political occasion required; they are still advocated by some radical Islamist groups today. As to foreign Christian residents, mostly traders, they generally enjoyed, as was the case almost universally (and Jewish bankers and traders at medieval European courts are a case in point), an extra-territorial legal status, negotiated on an ad hoc basis. This arrangement prefigured the later Ottoman system of Capitulations – despite the name, this did not imply initially any meddlesomeness on the part of foreign Christians, or disadvantage for Muslims, but was, rather, only a set of commercial privileges granted by the sovereign.

All in all, therefore, classical Muslim historical experience presents us with a set of precedents of plurality and pluralism which would not be recognisable to modern notions of pluralism, or which would provide “sources of inspiration” for them. And, in any case, classical pluralism in Muslim societies extended beyond the formal arrangements provided for by law, for these were societies of a highly composite nature, as were most human societies before the Protestant Reformation and the Napoleonic state. They were differentiated by language, dialect, locality, ethnic origin, clan relations and genealogies, social group, cultural baggage and much else. Except for the revivalist discourses of Muslim traditionalism, there is no reason to maintain that these differences were subject to the logic and institutes of Muslim jurisprudence, or that it was these institutes that governed social life. Classical Muslim law, including the apparently inflexible law of inheritance, has interacted with social and property relations in very diverse and very interesting ways, as it did with local customs; its courts were not always available in times when central control and communications were very difficult; Muslim jurists, like lawyers everywhere, were practical men, not ideologues; and finally, recourse to the legal system is, after all, most often an instance of last resort, used when the normal arrangements and conventions of social life become contentious or indeed when they fail, whether in individual

transactions or systemically. I cite all these matters in order to stress my firm conviction that it is not through law that we may be able to understand Muslim historical experience, but rather the inverse: it is by the careful and objective historical scrutiny of these experiences that we may be able to interpret the law and examine the way in which it influenced, or failed to influence, or otherwise interacted with, practices and conceptions of pluralism. The world cannot be properly understood if stood upon its head.

Yet the curious fact is that we live today in a world where two unlikely bedfellows are at once vocal and televisually attractive, tending, as they echo one another, to drown out the voices that better represent the normal arrangements of social life. One is a certain post-modern excess of zeal which, in the name of multiculturalist difference, celebrates the usual phantasm of social traditionalism of other, non-Western peoples and communities. The other is, of course, our home-grown traditionalism, increasingly literalist and illiterate in modes of expression and of sentiment, which decrees that Muslims are in fact super-Muslims, that they are everywhere one, and have always been one as to their passion for medieval legal notions, and when not, must be made to realise their real essence beyond and behind the changing realities of Muslim societies, be it by education or by the deployment of a sanctifying violence reminiscent of St Augustine's way with the world.

I would submit that a notion of pluralism arising from these shadowy historical memories, real or contrived, is not useful for the present purposes of any Muslim society – or, rather, for any state with a Muslim majority, for it is states that must claim our attention today. I find the rhetoric of pluralistic indigenism, by Muslims as by others, not to be useful, and indeed, in the long term, harmful. I find it rather pointless to score rhetorical points, such as “democratisation is not the same as westernisation” (the title of an article by Amartya Sen¹), for such apologetic points, easy to score but not very meaningful, are not sufficiently attentive to the potential practical consequences of such advocacy. Such practical consequences of indigenist reclamation and the attempted valorisation of medieval arrangements are in evidence among Muslims as among others. Most superficially, they are evident in what we might term the extortion of particularity or of authenticity, by which many states, in Muslim lands and elsewhere, claim that this or that democratic arrangement is out of keeping with indigenous values. More consequentially, and more systemically given the condition of countries such as Iraq, Afghanistan, Lebanon or India, they are translated into the model of communalism, and this at a time when as a result of war, inequalities, regional disparities, international stresses, patrimonialism and clientilism, the social and national fabric has been fractured and indeed systemically disaggregated. Communalism only aggravates the degradation of this fabric. It sets up region against region, community against community, leading to regressive

social stresses the end of which is not yet in sight. By identifying a religious community with the nation, by transposing social group into political party and society into state, it downgrades civility in favour of blood ties.

The uses of indigenist pluralism are not a fatalistic call by nature, but political contrivances, or at best sublimations of impasses and incapacities, flights from the realities of the present. No other matters account for the solicitation of shadows of the past, for calling social arrangements of a remote past blueprints for modern pluralism, for taking tribal consultation or conciliar authoritarianism that go by the name of *shura* for democracy, for the gentrification of archaism. All this after we have gone through major historical upheavals, adopted notions of citizenship, of parliamentarism, developed ideologically-based political parties, adopted schools and universities in our educational systems, adopted the notion of codified law, substituted science for received wisdom and for an ancient lore of nature. All of these, in the modern world, are of western provenance, but despite resistances they have become universal and are no longer western. No amount of fantasy, no amount of teaching dharmic astrology at hitherto reputable Indian universities or dwelling on the Qur'an as a document of natural science and a manual of law or of ancient history, will change this, and no amount of seeking inspiration from legend will stop anachronism from being anachronism, unless of course Muslims choose to exit from history and live helplessly, violently and miserably in the dreamy Shangri-La of authenticity, cocooned in an air of a generalised and paranoid fear of Western demons, of xenophobia – to which the original meaning of phobia as fear must be restored.

What must be realised is that this is not some trans-historical corporate social nature of Muslims that is calling them to seek intoxication with the mirage of a past that has passed. It is with this realisation that we can see that the true conflict lies not between a West that does not in reality exist, and an Islam that also does not in reality exist, in the form in which they are purveyed. It is, rather, between different sectors of Muslim populations: and I use the term “Muslim” to indicate persons who are Muslims by accident of birth, irrespective of their belief or disbelief, or of the inflection they give to their Muslim belonging, or the lack thereof. It is a conflict among Muslims, as social and political actors. This is a plurality that must be kept firmly in view, and not be allowed to give way to a monolithic vision which impoverishes the past and distorts the present complexities. Muslim historical experiences can and indeed do inspire, but they inspire aesthetically, and perhaps in a general way normatively. What they cannot be allowed to do, however, is inspire the desire for their repetition.

NOTE

1. Amartya Sen, “Democratisation is not the same as westernisation”, *The New Republic*, 6 October 2003.

CHAPTER 2

The Public and the Private in Middle Eastern History and Society

SAMI ZUBAIDA

The theme of “public” and “private” has been widely discussed and debated in social theory as well as in feminist literature. The concept and distinctions between the two spheres are often found problematic. The notion of the “public sphere”, introduced by Habermas in relation to its postulated emergence vis-à-vis bourgeois modernity in Europe, has proved popular in many sociological and ideological contexts, and thus has been “hijacked” from the very specific history stipulated by its author.¹ A consideration of the debates relating to that theme would not be directly pertinent to the task in hand, which is to explore the shifting and problematic public/private distinction in various contexts in Middle Eastern histories and societies. I should, however, introduce what I believe to be a pertinent general point on “spheres”. Historically, both in Europe and the Middle East, we find “segmented” publics. Segmented in the sense of spaces and spheres, isolated from one another. Different elites, elites and masses, regions, religious and ethnic communities, distinct urban quarters and spaces. Modernity and modern media bring a common public space to which various actors and enunciators address their discourses and advocacies, thereby creating a space that is inherently pluralist.

BOUNDARIES OF PUBLIC AND PRIVATE IN SOCIAL AND SPATIAL LOCATIONS

Historically, in Middle Eastern societies boundaries have been drawn in many spheres. The domestic sphere, for instance is normally considered the “private” par excellence. Yet the houses of nobles were themselves divided between the harem (private) and the *salamlik* (public). The latter was a sphere where power and influence were exercised and networks were maintained. These spheres, of

course, had parallels in the European nobility and notability. They also survive today in the institutions of *mudhif* and *diwaniya* in Arabia and the Gulf. These are “public” in a different sense and with a different social composition from those of government offices, mosques/churches and coffee houses (which are also different senses of public). These different locations, with their boundaries between public and private, were, as we shall see, for the most part particular to specific groups and communities, with varying boundaries between them, such as urban quarters and religious communities. Others, such as guilds, would, in some instances, cut across these boundaries, but impose their own.

Another sphere of the public is the market place. In addition to their core functions of exchange, markets were/are also spheres of sociability, of gossip and public opinion, of guild organisation and religious fraternities. Shops and stalls are foci of sociability as well as transactions. People sit around to drink tea, smoke a *narguila* (water pipe), pass the time of day and do business. Smoking hashish in *narguilas* was one of the vices that the qadi of Aleppo in the eighteenth century was keen to regulate if not prohibit. Secret or discreet drinking was carried out at the back of a grocer’s shop, only among select and known associates. In many cities, market guilds were important centres, in organising not just work, but social networks, charities and political mobilisation. These organisations and activities have survived in Iranian cities (guilds in Egypt and Turkey were destroyed in the early twentieth century by cheap imports). Guilds in Egypt and Iran were associated with religious organisations: in Egypt with Sufi *turuq* (orders), in Iran with *hey’a*, committees, some of which were nuclei for popular organisation during the 1979 Revolution.

All the same, are markets “public” spaces? It would depend on which market and under what conditions. As buying and selling venues, the main markets of the large cities were “public” in the sense of being universally accessible (but not in their networks, guilds and fraternities). Many urban markets, however, were identified with particular quarters, guilds and sometimes Sufi orders, to the extent that the quarters were restricted, often walled and gated (the first “gated communities”!), thus limiting access. We know, for instance, that until recently, perhaps even currently, it was perfectly respectable for women on their own to shop in particular venues, confined to their neighbourhood shops and markets. In a sense, the quarter and the market were seen as extensions of a “private”, almost domestic space. We get a (fictional) glimpse of these arrangements in some novels of Neguib Mahfouz (*Al-Harafish* and *Awlad Haretna*).² There the Shaykh al-Hara (chief of the quarter) is also Shaykh al-Tariqa (Shaykh of the Sufi order), sharing authority with the chief of the Futuwa, the “militia” of the quarter, enforcing the Shaykh’s authority and imposing rules and measures on the inhabitants, even arranging marriages, as well as defending them from external threats.

Similar conditions applied to mosques. In the major cities, *Al-Masjid al-Jami*”, the cathedral mosque, was open to all Muslims – a universal public space, and one which enshrined sovereign political authority in the Friday prayers and sermons. Not only the locus for prayer and ritual, it was also a refuge for travellers, a space for study and discussion, a venue for public meetings and, on occasion, protests against the authorities. The Sulaymaniya in Istanbul is an example of a mosque complex, featuring the main prayer area, the *turba* (cemetery), a madrasa and library and a soup kitchen (*imaret*). Many mosques also contained shrines and tombs of saints (Eyup in Istanbul) and *zawiyas* or *tekyas* (lodges) for Sufi orders. These spaces in the complex were accessible by membership and networks. Soup kitchens³ primarily fed students and teachers of the madrasa; (the portions were specified: teachers ate double the students’ portions!). They also fed travellers, travelling Sufi or ulama ranks, and as they could not have fed all the poor supplicants, there must have been “registered” poor. Smaller mosques could be “private” or attached to particular neighbourhoods or fraternities, where strangers would be discouraged. These religious, charitable and educational formations were typically instituted as *awqaf* (endowments), the prevalent legal forms for many public bodies. *Awqaf* dominated the spatial and economic landscapes of Middle Eastern cities, and constituted the arenas for economic competition and political contest between different elites and individuals benefiting from their revenues and powers. These spaces were the dominant form wherever religion was “materialised” in society, analogous to the institutions and properties of churches and monasteries in Europe.

Another space for (segmented) public functions were/are *turbas* (cemeteries). On specified feasts or holy days, families take picnics to cemeteries where their departed are buried, to engage in rituals (Qur’an readings by professionals) and spend some hours in family sociability. It is a public space in which the public consists of “private” families and neighbourhoods. During the eighteenth century, on the eve of modernity, cemeteries in parts of Syria may have been the location for a more generalised public, providing public spaces free of political control and religious censors for groups of dissident “intellectuals” and sectarians.

Let us now turn to the less respectable and more subversive public spaces. Chief among these was the coffee house, the *gahwa*. These, now, are largely innocuous and non-controversial (and serving a lot more tea than coffee!). However, when coffee was introduced and the first coffee houses opened in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, they aroused controversy and censure in many Middle Eastern locations. The coffee house, and even more so the (mostly clandestine) tavern, were areas of potential social disorder, in so far as they were not closely controllable by religious and political authority. Hattox has narrated the story of the introduction of coffee in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, and the debates and prohibitions it elicited from the religious authorities.⁴

One thing is clear from these accounts: the debate over whether coffee was a prohibited intoxicant akin to wine had a subtext, which was the social potential of the coffee house for uncontrolled public sociability. These considerations of social control continued to feature in urban conflicts in the following centuries. We have an interesting description of the phenomenon in eighteenth-century Aleppo in the work of Abraham Marcus.⁵ The legality of coffee drinking and tobacco (and hashish) smoking continued to be debated and frowned upon by the moral censors, and occasionally prohibited, as under Sultan Murad in 1633, when he tried to eradicate these habits throughout the Empire, albeit in vain. Things were back to normal after a few years. There were, however, persistent complaints by moralists that these establishments, which opened late into the night, were venues for drinking, prostitution and pederasty. Qadis and governors would crack down occasionally. But the authorities were also irritated by the entertainments that took place in these establishments: music, song and shadow theatre (*Qaraqoz*), as well as storytelling, especially during the nights of Ramadan, when many cafes operated well into the night (as they do at present). The objections were not only against music (deplored by the pious but ever-popular with a passionate public of all classes and confessions), but against shadow theatre and some of the storytelling, which, of course, often alluded to current events and personalities, satirising and mocking. The Janisaries were mocked in Aleppo cafés after their disgrace in the Russian campaign in 1768. We also find a vivid narrative of the subversive character of coffee houses in Orhan Pamuk's *My Name is Red*,⁶ which features a café that is the haunt of artists and storytellers, of drink and satire, especially against jealous religious censors who ultimately have their revenge in the sacking of the café and the murder of its main figures. It can be argued that, in this respect, coffee houses came closest to the modern notion of the "public sphere" in so far as they escaped authoritarian control and constituted venues for the formation and expression of "public opinion".

Women were not entirely excluded from public sociability: their venue was the bath house, the hammam:

The public bath houses also doubled as places of amusement and socialising, again especially for women, and a rich lore of popular sayings and stories centred on this social institution ... Parties of women and children brought food and entertainers along with them to the baths, and spent the day socialising in the relaxed atmosphere, their excited voices reaching the streets ... Wary of the excesses of such revelry, the Christian clergy issued periodic regulations prohibiting women from feasting in the baths. (Marcus 1989, p. 231)

Such bath entertainments for women continued throughout the region

into the twentieth century, and episodes are recounted in many anecdotes and memoirs.

The tavern is celebrated in poetry and literature. The *khammara* in Abu Nawas's Abbasid poetry (eighth century), and the *meykhana* of the Persian poets (Khayyam, Sa'di, Hafez), are two examples. It is claimed that the use of the word is a mystical metaphor, which may be so in some cases, but certainly goes beyond that into real drinking in the cases mentioned and many others. Stories of taverns and drink are also common in literary and historical narratives, such as the *Maqamat* of Hamadhani (tenth century), and of Hariri (eleventh/twelfth century), and the essays of notables such as Tanukhi on Baghdad in the eleventh century. In more recent times, the *meykhana* (*meyhane* in modern Turkish) features in tales, poesy and history. How much of a "public" venue was the tavern? The fact that it was periodically interdicted by the authorities would indicate that it continued to function for most of the time, more or less, publicly. In Ottoman locations, the soldiers, especially the Janissaries were known for their drinking in taverns with diverse entertainments, notably dancing boys and gambling.⁷ In the nineteenth century, with the Ottoman reforms and the self-conscious integration of the Ottoman elite into the world of progress and civilisation, *medeniyet* – drinking culture – became public and respectable. François Georgeon has written a fascinating account of the symbolic significance of alcohol for notions of modernity and civilisation in Turkey from the nineteenth century. Sultan Mahmud II (r. 1808–42) was the first reforming ruler who made a serious impact. He modelled himself on other European rulers, and included alcohol as a feature of public occasions, such as official dinners and receptions. Champagne, which was not new to the Ottoman court, then came out in public. Over the course of the century, and among the modern elites and the official classes, drink came to be associated with being modern and with "civilisation" (*madaniyat*). Husrev Pasha, *serasker* (defence minister): "[would drink] champagne with an influential European [even though he did not like it and preferred water], to show how he had shed completely the prejudices of the old Turkey: he knows full well that the fact will be noted in a newspaper article".⁸ Later in the century, the state class of the expanded reform bureaucracy became the vanguard of the drinking classes. To cater for them, a new type of refined and opulent tavern, or *meyhane*, came into existence, with a professional guild of tavern keepers and their assistants trained in the arts of serving drink and its accompaniments of *mezze*, and in the skills of nursing a *narguila*. Among the consumers, a new *adab* (etiquette) and lore of drink determined a kind of *savoir boire*. Drinking venues and cultures, then, constituted important elements in the "public" at various points in the history of Middle Eastern cities, and with different significances.

CENSOR AND HISBA

In past centuries, Muslim societies always contained various forms of censor on both public and private spheres of conduct. The office of *Muhtasib* is precisely such a source of censorship on public life, mainly markets. It is based, however, on the concept of *hisba* (literally accountability (before God)). The qadi was also empowered to control the social conduct of private individuals, pertaining, for example, to drink and loose sexuality in neighbourhoods, but only in response to complaints. Yet forbidden conducts in relation to drink, music, pederasty and other forms of illicit sex were not only widespread throughout Muslim history, but were celebrated in poetry, song, mysticism, and also theorised, as outlined earlier, in the case of drink. Books of philosophy and mathematics theorised music; medical treatises discoursed on the benefits of wine, and the “mirrors of princes” genre offered advice as to the comparative benefits of copulating with boys and girls. The courts of the princes and the houses of elites revelled in all these vices, as did many Sufi lodges, enriched with religious mysticism. Yet the scholars advanced elaborate treatises on their prohibition and prevention, sometimes the very same scholars and jurists who practised them in their *majalis* and lodges.⁹ Could it be that these contradictory strands of thought and literature only co-existed so easily because they were “public” only to segmented elites (paradoxically known as *al-khassa* (the private or special), as distinct from *al-amma* (the “public” or common people)). Separate and discrete circles of the elite, of the literate, were the authors and consumers of these materials. Jurists fulminated against philosophy, yet *fiqh* and philosophy co-existed for the most part, except when a philosopher brought his rationality into *fiqh*, like Ibn Rushd in twelfth-century Spain. What distinguishes modernity is precisely the common exposure of these spheres to a common literacy and a “public”. An example of this is the book of medicine by Al-Razi (d. 932) and the chapter on wine: *kitab manfi* “*al-aghdhya wa-daf*” *madhrrriha*, first modern printing in Bulaq 1888, Beirut edition in 1985, introduced by Asim ‘Aytani . The latter edition reproached Al-Razi for writing on wine and excised the chapter, lest the reader should fall into doubt regarding the matter of forbidden drink.¹⁰

THE LAW, THE PUBLIC AND THE PRIVATE

Let us now turn to law and religion in social life, and, in particular, the question of privacy. “The private sphere”: how is it conceived and protected from “public” exposure? A basic theme in the Muslim religion, indeed in several religions, is communitarianism and authoritarianism. Religious observances and moral rules are not left to the discretion of the individual and his/her relation to God and the after-life, but are enforced here and now, and this constitutes much

of the sphere of Shari'a. In Islam, the injunction of *al-amr bil-ma'ruf wal-nhy 'an al-munkar* (to command virtue and forbid vice), is apparently binding on every Muslim, who must correct errant behaviour when he/she encounters it. There is much debate on whether this is an individual responsibility or that of the authorities as *uwly al-amr* (guardians), and under what conditions. There are also many Qur'anic injunctions to Muslims to care for and watch over one another. These can be interpreted as egalitarian and participatory, or as authoritarian, restricting individual autonomy and liberty, subordinated to communal censor (officially personified in the office of Muhtasib, of which more later). In fact, legal scholars throughout the ages have been concerned with the question of privacy, as narrated by Michael Cook in his *Forbidding Wrong in Islam*.¹¹ A common point of view is expressed by Ibn Taimiya: "Manifest wrongs must be acted against, in contrast to hidden ones, the punishment of which afflicts only the perpetrator",¹² that is, divine punishment. This is a common distinction: sins are only combated when manifest (for example, indulgence in music and liquor). Scholars who advocated respect for privacy cited the anecdote about 'Umar ibn al-Khattab, the second caliph, who entered a man's house by climbing over the wall and caught him engaged in wrong-doing. The man protested that whereas he sinned once, "Umar had sinned three times: he had spied when God had prohibited spying (49:12); he had entered through the roof, against the command to enter the house by its door; and he had failed to greet the inhabitants when entering the house, as God had commanded. "Umar let the man be, ordering him to repent.¹³ Another theme is the injunction, advocated by many scholars, including Ghazali (d. 1111), not to expose a respectable Muslim. Indeed it is the duty of a Muslim to hide (*satr*) the shame of another from public gaze. If you discover sin committed in private, then you may admonish the sinner, but not expose him to public gaze.

These sensibilities of scholars and jurists were not always observed in practice. We have notable examples in the modern world of zealous incursions into the domestic and private domains by public authorities, in the name of commanding the good and forbidding sin, as in both Saudi Arabia and Iran. In this context, Azar Nafisi reflects on the Western feminist slogan, "the personal is political", and finds it problematic in the Iranian context in which women, and men, would rather that the political did not infringe on the personal. This is precisely what the clerics and their supporters are arguing and practising: personal autonomy and privacy are subjected to collective political goals dictated by authorities in the name of obedience to God's commands. The private is subordinated to the public, where "public" is in the sense of authority and command, or of communal authoritarianism, not the give and take of "public opinion" and "the public sphere".

MODERNITY AND THE PUBLIC SPHERE

The transformations of modernity include a more general and integrated “public”, which starts with the modern elites and middle classes (functionaries, officers, professionals, modern businesses) and then integrates further sectors of the population. These developments are in the context of increased density of transport and communication (railways, telegraph, intensified commerce, expanding bureaucracies), as well as spreading literacy in new educational systems. The new figure of the “public intellectual” comes on the scene and their role is defined by addressing this new public. The new media of press and books are, above all, the lubricants of this new process. Benedict Anderson’s notion of the nation as “imagined community” fits this picture.¹⁴ The boundaries between insulated communities become more porous and individuals are recruited into this no-man’s land of the “public”, aided by the emerging “print capitalism”. Anderson postulates a historical phase before the imagination of the nation, where there existed a universal but theoretical religious community of Christendom or the *umma* of Islam. This theoretical community was imagined as co-existing with the reality of bound communities with limited perspectives. The imagination of the nation is facilitated, above all, by common education systems and this “print capitalism” (in the context of expanding and enveloping general capitalism). Karl Mannheim advanced a relevant picture for emerging modernity in post-medieval Europe and the rise of what he called “free-floating intellectuals”.¹⁵ Free-floating, here, means that they are released from communal and caste moorings and thrust into the emerging field of universal public discourse. Their predecessors were the schoolmen, a caste of Church clerics and theologians bound, like a guild, to limited thought systems of Aristotelian philosophy and Church dogma, and a “truth regime” of reasoning from authority and precedent, the wisdom of the elders.

A crucial aspect of this emerging modernity is secularisation. That is not to say “secularism”, which refers to an ideology calling for the separation of religion from government, or even a rejection of religious belief. “Secularisation” is a socio-cultural process, regardless of piety or unbelief of individuals, by which spheres of society, politics and culture are separated from religious discourse and authority, largely as they become irrelevant to it, as we see in the experience of Iran under the Islamic Republic. Science, technology, bureaucracy and administration – the workings of modern economic forms – are not against religion but neutral to it. The processes of capitalism and the emergence of modern state practices are the components of this process. Even spheres previously intrinsic to religious authority, such as law and education, are withdrawn from it and taken into the modern state sphere and the public.

Ottoman intellectuals of the nineteenth century, such as the Young Ottomans,

while defending Islam as the principle of their identity and civilisation were at the same time engaged in activities that subverted it, such as the translation and dissemination of modern European thought and literature. A new public of educated middle classes of functionaries and intellectuals was absorbed by translated novels, the science fiction of Jules Verne and the adventures of Alexandre Dumas (serialised in weekly instalments by enterprising publishers), as well as news of scientific discoveries, technical wonders and the biographies of great men.¹⁶ While the Sultan-Caliph Abdul Hamid II instituted in the closing decades of the nineteenth century a regime of repression and censorship on any politically or religiously subversive materials, these genres, apparently neutral but in reality deeply subversive, continued to thrive.

This “public” also brings about new forms of language. The archaic forms of writing, designed for the limited circle of the literate, adorned with rhyming sentences to which sense and comprehension were sacrificed, give way to more direct prose, clear, lucid and communicable to the expanding literate public. Namik Kemal, the leading Young Ottoman, was a pioneer of the new writing.

The inclusion of expanding sectors of the population in this “public” involves a process of democratisation as well as universalisation. Cole relates how political newspapers in the latter part of the nineteenth century altered the attitudes of common people towards authority in Cairo.¹⁷ A literate person, usually a school boy, would read aloud news and (critical) commentaries to a largely illiterate audience in a café or market gathering. This has the effect of imagined inclusion and empowerment, not only in partaking in the news of currents and events, but also in participating in the criticism and even the satire against powerful figures of Khedive, princes and politicians. The idea of participating in an “imagined community” of the incipient nation is formed. These, for Cole, are some of the preludes to the first popular nationalist uprising in Egypt in 1882, the Urabi revolt.

Religion itself is transformed by these processes. Religious reformers partake in this creation of the public and its space, and address it as new intellectuals. A significant development at this point is in the pronouncing of fatwas (religious responses/opinions). The fatwa is in the form of an answer to a question posed by a private individual on a matter of faith and ritual, by a judge on a point of law, or by a prince on a matter of policy. A qualified mufti responds, typically in a brief, one-sentence answer, written or oral. It is a private and circumscribed exchange. From the late nineteenth century the religious reformer as public intellectual uses the fatwa to pronounce on a range of social and religious issues, in elaborate reasoning addressed to a public, often in the process of contest and debate. Muhammad Abdu and Rashid Rida and their successors addressed their fatwas to the public, and published them in newspapers. Rida had his own influential magazine, *al-Manar*, which carried these fatwas as well as an array of

THE PUBLIC AND THE PRIVATE

religious, social and political discourses and debates. This process contributes to secularisation in that it places religion alongside other forms of discourse and communication in a public, profane space. Religion is taken out of its sacred location and unitary authority and into the fray of public discourse, competing with secular ideologies and neutral forms of knowledge.¹⁸

THE TWENTIETH CENTURY

These processes of the formation of the modern state and political fields, of public spaces and sites of enunciation within them, continued into maturity in most countries of the region through the twentieth century. Added to all the above were new forms of media and entertainment, particularly cinema, TV and finally the Internet. Egypt was, and remains, the main home of Arab cinema. This cinema captured the imagination and the passions of Arab publics. More than any other element in public space, it was a democratic form which attracted wide audiences from the urban poor and common people. Taxi drivers and market porters, as well as students and teachers, could afford the entrance fee. Popular films (Bollywood-style, with song, dance, romance and adventure) would have a faithful audience of people re-viewing the film frequently until they memorised the songs and dialogue and could join in on subsequent viewing, thus carrying over habits of traditional storytelling into film-viewing.

In the field of politics, the struggles of the twentieth century were mostly fought with secular ideologies and political formations of nationalism, socialism, fascism and even liberalism. Politicised religion, such as the Muslim Brotherhood, were only one party amongst many, with ebbs and flows of fortune depending on contexts and situations. In Egypt, and much of the Arab world, Nasirism became a popular ideology which entranced the masses from the 1950s to the 1970s. In Iraq, Iran and the Sudan, communism, though clandestine, dominated the oppositional political scene in those middle decades, and rulers encouraged Islamic currents to combat the left. The Islamic current only started to gather momentum in the later 1970s and took off after the spectacle of the Iranian Revolution of 1979. Let us, therefore, move on to look at some of its dynamics and consequences for public spaces and spheres.

“ISLAMIC” CURRENTS AND THE PUBLIC SPHERE

The emerging public sphere and its spaces largely escaped religious authority and censor. Religious authority in most countries was on the retreat from the nineteenth century onwards. The ulama lost control over law and education, as well as the endowments as sources of revenue. Only when secularist or liberal writers or artists encroached on their own religious terrain did they react. Liter-

ature, the arts, entertainment, music, cinema, universities, the press, all went ahead with limited reference to religion, often honorific. It was in the later decades of the twentieth century, from the 1970s on, that a new form of religious movement – that of political Islam – attempted to impose religious authority over these spheres. The Islamic Republic in Iran was the most comprehensive in its extension of religious authority, in a combination of traditional clerics and modern “cultural revolution” to all aspects of social and cultural life. Egypt, the leading country in cultural modernity from the nineteenth century on, witnessed a wave of religious movement and sentiment, comprising political agitation for Islamic rule and law, some of it violent, as well as pietistic and moralistic preaching and direct religious intervention in many spheres. At first these currents emanated primarily from outside the religious establishment and its personnel, and the leaders were drawn predominantly from other spheres including many doctors and engineers. Subsequently, religious institutions and personnel jumped on the bandwagon. Al-Azhar committees have now taken on functions of censorship of cultural products. Islamic lawyers have taken to litigating against writers, artists and film-makers for religious or moral impropriety. Threat and intimidation restrict the range of cultural production. Segregation of the sexes in public places and institutions is on the increase. We see, then, first, the prominence of religious advocacy of various kinds in the public spheres, “staging virtue” to wide audiences from the mosques to TV and the press. These same agents attempt to control, censor and moralise public spaces. The moral campaigns also enter private lives, with pressures for religious observance and moral conduct. The rulers and their agents are vigilant in suppressing any manifestation of political opposition or disruption from Islamic or other sources, but tolerant and even complicit in pious and moral campaigns of social and cultural controls. These are avenues of social control attractive to authoritarian rulers.¹⁹ A central plank in Islamic political advocacy is the call for the application of the Shari’a, and it is in the name of the Shari’a, presented as God’s commands, that many of the authoritarian measures are conducted. The question of the Shari’a poses interesting questions for the issue of public and private.

Iran is the most interesting example in this respect. The Islamic Republic was explicitly committed to systematically legislating the Shari’a as modern state law. Schirazi²⁰ has argued that the great difficulty that arose in attempting to derive public law from the Shari’a was a consequence of the Shari’a being, in its history, largely *private* law of “mercantile, agricultural and nomadic society” to which the historical Shari’a was addressed. As a result, argues Schirazi, the bulk of the legislation in the Majles of the Islamic Republic is irrelevant to the Shari’a. He calculated 1022 bills approved by the Revolutionary Council and 1415 bills passed by successive parliaments till 1995. The Guardian Council, with few exceptions, did not establish any relationship between the bills and the Shari’a. The absence

of the Shari'a from much legislation was felt by some leading clergy to be an embarrassment which had to be addressed. Ayatollah Montazari declared that these provisions followed the Shari'a injunction "Regulate your affairs", and in so far as these regulations are approved by the Guardian Council, then they become Islamic. In effect, legislation by the Islamic government becomes by definition Islamic!²¹

Are these trends reversing the processes of secularisation which started in the nineteenth century and matured over the twentieth? Ostensibly, yes – but let us dig deeper. Three decades of the Islamic Republic in Iran have produced a thoroughly secularised society. All the indications are that a predominantly young population (70 per cent are under thirty) strongly resent Islamic government and its controls over their social and cultural lives. They use every opportunity to subvert these controls: music, football, dress, courting and sexuality. In the cultural sphere the censors are subverted by elements within the ministries, which have produced the remarkable renaissance in Iranian cinema. Reformist and innovative newspapers, magazines and books are suppressed and banned only for others to emerge. In the religious sphere itself, the ruling mullas have succumbed to pragmatic considerations, and while maintaining the Islamic rhetoric they have introduced many policies and measures which have abrogated their original specifications. In effect, they have continued the process of secularisation. What remains of Islam is its vocabulary and personnel. This has, in turn, reinforced the cynicism of the people: these are now merely politicians, clinging onto authoritarian rule by religious formulae. On the other hand, there are new and innovative sources of religious spirituality in the old spaces and institutions (Qom and Najaf), defying the legalistic formulae of the rulers.

Egypt, though, is apparently the opposite. Here an ever-pious public takes oppositional stances to an authoritarian regime with ambiguous religious credentials, apparently friendly to the US and at peace with Israel. Islam, for many Egyptians, becomes the idiom of opposition and the expression of frustrations. Would a dose of Islamic government here lead to similar results as in Iran? There are many indications that, underneath the symbols of piety, the "economy of desire" envelops many spheres, especially for the young. Young women bearing the hijab still walk hand in hand with their beaus on the Nile corniche, and play ball in university precincts, at least in Cairo. Shopping malls, apart from being temples of consumption of fashion, food and music, mostly in the styles of the vilified West, are springing up in ever greater profusion. They are the venues for much entertainment and for mixing of the sexes, of courtship and display, especially for the young. Urfi, or common-law marriage, is vociferously denounced by the moralists and the sensational press. They were silent when this form of religiously sanctioned but socially ambiguous marriage was contracted by rich Saudis with poor Egyptian girls. Now, however, it is being

used by young students away from home in order to cohabit without parental knowledge or consent, and without the expensive paraphernalia of weddings.

Religiosity in some Islamic lands, then, is a modern political and cultural wave with different significance in time and place. It is not peculiar to Islam: we see the retreat from universalist ideologies, whether of liberalism or Marxism, in many parts of the world, such as Eastern Europe and the Balkans, and the salience of ethnic and religious boundaries. This is an integral part of an increasingly globalised and secularised world. Weber's "disenchantment of the world" is now at its peak, and we witness individual and collective attempts to re-enchant the world. When this re-enchantment culminates in social and political authoritarianism, however, the economy of desire and its capitalist underpinning re-emerge and subvert the enchanted sphere.

NOTES

1. Jurgen Habermas, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere*, Oxford: Polity, 1989. A collection of critiques and debates followed in Craig Calhoun (ed.), *Habermas and the Public Sphere*, Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1992.
2. Mahfouz Neguib, *Awlad Haretna* [Cairo 1959], English translation, *Children of Gebelawi*, New York: Doubleday 1999; *Al-Harafish* [Cairo 1977], English translation, *The Harafish* (the rabble), New York: Doubleday, 1994.
3. For a description of an imaret (soup kitchen), in Konya, see Faroqhi Suraiya, *Towns and Townsmen in Ottoman Anatolia: Trades, Crafts and Food Production in an Urban Setting, 1520–1650*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984.
4. Ralph S. Hattox, *Coffee and Coffee Houses: The Origins of a Social Beverage in the Medieval Near East*, Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1985
5. Abraham Marcus, *The Middle East on the Eve of Modernity: Aleppo in the Eighteenth Century*, New York: Columbia University Press, 1989, pp. 229–40.
6. Orhan Pamuk, *My Name is Red*, translated by Erdag Gokner, London: Faber, 2002.
7. See Godfrey Goodwin, *The Janissaries*, London: Saqi, 1994/2006, pp. 87–9.
8. Francois Georgeon, "Ottomans and Drinkers: The Consumption of Alcohol in Istanbul in the Nineteenth Century", in Eugene Rogan (ed.), *Outside In: On the Margins of the Modern Middle East*, London: I. B. Tauris, 2002, pp. 7–30.
9. On the debauchery of judges and dignitaries, see Emile Tyan, *Histoire de l'organisation judiciaire en pays de l'Islam*, Leiden: Brill, 1960, pp. 293–332.
10. See David Waines, "Abu Zayd al-Balkhi on the nature of forbidden drink: a medieval Islamic controversy", in Manuela Marin and David Waines (eds), *La alimentacion en las culturas Islamicas*, Madrid: Agencia Espanola de Cooperacion Internacional, 1994, pp. 111–26.
11. Michael Cook, *Forbidding Wrong in Islam*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003.
12. *Ibid.*, p. 57.
13. *Ibid.*, p. 58.
14. Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origins and Spread of Nationalism*. London: Verso, 1983.

THE PUBLIC AND THE PRIVATE

15. Karl Mannheim, *Ideology and Utopia*, London: Routledge, 1942/1960.
16. See Niyazi Berkes, *The Development of Secularism in Turkey*, London: Hurst, 1964/1998, pp. 270–8.
17. Juan Cole, *Colonialism and Revolution in the Middle East: Social and Cultural Origins of Egypt's Urabi Movement*, Princeton NJ: Princeton University Press, 1993, pp. 115–26.
18. For a discussion on Rida, see Ahmad Dallal, “Appropriating the Past: Twentieth Century Reconstruction of Pre-modern Islamic Thought”, *Islamic Law and Society*, vol. 7, no. 1, 2000; and Sami Zubaida, “Contemporary Trends in Muslim Legal Thought and Ideology”, in *New Cambridge History of Islam*, Volume 6, forthcoming.
19. See Asef Bayat, *Making Islam Democratic: Social Movements and the Post-Islamist Turn*, Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2007, pp. 142–86.
20. Asghar Schirazi, *The Constitution of Iran: Politics and the State in the Islamic Republic*, London: I. B. Tauris, 1997.
21. *Ibid.*, pp. 171–2.

PART TWO

Contemporary Thought

CHAPTER 3

Civil Society and Conflict Management: Bangladesh's Experiences

AMENA MOHSIN

It is ironic that South Asia, the land of Gandhi, Tagore, Lalon, a land immersed in an ocean of civilisations, cultures and syncretism, today finds itself torn by politicised ethnicities and religions. Much of it, however, is a construct of “secular” politics, the ongoing militant politicisation of governance structures and ethos, and also the creation and re-creation of knowledge systems. It is therefore no surprise that conflict and security discourses have remained trapped within the language of insecurity and war. The periodisation that accompanied the formal onset of these discourses and disciplines since the end of the Second World War has been in terms of hot wars, Cold War or post-Cold War, with war remaining an important signifier. Subsequent attempts at peace-building, security studies, and conflict management not only had their genesis within a paradigm of insecurity, but were built on the premises of insecurity, mistrust and crisis or lack of confidence. In other words, they were immersed in a language that deployed terms such as the “enemy”, “opponent” or “otherness”; somehow the language of the politics of peace and accommodation were either lost or silenced.

It is submitted here that very strong vested groups exist within the state, whose interests are served by the perpetuation of conflict. In addition, notwithstanding more than fifty years of decolonisation, South Asia has failed to rid itself of the hangover of Partition and other residual effects. Structurally and conceptually, the post-colonial states of the region have failed to infuse confidence and security not only within but also without. South Asia remains fragmented and appropriated by the nation-state. To explicate this point, I shall digress a little and raise certain questions that I consider integral to the issues of security, conflict management and civil society.

Did the general population which ultimately constitutes the core and base of civil society ever lose confidence and trust in each other, or was the issue a politics of markers and identity construction? The findings of a project on Partition memories and violence jointly undertaken by the Centre for Alternatives (CA), Dhaka, Center for the Study of Developing Societies (CSDS), New Delhi, and Sustainable Development Policy Institute (SDPI), Islamabad, are quite revealing in this context. Psychologist Ashis Nandy of CSDS points out that partition had frozen public consciousness for decades. It had such a negative effect on the consciousness of people that they chose to remain silent, which is a language in its own right. Though Partition was violent, through the narratives of more than 150 people in Bangladesh, India and Pakistan it has been found that there were self-imposed restraints towards violence. Partition is seen by the victims, perpetrators and witnesses of violence as not simply a conflict between the Hindus and Muslims but between landlord and tenant, between business rivals in the same community who had old scores to settle and who took advantage of the chaos. There is a refusal on the part of the Hindu respondents to blame the carnage on Muslims, and vice-versa. The tragic and violent acts of Partition are referred to as a time of aberration during which humanity and sanity gave way to absolute evil. Even so, neighbours protected and sheltered each other.¹ In Noakhali, where one of the worst manifestations of Partition violence took place, Hindu victims pointed out that they were saved by the *moulvi saheb* (Muslim religious preacher) of the village, even though the riots were instigated in the name of religion. The respondents, both Hindus and Muslims, blamed the politics of Jinnah and Nehru for the bloodshed and persistently asked why Gandhi's path of non-violence could not be adopted.² Memories indeed play a very important role in the construction of a nation's history, yet historians and social science research have done little justice to these memories. Too much emphasis has been given to negative memories. In South Asia we have never attempted to explore the memories that speak of trust and confidence. Instead the history given down to us for generations is one of Hindu-Muslim division, violence, mistrust and antagonism.

It is ironical that, despite having a pluralist culture, South Asia began its journey towards modern statehood through the politics of divisions and identity formations constructed initially by the colonial powers and consolidated subsequently by nationalist leaders. To take the instance of Bengal, there is no denying Asim Roy's point that Bengal had a syncretistic tradition; and that Islam in Bengal also had a syncretistic tradition during the pre-colonial period. This had evolved as a consequence of the "conscious efforts of Bengali Muslim Cultural mediators, with a view to disseminating Islam in a more locally familiar and meaningful form".³ The Bauls (village poets and singers) simultaneously paid their respects to Hindu and Muslim places of worship. The growth of Muslim

Sufism and Hindu Vaishnavism had diluted the differences between the Bengali Muslims and Bengali Hindus. The syncretistic tradition was upheld by both Hindu and Muslim rulers.

British colonial policy of divide-and-rule stopped the growth of this process. Their economic and educational policies as pursued in Bengal were aimed at creating a Hindu aristocracy as a counterweight to one traditionally represented by Muslims. For instance, the Zamindari system (1793)⁴ sharpened the dichotomy between the Hindu landlords and Muslim peasants. The use of Persian for official purposes (Persian was spoken by the Muslim aristocracy, and was the language of the Muslim court) was replaced first by Bengali and later by English. This opened up job opportunities for Bengali Hindus, since Muslims refused to educate themselves in English. The result was the emergence of a white-collar, English-educated Hindu urban class, and the steady decline of Muslim aristocracy.

In 1891–2, the proportion of Muslims in the urban population of Bengal was only 27.5 per cent, and their ratio among the students of arts colleges, professional colleges and secondary schools was 5.7, 3.5 and 13.5 per cent respectively. The emergent middle class that developed in Bengal by the end of the nineteenth century was thus composed almost entirely of Hindus, upsetting the previous harmony in Bengal's social structure. This was felt more keenly in Bengal because of its Muslim majority.⁵

A renaissance in the Bengali language that took place in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries also contributed to this Hindu–Muslim cleavage. A two-tier tradition appeared in the Bengali language which had important socio-religious implications. Thus the Sadhu Bhasha (standard language) was a Sanskritised Bengali meant for the elites, most of whom were Hindus, while the Chalit Bhasha (colloquial language), the language spoken by the common people further alienated the Muslims from the elite class. While Hindus Sanskritised their Bengali, Muslims infused their Bengali language with Arabic and Persian words. This rift also extended to the realm of identity: while Bengali Hindus fixed their identity and continuity to the Hindu Indian past, the Bengali Muslims established their identity and its historical context in relation to the Muslim Indian past, both within India and in the wider traditions of West Asia. Thus the process of Hinduisation was paralleled by the process of Islamisation. Against this backdrop, the Muslim identity of Bengalis took precedence over their Bengali identity, and they gave their whole-hearted support to the idea of a Muslim Pakistan.

After nationalist leaders became part of the state or government, the divide continued as it was considered by them to be the most effective manner of nation- and state-construction. In the quest of creating modern states based on the notion of a homogenous population, South Asia's roots and traditions

of multiculturalism and pluralism were totally ignored. Though no precise estimates are available, according to one source the Partition of 1947, resulted in the migration of no fewer than 20 million people in both directions.⁶ The birth of Bangladesh in 1971 saw the creation of about 10 million refugees who fled to India from what was then East Pakistan. The state- and nation-building process, as pointed out earlier, strengthened the politics of division, inaugurating a refugee status which did not exist hitherto. The political elite of South Asia had failed to evolve a state system which could root its own population within a secure plural system. The ideas of nation and citizenship, two basic components of state, remained highly hegemonic and gendered.⁷

It is submitted here that civil society initiatives provide us with the necessary tools to build confidence and trust within and across communities in South Asia. Hence civil society may constitute the building blocks for peace and security in the region. South Asia provides its people with tremendous opportunities for co-operation and the adoption of conflict management mechanisms at the civil society level.

CIVIL SOCIETY AS A TOOL FOR CONFLICT MANAGEMENT

The idea of security came under critical examination following the demise of the Cold War. While military security remained an essential component of security, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) in its report of 1994 stated:

The concept of security has for too long been interpreted narrowly, as security of territory from external aggression, or as protection of national interests in foreign policy or as global security from the threat of nuclear holocaust. It has been related more to nation-states than to people ... Forgotten were the legitimate concerns of ordinary people who sought security in their daily lives. For many of them security symbolised protection from the threat of disease, hunger, unemployment, crime, social conflict, political repression and environmental hazards.⁸

The concept of human security focuses on four essential components. First, human security is viewed as a universal concern with relevance for the rich and poor. Unemployment, drugs, crime and pollution are common problems, though their intensity may differ from one region to another. Second, the components of human security are interdependent. Famine, disease, pollution, drug trafficking, terrorism, ethnic disputes and social disintegration are no longer isolated events – their existence in one part of the world affects other parts. Third, it is easier to ensure human security through early prevention than by subsequent inter-

vention; in other words, it is less costly to meet these threats upstream than downstream. Fourth, human security is people-centric: it is concerned with the autonomy, freedom and access by people to opportunities which enable them to make their own choices. It is, then, an integrative concept based on the interdependence and solidarity of people, rather than divisions between them. Human security is different from human development, which is a process of widening the range of people's choices. However, human security envisions the creation of an environment where these choices can be made freely and safely.⁹ The states of South Asia have come to "accept" the above conception of security at the policy level. But it needs to be emphasised that this acceptance is more a consequence of donor pressure than an actual appreciation and realisation of this notion of security by South Asian leadership. One can, however, argue that civil society movements in South Asia are more representative of the concept of human security, and many of their endeavours point to this.

South Asia has a long history of civil society movements. It began with nationalist struggles for freedom and independence. Civil society is often regarded as the non-profit sectors or voluntary associations that act as checks on the excesses of government. It has emerged as a primary locus for the expansion and strengthening of participatory democracy. With the widening of the concept of security, and greater awareness among people about their rights, partly due to the forces of globalisation and also the ongoing activities and demands of civil society, the state is often found unable to deliver the expected services to the people. Non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and agencies have stepped in to fill this gap in quite a forceful way. Today NGOs are regarded as important and crucial engines of change. Social movements, such as environmental and human rights groups, are reflections of the normative values of the people and are important components of civil society, which is generally regarded as "a collective noun, the sum of all the organisations we feel are responsible for bringing civility closer to home".¹⁰

Civil society has often been regarded as a force that counters the hegemony of the state. It is the arena that provides the space for dissent, for interrogation and, above all, for reformulation of the state apparatuses of governance. Arguably this arena should be independent of the state and in principle it should be accessible to all citizens for free engagement, dialogue and dissent. In other words, civil society ought to be democratic and participatory in nature. In majoritarian democracies, civil society organisations and movements have helped to give voice to minorities by rallying behind their concerns and problems, which might be quite distinct from those of the majority community and are often suppressed on account of the tyranny of the majority.

The existence of strong democratic values and systems are often regarded as prerequisites for civil society. Michael Walzer states that "only a democratic

state can create a democratic civil society".¹¹ Critics have argued that due to the absence of stable democracies in South Asia there is no civil society in the region. It has been suggested that lack of a stable political culture, religious extremism and militancy, state terrorism, the negative role of media, the gap between the rulers and the ruled, and economic fragility, constitute the main hurdles to a viable civil society in South Asia.¹² A democratic system indeed provides the space for a healthy and creative dissenting civil society to emerge and function effectively, but the lack of democracy does not rule out the existence of civil society. In fact, the Bangladesh experience during the Ershad regime demonstrates the resilience of civil society movements in the face of threats to the democratic ideals and system so cherished by the people. Ershad had to relinquish power before a united civil society movement against him. In other words, civil society movements can lead to the establishment of democratic values and system. Another example would be the case of Nepal where, despite the monarchy, substantial powers had to be devolved and a democratic apparatus functioned due to civil society pressures and movements. The same is true for other regions as well, such as in the East European context, where civil society played the most crucial role in the transition from authoritarianism to democracy following the end of the Cold War.¹³

Democracy, therefore, may be regarded as an enabling or facilitating factor – not a pre-requisite for – civil society to emerge and function.

Civil society in South Asia, however, is not without problems. Questions may be raised about the non-profit and voluntarism of this social sector. Rajni Kothari provides very succinct and pointed criticism of the NGO culture in India and argues that it has been co-opted by the donors.¹⁴ Likewise, in Bangladesh many NGOs have received scathing criticism for being co-opted by donors as well as by the government, thereby forfeiting their autonomy and independence. The elitist nature of many civil society movements is also a matter of concern, for many of them do not have any connection with the grass roots. In addition, not all civil society organisations and initiatives are democratic, emancipatory or inclusive in nature. Apart from the issues raised above, the extent of polarisation within civil society in Bangladesh is also alarming. While differences and dissent are part of a democratic culture, the existing polarisations have the capacity to bring the system to a halt. The non-scheduled closures of Dhaka University, and for that matter all public universities, for extensive periods of time are a telling example of the polarisations existing within the system in Bangladesh, and their devastating affects. This is a sad reflection on the sorry state of the country's political parties and intellectual community, which constitute important components of civil society. While the polarisation has its roots in nationalist struggle and the liberation of the country, its sustained and conscious reconstructions only hamper the growth of a healthy democratic culture and values.

Civil society and the state have often been placed in positions of tension and opposition to each other. It is true that NGO activities, as well as social movements, have been frequently scrutinised by the government. The state often takes special cognisance of civil society actions oriented towards minorities or organised by minorities themselves. In such cases the government institutes a rigorous governmental bureaucratic process that limits the opportunities for civil society initiatives to emerge from within the minorities themselves. The creation of the Chittagong Hill Tracts (CHT) Affairs Ministry and the requirement for the local NGO to obtain clearance from it (apart from other intelligence clearances) before applying for registration with the NGO Affairs Bureau has stifled many local initiatives. Within democracies the state provides an enabling environment and framework for civil society to operate. The latter, ideally being the watchdog, helps to create as well as to sustain a healthy democratic system. Even under authoritarian systems, though the space is limited, civil society can help to transform the system.

NGOs AND OTHER ORGANISATIONS AS CIVIL SOCIETY

Through human rights discourses, local and regional NGOs become involved in conflict prevention, conflict resolution and peace-building as a necessary condition for the protection of human rights.²⁶ These organisations and movements raise awareness about violence against women, issues relating to domestic violence, the politics of the private–public divide and its impact upon women; state-sponsored violence, rights for garment workers, slum-dwellers and sex workers. In addition to increasing awareness, they provide basic services to vulnerable groups. They lobby the state, donors and regional and international forums to create a legal framework for providing social justice and dignity to vulnerable groups. Despite divisions within and among these movements, it cannot be denied that such movements are aimed at humanising and democratising society and the polity.

For example, in Bangladesh the Shammolita Nari Samaj (United Women's Front) has come forward to join hands with the Hill Women's Federation (HWF) and the CHT to demand an investigation into the disappearance of Kalpana Chakma, who was abducted from the CHT on the eve of elections in June 1996. The HWF has openly joined with women's movements in Bangladesh on various issues.¹⁶ This is significant because the insurgency in the CHT by the Hill people was a rebellion against the Bangladesh state. Such coalitions help build confidence within and between communities and strengthen the process of democracy, which contributes positively to the environment of state security.

In Pakistan a coalition of women's NGOs at an international conference organised by ASR, an NGO, in Lahore, on 26 March 2001, formally apologised

to Bangladeshi women for violations committed by the Pakistani military in 1971. Such gestures of understanding and empathy, though narrowly-based, must not be marginalised. These are strong demonstrations of people's solidarity that cut across national boundaries and identities, helping to change negative perspectives and perceptions. Such initiatives need to be broadened and taken to the grassroots level to create an environment of understanding and tolerance among populations that constitute a critical building block for creating a people-based and people-centric conflict management system.

ACADEMIA AS CIVIL SOCIETY

Apart from NGOs and other movements that make up civil society, academia in Bangladesh has also attempted to build a secure system: a congenial environment for peace and harmony through stressing pluralism and emphasising the need for the construction of a positive knowledge system. This is true of Bangladesh as well as other South Asian countries. Knowledge is indeed a mode of power. It has the capacity to divide as well as to integrate people. The knowledge handed down to us and being taught in our academic institutions, from schools to universities, is more often than not, nationalistic in nature. Nationalism is both hegemonic and gendered. Consequently a discourse of hegemony and division is continually produced. To make this point, I cite the work of Rubina Saigol, who has made an in-depth examination of the school curriculum in Pakistan. She argues that, in the school curriculum:

The two-nation theory asserts that the Muslims and Hindus were “always” two nations, they had “never” lived in harmony, they will be different “forever”. Words such as “always”, “never” and “forever” constitute the empty time of nationalism – a time which is not situated in real people, events and actions but in the emptiness of “never”, “forever” and “always”. Anything can be filled into this empty time by those constructing nationalism ... yet they are accepted and legitimised as “*The Truth*” by the state curriculum and disseminated widely as legitimate, objective knowledge. The “scientific objectivity” assumed for these projections and the emotional appeal inherent in the language style, make this curriculum of rupture and boundary-production beyond the power of questioning and challenge ... the language of “is”, “was”, “happened”, “occurred” corrodes historical contingency further enhancing mythical time in which events appear to have no antecedents or consequences; things just happen or happened. The cause, if any is attributed to an individual or group's personality attributes rather than to social, historical, political, economic and ideological reasons [emphasis in original].¹⁷

Ruptures and boundaries are created not only outside but within state boundaries as well. For example, the liberation war of Bangladesh is projected in history books of Bangladesh as a war fought by the Bengalis alone. The struggles of ethnic minorities are totally absent from this nationalist discourse. The intellectual community has, indeed, a major responsibility for correcting these perspectives and building a knowledge system based on pluralism and harmony. Students tutored in the discourse of pluralism, harmony and trust can work towards the creation of a harmonious and pluralistic state and region. With this objective, the idea of a South Asian University has been floating around with the vision of creating a South Asian mind. It is noteworthy that the process is under way at state level for the creation of such a university under the auspices of the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC), a regional body set up in 1985. The private schools and universities in Bangladesh have collaborations with overseas schools and universities, though the flow is only one-way. Such collaborations can be turned into intra-regional ones starting from the school level. Since private schools and universities are not accessible by the masses due to the financial costs involved, civil society movements and organisations can build pressure on the state to make it a part of the state-financed institutions.

THE CASE OF BANGLADESH

Despite its deep polarisation, civil society in Bangladesh has played an active role in promoting and protecting human rights and thereby contributed to human security and conflict management. To illustrate this point, this chapter will examine two cases of civil society interventions in the political scenario of Bangladesh, wherein religion was and still is being used to create division and intolerance. The first refers to the increasing intolerance and violence towards the Hindu community in Bangladesh; the second looks at ongoing violence against the Ahmadiyya community in the country.

Based upon the principle of majority rule, politics has become a game of numbers, where individuals and communities are viewed as “vote banks” as opposed to human beings. The institution of majoritarian democracy does not allow minorities a voice in the national parliament. There is hardly any scope for them to meaningfully represent themselves in the 300-member parliament. Forty-five seats are reserved for women who are nominated by the elected members. In the parliamentary sessions between June 1996 and 2001, there have been only eight members from the Hindu community, and three from the minority Chakma community. Of these eleven elected members, ten were from the then ruling party, the Awami League (one independent candidate joined the Treasury Bench after his election), and one was from the BNP. The Awami League nominated three minority women to the reserved seats. Two

of them were Hindu and one was Rakahine. In the October 2001 elections, seven minority candidates were elected: five from the Hindu community, three of whom sit for the Awami League, and two from the BNP. Two Hill people, one from Chakma and the other from the Marma community, were elected from the Chittagong Hill Tracts (CHT): one of them was from the Awami League and the other from the BNP.

In the December 2008 elections, fourteen members were elected to the parliament from the minority population. All of them belonged to the Awami League-led alliance. In the new cabinet only two full ministers and one state minister have been appointed from the minority community.

Majoritarian democracy has reduced politics to a game of numbers. Human beings and communities have been turned into vote banks and constituencies. This dehumanising of politics took on an extremely ugly form in the October 2001 elections. Minority communities, particularly the Hindu community, were targeted. The reasons for this violence are not, therefore, communal; rather, the main factor behind these developments are political and structural. The Hindus are regarded as vote banks for the Awami League, so they were targeted by supporters of the BNP and its alliance partners. In some instances, Awami League supporters also attacked them, thinking that the local Hindus did not vote for them as was *expected*. Elsewhere, terrorists took advantage of the situation and indulged in extortion and looting of property.¹⁸

The violence started fifteen days before the elections of 1 October and continued until about 27 October, ruining the Durga Puja, the most important religious festival of the Hindu community in Bengal. Ten of the country's most popular dailies (*Prothom Alo*, *Jonokontho*, *Jugantor*, *Sangbad*, *Banglabazar*, *Inqilab*, *Dinkal*, *Daily Star*, *Ittefaq* and *Bhorer Kagoj*) reported 330 incidences of violence against the Hindu community between 15 September and 27 October. These included cases of rape, killing, physical torture, plunder, damage to property, bomb-throwing, arson and extortion. The role played by civil society actors during this crisis was laudable. The print media played an extremely important role in publicising the violations of human rights among minorities. This helped to create a general awareness at both national and international levels.

In Bangladesh many NGOs and women's organisations act as human rights watchdogs, and some of them even provide legal aid services to rural poor and women. They also play a critical role in the democratisation process of the country. Following the 2001 electoral violence, some of the NGOs and civil society organisations sent investigation teams into the affected areas. A joint team consisting of members from the Ain 'O Shalish Kendra (ASK), Sammolito Samajik Andolon, Nijera Kori, Bangladesh Nari Progoti Shongho (BNPS), Nari Uddyog, Bangladesh Mohila Parishad, BLAST and Society for Environment and Development (SEHD) visited the affected areas. Subse-

quently, a press conference was held on 17 October. However, participation by member organisations of the investigation team was small, namely the ASK, Nijera Kori, Bangladesh Mohila Parishad and Sammolito Samajik Andolon. At the press conference these organisations appealed to the government, political parties and civil society members to take measures to rehabilitate and properly compensate the affected individuals and groups. They asked for those who had been arrested by police and by the Bangladesh Rifles (BDR), a paramilitary force, while attempting to flee the country to be immediately released, properly compensated and rehabilitated. They requested that reports be published immediately and legal measures taken against the perpetrators; that long-term measures be adopted for winning the confidence of the minority community and for reinstating a sense of security. Finally, they observed that the tendency to target and victimise minority communities for no valid reason during different political situations should be immediately stopped and resisted.¹⁹

Another investigation team was sent by Shocheton Nagorik Samaj. They held a press conference on 21 October. Sammolito Samajik Andolon and Bangladesh Mohila Parishad also undertook some rehabilitation programs in the affected areas. Students from different universities, under the banner of Shocheton Chatra Samaj, organised a hunger strike to protest against the violence against minorities in the Central Shaheed Minar.²⁰

The ASK NGO also issued a writ at the High Court on 21 November, to stop this dire situation. It argued that the government and the Police Inspector General (IG) had failed to provide security to the Hindu community and thereby had also failed to guarantee the citizens' rights provided in Articles 27, 28, 34, 35, 41 and 42 of the Bangladesh Constitution. The High Court directed the Home Secretary and the Police Inspector General to submit their report regarding measures they had taken by 15 January 2002.²¹

Another example of violence against a minority with civil society intervention would be the wave of sectarian violence against the Ahmadiyya community. The Ahmadiyyas have been living peacefully in Bangladesh since 1944. They published writings and preached doctrines in Bangladesh without any hindrance. The movement against them began in 1987 and was inspired by strong political forces. Islamic Oikkyo Jote (Islamic United Coalition), an alliance partner of the then ruling party, was directly associated with this movement. Its followers demand the declaration of the Ahmadiyyas as non-Muslims under the banner of a movement called *Khatame Nabuwwat*.²²

On 9 January 2004 the government banned the sale, distribution and preservation of all publications of the Ahmadiyya community.²³ Attacks on their mosques and localities now occur at regular intervals. This aggression does not have mass support and is carried out by a group of religious extremists. Civil society in the country has expressed strong concern; the Bangladesh chapter

of the South Asian People's Human Rights Commission has raised the issue at various regional and international forums. ASK has challenged the ban on Ahmadiyya publications in the High Court as a gross violation of fundamental rights guaranteed under the Constitution. The High Court has also issued a ruling that the government show cause as to why its ban on Ahmadiyya publications should not be declared illegal.²⁴ The government and the opposition have been evasive and the major political parties failed to condemn the attacks. Their failure to take decisive action can be easily understood and explained in terms of electoral politics. It again demonstrates the gulf between politics and civil society in Bangladesh.

Thus, this growing militancy in politics and religion is very distinct from civil society movements that constantly press for the democratisation of the polity, which is considered to be crucial and fundamental for building pluralistic structures. In other words, one may argue that civil society is attempting to re-create and reproduce the syncretism and pluralism of pre-colonial Bengal. In this context, two issues are worth noting, considering their importance for conflict management.

Secularism versus Communalism

Bengali nationalism, as it evolved within Pakistan, was secular in its orientation. This was the logical outcome of a movement of the East Bengalis against the West Pakistani regime, which used religion as a tool for the oppression and exploitation of Bengalis. Later Bengali nationalism was adopted as the basis for Bangladesh's nationalism. It took its roots from Bengali language and culture. Secularism was also adopted as one of the state principles and political parties with religious orientations were banned from politics. This, however, changed after 1975, when Zia ur Rahman introduced the Bangladeshi model of nationhood; secularism was dropped from the constitution and substituted by religion. The ban on communal political parties was also lifted. Under Hussein Mohammad Ershad, communalisation was carried further. Islam was adopted as the state religion. It needs to be mentioned here that both Zia ur Rahman and H. M. Ershad were military-turned-civilian rulers, and they used religion to consolidate their power base within the population.

It would, however, be too simplistic to draw clear lines on the issue separating secular and non-secular forces. The actual situation is much more complex than this. One can observe several strands of this situation among the political parties. On a closer reading even the position of the two major political parties, BNP and Awami League, does not appear to be that different, though one is the main proponent of Bengali nationalism and the other Bangladeshi. It may be mentioned here that Bengali nationalism was the driving force of Bangladesh's

liberation, which, as mentioned earlier, had its genesis in Bengali language and culture. Later on, the BNP introduced Islamic elements into the Constitution of Bangladesh and dropped secularism as one of the main planks of the Bangladesh Constitution. Through this insertion they changed the nationalism of Bangladesh from Bengali to Bangladeshi. In other words, the former was secular while the latter was religion-based.

The compulsions of electoral politics and majoritarian democracy may be responsible for this. The Awami League, though blaming the BNP for communalisation of politics, makes liberal use of religion in all its political activities. It has not taken a clear position on the issue of reinserting secularism by replacing the Islamic references in the Constitution. From time to time, however, its leadership has referred to a return to the Constitution of 1972. Moreover, it had made Jamaat an alliance partner in 1993–4, when it led the movement to oust the BNP. The BNP, in turn, openly condemns communalism and fundamentalism. However, one may argue that by making Jamaat-i-Islami, a fundamentalist party, a partner in the ruling alliance during its term from 2001 to 2006, it patronised fundamentalist forces. In the recently concluded elections on 29 December 2008, the Jamaat again was an alliance partner of the BNP. It is the left and left-leaning parties who have demanded a return to the Constitution of 1972 and also the reinsertion of secularism in the Constitution.

Civil society, too, is divided on the issue and reflects the general political debate. The growth of communal forces, the attack on minorities, especially the Hindus, emergence of stunt figures such as Bangla Bhai, clandestine organisations such as Hikmatul Jihad, and finally the attack on the Ahmadiyyas, are all cause for much concern. Civil society and the media have taken a positive and effective stand on these issues. The general consensus appears to be that one has to draw a clear line between being communal and religious. The majority of people hold the latter point of view. Through their cultural and political festivals, such as Poila Boishakh and Ekushey February, Bengalis have constantly demonstrated their secular and syncretic spirit. The debates and the resistance suggest that Bangladesh will not give in to communal forces.

Democratisation of politics

Several issues are at stake here, from internal democracy and reforms within political parties to weeding out corruption and criminalisation, bolstering women's and minority representations, and increasing democratisation at local governmental levels. The lack of internal democracy within parties is gradually becoming a major issue. Despite clear provisions for elections within parties, top positions are occupied by the same close-knit group of people. Within parliament the system of open votes for reaching a decision makes it impossible for any party

member to hold a dissenting opinion or abstain from voting. The demand for democratisation of political parties is not, however, widespread and is limited to academic circles. But the demand for the reform of political parties by weeding out corrupt members has gained popular appeal. The print media has played a very effective role in this respect. Photographs showing top political leaders waving pistols caught the attention of millions. The reporting of criminal and terrorist activities carried out by political leaders, as well as their cronies, family members and party cadres, has created a general awareness about these issues. There is also a general demand for the political and financial accountability of politicians. Citizens' forums have also demanded that fundraising by political parties must be regulated by law in parliament.

The issue of minority rights and minority representation is gradually but steadily gaining ground. Human rights organisations brought this issue to the fore in the late 1980s in the wake of CHT conflict and reports of human rights violations by security personnel in the region. This was made an issue by Hill people's forums such as the Pahari Chatra Parishad (PCP) and Hill Women's Federation (HWF). In the 1990s the issue gained momentum, with the ethnic minorities themselves giving forceful voice to their demands. With the signing of the CHT peace accord and the formation of the Jatiyo Adibashi Forum, the demand has gained wider attention.

The demand for meaningful representation of women in *national* politics has become an important issue. It is somewhat ironic that, despite having two women at the helm of national politics – one as the leader positioning and the other as leader of the opposition – and despite wielding immense power within their respective parties, national politics remains a male-dominated arena. It is, however, notable that the recently elected Awami League government has appointed three women in three critical cabinet posts: the Foreign Ministry, the Home Ministry and the Agricultural Ministry. To what extent they will be able to bring about gender-sensitive policies and make a break from the past needs to be seen. Nonetheless, women holding these positions do have a tremendous symbolic value and are a major pathway for women's empowerment and meaningful democratisation of the society and state.

Furthermore, the question of democratisation and meaningful representation of women at *local* government levels is also emerging as a major issue. These political institutions constitute the foundations of power for politics at the national level. The government has reserved three seats for women in these bodies through direct elections. But elected representatives allege that they have not been granted substantive powers and that they are discriminated against in comparison with their male colleagues. The publicity of these views and the demand for reforms in the situation is a positive move towards democratisation.

CONCLUSION

South Asia has been described, variously, as a conflict-prone region, a region without regionalism, a civilisation, and so on. The new millennium has brought, with it, unpredictability in international politics that has its resonance in regional politics. The forces of fundamentalism, both in nationalism and in religion, seem to be on the rise. This development, on the one hand, militarises states and, on the other hand, shrinks the space for democracy. Human security and human rights becomes the first casualty of these forces and processes. Perhaps more than ever before, there is a need for civil society to establish itself in a most effective and profound manner during these times of chaos and uncertainty, thereby creating a discourse and culture of peace, tolerance and pluralism. Such interventions need to be broad-based and inclusive of grass roots, cutting across the various levels. Sustaining civil society through financial and human resources is a major problem in a society beset with uncertainties and partisanship. Yet it is worth persevering, for civil society movements are strong pressure groups and possess the potential for bringing about transformations.

There is a need to recall and reconstruct memories of trust, confidence, faith and accommodation that this civilisation once enjoyed, and thus it is time that South Asia was described as a region of peace, amity and diversity. As Dev Nathan so aptly points out, “the diversities have not changed but the means to accommodate them have.”²⁵ The means of accommodation indeed needs a change, a change infused in the discourse and language of confidence and security, not of insecurity and mistrust. A generation tutored in the language of dialogue and friendship can make meaningful change in the security and well-being of the lives of people.

NOTES

1. Sagarika Ghose, “The Partition Psychosis”, in *Outlook*, 13 August 1997, Delhi, p. 92.
2. Based on author’s personal interviews in Chatkhil, Noakhali, in December 1998. Gandhi had visited the place in the aftermath of riots.
3. Asim Roy, *The Islamic Syncretistic Tradition in Bengal*, Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1983, p. 251.
4. The Zamindari System refers to the collection of revenue by landholders from peasants and the punctual remittance of these revenues to the British. The introduction of the Permanent Settlement in 1793 was a contract between the East India Company and the landholders (Zamindars) where in the landholders were granted absolute proprietary rights of landed property.
5. Ramakrishna Mukherjee, “Nation-Building in Bangladesh”, in Rajni Kothari (ed.), *State and Nation Building*, Bombay: Allied Publishers, 1976, pp. 291–2.
6. Lok Raj Baral and S. D. Muni, “Introduction: Refugees, South Asia and Security”,

- in S. D. Muni and Lok Raj Baral (eds), *Refugees and Regional Security in South Asia*, RCSS, Colombo, in association with Konark Publishers Pvt. Ltd, Delhi, 1996, p. 9.
7. For details, see Paula Banerjee, "Refugee Repatriation: A Politics of Gender", *Refugee Watch*, Kathmandu, SAFHR, January 1998, pp. 8–9.
 8. *Human Development Report 1994*, New York: UNDP, 1994, p. 22.
 9. "Redefining Security: The Human Dimension", *Current History*, May 1995, pp. 229–42.
 10. Alison Van Rooy (ed.), *Civil Society and the Aid Industry*, London: Earthscan Publications Ltd, 1998, p. 15.
 11. Michael Walzer, "The Concept of Civil Society", in Michael Walzer (ed.), *Toward a Global Civil Society*, Providence, RI, Berghahn Books, 1998, p. 24.
 12. Naem Ahmed, "The Role of Civil Society in CBMs in South Asia", in Moonis Ahmar (ed.), *The Challenge of Confidence Building in South Asia*, New Delhi: Har-Anand Publications, 2001, pp. 266–83.
 13. For details, see Yamamoto Tadashi (ed.), *Governance and Civil Society in a Global Age*, Tokyo: JCIE, 2001.
 14. Rajni Kothari, "NGOs, the State and World Capitalism", Delhi: EPW, 13 December 1986.
 15. Rita Manchanda, "Confidence Building Measures and Regional Dialogue: Retrospect and Prospect What Role for NGOs?", in Dipankar Banerjee (ed.), *Confidence Building Measures in South Asia*, Colombo: Regional Centre for Strategic Studies, 1999, p. 171.
 16. For a detailed exposition of women building peace in South Asia, see, Rita Manchanda, *Women, War and Peace in South Asia: Beyond Victimhood to Agency*, New Delhi, Sage Publications, 2001.
 17. Rubina Saigol, "Boundaries of Consciousness: Interface Between the Curriculum, Gender and Nationalism", in Nighat Said Khan et al. (eds), *Locating the Self: Perspectives on Women and Multiple Identities*, Lahore: ASR, 1994, pp. 43–4.
 18. *The Star*, Weekend Magazine, Dhaka, 26 October 2001, p. 16.
 19. Press conference, "Nirbachonottor Shohingshota 'O Shonkhaloghuder Opor Akromon Shoho Shamprotik Poristhiti 'O Bhubisshot Koronio Proshongee" (Violence in elections, attack on the minorities, the communal situation and future options), Sangbad Shommelon, 17 October 2001. Organised by the Ain 'O Shalish Kendra (ASK), Nijera Kori, Bangladesh Mohila Porishad, Sammolito Samajik Andolon.
 20. *Prothom Alo*, 15 October 2001, Dhaka.
 21. Urmī Rahman, "Shonkhaloghu Nirjatoner Biruddhe Ain 'O Salish Kendra Mamlā", (The legal case of the ASK against attacks on the minorities), *Bulletin*, Ain 'O Shalish Kendra (ASK), Dhaka: December 2001, p. 10.
 22. ASK, *Bulletin*, Dhaka, March 2004, pp. 26–7.
 23. This movement, one may suggest, is an outcome of several factors, which include the growing potency of political Islam that is engulfing Muslim-majority states. Migrant workers to Middle Eastern countries are important contributors to the growth of Wahabism in Bangladesh. The US-led war on terror with its focus on Islam and the mediatisation of the entire issue, which has the impact of instilling the images and events in the popular psyche, only strengthens the orthodox school of Islam.
 25. Dev Nathan, "From Civilisation to Nation", paper presented at a seminar on *Internal Conflicts in South Asia*, organised by PRI, Oslo & Marg Institute, Colombo, 20–2 April 1991.

CHAPTER 4

Pluralism and Liberalism in Contemporary Islamic Thought

RIDWAN AL-SAYYID

THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN ISLAM AND PLURALISM (OR LIBERALISM)

The inception of cultural debates over liberalism – and I consider pluralism a part of the domain of liberalism – in the Arab world began in the 1960s. Prior to that, debates over issues of modernisation and the relationship with the rest of the world were conducted in terms of secularism or secularism *vis-à-vis* Islam. This was unfortunate, as the secularism associated with modernisation was the French version, characterised by an uncompromising separation between state and religion. For Muslim thinkers, it is primarily due to this factor that debates on liberalism and Islam contain a great deal of negative residue from debates on secularism and Islam.

For while the process of rejecting secularism continues, Muslim counter-attacks included the wholesale rejection of Western values, leading to the absolute rejection of the entire West by Islamists during the 1940s and 1950s. This rejection was caused not only by secularism, but also by major dislocations in the Arab East created by the First and Second World Wars. All these factors were reflected in the transformations of Islamic thought and the emergence of revivalist movements at the time.

Debates about Islam and secularism (modernity and progress) were gradually replaced with debates about Islam and liberalism (modernity, progress and democracy) instigated by the political changes brought about during the Cold War. In terms of political control, neo-revivalist Islamists had not yet become the key players. Rather, progressive Arab governments governed in countries such as Egypt, Syria and Iraq, followed by Algeria, Libya, Sudan and South Yemen. These governments allied themselves with the Soviet Union and adopted a one-party system of government and a socialist economy, thereby

creating a progressive Arab front. This was challenged by an Arab conservative front that allied itself with the United States of America and NATO. The competition between the progressive and conservative nations, over leadership and influence, increased in the spheres of politics, culture and religion.

During the 1960s, a plethora of articles and books were published about the close relationship between Islam and socialism. The Egyptian regime, as well as other progressive regimes, employed traditional religious centres to issue legal opinions (fatwas) against the capitalist West, along with its Islamic and Arab allies, and against radical Islamic movements that opposed their governments. This situation also included non-Arab Islamic countries such as Pakistan and Indonesia. The pro-American Arab governments responded via the Islamists who had taken refuge in their countries, by publishing studies that accused the progressive governments of atheism and regimes such as those of Egypt and Syria, of being militantly secular along the lines of Ataturk's in Turkey.

Islamists who were located in the conservative Islamic and Arab camps could not use the weapon of democracy or pluralism to criticise progressive regimes because the countries where they were based were neither democratic nor liberal. Furthermore, those critics who employed arguments in favour of liberalism and democracy were modern intellectuals chiefly educated either in Western countries or in Lebanon. As a result, they were primarily focused on the reformation of societies rather than on political regimes. Arguments held that governments, whether conservative or authoritarian, were not the problem, as compared to traditional societies, which were responsible for preventing progress and modernisation. Their poverty and backwardness enabled corporate states with socialist tendencies to control them.

Therefore, it was believed that social change should come out of a process of cultural and social transformation in order to prepare the environment for the rise of an elite civil society as well as liberalism and democracy. Hourani gives the example of the movement of Islamic reform represented by Jamal ad-Din al-Afghani and Muhammad Abdu who both gave priority to educational, cultural and social change over political reformation.¹ Although this movement did not adopt the French variety of secularism, it recognised two independent spheres, the political and the religious. During the 1960s and 1970s, however, these leaders of religious reform were accused of being freemasons or agnostics.

As a result, discussions in Muslim contexts about Islam and liberalism quickly reached a deadlock in the mid-1970s. While the thinkers concerned with liberalisation were opposed to the new revolutionary regimes, their intellectualism led them to set up a divide that placed the conflict with the regimes into stark, uncompromising dichotomies of Byzantine complexity. Liberalism, for these thinkers, meant accepting modernity and rejecting traditionalism. Modernity was primarily cultural and social rather than political. This is why removing the

sacred nature of customs and texts became a focal point in the process of social, cultural and, therefore, political modernisation. The model they tried to emulate was a European one that had successfully removed religion from the public sphere into the private one. This imitative, incomplete Arab model became an Islamic reform that was stifled by traditionalism. Arab modernisers could have turned to Ottoman reforms of the mid-nineteenth century, which were comprehensive and included political and cultural dimensions. Their reasons for not doing so were two-fold: (i) they harboured a deep-seated, historical animosity towards the Ottomans, and (ii) they wished to use what they regarded as a modern and successful model, that is, the European one.

The neo-Islamists living under conservative regimes were reacting against a different liberalism, one that opposed religion, as was earlier the case with secularism. They also condemned Muslim reformers for being alienated from the tradition of Islam because they wished to restructure the Islamic system independent from Western systems such as capitalism and Marxism. However, they agreed with Arab and Muslim modernisers on one point, namely an opposition to Islamic traditionalism, both intellectual and institutional.

POLITICAL AUTHORITY

In 1971, I interviewed the well-known Algerian thinker Malik Bin Nabi for the *Journal of Islamic Thought* published by Dar al-Fatwa in Beirut. Bin Nabi began as a reformer and ended up as a revolutionary without assigning himself to any political party. As a graduate of al-Azhar University, I expressed my concern to him over the stagnation of that and other Islamic institutions, especially with regard to their subordination to political authorities. He agreed and also pointed out that this same traditionalism not only bothered secularists and modernisers such as Arkoun, al-'Azm, al-Bitar and Saab, but, that it also bothered other Islamists such as al-Mawdudi, Sayyid Qutb, al-Ghazali and al-Qaradawi. He further believed that rising protests in the Muslim world would preoccupy us for years to come, even as we were unaware of it then. I did not quite understand what Bin Nabi meant at the time. Given their confrontations with the new authorities, the Islamists' politicisation lay outside the official institutions and I therefore viewed them as neo-traditionalists or conservatives.

Subsequently, during the 1980s, we began to observe a strong revivalist Islam whose adherents were calling for an Islamic resurgence that would comprehensively address both private and public spheres. Analysis of all these factors thus indicates that it was an identity crisis that began in the 1920s following the collapse of the Ottoman caliphate and the emergence of "nation-states" across the Arab and Islamic world.

The Egyptian state was formed as a consequence of anti-British protests under

the leadership of Saad Zaghlul. The French established Greater Lebanon for the Lebanese “nation” in the constitution of 1926, leading Muhammad Rashid Rida and Shakib Arsalan, both of Lebanese origin, to dwell on the question of setting up an Islamic state based on nationalistic foundations. With the exception of Turkey, where Mustafa Ataturk was armed with a clear and distinct programme when he established the Turkish Republic on the ruins of the caliphate, in the name of nationalism, all the Arab and Islamic states were established under colonial constitutions and institutions. This gave rise to movements in the Arab East, India, Central Asia and Indonesia that aimed to preserve a different identity within societies, states and cultures, which they did by setting up parties and societies that adopted Islam as their motto. Examples include the Muslim Youth (1927), Muslim Brotherhood (1928) Union of Islamic Youth in Greater Syria (1933), Revival of Sunna (1933) and the Shar’iyya Association (1934). Such movements established their own institutions, ranging from private schools, sports clubs and economic infrastructure, to the establishment of factories that manufactured Islamic dress for both men and women. In addition to regulating family life and values, as well as religious rituals and symbols, they also produced many books and publications criticising first Western missionary programmes, then colonialism and finally the West as a whole, since it had become their anti-model for the Islamic model. What popularised these writings is that the West did indeed colonise the Islamic world. The outbreak of the Second World War created many difficulties for Muslims, including the massacre of Muslims and Hindus on the Indian Peninsula and the establishment of the state of Israel in Palestine.

Until the mid-1950s and despite publishing works that condemned the West and their political agents in the Islamic world, Islamists in Egypt, Syria and Pakistan were prepared to co-operate and participate in political life in order to rectify the course of political action. However, the Muslim Brotherhood clashed head-on with the regime of Jamal ‘Abd el-Nasser – a clash that continued until the 1970s and led to the rise of a new, independent political theory for Islamists that remains dominant today. Sayyid Qutb derived his view of divine governance (*hakimiyya*) from Abu al-A’la al-Mawdudi. It included critical and constructive aspects. The critical aspect argues that the modern world is immersed in paganism (*jahiliyya*) and tyranny (*taghut*), and that political regimes in the Islamic world are part of it. The constructive aspect views the necessity of setting up an Islamic state that applies religious law to legitimise Muslim societies and Islamic states.

As a consequence of persecution that Islamists suffered in the Arab and Islamic states from the 1960s to the 1980s, they felt besieged and that a world conspiracy had been created against Islam, with the Islamists as its representatives. This has led to a state of hopelessness and struggle against a world domi-

nated by such thinking, which encourages some Islamic movements to use violence as a political tactic. Those movements that had previously not adopted violence as a tool towards establishing an Islamic state began, in the mid-1980s, to reconsider their practice and theory, particularly the notions of democracy, pluralism and human rights.

CITIZENSHIP AND RELATIONSHIPS WITH NON-MUSLIMS

Shaykh Yusuf al-Qaradawi, one of the great thinkers of Islamic revivalism today, argues in his book *The Islamic Solution is a Duty and a Necessity* (published in 1974) that Muslims have tried to adopt Western models selected from both liberal capitalism and Marxist socialism. The liberal capitalists collapsed with the war of Palestine in 1948 and the Marxists collapsed during the war of 1967. This is why the “Islamic solution” is not only a religious duty but has become also a human and political necessity. However, al-Qaradawi, who rejected liberalism and democracy at the zenith of the conflict between the Islamists and the West during the 1970s said in his book *Contemporary Fatawas* (published in 1987) that the democratic system of government, which is based on political parties, elections and people’s selection of their representative, is close to the system of Islamic *shura*. While it is true that elections are subject to falsification, and that the system may be corrupt, they remain superior to the one-party system and the deification of rulers that we find in totalitarian regimes. Al-Qaradawi reinforces his view by citing Muhammad Abdu, who argued that government in Islam is civil and human: thus, al-Qaradawi abandons al-Mawdudi and Qutb’s view of governance, as well as the view that postulates an essential contradiction between democracy and Islam. Since governance is a matter of administration and the pursuit of daily interests, al-Qaradawi, like Muhammad ‘Amara, Muhammad Salim al-Awwa and Ahmad Kamal Abu al-Majd, makes a distinction between ultimate authority and the exercise of authority. Ultimate authority is reserved for God; however, the exercise of authority is the people’s prerogative. Thus, it becomes possible to have a constitution stating that Islamic law is the main source of legislation, and in cases of a conflict with human rights law or legal decision-making, the latter could be rectified or adjusted to fit within Islamic law through a constitutional council whose members are religious scholars.

Therefore, al-Qaradawi and most Islamists of the mainstream movements still consider that ultimate political authority rests with God, and in the consensus of the people or the majority as in traditional Sunni Islam. For their view of the Shari’a is dominated by its legal binding nature and is less concerned with the cultural and symbolic aspects of religion. This could very easily be gleaned from their view of citizenship. Muslim reformers and their disciples such as Mahmud Shaltut (d. 1963) and Mustafa al-Siba’i (d. 1962) believe that the question of

“the people of the book” was solved by Ottoman reforms (*tanziimat*) making all people, Muslims and non-Muslims, equal before the law throughout the Islamic world. However, revivalist Islamists have shed doubt on this view since the Islamic state is based on religion and therefore cannot deal equally between Muslims and non-Muslims, as such an equality contradicts the Qur’an and the Sunna.

From the 1950s, and through the 1980s, many books have been published on the positive character of the system of *Ahl al-Dhimma* (people of the contract), while radical Islamists committed violent acts against Christians in Egypt. During the 1980s, Egyptian Islamists reconsidered the issue of citizenship and stated that a new contract had arisen out of the “national community” because of the Coptic participation with Muslims in fighting colonialism. Nonetheless, there have always been doubts about Christian equality. The late leader of the Muslim Brotherhood, Hamid Abu al-Nasr, did not see the need for Christians to join the army. Even if we consider the issue of minorities in Egypt to be resolved, the problem still exists in the remaining Islamic countries which have more than one religion. The only solution, therefore, and as al-Awwa indicated, is to refer back to the authority of the community or society, and not to Shari’a. It is preferable to entrust people with Islam because that is the source that guarantees their existence. But to make ultimate authority hostage to religious texts whose interpretation is subject to divergent viewpoints will not serve Islam at all. Also, the Shari’a is not a legal code but a system or method of living.

A judge from Basra in the eighth century, al-‘Anbari, was known for his saying that every mujtahid (jurist) was correct. He had adopted the view of the relativity as well as multiplicity of knowledge both in terms of the fundamentals and the details of jurisprudence, and all of the manifestations of religion, culture and matters concerning the daily life of people. It is known that Averroes, the famous philosopher and commentator on Aristotle’s work in the thirteenth century, said that there are two types of truth: a religious truth and a truth that is rational or demonstrative. Nevertheless, Islamic orthodoxies, headed by the orthodoxy of the Sunnis, hold to the position that truth is one, both in fundamentals and details. Discussion and difference are valid in jurisprudence and the daily affairs of people in order to arrive at the truth, even though it is not in itself categorical. However, differences in theology are not permissible when truth is categorical. Notwithstanding this view, differences continued among the Islamic schools, both in theology and jurisprudence. But the different Islamic schools are united in their view on the absoluteness of Islam and its exclusive possession of truth: “Religion for God is Islam”, “And if the person should follow a religion other than Islam, it would not be accepted.”

CULTURAL AND POLITICAL PLURALISM

The early acknowledgement of Judaism and Christianity as predecessors of Islam gradually disappeared during the ninth century due to a growing belief that the former religions were abrogated or replaced and that all of humankind must seek salvation by adhering to the true religion revealed by Muhammad. Followers of Abrahamic religions were allowed the freedom to practise their creeds, for there is no compulsion in religion, according to the Qur'an. However, under their imperial state, Muslims held the highest status, and others did not enjoy the same rights as Muslims. Within this absolute and exclusive context, the scheme of Dar al-Islam and Dar al-Harb emerged. No one doubted this scheme during the medieval period, except Rashid al-Din, the minister of the Mughals and their historiographer, who upheld the view that verses on war had been abrogated by verses on peace, tranquillity and gentle preaching.

During the medieval period, religious debate grew fervent and was largely intolerant. In fact, exclusivity became paramount for the three religions of Judaism, Christianity and Islam. This is why religious arguments dominated the period. Each religion negated the other. It is well known how the Courts of Inquisition behaved with Muslims and Jews in Andalucía. There was a persistent attempt, initially by European Catholics, and then Protestants, to establish religiously unified societies at any cost. After the eighteenth century, during the age of the nation-state, this endeavour turned increasingly dangerous as there was tolerance of religious pluralism but not ethnic diversity. All the same, Muslims generally accepted religious and ethnic pluralism, but without accepting the idea of equal rights and duties, notwithstanding the Qur'anic stipulations on the equality of humankind and the appreciation of people in terms of their actions.

While Islamic revivalism has gained prominence in our cultural sphere, it is important to understand that it does not represent merely a repetition of the past, even if it refers to the texts of past scholars. For the texts have become symbols, as C. Geertz has said.² The heritage of religious pluralism, which Ottomans called the Millet system, has been rejected. Muslims exercised discrimination during the medieval period because they were superior in numbers and in power, while the Europeans exercised tolerance because of the new ideas that came into being with modernity. However, Muslim revivalists have in fact upheld the idea of differentiation, but not discrimination, because they felt that their identity was in danger. Revivalist thought among the neo-Islamists, as is the case with the neo-Evangelicals, is ideological. Ideology by its nature is exclusivist and absolutist: it does not accept pluralism because it rejects relativism, which it regards as a concession to either religion or interest.

Revivalist Islamists from the 1950s to the 1970s were extremely uncomfortable when discussing the issue of political pluralism and, more importantly, cultural

and religious pluralism. They viewed pluralism as a means to dismiss Islam's ultimate authority. Today, they remain suspicious of cultural pluralism because they believe that the culture of the people should be Islam alone. However, they have started accepting political pluralism and multi-party systems and allying themselves with nationalist parties in elections and demonstrations. They have written numerous books on authenticating pluralism and difference (*ikhtilaf*) from the Qur'an and Sunna. By studying the history of Islam, they have learned that the Islamic experience was different from the European one. It accepted diversity, difference and the recognition of others; however, many thinkers are still reluctant to describe that experience as liberal. Furthermore, if a Christian disagreed with Islamists on one issue or another, they would revert to old accusations of distrust towards the nation and society.

On political matters, no moderate Islamist today speaks of the doctrine of *al-hakimiyya* (God's governance). But all Islamists, radical or moderate, call for the establishment of the Islamic state and the application of the Shari'a. It seems that mainstream movements of the Brotherhood in the Arab world, especially in Egypt, Syria, Jordan and Yemen, reject the use of violence. Outside of Lebanon, Jordan, Kuwait and Yemen, they are not allowed to organise politically, either because religious parties are outlawed or because the authorities distrust their acceptance of political pluralism and peaceful transfer of power. All the same, even where they are outlawed, these movements lead protests in society. Given that majorities are sensitive to symbolic issues, including the question of Palestine and the nature of an Islamic state and society, Islamists who are not allowed to play a public role are still capable of mobilising the masses, who in turn are inclined to large-scale protests and subject to radicalism due to the pressures of the economic and political conditions under which they live.

MUSLIM WORLDVIEWS

To demonstrate that the Islamists are new players in the international arena, and to highlight the fact that their view of the world is complex, I will briefly discuss their view of human rights. Since the 1950s, Islamists have publicly criticised the International Declaration of Human Rights on the pretext that it is based on the doctrine of natural law. Islamists believe that human rights should be based on the doctrine of divine obligations, as articulated in the Shari'a. They refer to the greatness of Islamic textual and historical analysis and experience: caring for humans, particularly women and children. They also consider the West hypocritical and racist because of its double standards. In the 1970s and 1980s they began issuing Islamic Declarations for human rights founded on the Qur'an and the Sunna. In reality, this was an imitation of the agenda and strategy of the International Declaration, with the addition that these rights are

considered divine duties as they are cited in the Qur'an.

This can be understood in two ways: Islamists insist on the particularities of Islamic declarations of human rights on the one hand, but equally believe they are contributing to modern universal values. Nonetheless, it is strange that the Islamists who have suffered more than the others – because of the lack of pluralism, democracy and human rights, and still have several thousand colleagues in jails – are so slow to recognise the importance of pluralism, democracy and human rights. Even today, they are not at the forefront of those who are calling for democracy and human rights.

The Islamist worldview and relationship with the world explains their attitude to pluralism, democracy and human rights. Over the last fifty years, thousands of books and publications critical of orientalism and colonialism, as well as of Western missionary activities, have accumulated and contribute to the idea of the West as a categorical opponent. During the 1960s and 1970s the idea that Islam was the alternative to the decadent and misdirected West began to dominate Islamist thinking. The reason could be summarised by the Western tendency to dominate, colonise and deal unjustly with the rest of the world, especially the Muslim world. Later, another reason was added, which was the establishment and or support of corrupt regimes in the Islamic world by Western powers. In the 1970s, the Islamists considered the West to be an evil for the entire world, and especially for Muslims, because it perceived Muslims as antagonists, situating this antagonism in the historical struggle between Muslims and Christians. Al-Mawdudi wrote about the “devil of nationalism” that the West had brought into the Islamic world, one which would destroy both the Muslim and Western worlds. Sayyid Qutb wrote about the conflict between Islam and capitalism. Omar Farrukh and Muhammad al-Bahi added to this discourse by discussing the West, colonialism, Western notions of orientalism and the West's missionary activities. Furthermore, Muhammad al-Ghazali wrote about Islam's conflict with socialism, and Muhammad Qutb and Anwar al-Jundi discussed the Jewish origin of Western culture. The early Islamists had come across a few writings that discussed the impending disintegration of the West. After the 1960s, condemnation of the West became symbolic and stopped focusing on single issues. This development could be attributed to the way oppressed Islamists eschewed Western values and tools of thought, while simultaneously confronting repressive regimes; moreover, they hoped to create a system of thought contrary to Western values, which they viewed as stacked against Islam and the Islamists.

At the same time, it is noteworthy that during the 1970s many Islamists escaping persecution took refuge in Europe and the United States. In the 1980s, many works were published that justified living in the West, and this branch of writing became known as the jurisprudence of minorities. Egyptian and Syrian

Islamists justified this course of action with the notion that Islam is a global religion and that Muslims are called upon to participate in world activities to increase their influence in the world. The issues of Dar al-Islam and Dar al-Harb are then seen as historical legal developments that do not preclude the unity of the world. What remains is God's command to honour and deal fairly with non-Muslims if they do not fight the Muslims. Thus, there is no reason to fight a group of people or a state unless they act against Islam or occupy its lands. Enmity ends with the end of the conflict. As is the case with other matters, political and cultural events have some impact on shaping the ideas of Islamists. Opposition to the United States and the West has increased after the second Gulf War, the latest renewal of fighting in Palestine, and the invasion of Iraq. However, such opposition is not restricted to Islamists, but includes other sections of society. It should be emphasised that not many religious symbols have been employed in this opposition.

What has energised Islamists is the discussion of "the clash of civilisations" suggested by Huntington in the early 1990s.³ Islamists insist on the peaceful nature of Islam and the defensiveness of jihad. As a counterpart, the rest of their discourse is directed towards developing criticisms against the aggressiveness of the West. A similar response occurred towards the events surrounding Osama Bin Laden and the 11 September 2001 attacks in the USA. After a short introduction condemning the killing of innocent people, the attack against the US and a statement that Bin Laden only represents his own understanding of Islam, Islamists then go on to strongly criticise the West, itemising a list of grievances, especially against the United States. Included in these grievances are Palestine, Iraq and, on occasion, the axis of evil, and the campaign of the Western media against Islam. So, has there been any change in the worldview of the Islamists? Where is mainstream or moderate Islam? What are the possibilities of the emergence of "liberal" and pluralistic Islam? In October 2001, *Time Magazine* published an article by Karen Armstrong in which she called upon her readers to reclaim Islam from its kidnapers.⁴ Former President Bush and others, including former British prime minister Tony Blair, have suggested that Muslims return to moderate Islam, that is the Islam of the mainstream. The idea of a mainstream Islam is an important idea for the intellectuals of Islamic traditionalism because it signifies the Islam of the majority.

Orthodox or Sunni Muslims believe that mainstream Islam is the middle road between a wide range of schools and divisions that are evaluated according to their proximity to orthodox Islam. Sunni Islam does not have a highly defined hierarchy, a consent creed or a sacred authority. These human and pluralistic characteristics allowed Islam to survive united, even though it existed in diversified contexts. However, during a situation of crisis, Sunni Islam becomes itself part of the problem, and this has been the situation for the last few decades.

The severe attacks of the Muslim reformers, as well as those of Islamists and the Salafi (ancestors of the tradition), weakened the power of traditional authorities. When the Islamists took over the reformers, they filled in the authority gap left by the traditionalists and received popular support because of their radical activities and their ability to respond to the challenges by ready answers derived from the Qur'an and dependent symbolically on radical change. The old and neo-traditionalists, who are affected by the views of the reformers, were no longer alone, and able to command authority by issuing fatwas and exercising *ijtihad*. Sometime they exceeded the Islamists in condemning the West, either out of competition or weakness or conviction. This is why, for the last two decades, there has been a struggle over the principles and ethos of Islam not only between the Islamists and the traditionalists, but also between moderate and radical Islamists. The Islamists try to seize authority over Islam through the return to the mechanisms of traditional *ijtihad* in order to produce "new traditions". However, the neo-traditionalists try to return to the doctrines of the reformers at the beginning of the twentieth century. What I have said so far about the traditionalists is important because their legal views and fatwas are adhered to by a majority of the people, but the neo-traditionalists are more open to new ideas and interactions.

Revivalist Islamists of the mainstream trend have come a long way in avoiding fundamentalism and joining the wider world. Most of them today are non-partisans and usually enjoy acceptable relations with political authorities. In addition, over the last two decades they have mostly been engaged in discussions with the world Council of Churches and the Catholic Church under the banner of Muslim-Christian dialogue. While churchmen are not the only group that is engaged with the Islamists, they have nonetheless had a more positive effect on their thinking about the West, which they no longer perceive as a single monolithic bloc.

Meanwhile, there have been concurrent positive experiences within their own countries that have affected the Islamists. They know, for instance, that they can participate in and affect political life if governments open up. The partial liberalising of the political system enables them to win around 30 per cent of the vote in many countries. Although Americans supported most of the Arab regimes, neo-Islamists know that only the West can pressure regimes to change and open up, and that every change towards democracy will be in favour of Islamists. They have noticed the halt in the process toward democracy since the West (that has had negative relations with the Islamists) stopped pressuring the regimes in the middle of the 1990s. If the ongoing political and intellectual change among the Islamists is insufficient, it is because they are not able to genuinely and substantially participate in political life. For instance, Jordanian and Yemeni Islamists have been through major changes because they have been

able to function within their political contexts, to freely organise and become members of parliament, the cabinet and other institutions, while the radical movements are no longer the result of splits within the mainstream movements. Early in the 1980s, they established themselves as independent organisations. No doubt political openness and a proper consideration of human rights and political rights in dealing with the Islamists will go a long way in mitigating their doctrinal policies and encouraging them to embark on a peaceful course of action rather than violence in negative economic and security conditions.

In order to respond properly to radicalism and violence, moderate Islam requires a new worldview and an open space. Regardless of what has been said since 11 September about our need for a new worldview, expressions of injustice and hopelessness still dominate for many reasons, including the issue of Palestine, the invasion of Iraq and the positioning of Arab regimes between their people and the West. I am not calling for any mechanical relationship between realities and consciousness, but there will definitely be a major positive response from the Muslim world if the Palestinian issue were to be justly resolved, which, in turn would increase the possibility of positive and healthy relations between the Islamists, nationalists and the Western world.

Having said this much, we might ask the question Hamilton Gibb asked about fifty years ago: What is the direction of Islam?⁵ Gibb was hopeful about the Indian Peninsula. However, the resurgence of the Taliban, the inability of radical Islamists to control it, and the feeling of isolation amongst Muslims in the Indian Peninsula has dissipated that hope. Other scholars have shown their dismay over the future of Islam because of the rise of fundamentalists and look instead for hope amongst Muslims in East Asia.

Some Arab scholars believe that European and American Muslims are the hope for Islam. However, all of these views are no more than personal impressions, which Clifford Geertz dismisses, since there is more than one Islam in the world ranging from Morocco to Indonesia. Talal Asad, however, argues that there is a unity of perception or a worldview that covers the entire Islamic world.⁶ Therefore, we have a criterion for regarding one type of Islam as good and the other as?

A new, under-explored phenomenon that has become a part of the Islamic revival is the rise of Sufi movements, which outnumber political movements but are less effective. Is, then, Sufi Islam the alternative for revivalist Islam? Ultimately, I see no problem in the Islam of today, whether Sufi or revivalist, for other religions also have radical revivalist movements. However, the problem lies in the inability of many Muslims to adjust to the contemporary world. For this is another manifestation of cultural pessimism, one that leads to stagnation and depression rather than violence. In the final analysis, much of this discussion would have been irrelevant had it not been for the events of 11 September and

the occupation of Iraq. The Arabs, in particular, must work to rectify their relationships with the world, as well as changing their worldview within Arab spheres of culture and politics. I do not believe that the political, economic or cultural problems that face the Japanese or the Chinese with the United States and the West have been any less intense. However, they have managed to resolve their problems without declaring war against liberal pluralism. Moderate Islam is, then, the Islam of proper relationships with the world, of responsibility, participation, co-existence and a common future. This was the philosophy of the historical experience of Islamic civilisation. If it cannot be repeated, then, we should have the courage and the will to face the hopelessness and despair that currently colours the view of the world in the eyes of many Muslims.

NOTES

1. Albert Hourani, *Arabic Thought in the Liberal Age, 1798–1942*, Cambridge, MA: Cambridge University Press, 1983.
2. Clifford Geertz, *Islam Observed: Religious Development in Morocco and Indonesia*, Chicago, IL: Chicago University Press, 1971.
3. Samuel Huntington, “The Clash of Civilizations”, *Foreign Affairs*, Summer 1993.
4. Karen Armstrong, “The True, Peaceful Face of Islam”, *Time Magazine*, 8 October 2001.
5. Hamilton A. R. Gibb, *Whither Islam: A Survey of Modern Movements in the Moslem World*, London: Victor Gollancz, 1932.
6. Talal Asad, *The Genealogy of Religion*, Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1993.

CHAPTER 5

Democracy, Pluralism and Political Islam

ADEL DAHER

The aim of this chapter is to address whether political Islam, in some of its well-known versions, is compatible, as far as its socio-political ends are concerned, with the requirements of just, democratic institutions. The emphasis here is on the term “just”, as certain understandings of democratic institutions have no conceptual connection between justice and democracy. In theory, a state may be democratic but not just, where “just” is understood in its broad sense. I argue that democracy without justice, though logically conceivable, is democracy only in form but not in substance. At best, it is procedural democracy. Therein lies the rationale for my desire to explore not merely whether the aims of political Islam are reconcilable with the requirements of democratic institutions, but, more importantly, whether they are reconcilable with just, democratic institutions. However, I shall limit myself to the political sense of “just”, for within the representative movements of political Islam there is nothing in the nature of their common central aims that prevents them from being reconcilable with economic or social justice. Nevertheless, as will become evident in this chapter, the nature of these common aims precludes their being reconcilable with political justice as it relates to democratic praxis.

I begin with some preliminary remarks about the meaning and criteria of just, democratic institutions. It would help to focus the discussion at this point on what lies at the heart of these requirements, namely pluralism.

Theories of pluralism abound. But I shall limit myself to a brief discussion of classical pluralism, radical pluralism and liberal pluralism. Classical pluralists, like Robert Dahl, Seymour Martin Lipset, and so on, focus on conflict among society’s interest groups.¹ They share this point of view with radical pluralists, such as Chantal Mouffe, Ernesto Laclau, Claude Lefort and William Connolly.²

However, they may be distinguished by the fact that the classical pluralists regard conflict as a problem for democracy and are mainly concerned with how to maintain stability in conflict-ridden societies. On the other hand, radical pluralists do not regard conflict as a problem for democracy, but consider it to be a virtue of democracy which acts as a bulwark against autocracy. If classic pluralist theory lends itself to a Hobbesian interpretation, radical pluralist theory, by contrast, explicitly draws upon key concepts of post-structuralist philosophers such as Lyotard, Foucault and Derrida. Regardless of their differences, they provide us with a common insight that is hard to ignore, namely that, no matter how homogeneous present-day societies claim to be, they are still plural societies, each internally divided along gender lines, class lines, ethnic lines, and so on. In short, “interest” pluralism is a significant feature of modern societies.

In one way or another, liberal theories of pluralism attempt to justify placing limits on political authority, that aim to guarantee the protection of basic freedoms, such as the freedoms of conscience, thought, belief, expression, of pursuing one’s life plans and combining with others for any non-malicious purpose. These theories argue that a clear line demarcating the public domain from the private one needs to be drawn. However, differences arise among liberal pluralists on where this line should be drawn, which further raises questions such as what to include or exclude from the set of basic liberties, and whether liberty should be understood as a solely negative value.³

However, two beliefs lie behind all such theories: the belief in the intimate connection between democracy and liberalism, and the belief in “value” pluralism. In my judgement, both are defensible. Let us consider value pluralism first. It is reasonable to claim in this case, without adopting a sceptical stance, as many liberals mistakenly do, that there are several comprehensive doctrines of a religious-metaphysical nature, or even a secular nature, that represent multiple perspectives on the good. Many are incommensurate and, therefore, one cannot rationally argue the superiority of one doctrine or perspective over the others. But even when incommensurability is not the issue, agreement with regard to the validity of these comprehensive doctrines is difficult, if not impossible, to reach. One important consequence of this fact is that no such doctrine should be integrated into the public domain. It should not be institutionalised, for that inevitably leads to the imposition of the values of one segment of society on all other segments.

Value pluralism is based on the insight that values do not lend themselves to a metaphysically ordered hierarchy.⁴ This entails the fact that a plurality of reasonable conceptions of the good may be held as reasonable beliefs. Therefore, individual judgement and choice in the domain of values is of paramount importance, and the individual who judges and chooses is akin to the autonomous individual depicted in Kant’s moral theory. This position requires an equality of

moral status of all persons as autonomous beings. The state should not promote a particular conception of the good, but should maintain neutrality vis-à-vis the different conceptions, if it is not to descend into paternalistic interfering with a citizen's pursuit, as a rational autonomous person, of what he or she considers to be good.⁵ Respect for autonomy is not only incompatible with paternalism, but with the notion of perfectionism as well. An anti-perfectionist stance on the part of the state involves rejecting the imposition of a conception of the good on the citizenry that infringes upon their autonomy.

Neutrality vis-à-vis different conceptions of the good necessarily entails neutrality vis-à-vis the comprehensive doctrines that are at the basis of these different conceptions. For what applies to the former, with regard to being subject to individual judgement and choice, applies *mutatis mutandis* to the latter, whether they are of a religious-metaphysical nature or a secular one. As there is no metaphysically ordered hierarchy of values, so there is no metaphysically ordered hierarchy of validity involving comprehensive religious-metaphysical doctrines or even secular *weltanschauungs* or worldviews. Therefore, here too we could have, in theory, a number of such reasonable doctrines or *weltanschauungs*.

The principle of neutrality, as it bears on the question of pluralism, cannot be separated from the idea of the priority of the right over the good. For this principle necessitates that the private sphere be sharply demarcated from the public, which requires that only actions that have a bearing, within the ambit of the public sphere, on just social relations, be the proper subject of political control. This, obviously, gives priority in the public domain to rules of just social relations over the good.⁶

The principle of neutrality is not dictated by respect for autonomy alone, but also by the principle of mutual respect. The latter can be described as follows – given a multiplicity of comprehensive doctrines, where the grounds are not transparent to those who do not adhere to them, the upholders of any of these doctrines ought to respect the epistemic authority of upholders of other doctrines with regard to determining for themselves what is valuable, good and true. This principle of epistemic equality follows directly from the fact that no group holds a privileged epistemic position in this domain. Clearly, any group that claims epistemic privilege for itself, and refuses to yield its epistemic authority to any other group, can do so effectively only if it holds a position of power that enables it to impose its doctrines on others. Mutual respect is the only fair and just alternative on the basis of which the adherents of diverse comprehensive doctrines should organise their dealings with each other. This becomes all the more obvious in view of the fact that the rejection of this alternative is a gross violation of the principle of universalisability. This principle, which sets the minimum requirement for justice and for moral rightness, asserts that given anything x (where x is a variable ranging over actions, decisions, policies and

the like), if a maxim is a sufficient justification for *x*, then it is also a sufficient justification for whatever is similar to *x* in the relevant respects. In the present context, this principle implies that if a maxim is a sufficient justification for the adherents of one comprehensive doctrine to refuse to yield their epistemic authority to the adherents of any other such doctrine, then that same maxim is equally a sufficient justification for the latter to refuse to yield their epistemic authority to the former. This is unavoidable as long as there is epistemic parity between the two. Hence it is clear that rejecting the principle of mutual respect places those who violate it a short step from violating the universalisability principle. Such rejection leads to an impasse, or contradictory position, whereby a group which claims the right to resist yielding its own epistemic authority claims to have the right to deny the epistemic authority of others, and to demand that these others submit to its epistemic authority. However, if the universalisability principle is the basis of the right of every group, in a situation of epistemic parity, to refuse to yield its epistemic authority to any other group, it follows that no group has the right to demand of any other group to yield its epistemic authority to it.

Given the ineluctability, from the normative perspective, of adopting the principle of mutual respect, we may ask what its adoption amounts to on the public level – the level of state policy. The answer is clear: mutual respect, on this level, should be translated into a policy of neutrality. For if the state were to promote one doctrine to the exclusion of all others, it would violate the universalisability principle, in that it would be demanding that the adherents of all other doctrines yield their epistemic authority to the one promoted by the state. Such a demand is ruled out by the principle of mutual respect. It is obvious, therefore, that the normative necessity of the principle of mutual respect can only be realised through state neutrality.

If pluralism requires that political justice be given pride of place – that is, that right be given precedence over good – then political justice, in turn, requires that democracy be given precedence over all other political arrangements. Here we see the intimate connection between liberalism and democracy. Democratic procedures, with this understanding, would not merely be an addition to an already just society, an added mechanism, as it were, to aggregate preferences in that society, but they would become integral to just or liberal institutions. “The operation of robust methods to facilitate social discourse, collective deliberation and public expression and discussion,” as John Christman reminds us, “is essential for principles of justice to be fully articulated and operational”.⁷ Without “actual voices” that represent the diverse perspectives called upon “to articulate the specific interests, value perspectives, identities, and particular experiences that make up an increasingly differentiated social world”, there can be no effective way to work out the norms required to organise the process of

dialogical social interaction among the representatives of diverse interests, value perspectives and identities. Without these voices, or the conditions for their being heard, all such normative principles “run the risk of ... exclusion and bias”,⁸ which explains why justice cannot be decoupled from democracy nor democracy from justice.

Pluralism constitutes the middle term between justice and democracy. For if any differentiation in the social world is left out, for example, diverse interests, identities and value perspectives, then the question of whether democratic institutions are just or unjust does not arise, or at least loses its importance. This is obvious in view of the fact that a political institution becomes unjust when it embodies a policy of exclusion. However, such a policy is only possible if there is something to be excluded. Therefore, there would be no need for democratic procedures in a non-plural society (if such an entity were to exist) to be other than added mechanisms to aggregate preferences. But, as a non-plural society is pure fiction, the demand for coupling democracy and justice is of paramount importance.

I shall now turn to a discussion of the requirements of just, democratic institutions. A good place to begin is to ask what is the *raison d'être* of such institutions? The answer, in my judgement, lies in the fact that no person is of sufficient intelligence, wisdom and goodness to rule over others without their consent. The positive significance of this is that all adults who are affected by the political institutions of their community have the right to participate in shaping and managing these institutions, regardless of the perspective or interest each represents. The values and policies that are the result of this political process do not belong to one segment of society to the exclusion of others, but concern all individuals and groups in society. After all, it is around these values and policies that their common social life is to be organised. Therefore, every individual and group has the right to participate in determining these values and policies. Thus, the core of the democratic ideal is the idea of participation being an all-inclusive process.

A central presupposition of the commitment to the democratic ideal is the belief in the ability of collective human reason to find solutions to the problems that humanity encounters. By co-operating in the use of their rational powers and talents, people can gradually and steadily acquire the knowledge and wisdom necessary to guide their collective actions towards that which serves their collective interests.

In the light of the preceding discussion, we may now specify the conditions required for the establishment of just, democratic institutions. The most important of these conditions are the following. First, no individual or group may have a monopoly on power – that is, the collective will alone must be the source of political power. Second, there must be an equal opportunity for all

to participate in the political process, which requires, in turn, the neutrality of the state vis-à-vis all competing legitimate interests, as well as all competing reasonable comprehensive doctrines and value perspectives. Third, each citizen must be granted a right to the most extensive liberty commensurate with a like liberty for all. Fourth, no member of the community is to be deprived of any of his/her citizenship rights arbitrarily, for example, on religious or ethnic grounds. Fifth and last, there must exist a co-operative framework within which the proper conditions for dialogical social interaction among all representatives of various value perspectives, interests and comprehensive doctrines can be satisfied and the principle of mutual respect observed.

I shall turn now to political Islam and demonstrate why its aims, if implemented, would exclude the possibility of any of the preceding five conditions from being satisfied.

Clearly there is no single unified doctrine or political ideology shared by all the movements representing political Islam. What I have in mind, then, when I refer to political Islam, are movements inspired in particular by Islamist ideologues, such as al Mawdudi, Sayyed Kotb, Khomeini and his followers, Hassan al-Banna, Anwar al-Jundi, Hassan al-Turabi, and Rashid al-Ghannoushi.⁹ I do not claim that there are no differences among these thinkers; on the contrary, differences exist, even substantive ones. My main concern, however, is with the beliefs that they share and which constitute the ideological core of the diverse Islamist movements under consideration. It is these beliefs that are, in so far as their political implications are concerned, incontrovertibly incompatible with the establishment of just, democratic institutions in Islamic societies. These beliefs may be reduced almost entirely to a single fundamental belief, namely the belief that Islam, as a religion, is an all-inclusive system.¹⁰ No important aspect of life – earthly life – can be subsumed under secular principles, in other words, principles that are not derivable from, or at least are not in accord with, the teachings of Islam. This explains why secularism, from this point of view, is regarded by Islamists to be similar to atheism, which makes it, of course, the most dreadful offence from the religious perspective. Belief in God, then, necessarily involves duties that extend to all important aspects of life, whether they have to do with politics or civil society, law or morality, personal values or social values.

It comes as no surprise, therefore, to find that one of the salient shared beliefs of the movements under consideration is the belief that Islam cannot conceptually be divorced from politics,¹¹ in the sense that being political, in the present context, means organising into a political party the central aim of which is to establish an Islamic state, or a state organised around Islamic principles and values. Islam, as a religion, is not complete, on this view, unless this aim is accomplished. It is obvious, in the light of this, that Islamists are not in

the business of merely politicising Islam as, for example, liberation theologians in Latin America politicised Christianity; they are instead in the business of Islamising politics, which is far more inimical to democratic politics, as I shall demonstrate below.

Islamists, as my previous discussion indicates, go much further than demanding the Islamisation of politics (that is, the governance of the political aspect of communal life in accordance with Islamic principles). The “logic” of their belief that the faith of Islam is an all-inclusive system requires that all other important aspects of life be Islamised and, consequently, subsumed under Islamic principles. Even knowledge, including scientific knowledge, is not exempt from this condition. Obviously, if they go that far in their demand for Islamisation, then, *a fortiori*, they cannot be content with less than the Islamisation of law, economics, education, art, values, and so on. Such wholesale Islamisation is obviously exclusionary in an overweening way. For it entails that the religious duties of the Muslim encompass the duty to bring Islamic principles and values to bear on all aspects of life, in addition to the duty of carrying out the Five Pillars of Islam, that is the duties of affirmation of faith, daily prayer, pilgrimage, fasting and *ḥaḳāt* or the giving of alms. We have here the seeds of a totalitarian system. Such a totalitarian view of Islam is bound to translate into political arrangements that permit no secular perspective in any area of life to rival the Islamic perspective, were an Islamist group to attain political power. All such perspectives, though they pertain to aspects of culture and social life that are not normally and appropriately viewed as integral to religion, would be constantly pressured to merge into, or at least accommodate, the Islamic perspective. Cultural diversity, along with value pluralism and personal freedoms, can hardly thrive under such political arrangements.

This characteristic becomes all the more obvious when we consider the rationale that all the Islamist ideologues mentioned above provide for viewing the establishment of an Islamic state as a religious duty, namely the dictum that sovereignty belongs to God.¹² In an important sense, of course, such as the purely theological sense, this dictum expresses a pleonasm, or a self-containing conceptual truth, not to be disputed, as long as it is taken not to have any existential significance. For God, being the creator and sustainer of everything in existence, by definition rules over everything, and in that sense He is the absolute and ultimate sovereign. At least, this belief is a logical extension from the conception of the divine in the Abrahamic tradition. There are other notions, however, such as the deistic conception, which would not yield the same consequence with regard to how divine sovereignty is to be interpreted, but such conceptions are not relevant to this chapter. Thus, God, non-deistically conceived, rules over the universe in the sense that the laws that govern natural events are subject to His will and sustained by His omnipotent power,

and He alone has the power to suspend them or abrogate them, if He so chooses.

Islamist ideologues, however, extend the dictum of divine sovereignty from its theological context to one which is socio-political, alleging that this is a necessary consequence of a correct interpretation of Islam. I do not believe, myself, that this is the way to interpret Islam. I have demonstrated this elsewhere, arguing that the aspects of Islam that have to do with the organisation of society are merely contingently related to Islam and that, at best, they have a historical but not an essential or conceptual relationship to Islam.¹³ Thus, to interpret Islam, as a religion, the way the Islamists interpret it, is to commit a gross fallacy, the fallacy of converting what is historical and contingent to what is necessary and thus ahistorical.

I am not concerned here with Islam, as such, and the proper way to interpret its relationship to socio-political issues; but I am interested in how the Islamists under consideration interpret this relationship. According to their interpretation we are under an obligation to regard divine sovereignty as including the socio-political sphere. This is to say that the socio-political organisation of society must conform to divine law as interpreted by them. When Divine Sovereignty is so interpreted, the practical consequences of such an interpretation create ideal conditions for giving a free rein to the imposition of political authority in all spheres of life. This transforms the dictum “sovereignty belongs to God” into a recipe for totalitarianism more absolute than any previous example in history. This arises from the reductionist nature of Islamist ideology, where not only human duties become at bottom religious duties, but also what is at best desirable becomes obligatory on account of the apparent requirements of the faith. Thus, the domain of religious obligations is so extensive that there is hardly any room left for personal freedoms. It is the case, then, that the authority of God, viewed from the perspective of Islamist ideology, is so encompassing as to extend even to the private life of an individual. But to give divine sovereignty a socio-political meaning, in this case, is to place all human actions under an all-encompassing divine law. This is tantamount not only to making political obligation a species of religious obligation, but also to subjecting in effect all aspects of life to human political authority. For the Sovereignty of God, if it is to be extended to the socio-political domain, cannot, unlike His Sovereignty over nature, be exercised directly but only indirectly through human beings who act as His appointed agents. This inevitably leads to the situation where those who claim to speak for God, or who are deemed to be qualified to rule in the name of God, carry through their programme of giving the alleged all-encompassing authority of divine law political and legal expression, should they wield unhampered political authority. Would not the most likely outcome of this development be the collapse of the private domain into the public, thereby laying the foundation of a totalitarian system?

Clearly none of the five requirements of just, democratic institutions that embody the linkage that pluralism establishes between justice and democracy would be met in an Islamic state established along the principles laid out by Islamists. The first requirement, as we saw, is that power should not be monopolised. However, if sovereignty belongs to God alone and divine sovereignty is regarded as having socio-political implications, then given the fact that divine sovereignty in the socio-political sphere is exercised through humans, it necessarily follows that the ideological group which governs on behalf of God must possess a monopoly over power. Islamists continually state that their party is the party of God and every competing party is the party of the devil. Even those among them who are perceived as relatively moderate (for example, the Tunisian, Rashid al-Ghannoushi) are prepared to tolerate political differences only if they are about the means and not the ends.¹⁴ Political power must belong to those who believe in, and are suited to, achieving the ends of the Islamic state, and other citizens, if they are not suppressed, are bound to be marginalised. Thus, the ends of the Islamic state are those set by the ideology of the Islamist group that happens to prevail politically.

It is not a fruitful argument to maintain that since God does not govern directly nor does He bestow political power on humans, therefore in principle political arrangements can exist that could grant the collective will an important, or even a crucial, role in determining who rules. I believe this argument is of no avail because whatever political arrangements are in place, and no matter how much they mimic democratic processes, the fact remains that the Islamic state envisaged by the Islamists under consideration would be such that its guardians would ensure that no groups are empowered other than those whose aims coincide with the aims of the “party of God”. This necessarily follows from the “logic” of their thinking, which is reduced to three essential components. The first relates to their belief that the duty to establish an Islamic state is a religious duty. The second concerns their belief that an Islamic state must be governed by divine law. The third element of this “logic” holds that they are the only persons privileged enough to provide the right interpretation of divine law and its socio-political implications. Given these three aspects of their “logic”, how can those Islamists who hold them with such certainty and passion be relied upon not to monopolise political power wherever they gain it? To fail to monopolise political power would, from their point of view, be contrary to divine injunction. There can be no stronger reason, from this point of view, for any action other than that it is required by divine injunction. It is clear, then, that if these Islamists were to gain political power, given the “logic” of their thinking, they would have the strongest reason possible to ensure that they kept a permanent hold on it.

This brings us to the second requirement of just, democratic institutions:

the requirement of neutrality. The *raison d'être* for such institutions, we should remember, is that human beings should not be ruled without consent. The right to determine the policies and values around which a community is to be organised belongs to all its members and not to a select few or even the majority. They possess this right distributively as well as collectively. Their collective possession is, no doubt, derived from their possession of it distributively. Thus, ultimately it is the right of every autonomous individual to participate in political life on an equal footing with everyone else. In a world permeated by various forms of pluralism generating different and sometimes conflicting perspectives, every perspective should have a right to an equal position in public space.

It is easy to show that the Islamic state envisaged by the Islamists under consideration cannot, by its very nature, be neutral *vis-à-vis* conflicting perspectives, and, consequently it will fail to protect the right of equal opportunity for all within the domain of political life. Consider the fact of interest pluralism, as well as value pluralism: although a religious outlook does not necessarily rule out differences in interests or values, the fact remains that two tendencies lie within it which make it incompatible with pluralism when it is brought to bear on public issues. The first is the Islamists' reductionist tendency, that is to say, their tendency to view conflicts of interest or values as being reducible to a single fundamental conflict between good and evil. When this is translated into socio-political terms, conflicts become a messianic fight which cannot be managed politically in a manner that aims to harmonise conflicting interests in order to maintain stability and peace. The second tendency is to impose its own standards as the exclusive criteria by which to judge the legitimacy of any interest or value. Thus, the religious outlook tends to regard anything which conflicts with its standards as an aberration. When this is translated into socio-political terms, it is bound to entail that any point of view concerning public issues, with its corresponding interests and values is illegitimate, unless it coincides or is at least compatible with the point of view embodied by the religious outlook.

One could object that the would-be Islamic state will be guided by divine law which, by definition, cannot be unjust; it therefore follows that the socio-political institutions of such a state are more likely than those of any other type of state to meet the requirements of justice, as long as they remain under divine guidance. The response to this objection is simple: the claim that divine law will guide this state is nonsense; what will, in fact, guide the state is what the Islamists *believe* is the divine law, and what they claim to be its socio-political content. The so-called divine law is reduced to a socio-political ideology reflecting the specific point of view of the Islamic group that holds the reins of power and which expresses the group's interests. The consequences of this are obvious: as long as the Islamic group in question is unable to acknowledge that it is within

the ambit of any other group that does not share its perspective in determining a particular course of action in the public sphere as being right, it is bound to deny a political role for any such group which holds a competing perspective. What chance would a non-Muslim, or an agnostic, a secularist or a liberal Muslim, have of participating in public life on an equal footing with those whose perspective would coincide with that of the dominant Islamic group? Clearly the answer is “none”. Would there be any room for identity politics, gender politics and the like? Of course not. Participatory parity is bound to be ruled out.

It is futile to object to this position on the grounds that just, democratic institutions must embody majority rule, and if the majority in a country is Muslim and chooses to be ruled by Islamists, then there can be no deviation from the requirements of just, democratic institutions. My response to this point of view is that the process that produces an Islamist government would only be procedurally democratic; in substance, it would embody everything that is antithetical to just, democratic institutions. To begin with, the mere fact that a group, which happens to constitute a numerical majority in a state aspires to become a political majority, and to constitutionally guarantee its status as a political majority, is contrary to the spirit of democracy and the civic duties stemming from that spirit. To aspire to do so is to express an unmistakable desire for establishing a tyranny of the majority. This is so, whether the group constitutes a religious majority or an ethnic or a cultural one. Whites in the United States, for example, cannot be justified, on democratic grounds, in seeking to be a political majority because of their numerical superiority; nor, for similar reasons, are Jews in Israel justified in seeking an analogous status for themselves.

To explain this matter further, let me begin by distinguishing principles that inform democratic practice from principles that should inform our choice for constitutional essentials.¹⁵ Majority rule is of the former kind. It is an unavoidable principle, practically speaking, because unanimity about political matters is extremely difficult, if not impossible, to attain. To demand unanimity in this case is tantamount to making the collective political will ineffectual. But when it comes to choosing constitutional essentials, there should be no counterpart to the principle of majority rule among the principles that inform our choice. In other words, we cannot make our choice of constitutional essentials dependent on the opinion of the majority. To demand less than unanimity, or less than “overlapping consensus”¹⁶ is to leave the door wide open for an ethnic or religious majority to secure for itself permanent status as a political majority. However, for the political majority to become identical with a religious or ethnic majority on constitutional grounds, is for it to become incontrovertibly unjust and undemocratic, for this is no longer majority rule but a tyranny of the majority. Therefore, constitutionally speaking, the principles that must constitute our ultimate recourse cannot guarantee the establishment

of just, democratic institutions, unless they meet the approval of all, without exception. Unanimity, or an “overlapping consensus”, is a must on the level of choosing constitutional essentials, if the principles agreed upon are to be fair to all and not yield, in practice, a tyranny of the majority.

Let us assume that the constitutional principles in a particular community merely reflect the perspective of a religious majority. An important consequence of this is that these principles would embody that majority’s comprehensive doctrine of the good, as well as its own interests. Thus, putting these principles into practice could yield only one thing: the imposition of this comprehensive doctrine of the good on all; and the marginalisation, if not the total exclusion, of all voices representing different conceptions of the good and different interests. There can be no room here for either value pluralism or interest pluralism. Furthermore, such a constitution would be anathema to the remaining three requirements of just, democratic institutions. The third requirement, you will remember, granted each individual a right to basic liberties which mirrors the liberties enjoyed by all citizens. Freedom of belief is central here, and it encompasses the freedom to believe in any faith, or to change one’s faith, or be an agnostic or an atheist. However, this freedom can only be guaranteed if the state is religiously neutral. For a religious state cannot be relied upon to guarantee the religious beliefs of others and to spread the ethos of tolerance in society so that individuals are able to exercise their right to freedom of conscience in the absence of external constraints. A religious state, especially of the type envisaged by the Islamists under consideration, is bound to create a fertile environment for intolerance in which individuals are subjected to extraordinary pressures that either compel them to remain being members of the religious faith of the ruling party or make their adherence to their religious belief, if it is not the same as that of the government, highly undesirable. The “logic” of the religious state is such that it cannot but spawn conditions that severely interfere with the right to freedom of conscience. There might be no positive laws limiting that freedom – although this is highly unlikely – but the fact remains that the lack of religious neutrality on the part of the state encourages the religious majority to be intolerant towards those who do not share their religious belief, as well as towards those who are atheists or agnostics. This intolerance is bound to create a state of affairs where those who do not adhere to the state religion, or to any religion will be constantly pressurised to convert to the state religion and thus be immensely constrained from exercising their right to freedom of conscience.

In addition to the pressures of intolerance, there are other pressures emanating from the fact that the religious state is bound to exclude those who do not adhere to the state religion from key public jobs and, worse still, it will deny converts from the state religion or agnostics most of their civil rights and treat them as criminals, at best. This brings us to the fourth requirement of just, democratic

institutions, namely that no member of a polity is to be deprived of his/her citizenship rights on arbitrary grounds. Every citizen, regardless of his/her religious faith or stance vis-à-vis religion, is affected by the policies and laws of the state. This alone grants that individual a *prima facie* right not only to have a voice in determining and managing state institutions on an equal footing with others, but also to have a fair share of public goods, benefits and obligations. It is not one's beliefs, and certainly not one's religious beliefs or stance vis-à-vis religion, that is of relevance here, but the fact that one participates in communal life and is liable to be affected by the collective decisions of one's community. This gives each individual the right not only to participate equally with all others in the political process that is supposed to guide and form these collective decisions, but also the right to seek any position or office, including any at the centre of the political decision-making process.

In a religious state, however, a person's faith or stance vis-à-vis religion becomes relevant in assessing the extent to which that person is a full-fledged citizen, and thus what rights he/she should have, and to what extent he/she should share in public goods, benefits and obligations. In the would-be Islamic state envisaged by the Islamists under consideration, the citizenship of non-Muslims remains incomplete, unless they convert to Islam. Professed agnostics or atheists among those who are Muslims by birth would meet a far worse fate than non-Muslims, as far as forfeiture of their rights is concerned, because they would be treated as apostates or criminals. Even a relatively moderate Islamist such as al-Ghannoushi would be in favour of criminalising apostates, although he differs from other Islamists in that he would consider their crime to be of a political nature.¹⁷ But whether it is considered of a political nature or otherwise, the fact remains that the forfeiture of some of the apostates' basic rights is based on arbitrary grounds, namely that they hold beliefs different from those of the governing party.

It is worth noting here that secularists, even if they profess to be believers, would have the same status in the would-be Islamic state as apostates. For, as we saw earlier in our discussion of political Islam, Islamic belief, from the point of view of the Islamists under consideration, entails that the establishment of an Islamic state is a religious duty. Thus secularism, in accordance with the logic of this point of view, is in effect a denial of Islamic belief and, hence, apostasy. But even if advocates of secularism are spared apostates, in the type of Islamist state under consideration they would still be considered enemies of the state and deprived of many of their basic rights on account of their secularist beliefs.

Let us turn now to the fifth and last requirement of just, democratic institutions, namely the requirement of co-operation, of creating the proper conditions so that dialogical social interaction can take place among individuals holding various differing perspectives, interests and comprehensive doctrines, where

the principle of mutual respect is observed. The *raison d'être* of just, democratic institutions, as we saw, is the belief that all individuals or groups have the same rights to participate in determining the values, policies and norms around which their common life is to be organised, which is a function of participatory parity. The latter belief, however, would not amount to much in practice if it is de-coupled from the belief in the capacity of public reason to develop proper solutions to society's common problems. But public reason is collective reason, and it can work effectively only within a co-operative framework, where an all-inclusive process of dialogical interaction can take place, sustained by the observance of the principle of mutual respect.

A religious state of the type envisaged by the Islamists under consideration will inevitably exclude all those whose religion is other than the state religion from the process of dialogical interaction, as well as all secularists, even where they publicly profess the state religion. The latter cannot effectively participate in determining the policies, values and norms around which their community is to be organised and which will affect their interests. This is inevitable in view of the fact that what such participation is supposed to obtain in an Islamic state is a consensus on the proposed policies, values or norms that would best accord with Islamic teachings. This entails that only those who adhere to the ideology of the ruling Islamist group, and those who support its doctrines, can play an effective role in the public domain. All others are automatically debarred from playing such a role. They become spectators rather than players in the political life of the state.

This is all the more obvious in view of the fact that a religious state, or even the call for establishing such a state, is a gross violation of the principle of mutual respect. It is a principle requiring that participatory parity be coupled with epistemic parity. Thus, when it comes to conflicting comprehensive religious-metaphysical doctrines, or different perspectives on the good, what is required is more than a *modus vivendi* between these doctrines or perspectives. What is required, in fact, is mutual respect, which means, as we saw, that the adherents of each doctrine or conception of the good must respect the right – in other words, the epistemic right – of all those who adhere to different doctrines or conceptions to choose their own path to “truth”. Mutual respect, in this context, consists of epistemic parity. Now, in the absence of epistemic parity in the public arena, the dialogical process of political and social interaction becomes a battle zone in which competing doctrines and conceptions clash. This state of affairs, surely, will lead to the commencement of a process of exclusion which destroys participatory parity. Unless no competing party is able to impose its epistemic authority on others, and a *modus vivendi* is reached as a result, the outcome of this clash will most likely be the domination of epistemic authority by one party, leaving no room for others to play an effective and

meaningful role in the public sphere. The loss of epistemic parity leads to the loss of participatory parity and the breakdown of the dialogical process of social and political interaction.

The above breakdown in the dialogical process is not only inevitable if an Islamist state is in place, but also if religion is injected into politics in such a way that it mirrors the thinking of the Islamists under consideration. There is a difference, of course, between what this breakdown signifies under an Islamic state and what it signifies when religion is injected into politics. In an Islamist state of the type in question, the Islamic group in power will set the terms for participation in the debates on public issues, given that its epistemic authority is the dominant one. Therefore, any other group wishing to participate in collective deliberations on public issues must accept those terms and surrender its epistemic authority in the process to the ruling group. In the absence of the latter condition, it will inevitably be excluded.

Now, if the Islamic group is not in power yet, it cannot, of course, set its own terms for participation in the debates on public issues. It is still the case, however, that the mere fact that its Islamising of politics in the way explained earlier amounts to a gross violation of the principle of mutual respect and consequent epistemic parity. For what it seeks to achieve is the establishment of an Islamic state – that is, the establishment of socio-political institutions within which its epistemic authority will be dominant. The message Islamists present, in this case, to every competing group is obvious: surrender your epistemic authority to us! There is no recognition in this message of the fact that there is no algorithm for settling big questions of a religious-metaphysical nature and that the only fair and reasonable way for the advocates of different religious-metaphysical doctrines to regulate their dealings with each other is to keep their differences on this level away from the domain of public and collective reason, thereby preventing one party from substituting its epistemic authority in place of all other parties. This is precisely what makes the injection of religion into politics, in the way intended here, a gross violation of the principle of mutual respect and begins a process that leads into social and political conflict resulting in a breakdown of the dialogical process necessary to maintain a democratic polity.

NOTES

1. For a detailed discussion of classic pluralism, see Frank Cunningham, *Theories of Democracy*, New York: Routledge, 2002, Chapter 5.
2. *Ibid.*, Chapter 10.
3. The distinction between positive and negative liberty is due to Isaiah Berlin. See, I. Berlin, *Four Concepts of Liberty*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1969, pp. 121–32.
4. John Christman, *Social and Political Philosophy*, London and New York: Routledge, 2002, p.95.

5. Ibid., p. 97.
6. Ibid., p. 98. See also John Rawls, *Political Liberalism*, New York: Columbia University Press, 1996, Lecture V.
7. Christman, p. 211
8. Ibid.
9. See, in particular, Abu'l-Ala al-Mawdudi, *al-Hukuma al-Islamiyya* (Islamic Government), translated by Ahmad Idris, and al-Mukhtar al-Islami, 2nd edition, Cairo 1980?, and *al-Jihad fi Sabil Allah*, translated by Mas'ud al-Nadwi, Cairo: Lajnat al-Shabab al-Muslim, n.d. See also Hassan al-Banna, "al-Islam wa siyasat al-Hukm", in *al-Ikhwan al Muslimun*, 1946; Sayyed Kotb, *Ma'alim fi al-Tariq*, Dar ash-Shuruq, n.d.; Anwar al-Jundi, *Suqut al- Ilmaniyya*, Beirut: Dar al-Kitab al-Lubnani, 1973; Ruholla Khomeini, "The Religious Scholars led the Revolt", in A. C. Kimmens (ed.), *Islamic Politics*, New York: H. W. Wilson Co., 1991; and J. L. Esposito (ed.), *Voices of Resurgent Islam*, New York: Oxford University Press, 1983.
10. This view of Islam is evident in the various writings referred to in note 9 above.
11. Rashid al-Ghannoushi and Hassan al-Turabi, *al-Haraka al-Islamiyya wa'al-tahdith*, Khartoum: Maktabat Dar al-Fik'r, 1980. See also the works cited in note 9.
12. See Hassan al-Banna, *Majmu'at al-Rasa'il*, Beirut: Mu'assasat al-Risala, n.d., p. 272; Anwar al-Jundi, pp. 41–6; and Sayyed Kotb, *Hada ad-Din*, Indiana: al-It-tihad al-Islami al-Alami lil'Munadhama al-Islamiyya, n.d, pp. 15–16.
13. Adel Daher, *al usus al-Falsafiyya lil'almaniyya*, London: Saqi, 1993, Chapter 11.
14. Rashid al-Ghannoushi, *al-Hurriyyat al-Amma fi Ad-dawlah al-Islamiyya*, Beirut: Center for Arab Unity Studies, 1993, pp. 294–5.
15. We have benefited here from John Rawls's discussion of this issue in *Political Liberalism*, New York: Columbia University Press, 1996, Lecture IV.
16. Ibid.
17. al-Ghannoushi, pp. 49–50.

CHAPTER 6

Islam, Conflict and Democracy

AKEEL BILGRAMI

There is a very familiar cautionary response that one finds oneself constantly making when engaging in discussions about Islam these days. This is the response of saying, “There are many Islams!” In fact, this has become something of a mantra and, given the strenuous simplifications one finds in the media and on the lips and in memos of politicians, as well as in continuing forms of “orientalist” academic writing, expressions of such caution are thoroughly warranted. However, it should not become a conversation-stopper; nor should it be inconsistently deployed. There is no doubt that there are many Islams. That should be a banality. If that is so, then, equally, there are many Americas, and there are many Wests, too. That does not stop many of us from making remarks abstracting from this many-ness and diversity of the West and of America to make roughly true generalisations about the West. For example, that there is a corporate-driven foreign policy prevalent in the West, especially in the US, which has had very destructive effects in countries with Muslim populations; that the US government has consistently supported Islamic militants when it suited their geo-political and economic interests; that it has supported Israeli occupation and brutalisation of the Palestinian land and peoples; and so on. These are all things that we insist on saying, even as we acknowledge that there are many Wests, many Americas, with diverse interests and commitments, and the like. If one is consistent, then one should also refuse to be inhibited from making efforts to understand an Islam that abstracts from diversity, while also making generalisations that are plausible, which advance discussion and understanding about Muslim societies. In a sense, there could be no social explanation whatever without abstraction from the multifarious diversities of a social phenomenon in order to set up the explananda.

I say all this not to be dismissive of those who caution us against crass and messianic media pundits on Islam. The media's discussion of Islam is indeed brazenly ignorant and brash, for the most part. I say it only to allow enough discussion to get off the ground, such that any cautions about ignoring the diversity of Islam should take the form of improving our analysis piecemeal, when it is ignoring some diversity on this or that matter, rather than to wield the caution as a general mantra that pre-empts earnest discussion about Islam for fear that one is always falling into some caricature familiar from what we read in the press and various popular writings.

One sensible way for me to avoid the pitfall of ignoring the diversity of Islam is perhaps to start by discussing the position of many Muslims in one specific part of the world, a part where I come from – India – to see what lessons one may extrapolate from there. On the face of it, it may appear surprising to draw conclusions about Islam from the case of Indian Muslims, since India has only a *minority* Muslim population, whereas recent obsessions with Islam, even before 11 September 2001, have largely tended to be with Muslim-*majority* countries of the oil-producing region of the Middle East, or Muslim-majority countries such as Pakistan and Afghanistan due to their obvious geo-political location in cold war struggles against the USSR. All the same, it will be my claim that Muslim-minority status in India is actually quite revealing in terms of the more general lessons that I do want to try and draw.

The term “minority” marked a subject of study only after statistics began to influence the governance of societies, as well as the methodology of social science. I first want to view it not in its statistical function, but rather as the site of a certain *mentality*, and then later return to its obvious arithmetical implications for politics. My extended point will be that these two aspects of the notion of minority are in an unusual and illuminating dialectical relation with one another among Muslim populations all over the world.

Let me begin by pointing out that it is quite mistaken to think that the current situation of Muslims in India, and the widespread religious communalisation of Indian politics in general reflects a chronic condition since Indian independence. As with several other countries after decolonisation, Indian society developed a great deal of hard-won civil society, which was secular, non-sectarian and broadly nationalist, growing out of the freedom movement but settling in quickly at institutional, professional and commercial sites throughout the country after freedom was won. It succeeded in doing so despite a very long period of British rule which constantly exploited traditional religious divisions in society between Muslim and Hindu that were constructed during the colonial period for Britain's own detailed purposes of governance. However, after independence the question of religious communities, though not far from the surface of Indian politics in the following three decades, did not determine political

mobilisation to the extraordinary degree it does now, and has done during the last fifteen or twenty years.

During the 1950s, 1960s, and 1970s, the Indian National Congress party, which, during the struggle for independence, had unified all sorts of different interests and points of view, became not merely one party among other parties in the political field, and not even (again, merely) the victorious and most popular party in the field; it became metonymically a stand-in for the entire political system of the country. In this system, the party at the centre, in charge of governance, allowed relative autonomy, both organisational and financial, to its provincial wings, thus giving voice to dissident elements. All or most of the country's voices were thus active within the party itself, and this gave the national party the task of building coalitions and consensus in order to carry out its commitment to using the state as an instrument for social change and the promotion of diverse interests. Thus democracy, thanks to the umbrella nature of the Congress party, did not succumb to its own potential for becoming a cynical electoral calculus where vote-banks are the primary targets of competing political parties and determine all their political exercises even when in power after elections, leaving them no motivation or initiative to use the state for purposes of reform and social change. Rather, democracy became an exercise in pluralism trying to accommodate different interests within the electoral domination of one party, and to a measurable degree building institutional, commercial and professional structures reflecting these different interests. To the extent that this process was successful (and to a recognisable extent it was), it was India's answer to its own most urgent question of how to combine the modern institutions of democracy and a centralised state with its deep traditions of religion and caste, as well as other sectarian diversities spread across the country.

If we abstract this point from detailed differences in context, I believe it can (at an appropriate level of generality) be applied to other countries where questions regarding Islam are now prominent. Even though there are no analogues to the agency of a single party which emerged from a freedom movement in countries with Muslim populations such as Iraq, for instance, a similar point holds. There, too, the current focus on the traditional religious and sectarian strands these days is so great that we tend to forget that these strands were not as prominent following decolonisation. Similar to the Indian example, the grip of traditional elements in Iraq was considerably loosened at various levels by a burgeoning civil society in a manner that is best described in terms that ideologies of the left would call a growing "national bourgeoisie". In Egypt, too, there were various institutions surrounding the practice of Islam, ranging from guilds, dervish orders and *kuttab-madrassa* education, to the Shari'a and the sultanate, and these together cemented a structure of traditional social, economic, psycho-

logical and ideological links, a structure that was also greatly loosened by similar nationalist forces.

How the transformations in these nations then went on to suffer a setback, how the infrastructures of civil society which, to a considerable extent, had subdued the political prominence of traditional divisions and religious elements were then undermined in the last twenty years or so, is a story worth telling. Undoubtedly, there is a different story in each case where this occurred (and these lie outside the scope of this chapter).

There is an enormous regional, sectarian, as well as creedal, diversity in Islam in India. Muslim religious life in India has always been characterised by two tendencies that have been preserved in a delicate balance due to the tension between them. On the one hand, at the level of ritual, ceremony and a broad range of other daily practice, there is a great deal of pragmatic and syncretic (“Sufistic”) retention of locally acquired features that are quite continuous with many aspects of Hindu life and cultural practice. On the other hand, there is the scriptural, transcendental and normative element tied to the ulama and characterised by a deferential gaze beyond the local toward the Arabian lands from where the classical doctrine of Islam originated. This is hardly surprising, since the Islamic faith itself arrived in India through Persia, Turkey and Central Asia, acquiring local accretions on the way, so the ultimate and formal, bookish elements had always to be recalled in self-conscious ways at all points in the midst of often livelier home-grown and alien elements.

The tense balance created by this double movement, of form and root, has persisted in India through the centuries to this day, and though there is much integration of the two elements there is often rivalry between them, not just in the rural and poorer sections of society, but even in such highly metropolitan cultural productions as Hindustani music or the Hindi cinema of Bombay, which might quite properly be regarded as the last, urban outposts of Sufism, still to some extent resisting the narrowing doctrinal visions of Muslim (as well as Brahmanical Hindu) religious orthodoxy.

It is precisely this balance that is made increasingly precarious by developments over the last two decades, developments I have described as common to the setbacks suffered in Iraq and Egypt, and other nations as well. To begin with, there is the relative poverty of Muslims in India ever since the more landed and educated Muslims, fearing for the loss of their estates and of discrimination in career opportunities in India, left for Pakistan during partition. For those who stayed, especially in the last fifteen years or so, those fears have largely been realised and, as the Sachar report on the conditions of Muslims in India points out, Muslims in most parts of the country live in the most degrading conditions, often more degrading than even the so-called “untouchable” or “scheduled” castes.¹ Another major loss has been of their language, Urdu (indeed it has been

the language of many Hindus in north India as well), which was given away as an exclusive gift to Pakistan because the Indian leaders, for all their avowed pluralism and secularism, were unable to withstand the nationalistic pique of Hindu ideologues in their own Congress Party, who placed great pressure on them to drop Urdu altogether as a medium of instruction in the national and regional school curricula.

The Muslim “minority” in India, therefore, has had the ideological potential to vex in at least two ways. First, it is open to perception as a minority that is descended from the Muslim conquerors who ruled for centuries over a predominantly Hindu people. This makes it a good target for “historical” revenge. Second, it is open to the perception of being a residual population, one that had its choice of leaving for the newly-created Muslim nation of Pakistan in 1947, but which chose to stay; therefore, it must now adapt in accord with the culture of the Hindu nation for which it has opted.

Apart from the repugnance of the very idea of “historical revenge”, even something like the idea of historical justice and reparations only makes conceptual sense if the offended people are currently in a highly disadvantaged condition, and that condition is causally explicable by the fact of their historical subjugation. Perhaps such an argument could be made about African Americans today, and other such communities. However, that one should be even tempted to say Indian Hindus are disadvantaged today by a Muslim rule that ended two hundred and fifty years ago is absurd. In fact, the position of disadvantage is overwhelmingly the other way round. Even if we choose to set this point aside, there are plain historical facts that make nonsense of the idea of historical revenge or justice in this case. The well-known fact is that most Muslims today are not descendants of a conquering people, but Hindu converts. It is also a fact that a number of the Muslim rulers of India showed a remarkable amount of religious tolerance, comparable at least to the Muslim rule in medieval Spain. Moreover, the assertion that all Muslims should have crossed the border to Pakistan when it was created as a Muslim nation is totally impractical, if not inane, in as much as Muslims who belong to the poor and labouring classes were, by definition, sedentary, and could never have made a journey consisting of thousands of miles even if they had wished to do so. There is also the fact of the idealism of both this class and the much smaller, but admittedly more mobile, educated middle class of Muslims who thought a secular India was a better option than a nation founded on a religious basis. However, these are mere, petty facts, and ideological perceptions, as we know, are the products of a free social imagination.

The ultimate point I want to make is based on straightforward and familiar psychology. The historical context as well as ideological situation described here has made several Indian Muslims deeply resentful and defensive in their mentality. Moreover, this mindset is adversely affecting the double movement

to which I have made reference – of rooted, quotidian, syncretic diversity on the one hand, and invocation of scriptural form and doctrinal fundamentals on the other – by threatening to tilt the balance in favour of the latter over the former. In a situation where material life, as well as self-respect, is increasingly threatened by alarming majoritarian tendencies in the polity, the absolutist doctrinal side of the double movement is holding out the promise of dignity and autonomy in the name of Islam, especially among the young. The attractions are utterly illusory, of course – they are manifestly undemocratic, deeply reactionary on issues of gender, and they are antagonistic in the extreme towards modernity, even a home-grown and non-Western path to modernity. They are “reactionary” in every sense of the term, but the point I wish to stress is that they are reactionary in the sense of being a reaction to the feelings of helplessness and defeat, and the seeming lack of viable alternatives to cope with these feelings. To give an example of reaction-formation, one response to the combination of poverty, lack of career opportunity and the loss of Urdu has been the rise of the phenomenon of the “madrassa”. These *madaris* are scattered all over the country, but specially in north India, often financed by Saudi Arabian largesse, they offer free education in Urdu, and a place for boys from poverty-stricken families to live without cost while they are trained to uncritically absorb strict scriptural doctrine, a training that may sometimes amount to a source of encouragement for them to find a career in fundamentalist movements. This is just one example, though, and all of it predictably leads to a further backlash from Hindu ideologues, as witnessed by the destruction of the mosque in Ayodhya and the pogrom in Gujarat; and, in turn, more defensiveness that results in more aggressive reactions among the Muslims.

When we look further afield from India, we notice a curious thing. Even casual reflection on Muslims outside India suggests a paradoxical conclusion, which is that precisely this minority mentality is to be found among Muslim populations all over the world, even where Muslims are an overwhelming majority. The only difference is that the reaction outside India is, of course, not towards Hindus but against American, Israeli and other such Western power and domination.

It is clear that the psychological attitudes even of many majority Muslim populations appear to manifest the defensiveness and insecurity of a minority population. This fact has been *wilfully ignored* by recent Western writing and commentaries which fail to take into account the existential condition of Muslims in relations between Islamic populations and the West; instead, they are intent on setting out their discourse in the misleadingly neutral and deceptive terms of the “clash or conflict of civilisations”. I shall now explain what I mean when I refer to these terms of description as misleadingly neutral and deceptive.

Perverse as it may sound, I believe there is much to be said in favour of clashes

and conflict. Of course, I mean this remark as a comparative reference only. I shall explain it by recalling one large historical comparison.

For centuries the relations between European Christendom and Islam, which could be reasonably described as vilifying in word, and violent in deed, nevertheless also contained a sense of respect by Christians for Muslims and vice-versa; trading in diverse material products, and engaged in a prolonged and fruitful mutual intellectual and artistic collaboration and influence – all of which, viewed from the thoroughly revised perspectives of modernity, can only be seen as enviably robust and healthy. For those many hundred years prior to the consolidation of Western colonial rule, both cultures were feudal and pastoral, and, despite local difference in religious doctrine, which was in large part the avowed ground of the antagonism, there were shared intellectual premises that governed these differences. In fact, it is the shared element that was the *real* source of the hostility. The more ancient religions of the East, such as Hinduism and Buddhism, were not only more removed in space, but were intellectually too remote to be palpably threatening to Christianity in the way Islam was, with its many *shared* assumptions. It would be fair to say that the Crusades were fought against a form of heresy represented by Islamic civilisation in Arabian lands, rather than against some wholly alien presence there.

Napoleon's invasion of Egypt and the British conquest of India, however, gradually gave rise to an era with a different tone of relations. Conflict was, of course, still present on both sides, but it was not the key to future relations. The new tenor of colonial mastery gave rise to attitudes of condescension on the part of the West, and were gradually internalised by the colonised people, breeding not so much a robust sense of conflict but one of alienation, de-humanisation and resentment among them. This new moral psychology that accompanied colonial relations was, of course, under-girded by an altering of the material relations that had subsisted for centuries. The growing mercantile and industrial forces of the most powerful Christian lands were steadily destroying pastoral societies in their own terrain, but their effect on the lands and economies of their colonial subjects was altogether different. The feudal structures it destroyed to recreate new and vibrant economies in its own midst it left well alone in these other lands taking only that which was necessary for its mercantile and industrial requirements. By transforming its own political economy while extracting surpluses but leaving the social, economic and political structures unchanged in the conquered lands, European colonialism laid the foundation for an abiding material differential that has continued until today as the underlying source of the ideological rhetoric of superior progress, not only material but also civilisational. The more healthy form of conflict by more or less equal foes had by these material agencies now also deteriorated to the alienating effects of condescension and defensive resentment among increasingly unequal ones. As is

well known, yet denied only by the mandarin classes in Western countries, this material and moral and psychological situation has not changed in essentials since decolonisation, and is pervasively present today.

One lesson we can learn from this state of affairs is that the clash of, or conflict between, civilisations would not be nearly as bad if it was a genuine clash, rather than a conquest passed off in neutral terms as a clash. This neutral idiom of “clash” and “conflict” used by ideologues such as Huntington² to describe a situation which should rightly be described as a *conquest* was revived not only by former US president George W. Bush and his sinister coterie of advisers, who were responsible for the invasions of Afghanistan and Iraq, but also implicitly by the more glamorous ideologues of liberal empire, such as Christopher Hitchens and Michael Ignatieff, and alas even Salman Rushdie, who gave intellectual support to these invasions.

I shall now suggest further that the health-in-conflict as compared to the malaise-in-conquest (passing off as conflict) is best understood by examining dialectically a very different sort of conflict. This is an example of the most genuinely healthy sorts of conflict that exist, those *within* civilisations, rather than between them.

George W. Bush, in one of the few truthful statements he made since 11 September 2001, often said that most Muslims are not fundamentalists. I do not like the term “fundamentalist”, so I will use the term “absolutist” instead, and by it I will mean a cluster of commitments ranging from wanting to enforce Islamist regimes with strict Shari’a laws, accompanied by a chronic and occasionally acute commitment to a war against modernity and its corporate and military symbols in the West and their presence in Muslim lands, viewed however not merely as military and economic forms of conquest so much as the presence of infidels.

Bush is obviously right, and no one really disagrees that, as a matter of ubiquitous empirical fact – whether in Mumbai or Cairo, Karachi or Tehran, Afghanistan or Saudi Arabia, New Jersey or Bradford – most Muslims are not absolutists at all; in fact, they share very little with the absolutist. This is evident in the fact that, for the most part, wherever there have been fair and open elections the “fundamentalist” parties have failed to gain power, whether in Iran or in Pakistan. In fact, in Pakistan they have never gained more than 6.5 per cent of the vote in national elections. Most ordinary Muslims are simply too busy with their occupations and preoccupations to be seduced by any absolutist fantasies about an Islamic revival for which it would be worth fighting. The point can be safely generalised. Hardline Islamists are not likely to get anywhere in elections in any country where Islam has not been wilfully suppressed, as in Algeria or perhaps Egypt. Even the popularity of Hamas in the Palestinian territories does not rest in the fact of its Islamism, but in the fact that in a situation of desperate

subjugation of a colonised people, it has managed to keep services and basic lines of civil society active and functional.

If, as I believe, the contentions set out in this chapter are correct, an obvious question arises as to why countries with predominantly Muslim populations give an impression of undergoing rampant Islamic revivalism. What accounts for this disparity between the image and the reality on the ground? Though it is perhaps true that this is, to a considerable extent, a result of misleading portrayal and analysis by the Western media, it would be too simple to attribute it all to such a distortion. The problem goes much deeper than this. I have tried to convey in this essay that a minority mentality, even in majority Muslim populations, cuts through to the internal moral psychologies of Muslims in these countries. The first thing to register is the fact that the far larger population of ordinary Muslims who are not absolutists are often unwilling to be openly critical of the absolutists in their midst, with whom they share so little by way of ideology and ideals. This fact, which certainly adds to the already wide gap between image and reality, needs to be analysed. The long history of colonial rule with which I began my description of the moral and psychological condition of Muslims and its continuing presence in new and revised forms today plays a great part in this analysis. As a result of the detailed subjugations visited by that history, as well as continuing feelings of helplessness in the face of American domination and Israeli occupation and expansion, even ordinary, non-absolutist Muslims feel that to criticise their own people in any way is unacceptable disloyalty, somehow a capitulation to this longstanding history of colonisation and condescension.

What this suggests is that there is yet another conflict which is pertinent, a clash of attitudes and values not only between ordinary Muslims and fundamentalists, but another clash internal to the psychology of ordinary, non-absolutist Muslims themselves. On the one hand, most ordinary Muslims are torn between their dislike of fundamentalist visions of their religion and the societies they project, and on the other hand they are troubled by deep, defensive feelings of resentment against long-established forces which they perceive to be alien and hostile in one colonial form or another, and which have often supported the fundamentalists when it suited their political agendas.

This second layer of internal conflict in Islam is a vital factor in understanding the scope for any kind of change in these regions of the world. There is no space here to elaborate in any detail what it would take to overcome such a defensive cast of mind. But it is a form of convenient and self-serving obtuseness to think, as many do in the US, that addressing the issues that give rise to this defensive psychology is irrelevant or unnecessary. It should be clear to everyone except those who are incapable of the most elementary form of instrumental reasoning about ends and means that the cruelty of wars, of bombings, of occupations, of expansionist settlements, of embargoes and sanctions, of supporting corrupt

elites, do nothing to encourage ordinary Muslims to show the necessary confidence to adopt a critical attitude towards the absolutists. Nor does the openly exploitative pursuit of Western corporate interests in these regions help the situation; indeed, they only increase the sense of defensiveness.

The point, then, is this: conflict between ordinary Muslims and the absolutists would be a sign of great health in societies with large Muslim populations, whether in Iran or Pakistan or India, or, indeed, France and England. This could lead to a favourable outcome if the second inner conflict, the one in the hearts of ordinary non-absolutist Muslims, were resolved. The point about the role of such a conflict in public deliberation and internal change is essentially a dialectical one set within the ideals of democracy. None of this would be relevant if it were not for the fact that we can assume, as I have suggested that even George W. Bush can assume, with empirical authority, that most Muslims are not absolutists. If we take this assumption as a given, and acknowledge that democracies operate in terms of representation of the majority of the population, it is clear that the conflict between the more numerous ordinary Muslims and the absolutists, reveals the absolutists within Muslim societies to be exactly what they are – a shrill but unrepresentative minority. That is what I have termed at the outset of this essay as the numerative function of the idea of minority in a democracy. It is fine to want democracy to exist in various parts of the world where it presently does not. But the point is that there are two kinds of conflict. One is between the absolutist and the ordinary Muslim and no amount of democracy will reveal the health of this conflict unless the other conflict within the psychology of ordinary Muslims is resolved. Unfortunately, over-confident ideologues of liberal empire, such as Hitchens, have done everything possible to ensure that this becomes very difficult to achieve. That is my point about the internal dialectical link between these two aspects of the notion of a “minority” – the numerative function of minorities in democracies cannot play their full role unless the defensive mentality of such minorities is overcome.

Just as I end this point about conflict and democracy vis-à-vis Muslim populations, I shall refer to a type of institutional difficulty that exists in countries such as India, or for that matter Britain and France, where Muslims are a minority. I have pointed out the obvious formal and arithmetical merit of democracy, if we acknowledge the empirical fact that most Muslims are not absolutists. Democratic and representative institutions should, then, be able to reveal that these absolutists do not represent the minority Muslim populations. But it is a curiously difficult and under-theorised problem about democracies that we have no institutional sites and means for developing representative institutions within communities, as can be found at the level of the region, the province, the city, and so on. Communities are too dispersed, and they have no obvious formal mechanisms by which democratic representation can be installed. This need for,

and failure to achieve, intra-community democratisation is a remarkably understudied and under-theorised phenomenon in political theory and sociology.

Before I leave the subject of democracy and conflict altogether, I shall move away from Islamic populations to look at the issue of conflict and democracy in the United States, which has been responding negatively and aggressively to the existence, demands and stresses of Islamic populations across the world.

Here, I have to confess to finding a rather disturbing tendency among even many progressive minded Americans who would quite readily agree with all that I have been saying thus far. They feel such disgust for the strong and open support shown for the war in the USA, in contrast to most European countries, that it is quite common to hear despairing and contemptuous descriptions of the American electorate, that is to say, of “ordinary Americans” – the counterpart of the “ordinary Muslims”. But this cannot possibly be a sensible response. At any rate, it is not a response that is compatible with a belief in democracy. You simply cannot believe in democracy and say that the people are irresponsible and stupid. One might as well believe in an aristocracy or enlightened monarchy. And it will not do to trot out the Churchillian cliché that the only reason to believe in democracy is that it is the best of a bad set of options for self-government. That worn-out Churchillian response is, in reality, a fallacy. If one had no confidence in the moral strengths of ordinary people, then belief in democracy would be purely an empty form, and it would *not* be better than other forms of polity. For, after all, if such moral strengths are denied to the electorate, but are thought to belong to an aristocracy or to a monarchy, to continue to champion democracy would be a purely procedural fetish.

This negative attitude towards the electorate from a disenchanted progressive community is disturbing partly because it distracts from the relevance of the rest of their progressive analysis and agenda. Therefore, it would be useful to diagnose this situation in order to see why there is a failure of conflict to surface, just as there is in Muslim societies in which there is a failure of conflict to surface because of the reluctance of ordinary Muslims to criticise the absolutists with whom they have little in common. In a sense, diagnostic answers here are more obvious than the more subtle ones having to do with a defensive, a virtual minoritarian, moral psychology induced by colonial pasts and presents even in Muslim majorities. However, we can approach the obvious by looking at a more distant case, Saudi Arabia, where just three years ago there was scarcely any explicit conflict at all. Many factors, no doubt, have been responsible for recent changes, but a most salient and dramatic factor has been the extraordinary impact of the Qatari television station, Al-Jazeera, on ordinary citizens. For it has injected conflict into Saudi Arabian society by the most basic service of providing information about just how much the country was run by a corrupt and self-serving state and its powerful elites. But this impact is not restricted to Saudi Arabia.

The implications of this method of diagnosing the situation in the United States should be obvious and familiar. By contrast with Al-Jazeera, the media in America is cravenly unwilling to provide the most basic information to ordinary citizens about their government's actions, and the consequences of those actions, not to mention the actions and consequences of governments elsewhere supported by the United States administration. There is little doubt that ordinary Americans are as morally robust as ordinary Europeans, or the citizens of any other region of the world; their failure to understand and to act accordingly in comparison to other people is *epistemic*, rather than moral. We are unable to exercise what moral strengths we may have, if we are epistemically weak – if we do not have access to unbiased and balanced information. This requirement should be inscribed as the First Law of Political Psychology, and no doubt the point goes deeper. Even if ordinary Americans were provided with information through a less biased media, they would still need to overcome a deep level of indoctrination that pervades their education system.

The implications of this development on the subject of conflict and democracy are, therefore, plain. Al-Jazeera's impact on Saudi Arabia to some extent shows that in the United States, too, we need essentially to think of conflict in counterfactual terms. That is to say that there is much scope for conflict even in the United States today, and that this latent conflict has the potential to come to the surface if, counter-to-fact, full information was available to the ordinary American.

A question might be raised about the grounds for assuming this counterfactual approach; with the exception of a dogmatic and question-begging faith in democracy requiring, as I have suggested, a belief in the moral strength of the electorate, there are many grounds for making this assumption, not the least of which are connected to the inconsistencies that appear in voting polls. It is quite common to find that when questions in polls are put in terms of values held by individuals, answers are overwhelmingly humane and compassionate. However, if the questions are formulated in terms of economic or foreign-policy jargon, on the very same issues answers indicate the opposite. One could argue that the answer to the latter type of question implies that the answer to the former type was insincere or dishonest. But such a cynical interpretation, one to which many progressives seem susceptible, is premature. It seems perfectly apt to ascribe this discrepancy to the notion of epistemic weakness rather than to moral failing. When people think (and indeed act) as individuals, they are not typically immoral and ruthless. The first type of question addresses the individual as an individual. However, the second type of question is addressed to those being questioned not as individuals, but as citizens. Indeed, they are citizens who have been subordinated to institutional structures of state, to corporations, and to media that present these structures in a light that conceals conflicts that

would otherwise surface regarding the values they hold as individuals. That is the latent and what I term the healthy form of conflict, one which allows one to retain one's belief in democracy rather than hold opinions that are incompatible with that belief.

The point of pressing concern is how epistemic strength might be built up in order to resolve the conflict identified here in the right direction. Here, too, the answers are obvious. It is clear that because this epistemic weakness arises from the general media, and largely as a consequence of national educational systems and policies, all of which have been subordinated to corporate and state structures, it is then left to popular movements strengthened by additional informational and communicative access to the Internet and to electronic mail to become the main sites of public education and public deliberation.

There is a natural tendency among the American intelligentsia, and perhaps in Western Europe, to think of such movements as being peripheral. Academic work and intellectual discourse on such movements is minimal when compared to such work on constitutions, elections, and all the other more formal apparatus and institutional aspects of democracy. This situation is partly caused by the association of mass movements with extremism. However, in fact, in the post-constitutional societies of the West, the opposite is true. Mass movements by definition need the assent of a mass of people, which makes compromise and moderation a necessity. This is a simple but often unperceived fact, which can be gleaned by even a cursory study of the history of the civil rights movement in the USA, when Martin Luther King was able to bring a range of different ideological positions among African Americans together into a wider movement.

Returning to the subject of Islam, however, I shall close by making two points of a more broadly philosophical significance.

I was asked to write about Islam in public and private spaces. I have not done so explicitly because it seems to me that secular liberalism has never — except in narrow, juridical terms — made that distinction clearly, or at any rate cleanly. Nor could it. Certainly, the matter of personal or family law which has always been a vexed issue for Islam cannot be used to define a private rather than a public space. After all, if the law amounts to an inequitable treatment of women in such things as divorce or alimony, then it runs counter to a canonical element in public space as defined by secular liberalism's commitments to gender justice. Likewise (whether rightly or wrongly), secular liberalism does not allow something as private as one's religious dress code to be completely private because if public safety laws of traffic require that one wear a helmet rather than a turban, then such religious dress per se will no longer be viewed as a purely private phenomenon. Though I have views on the matter, I am not pre-judging what stand to take on family law or on turbans, hijab, or other forms of religious observance; I am instead only questioning whether the controversies surrounding

them can be described in terms of public-versus-private connotations. Given these unavoidable failures to draw a clear and explicit distinction between the public and private, I have, in this chapter, approached the distinction in somewhat implicit and abstract terms. I have done so by arguing that the apparent lack of open and healthy public conflict between a minority of what I have termed “absolutists” and a much larger class of people whom I have called ordinary Muslims is to be diagnosed as issuing from a certain quite different, and more private, inner conflict. This conflict itself arises from a certain defensive psychology usually associated with oppressed minorities. I have also argued that it is only if this latter conflict is resolved in a certain direction that the healthier conflict will emerge in public and within broadly democratic contexts, thereby leading to interesting transformations that were once a promising possibility in decolonised societies such as India and Iraq and Egypt, but which have been dashed by developments over the past twenty years.

I am aware of the scepticism in certain quarters concerning the line of argument I have developed in this chapter, and this needs to be addressed. An example of one very widespread version of the scepticism is expressed with great eloquence by the writer and social critic, Christopher Hitchens. He maintains that populations which identify themselves with Islam are not capable of resolving the two dialectically linked conflicts I have described along the lines I think are possible, because to do so, argues Hitchens, would be to disown their Islamic identity.

This line of argument asserts that for ordinary Muslims to be more openly critical of the absolutists requires them to relinquish some essential aspects of their religion. They would have to relinquish certain ideas about relations to non-Muslims, ideas about gender relations in institutions such as marriage, divorce, alimony, and so on, as well as their religious commitments to censorship and to the punishment of blasphemy, and doing so would be to give up on one’s Muslim identity, to cease to see oneself as a Muslim.

This line of thought is based on a false notion of cultural identity, whether religious or otherwise; it is also a picture, alas, that the absolutist is happy to encourage. However, a person’s identity is not simply manufactured by a checklist, in such a way that if no item on the list is ticked off then the identity is incomplete or destroyed. Identity cannot simply be codified in that way. It is fluid and malleable and survives enormous amounts of revision and erosion, as we see in Muslim societies in many parts of the world today. The idea that if one gives up Shari’a law about blasphemy or alimony, or if one gives up a customary religious practice such as *purdah*, one ceases to be a Muslim altogether, is an egregious misrepresentation of Muslim identity. I know many Muslims, not deracines as myself but orthodox Muslims, who have shed these offending beliefs and practices but who regard themselves and are regarded by their fellow believers as

true Muslims. To say that they have rejected their Muslim identity is to assume a notion of identity that only an absolutist would affirm. Hitchens, therefore, should reflect on the disturbing nature of his holding views that mirror too perfectly the views of the absolutist.

Returning to the subject of public and private spheres of belief and action, perhaps the best thing we can say in the context of the distinction is that any realistic notion of religious and cultural identity enables that identity to survive, notwithstanding the de facto discarding of particular laws, religious obligations and customs. I do not personally believe that notions of “private” and “public” are particularly helpful or illuminating descriptions of what I wish to say about identity – a notion that is orthogonal to the notions of private and public. However, perhaps I am being terminologically rigid here.

A great part of this essay has sympathetically analysed the psychology of ordinary Muslims in different parts of the world. Many others have done so, even occasionally in the mainstream media, though not often in the US. However I wish to end with an abstract philosophical point. When sympathetic diagnoses and explanations of Muslims are made by writers in the West, including by deracinated Muslims such as myself, they are expressed in the voice of the third person. By that I mean that they take the form of saying, “*They* must be understood as having a psychology produced by past and present forms of colonialism.” However, I invite the reader to notice an odd result. These very same remarks sound odd in the first person voice; they sound very odd when Muslims say them about themselves. That is to say, it sounds very odd if Muslims themselves were to say, “*We* are the products of colonialism, and that is why we are unable to be more self-critical of absolutist elements in our society.” Thus, the very same observation when spoken by another, from the outside, rings true. However, whilst it is true per se whoever says it, when Muslims say it, it sounds awkward and is difficult to put into words. Why should this be the case? I believe it arises because it is a surrender of agency to speak of oneself in this way in the first-person mode. Understanding oneself is achieved by stepping outside of oneself and looking at oneself from the outside, as a third person; however, this cannot be allowed to exhaust our perspective of ourselves. If this were true, it would destroy our freedom that consists in the first-person point of view, the point of view of agency, the point of view of the subject rather than the point of view by which we view ourselves as objects, the objects of history and its causes. This is a point so fundamental that its significance amounts to nothing less than this – it would be the final triumph of imperialism if it has affected us so profoundly that we understand ourselves so well as a product of colonial history that it has effectively destroyed our capacity for free, self-critical agency.

NOTES

1. The Sachar Report of November 2006 was commissioned by the Indian prime minister to study the economic, educational and other social conditions of Muslims in India.
2. See the classic and influential ideological text by Samuel Huntington, "The Clash of Civilisations", *Foreign Affairs*, Summer 1993.

CHAPTER 7

The Diversity of Cultures in the Crucible of Globalisation

NUR YALMAN

What does “globalisation” mean? The term came into general use in connection with the opening of the financial markets in London some years ago. This was to be the “Big Bang” that would suddenly tie financial transactions in different parts of the world into a single large and efficient market. To some extent we have seen the economies of many nations increasingly linked to the capital markets of the Western world. This is a major element of “globalisation” which brings out the “hegemonic power” of major financial interests that dominate our lives.

The “soft” cultural aspect is only one facet of the process of globalisation. There are other key matters: apart from economic linkages (and domination) of financial markets, there is also the political and military dimension. For example, the concerns of the international arms trade – which builds weapons of ultimate persuasion and terror, controls the trade in nuclear materials, electronic command-and-control systems, satellites, missiles and other similar matters that deserve serious attention. The control of weapons is a critical element of the “globalisation” agenda. Several things revolve around the definition and management of the international “agenda” concerning these matters, through all kinds of agencies and other forums. We know only too well how deadly and important these matters are, whether in Sri Lanka, Turkey or Japan. India, for example, discovered it in the Bofors story.

Another critical area of globalisation concerns the movement of peoples. The control of immigration, emigration, the management of large groups of alien workers across major cosmopolitan markets, the concern with their human rights; all of these are all becoming major issues for the future. How can we, as anthropologists, overlook the fate of the “boat people” of Vietnam,

or the rusting boats filled with refugees from Albania that arrive at the coast of Italy? The numbers are already extraordinary in Europe, Asia, Africa and the Americas. This trend will continue and increase, manifesting a social aspect of globalisation. We should be mindful of the fact that large numbers are on the move, together with their cultures.

CULTURE AND DIFFUSION

Having made these general observations, let us turn to the cultural factors affected by globalisation. First of all, what is meant by culture? The term is used widely and loosely; for example, in recent times, even business schools now refer to “corporate cultures”. Anthropologists, however, have had a long and difficult time with this word. The British social anthropologist Radcliffe-Brown considered culture to be essentially irrelevant. He claimed that social structure was the key to understanding how a society works. Culture was a residual set of beliefs and customs, of art, literature, and so on. In other words, Radcliffe-Brown regarded “culture” as a residual dustbin for everything that did not fit and could not be systematically analysed. Another British social anthropologist, Edmund Leach, with his Malinowskian background, was a little more generous: he thought that structure was the necessary “form” and that “culture” was simply “content”. But, we may well ask, what was in that content?

It was the French anthropologist Claude Lévi-Strauss who developed the most creative and challenging ideas on this issue. First of all, he accepted the Marxian categories of infrastructure and superstructure. Infrastructure: everything that mattered, the hard practical facts. Superstructure: epiphenomena; the very complicated cognitive reflection of the real world. In another sense, he was returning to the ideas of the French sociologist Emile Durkheim, to the famously ambiguous “conscience collective”. He asked himself whether this difficult concept could be analysed in a manner more precise than Durkheim. We find the answer in a brilliant series of books on the mythology of the Americas. It was in mythology that the structures of collective and customary thought, that is, the “conscience collective”, would be most discernable. Hence Lévi-Strauss attempted to explore how far such analysis could be taken in terms of a theory of cultural forms. Certainly, Lévi-Strauss has given us much to think about: he has alerted us to the structured codes behind the operation of thinking patterns, conceptions and perceptions. These link up with structured forms of the five senses: so all the senses are culturally coded.¹

What all this means is that what others so superficially call “culture” is, in fact, intimately related to a myriad of deep structures which involve all the senses and all thought patterns both in an individual and a collective sense. This certainly includes intimate aspects of everyday life, those deeply ingrained

customs of cooking, of music, of art, as well as the more subtle matters of language use, family relations, definitions of male and female, how one holds one's body, uses one's hands, one's feet, how one walks, sits, sleeps and a host of other matters that anthropologists describe in their field monographs. Some are rather bizarre customs: the elongated necks of women on the Burmese–Thai border, or the female genital mutilations in parts of Africa, also known as Pharaonic circumcision in Egypt, and similar matters. There are many unusual customs that have been given up, to such as head shrinking, which might still be revived to intimidate and terrorise enemies as a cheap military option. However, many other much more understandable practices have been quietly relegated to history. For example, some unusual experiments in human family organisation, such as the remarkable polyandrous Nayar marriage systems of Kerala in South India, or structures of complex forms of cross-cousin and sisters' daughter's marriage among the people of Tamil Nadu, have faded away under the influence of foreign contact.

The reasons why very deep-seated customs that are maintained through generations are eventually discarded have preoccupied anthropologists for a very long time. Nineteenth-century anthropologists in Germany, for instance, with the *Kulturkreislehre*, were interested in trying to understand how cultural elements would spread from a radiating centre to the periphery; how people around a centre would imitate customs and material culture – artefacts, objects, canoes, and so on – that were developed by others. So the history of cultural diffusion occupied a pre-eminent place in anthropological speculation until the Polish anthropologist Bronislaw Malinowski and Radcliffe-Brown rejected these approaches. They argued that there were too many unknowns in all this speculation about cultural centres and diffusion, and that meant that all attempts at describing the history of culture were of no value.

THE PERSUASIVENESS OF POWER

The impact of various cultures on each other has been a historical process; however, in the contemporary world the speed and comprehensiveness of the interactions between cultures has increased tremendously. Hence, what we are witnessing today in terms of the cross-influence of cultures is nothing new. It has always been so; the only difference is that there are now more channels of communication, and speedier transport. These, in turn, increase the exposure to cultural elements in surprising ways. TV programmes are a good case in point: South American TV programmes originating in Brazil or Argentina become fashionable in Turkey and Iran. You can watch wonderful Japanese films every night in Istanbul. They have not yet encouraged more people to eat sushi – though this is also happening. Brian Larkin, who has been working in northern

Nigeria among Hausa-speaking Muslims, has found that Indian films are the most popular with the Hausa because they depict a sense of family values and respect which is felt to be in accord with local values.

In Turkey, where the penetration of TV into the smallest and most distant village communities has been extremely rapid, the effect has been dramatic over the past generation. Young people have decided that rural life is not sufficiently rewarding and that it is preferable to seek their fortunes in the cities. Thus, there has been an extraordinary exodus out of the rural hinterland of Turkey into the major cities. This has contributed first of all to the immense growth of urban centres such as Ankara, Adana, Izmir and Istanbul, but it has also meant a dramatic rise in demand for all social services, from housing to education and health.

In this process of rapid urbanisation, which is essentially a process of deracination, young people become more open to other influences. They are more easily persuaded by fashion as seen on TV or in the papers. This, in turn, raises the question of who determines fashion, and why some fashion is more fashionable than others.

Here, the matter comes full circle to the question of power. It is not for nothing that the youth of the entire world, from Iran to Chile, from Norway to Japan, wear a strange, somewhat uncomfortable, shapeless garment called blue jeans. Why have they not affected that practical and comfortable Japanese garment called yukata, or even better samue? Why not those Turkish shalvars, loose unisex pantaloons known in the fashion trade as "harem pants"? Were Moscovites who were paying small fortunes to get hold of the cherished objects, the blue jeans, thinking of themselves as American cowboys from Texas? Hardly so. But the attractiveness of feeling "with it" was evidently too strong to be overcome by mere scruples of price. The secret symbolism of the prestige of perceived power appears irresistible. It is combined with such all-American symbols as McDonald's and Coca-Cola. There are millions of dollars riding behind the advertisements, but it is the symbolic power of the trademarks that is the key. And, as any financial analyst will tell you, the trademarks themselves, the IBMs and the Sonys, are worth a mint.

Again, not very unusual. Bernard Lewis, a controversial if perceptive historian of the Middle East, writes that when the Mongols conquered Baghdad in 1258, their manner of dress, their garments and hairstyles became fashionable in the Middle East. Muslims, who up to that time used to wear their hair short took to long and lanky hair, just like the Mongols. When Sultan Mahmoud II decided to modernise the military of the Ottoman Empire in the 1820s, he adopted European dress, European saddles for the horses. Edward Lane describes the use of forks and knives in Cairo in 1841.

One of the effects [of the superiority of one of our branches of science] ... might be regarded by an unreflecting mind as of no importance but is considered by the philosophical Muslim as awfully portentous, and hailed by the Christians as an omen of the brightest promise. The Turks have been led to imitate us in our luxuries: several of the more wealthy began by adopting the use of the knife and fork; and the habit of openly drinking wine immediately followed, and has become common among a great number of the higher officers of the government ... the principles of the dominant class will doubtless spread (though they have not yet done so) among the inferior members of the community. The former have begun to undermine the foundations of EI-Islam: the latter as yet seem to look on with apathy ... but they will probably soon assist in the work, and the overthrow of the whole fabric may reasonably be expected to ensue at a period not very remote.²

The editor of that remarkable work, *The Manners and Customs of the Modern Egyptians*, Lane's nephew, Edward Stanley Poole, also writes in his preface to the classic work, in London in 1860, that "Twenty five years of steam communication with Egypt have more altered its inhabitants than had the preceding five centuries. They then retained the habits and manners of their remote ancestors: they now are yearly straying from old paths into the ways of European civilisation. Scholars will ever regard it as most fortunate that Mr. Lane seized his opportunity, and described so remarkable a people while yet they were unchanged." Comments which are a warning to those who detect all those changes just around the corner at this time in history.

Note, too, that all this talk of forks and knives is all the more intriguing given that we learn from Norbert Elias, the great expert on emulation up the social scale, that forks were introduced into Europe in the twelfth century by a Byzantine princess whose golden fork caused sardonic comment in Venice.³ She was considered extremely snobbish for using such a dainty object for such a mundane task as putting a morsel of food in one's mouth.

More significantly, Bernard Lewis tells us that through those long centuries when the Islamic world considered itself the very centre of civilisation, nothing was translated from the European languages into Turkish, Arabic or Persian. It was only after the serious defeat of Ottoman power in Europe, after the unsuccessful siege of Vienna in 1683 and the battle of Carlowitz in 1699, that the Ottomans became interested in what was going on in those dark places in Europe.⁴

Even so, there was a long hiatus of self-satisfaction in the eighteenth century during the Tulip Age in the Ottoman lands, which reached heights in Ottoman music and poetry that were still untouched by European forms. With the French Revolution a major change of mood came about. The Ottoman Ambassador at the French court, Tahtawi, describes the activities of the court with amusement.

However, serious matters then follow. Tahtawi translates the French constitution in 1834, and not only that, the governor of Tunisia adopts the Belgian constitution. From then on, constitutions are all the rage. Namik Kemal, the great Ottoman writer, after his sojourn in Paris escaping from the absolutism of the Sultan, declares that a constitutional monarchy is much more suitable for Turks than for the French. The French, according to Kemal, are much given to excesses and are emotional. They get carried away in crowds. Whereas the Ottomans, Kemal argues, with their innate gravity, are much more likely to benefit from a rational constitution. It also fits Islam better, according to him. The upshot of all this is that the Ottomans enact the Constitution of 1876 in order to benefit from its magical healing powers for the body politic. While initially unsuccessful, the defeat of Russia in 1905 by a Japan that was ruled by constitutional monarchy is interpreted in the Islamic world as unmistakable proof of the superiority of constitutional government over autocracy. The Constitutional Revolution of 1906 in Iran, and the coup d'état of the Committee of Union and Progress (motto derived from the work of the French philosopher Auguste Comte) in 1908 in Turkey, again demonstrates the power of received ideas that emanated from Paris.

It is not only the Islamic world that is so sensitive to unconventional ideas from the outside. The description of Russian intellectuals in the nineteenth century is also instructive. Alexander Herzen writes on the reception of Hegelian philosophy from Germany in Russia during the 1850s:

... there is no paragraph in all the three parts of the Logic, two parts of the Aesthetic, of the Encyclopedia ... which was not captured after the most desperate debates lasting several nights. People who adored each other became estranged for entire weeks because they could not agree on the definition of "transcendental spirit", were personally offended by the opinions about "absolute personality" and "being in itself". The most worthless tracts of German philosophy that came out of Berlin and other [German] provincial towns and villages, in which there was any mention of Hegel, were written for and read to shreds – till they came out in yellow stains, till pages dropped out after a few days ... ⁵

The Oxford philosopher Isaiah Berlin writes that the Russian government was unwilling to allow its subjects to travel to France, which they regarded "as a chronically revolutionary country, liable to perpetual upheavals, bloodletting, violence and chaos. By contrast, Germany lay peaceful under the heel of a very respectable despotism. Consequently young Russians were encouraged to go to German universities ... [to make them] faithful servants of the Russian autocracy."⁶

Who could deny that ideas of the most dangerous sort have been traversing most carefully guarded boundaries for a long time? Even the Soviet Union was not immune. Many have observed that it was the daily experience on TV of the quality and superiority of ordinary daily life in West Germany which, in the end, made the lies of the East German and other Iron Curtain regimes untenable. It was the contrast between the life lived and the life observed on TV, and greatly magnified by the imagination, that in the end brought down the Berlin Wall and, with it, the Iron Curtain. The world has been utterly different ever since.

THE POLITICS OF CULTURAL CONTROL

Why, in the end, are some customs, ideas, and fashions accepted, and others discarded? Certainly there is a mysterious element in all this which makes cultural development highly unpredictable. The availability of information through many channels is a necessary pre-condition for cultural change, but this is not enough. There needs to be an internal process of differentiation in the society concerned that will permit the “new” forms, ideas, fashions and customs to be accepted, adopted and utilised for local and immediate purposes. The adoption of new ideologies is an ongoing process in the struggle of particular groups trying to impose their views on a complex social structure. Symbols and ideas are an integral part of the political process of persons and groups who negotiate for position, influence and power. Social forms are not static: they are always being challenged by new individuals or groups with new ideas and new directions. As groups try to define themselves, further their agendas, define their opponents, struggle to meet changing conditions, they adopt symbols, hairstyles, clothing, tattoos, drinks and culinary forms that indicate their “difference” from other such groups. Such concern with “difference” – we do this, you do that – is of the essence in social relations. It communicates status. This leads naturally to questions of social control: you may do this, and you may not do that. The entire sorry story of headscarves for women in Muslim countries, and in France, makes a good example of this matter of definition, difference and control. The scarves, and the denial of scarves, become “symbolic”. They come to represent the defiant gestures of a struggle for the domination of the high ground of moral ideology. In turn, this struggle, which may begin with “cultural” symbols, leads subtly into political action, and thus into a form of “legitimacy” by way of political domination.

The story of the Turkish Welfare party’s rise into prominence, power and subsequent fall from power (1994–7) is replete with the use of Islamic “symbols” for purposes of self-definition and legitimacy. This is a very precise example of the use of symbolic rhetoric for the purposes of “differentiation” and thus the definition of an “identity”. The symbols adopted by the Welfare party – scarves,

headgear, gestures, the entire armoury of Islamic insignia – allowed it to insist on its “difference” from other “ordinary” parliamentary parties which were, in fact, no less “Islamic” than the Welfare party. It made frontal attacks on the symbols of “secularism” in Turkey: insisting on attacking or defacing pictures and statues of the founder of the republic, Atatürk. The rhetoric used by the Welfare party insisted on these symbolic markers of “difference” and defined the “others” as “traitors” to the moral struggle for the freedom of conscience. These symbolic tactics led it to take up extreme positions against the “secular” constitution of the Turkish Republic. Support for the Welfare party rose from about 11 per cent to 21 per cent of the electorate. Anger at inflation running at 100 per cent and local corruption, fed into the sense of alienation. This trend continued for a period (1996–7) and it was, at the time, tolerated by the political establishment for entirely local and practical reasons. It seemed to serve the short-term tactics of one of their so-called “secularist” allies (the DYP–True Path Party of the former prime minister Tansu Ciller), which also enjoyed the support of about 20 per cent of the electorate. However, all these political-rhetorical manoeuvres finally exhausted the patience of their powerful opponents, the large urban middle class, major newspapers and TV channels, and more importantly the military and other bureaucratic elements of the establishment, who engineered their fall from power to the considerable relief of those (79 per cent) who had voted against the highly symbolic Welfare agenda.

The story did not end there, however. Another Islamist party with roots in Welfare was able to combine those symbols of Islamist “difference”, the headscarf in particular, with a liberal agenda by adopting the principles of the European Union. They were able to claim that their anti-secularist stance was part of the European idea of “universal human rights” for the freedoms of conscience and religious practice. The clever use of “human rights”, combined with the “headscarves” issue for women, made for a vibrant election platform which allowed them to win 47 per cent of the votes in the 2007 elections. Thus, cultural elements of symbolic “difference” became the instrument for the legitimisation of political hegemony.

An even more telling but older example of similar dynamics is the adoption of the Latin alphabet by Turkey. The Arabic script that the Turks had used in their domains in Asia, Europe and Africa for more than a thousand years was simply discarded without much struggle in 1929. The symbolic statement of the break of the vigorous new republic with the imperial past could not have been more eloquent. The profound effects of this dramatic change are still reverberating in the national consciousnesses of Turkish-speaking peoples from the Balkans to China. It cannot be denied that the effect of the change of alphabet from the Ottoman to the Latin has been to open up Turkish culture to deep Western influence. It is not without reason that the Iranians, who, with the rise

of Khomeini, have embarked on a different direction, consider the Turkish case to be one of “westoxication”, to use their colourful phrase. Cultural symbols define and differentiate social groups in specifically local contexts, even if their content is ultimately derived from international sources.

In his recent writing on this subject, the sociologist Peter Berger has suggested that the nature of globalisation has been particularly salient among certain key groups. He notes the development of a “world wide” shared style (hardly to be called “culture” as yet) among important policy makers (“the Davos group”), itinerant academics (“the Faculty Club types”), the mass media (“Peter Arnett in Baghdad again”) and Protestant Evangelical missionary activity in many parts of the world.⁷ The pace of contact and communication in such developments has certainly increased. The question of “depth” of penetration remains open.⁸

Berger also proposes to investigate the problem of “penetration” by considering local reactions in terms of replacement, synthesis, co-existence and rejection (of cultural forms).⁹ He rightly feels that cultural process could be consistently monitored in these respects. He is correct in identifying cases of synthesis and rejection to be of particular interest. As I have indicated above in connection with the problem of the internal dynamics of “group formation” and “differentiation” in the Turkish political context, these processes need to be explored in their intimate and particular socio-political details. The politics of culture, as Aldous Huxley, George Orwell and Arthur Koestler never tired of warning us, is the key to the “future societies” that we are in the process of creating. Thus, the stakes are very high indeed in the cultural control of symbolism in the media.

CULTURAL SYMBIOSIS AND REJECTION

The new globally-connected world that we are beginning to experience will include large numbers of people who will be speaking different languages, and maintaining their own distinct customs. The burning question, ever since Bosnia, Chechnya and Rwanda, is how to devise legal and constitutional forms that will enable plural societies to exist in reasonable amity. Where the legal safeguards are not in place, or not sufficiently observed, assiduously entrenched labour interests are combined with high unemployment – as in the case of much of Western Europe – and the danger of ethnic strife becomes very large. On this score there is much for Europeans to learn from the long American experience with immigration, as well as from the openness of Asian civilisations. The American case provides the complicated picture of legal and constitutional frameworks within which “cultural rights” are recognised as part of the right to freedom of expression and religion. It is in this context that bilingual education and human rights are being debated. There is much here of great importance concerning the development of institutions and legal precedents concerning

cultural survival and/or assimilation. Nonetheless, behind legal frameworks and the learned opinions of legal experts, lies the everyday experience of interpersonal relations. On this score, even with the momentous election victory of Barack Obama to the White House, there is so much more to be done for Americans to open their minds, and their hearts, to each other.

It is in this intimate respect that the Asian and Middle Eastern experiences of interpersonal relations are different. There are two important and highly sophisticated examples from which we can draw valuable lessons: India and the Ottoman Empire. First, regarding India, consider this interesting letter to *The Economist* (written in the mid-1980s but still valid today):

Sir—Despite your article on communal violence in India (November 1), the great majority of Hindus, Muslims, Christians and others live peacefully together. Here in southern India, there are many examples of different religious bodies actually sharing each other's places of worship.

In the heart of Madras city (population now around six million) there is a Muslim shrine where Hindu and Christian women (including high-caste Brahmin women) bring their babies to be blessed by the mullah. A few blocks farther on is a Catholic church crowded, especially on Fridays, by Hindus and Muslims, as well as Christians. On the holy Muslim day of Muhurram, Muslims in Madras have the hereditary right to use the sacred waters of the temple pool of the beautiful Hindu Kapaleeswara temple, in the heart of the city.

Because of a legend that a crippled Muslim boy saw a vision of the Blessed Virgin Mary, and was consequently cured, thousands of Muslims from the Middle East and Malaysia join Hindus and Christians at the annual festival of the Vailankanni Roman Catholic church, farther south. In neighbouring Karnataka state a joint Hindu-Muslim object of worship in the Baba Budan Mountains is presided over by a Muslim priest, who administers to multitudes of Hindu pilgrims as well as to Muslims. The list is endless.

It is, I know, unfashionable to write anything pleasant about contemporary India, but compare that, if you please, with the carnage Christian wreaks upon Christian in Northern Ireland. Imagine, if you can, a Baptist minister celebrating mass in St. Peters. And from the days when I was a small choirboy in Britain I have vivid recollections of low-church worshippers stalking indignantly out of church in the middle of service because a visiting high-church clergyman made the sign of the cross!"

Harry Miller (Madras, India)¹⁰

What is it that makes it possible to have these open-minded relations between the myriad ethnic and linguistic groups on this colourful subcontinent which

seems to pulsate with baroque human complexity? As is well known, India has at least 300 languages, about 10 of which are major literary languages; it also has at least 70,000 different castes and other distinguishable groups. Even the temples exemplify the desire to elaborate: more gods, more goddesses, more mysterious rituals, more abstract explanations, more categories of priests, of servants, of worshippers. Complexity is the rule. We know full well that when things go wrong, a terrible price is paid for the dark suspicions that groups may harbour towards each other even in tolerant India. Examples of riots and killings abound. Even so, considering the long history of the co-existence of myriad castes and cultures, even after the disastrous partition in 1947, the more enriching aspects of personal relations in India remain the most important hope for the future. We know that, at the individual and personal level, there is often a sense of tolerance and understanding, a sense of acceptance of diversity, that is very different from the experience of more homogeneous societies such as those of Western Europe. The personal courage of Indians in many walks of life (including important anthropologists, such as Veena Das, T. N. Madan and Ashis Nandy) during the Delhi riots to save Sikhs from maddened rioters, or Muslims during the Ayodhya and Bombay troubles, deserves mention. When Kathleen Gough wrote in 1952 about a small village in Tanjore made up of an incredible number of castes (47, to be precise, in a village of 962 persons, of whom 311 were Devendra Pallan, a single low caste), one could see that the experience of diversity, a sense of the different “other”, would come very close to the intimacy of individual experience in daily life.¹¹

We know that the unification of “nation-states” through the assimilation of diverse groups has been a long-term historical process in Europe in which persuasion, arrogance and snobbery, as well as heavy-handed bludgeoning, have played a part. The experiences of the Corsicans, the Basques and the Bretons in France, the Vallons and Flamands in Belgium, the problems of Northern Ireland – all are the residue of desperate struggles involved in the homogenisation of these nation-states. Both in France and in Britain (and many other countries) insistence on the exclusive use of national languages was official policy until recent times. In India, with the ancient and unusual legacy of the caste system, such attempts were not undertaken by the authorities (although it is true that the Emperor Akbar experimented with a super-religion (*Din-i Ilahi*) over Islam and Hinduism).¹² It is not clear how much pressure there was for conversion under Muslim rulers in the north, even though India has experienced large-scale conversions to Islam throughout its history. No doubt there were movements from one caste into another, from one category of caste into another as well, so that the social fabric was always changing. But evidently there could not have been the kind of assimilation that seems to have taken place in Western Europe. Dalrymple writes:

About 100 miles south of Delhi, where I live, lie the ruins of the Mughal capital, Fateh-pur Sikri. This was built by the Emperor Akbar at the end of the 16th century. Here Akbar would listen carefully as philosophers, mystics and holy men of different faiths debated the merits of their different beliefs in what is the earliest known experiment in formal inter-religious dialogue.

Representatives of Muslims (Sunni and Shi'ite as well as Sufi), Hindus (followers of Shiva and Vishnu as well as Hindu atheists), Christians, Jains, Jews, Buddhists and Zoroastrians came together to discuss where they differed and how they could live together.

Muslim rulers are not usually thought of in the West as standard-bearers of freedom of thought; but Akbar was obsessed with exploring the issues of religious truth, and with as open a mind as possible, declaring: "No man should be interfered with on account of religion, and anyone is to be allowed to go over to any religion that pleases him." He also argued for what he called "the pursuit of reason" rather than "reliance on the marshy land of tradition".

All this took place when in London, Jesuits were being hung, drawn and quartered outside Tyburn, in Spain and Portugal the Inquisition was torturing anyone who defied the dogmas of the Catholic church, and in Rome Giordano Bruno was being burnt at the stake in Campo de' Fiori.¹³

The familiar experience of "difference" around the individual evidently "humanised" personal relations, so that people would "naturally" speak numerous languages, and go in and out of each other's temples, and participate in each other's rituals. In some parts, such as Lucknow, there would be one language in the family, another one in the street, a different language for the lower castes, and another one for superiors. To this could be added a sacred language for those so inclined.

The problem in the Indian case is that such complexity was maintained through long centuries at the cost of caste barriers. The plight of the low castes and the outcastes remained. It dominated debates for social reform. It is a matter of considerable achievement for British rule in India during the nineteenth century to have been able to formalise these matters so that the legal systems functioned with tolerable efficiency. We are told that civil strife was fairly rare in the nineteenth century. It could be argued that it is since independence, with the struggle for power taking place among mass political parties, that the social divisions have become so salient and so difficult to manage.¹⁴

In Sri Lanka, which shares many attributes with the Indian subcontinent, cultural recognition of difference has not proven to be a sufficient guarantee of minority rights. The experience of the Tamil minority in a state dominated by Sinhalese Buddhists has not been a happy one. The Sri Lankan example indicates more clearly than other cases that even in the context of effective

parliamentary institutions, a relatively free press and a courageous judiciary, the intensity of ethnic tensions and reprisals can still overwhelm rational politics. Thus, humane personal relations are vital, but not sufficient. Liberal political institutions at every level of the state need to be very firmly established as well.

OTTOMAN ETHNICITY

Let me briefly turn now to the experience of the Middle East. The Ottoman Empire is famous for its unusual “millet” system. Here, the experience is comparable to that of India in terms of the complexity of ethnic groups, of religions and languages, except that structured forms of differentiation comparable to the castes of India were not developed. As a result, interpersonal relations have the same quality of openness between different categories of people, but without intense concern about social distance and the possibility of caste pollution. Hence, ethnic groups have mixed and mingled in the most intimate manner from the Balkans (where Bosnia is a good example) to Egypt, wherever the Ottomans ruled. Mazower, in a remarkable work of scholarship, documents the change in vivid detail, from the relatively easy-going relations between ethnic groups under the empire, to the vicious state of affairs that arose once the various nation-states took over their claimed territories in the Balkans. Here is Mazower quoting from a Bulgarian memoir of life in the 1870s:

Turks and Bulgarians got on well together. The women of a village quarter bordering on Turkish houses mixed with the Turkish women in a neighbourly way, while the children played with the little Turks as with their own play-mates. The Turkish women and children spoke Bulgarian quite well and the Bulgarians, like their children, managed to get by in Turkish, the result being a sort of mixed patois. Those Turks who worked at Bulgarian houses were accepted as close friends ... We were used to the Turks ... all this we took as being in the order of things.¹⁵

Such is the state of affairs just before the independence of Bulgaria in 1877, in the aftermath of the Russian invasion, when “ethnic cleansing” gets under way. Just as in the case of India, there is a great deal of common cultural patterns between the various communities: according to Mazower again: “The blurring of the divide among the three great monotheistic faiths was a feature of one of the fastest-growing religious movements of the seventeenth- and eighteenth-century Balkans – the strain of Islamic mysticism known as Bektashism ...” Mazower then quotes from a pamphlet, “The Bektashi believe in the Great Lord and in the true saints Muhammad, Ali, Kadije, Fatima, and Hasan and Husain ... They also believe in all the saints, both ancient and modern, because

they believe in Good and worship it. And as they believe in these and love them, so also do they in Moses and Miriam and Jesus and their servants ...” “‘I thought you were all Moslems here,’ a British traveller asked the priests at one Bektashi tekke. ‘So we are,’ they told her, ‘but of course we keep St George’s Day.’ ...Bektashism spread throughout south-eastern Europe with the [Ottoman] empire and became popular in southern Albania, where it remains entrenched even after the fall of communism.”¹⁶

So much for the “clash of civilisations”.

The Jews, too, had been closely involved with the Muslim community.¹⁷ Bernard Lewis quotes the famous Edirne letter “written in the first half of the fifteenth century”:

I have heard of the afflictions, more bitter than death, that have befallen our brethren in Germany – of the tyrannical laws, the compulsory baptisms and the banishments, which are of daily occurrence ... on all sides I learn of anguish of soul and torment of body ... Brothers and teachers, friends and acquaintances! I, Isaac Zarfati, though I spring from a French stock, yet I was born in Germany and sat there at the feet of my esteemed teachers. I proclaim to you that Turkey is a land wherein nothing is lacking, and where, if you will, all shall be well with you. The way to the Holy Land lies open to you through Turkey ... Here every man may dwell at peace under his own vine and fig tree. Here you are allowed to wear the most precious garments. In Christendom, on the contrary, you dare not even venture to clothe your children in red or in blue, according to your taste, without exposing them to the insult of being beaten black and blue, or kicked green and red, and therefore are ye condemned to go about meanly clad in sad coloured raiment ... and now, seeing all these things, Israel, wherefore sleepest thou? Arise! And leave this accursed land forever.

Lewis goes on to quote from Samuel Usque, a Portugese Jew, a century later:

... most signal (among human consolations) is great Turkey, a broad and spacious sea which God opened with the rod of His mercy as He opened the Red Sea at the time of the exodus ... here the gates of liberty are always open for the observance of Judaism”

and adds, “this must have come as a considerable surprise to a traveller from sixteenth century Portugal”.¹⁸

It is a matter of considerable regret for Turkish intellectuals that the liberal attitudes of the Ottomans in terms of cultural, ethnic and linguistic diversity appropriate in an imperial age have not been transferred to Turkey after 1924,

as a nation-state. Hence the terrible, short-sighted and narrow-minded cultural policies of recent times, especially in the period after military rule in the 1980s in the Turkish Republic, which are sadly undermining the familiar trust between Turks and Kurds built up over centuries of interaction.

CONCLUSION

We commenced the chapter with historical examples showing how cultures affect each other in interactions that are always profoundly political. Cultural features are almost never neutral. They carry a heavy load of a perceived political context. The sense of power, of domination and subjugation, of superior forms to be adopted or inferior patterns to be rejected, is often under the surface. These dynamic relations may not always be in the open, but they are likely to be sensed sometimes in an inchoate manner by the people involved. Symbolic forms of power and prestige, of honour and respect, remain critical in the interaction of cultures. The philosophies behind the politics of hegemony – how to manage virtuous and just societies – have engaged serious thinkers in all civilisations, from the ancient to the modern. The acceptance of diversity, and the just management of interrelations, are often highly controversial matters that have led – and still lead – to tragedies. They turn out to be very different in the experience of the West, and some of the others mentioned above, as compared to the East.

We are now dealing with the most immediate concerns of human rights everywhere. The challenge, as always, is to balance the needs of an orderly and just society with liberty and individual freedoms. The ideal must be to achieve open societies in which ethnic and cultural diversity may enrich the lives and experiences of the citizens.

Therefore, two conclusions follow: first, an open society must have firm political and legal institutions, the rule of law clearly promulgated, and a tradition of tolerance and inclusiveness, all of which will allow ethnic and other divergent groups to feel secure in the body politic. However, while this is necessary, it is not by itself sufficient. A culture of acceptance in interpersonal relations must also be cultivated. Differences and complexity must be allowed to flourish in order to permit the development of a more tolerant state of mind. Furthermore, at the current time, all this must exist in the context of the representative institutions, elections and a free parliament that make modern society possible. These are high hopes, but we cannot deny that the willing acceptance of diversity and the rule of law are the *sine qua non* of the open societies we must build for a more humane future.

NOTES

1. C. Lévi-Strauss, *La Pensée Sauvage*, Paris: Librairie Plon, 1962; *Le Cru et le Cuit*, New York: Harper and Row, 1964; *Du Miel aux Cendres*, Paris: Librairie Plon, 1966; *L'Origine des Manières de Table*, Paris: Librairie Plon, 1968; *L'Homme Nu*, New York: Harper and Row, 1971.
2. E. W. Lane, *The Manners and Customs of the Modern Egyptians*, London and New York: Dutton, Everyman's Library, [1842] 1963.
3. N. Elias, *The Civilizing Process: The History of Manners and Power and Civility*, 2 vols, New York, Pantheon Books, [1942] 1982.
4. B. Lewis, "The Impact of the French Revolution on Turkey: Some Notes on the Transmission of Ideas", in *Journal of World History*, I, 1953, pp. 105–25; *The Emergence of Modern Turkey*, London: Oxford University Press, 1968; *The Muslim Discovery of Europe*, New York and London: W. W. Norton & Co., 1982; *Islam and the West*, New York and Oxford; Oxford University Press, 1993.
5. Herzen quoted in S. I. Berlin, *Russian Thinkers*. Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1979.
6. Berlin, *Russian Thinkers*.
7. P. L. Berger, in "Four Faces of Global Culture", *The National Interest*, no. 49, Fall 1997, pp. 23–29.
8. P. L. Berger and S. P. Huntington, *Cultural Globalisation: A Research Project* (published paper held at Boston University); Peter L. Berger, "Four Faces of Global Culture", *The National Interest*, no. 49, Fall 1997, pp. 23–9.
9. Berger and Huntington, *Cultural Globalisation*.
10. H. Miller, Letter to *The Economist*, 29 November 1986, p. 301.
11. E. Kathleen Gough, "Caste in a Tanjore Village", in E. R. Leach (ed.), *Aspects of Caste in South India, Ceylon and North West Pakistan*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1960.
12. Amartya Sen, *The Argumentative Indian: Writings on Indian History, Culture and Identity*, New York: Picador/Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2006.
13. W. Dalrymple, "A lesson in humility for the smug West", *The Times*, 14 October 2007.
14. T. N. Madan, *Modern Myths, Locked Minds: Secularism and Fundamentalism in India*. Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1997; A. Nandy, *The Intimate Enemy: Loss and Recovery of Self under Colonialism*, Delhi, Oxford University Press, 1983; A. Nandy and S. Trivedy, et al., *Creating a Nationality: The Ramjanmabhumi Movement and Fear of the Self*, Delhi, Oxford University Press, 1997; M. C. Nussbaum, *The Clash Within: Democracy, Religious Violence and India's Future*, Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2007.
15. M. Mazower, *The Balkans: A Short History*, New York: Modern Library, 2002, p. 66.
16. Mazower, pp. 63–4
17. M. Mazower, *Salonica, City of Ghosts: Christians, Muslims and Jews, 1430–1950*, London: HarperCollins, 2004.
18. B. Lewis, *The Jews of Islam*, Princeton, N.J., Princeton University Press, 1984.

About the Contributors

Abdou Filali-Ansary has been the Director of the Aga Khan University Institute for the Study of Muslim Civilisations (AKU-ISMC) in London since 2002. Previously he served as the founding Director of the King Abdul-Aziz Foundation for Islamic Studies and Human Sciences in Casablanca, Morocco, and as Secretary General of the Mohammed V University in Rabat, having also taught modern philosophy there. He has contributed widely to academic discourse on Islam and modernity, and democratisation and civil society in the Middle East. His most recent publication, *Le sens de l'histoire (Meaning and End of History)*, was published jointly by the Roi Abdul Aziz Foundation, Casablanca, and the Konrad Adenauer Foundation in January 2008. The book is the result of a symposium held in Casablanca by the Roi Abdul Aziz Foundation for the Etudes Islamiques et les Sciences Humaines. He is the author of numerous books and articles on Islam's reformist traditions, including *Is Islam Hostile to Secularism?* (1996, 1999) and *Reforming Islam: An Introduction to Contemporary Debates* (2003), as well as a translation into French of Ali Abdel-Raziq's landmark book, *Islam and the Foundations of Political Power* (1994). In 1993, he co-founded the bilingual Arabic–French journal *Prologues: revue maghrébine du livre*.

Aziz al-Azmeh was born in Damascus. He earned his License-ès-Lettres in philosophy and sociology in 1971 from the Beirut Arab University. He got his MA in philosophy from Tübingen in 1977 and then completed his PhD in Oriental Studies at the University of Oxford. Following completion of his doctoral studies, he has held a number of research fellowships and visiting professorships. These include positions at Beirut, Exeter, Uppsala, Oxford and Cambridge. Professor al-Azmeh has written and edited several books both in Arabic and English. His scholarly output includes two works on Ibn Khaldun and

two on secularism in Arab society. He has also written about historical writing and about Arab and Islamic society and culture. His edited works include a volume on Islamic law and anthologies of the works of Ahmad Faris al-Shidyaq, Ibn Taimiyya, Al-Mawardi, Muhammad Ibn 'Abd al-Wahhab and Ibn Khaldun. The variety and range of al-Azmeh's research interests are reflected in dozens of articles he has published in international journals in Arabic, English and German. Professor al-Azmeh is currently engaged in a large work on Islamic history and late antiquity, and a study of Constantine Zurayk.

Akeel Bilgrami is the Johnsonian Professor of Philosophy at Columbia University and Director of the Heyman Center for the Humanities. He got his first degree in English Literature at Bombay University and then went as a Rhodes Scholar to Oxford University, where he got a BA in Philosophy, Politics and Economics. He has a PhD from the University of Chicago and taught at the University of Michigan for two years before going to Columbia University, where he has been since the mid-1980s. He has written a book called *Belief and Meaning*, on issues of linguistic meaning and its relation to thought and reality, as well as various articles on related themes having to do, generally, with intentionality, first-person authority, scepticism and realism. Apart from philosophy of language and mind, he also has research interests in moral psychology and political theory and two books published by Harvard University Press: *Self-Knowledge and Resentment* (2006) and *Politics and the Moral Psychology of Identity* (2009).

Adel Daher was educated at the American University in Beirut and Frankfurt University. He obtained his PhD from New York University in 1967. Professor Daher worked as a lecturer in a number of universities in New York for ten years, and is currently a professor at Pace University in New York. Professor Daher is a member of the Philosophical Society, the American Philosophical Society and the Society of International Affairs. His main publications include: *Al-Falsafah wa-al-siyasah* (Philosophy & Politics), London: Dar al-Saqi, 1990; *Al-Usus al-falsafiyah lil-'almaniyah* (The Philosophical Foundations of Secularism), Beirut: Dar al-Saqi, 1993; *Awwaliyat al-'aql: naqd utruhat al-Islam al-siyasa* (Primacy of Reason: Criticism of the Thesis of Political Islam), Beirut: Dar Amwaj, 2001.

Amena Mohsin is a professor in the Department of International Relations at the University of Dhaka in Bangladesh. She received her MA in Pacific Islands Studies from the University of Hawaii and PhD from Cambridge University. Her research has focused on minorities, human rights, gender and security issues. She has also authored two books on the Chittagong Hill Tracts conflict in Bangladesh. Her publications include: *The Politics of Nationalism: The Case of the Chittagong Hill Tracts, Bangladesh*, Dhaka: University Press Ltd, 1997; (ed.) *Ethnic Minorities of Bangladesh: Some Reflections, The Saontals and the Rakhaines*, Program for Research on Poverty Alleviation (PRPA), Grameen Trust, Dhaka,

2002; *The Chittagong Hill Tracts, Bangladesh: On the Difficult Road to Peace*, International Peace Academy, USA: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2003.

Ridwan al-Sayyid is a professor of Islamic Studies at the Lebanese University. He is also the editor-in-chief of *al-Ijtihad* which has been considered as the leading academic journal on Muslim thought in the Arab world. In addition, he acted as a Director of the Higher Institute for Islamic Studies in Beirut and Director of the Arab Development Institute in Beirut. Ridwan al-Sayyid has been a visiting professor at several prominent universities: Harvard University, University of Chicago, Salzburg University, San'aa University, and research fellow at Tübingen University. His research interests focus on three main areas: (a) the critical edition of classical sources relevant to Muslim political thought; (b) classical Muslim scholarship; (c) modern Muslim thought. Professor al-Sayyid is considered to be one of the most learned scholars on the political literature in Muslim heritage. His studies on Muslim Dogma and theology, in addition to those on legal schools and the roots of Muslim law, represent valuable contributions in the field. Ridwan al-Sayyid has also been committed to the study of the issue of modernity in Muslim contexts. His publications include: *The Revolt of Ibn al-Ash'ath and the Qurra'*, Freiburg: Klaus Schwarz Verlag, 1997; *Community and Society (al-Jama'a wa-l-Mujtami')*, Beirut: Dar al-Kitab al-'Arabi, 1997; *Political Issues in Contemporary Islam (Siyasiyyat al-Islam al-Mu'asir)*, Beirut: Dar al-Kitab al-'Arabi, 1998; (with 'Abd al-Ilah balqaziz) *The Crisis of Political Arab Thought (Azmat al-Fikr as-Siyasi al-'Arabi)*, Damascus: Dar al-Fikr, 2000.

Nur Yalman is a professor of Social Anthropology and Middle Eastern Studies in the Department of Anthropology at Harvard University, Senior Fellow of the Harvard Society of Fellows and a Fellow of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences. He has been Bye-Fellow of Peterhouse at Cambridge University, Professor of Social Anthropology at the University of Chicago and Professor of Social Anthropology and of Middle Eastern Studies at Harvard University since 1972. He has done fieldwork in Sri Lanka, India, Iran and Turkey. Professor Yalman has a PhD from Harvard. He is familiar with the Balkans, Central Asia and Japan, and speaks French, German, Turkish, some Persian, Sinhalese, Italian and Arabic. His areas of interest include contemporary social theory and theorists, the anthropology of religion with special reference to Islam, Buddhism and Hinduism, social and political conditions in South and Central Asia, and the Middle East, and political and intellectual developments in other parts of Asia. His publications include: *Under the Bo Tree: On the Purity of Women in the Castes of Ceylon and Malabar* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1967) and "On Land Disputes in Easter Turkey", in *Islam and its Cultural Divergence*, Champaign, IL: University of Illinois Press, 1971.

ABOUT THE CONTRIBUTORS

Sami Zubaida is a reader in Sociology at the School of Politics and Sociology at Birkbeck College, University of London. He is also Research Associate of the Centre for Near and Middle East Studies at SOAS. He has held visiting research and teaching posts in Cairo, Aix-en-Provence and Istanbul, and at Berkeley, California. He teaches Political Sociology and Religion, Culture and Politics on the MSc/MRes degrees, and the Formation of Modern Societies, and Magic, Science and Religion to undergraduates. His research interests are in religion, ethnicity and nationalism in the Middle East, politics, food and culture. Recent publications include: *Islam, the People and the State* (second edition, London: I. B. Tauris, 1993), *A Taste of Thyme: Culinary Cultures of the Middle East* (with Richard Tapper (ed.), London: I. B. Tauris, 1994), and *Law and Power in the Islamic World* (London: I. B. Tauris, 2003).

Index

- Abbasids, 13, 20
Abdu, Muhammad, 24, 50, 53
Abdul Hamid II, Sultan-Caliph, 24
absolutism, 55, 68, 69, 83, 99
absolutists *see* Islamists
academia, 40–1, 90; *see also* universities
al-Afghani, Jamal al-Din, 50
Afghanistan, 14, 79, 85
agnosticism, 72, 74
Ahmadiyya community, 43–4, 45, 48n23
Akbar, Emperor, 104, 105
Albania, 94, 107
alcohol, 17, 18, 19–20, 21, 22
Algeria, 49, 85
Andalucía, 55
Anderson, Benedict, 23
anthropologists, 94, 95, 96, 104
apostasy, 74
Argentina, 96
aristocracy, 35, 88
Aristotle, 54
arms trade, 94
Armstrong, Karen, 58
Arsalan, Shakib, 52
Asad, Talal, 60
ASK (Ain 'O Shalish Kendra) (NGO), 42,
43, 44
Assyrians, 10
Ataturk, Kemal, 50, 52, 101
atheism, 50, 67, 72, 74
authoritarianism, 21, 22, 26, 27, 38, 39
autonomy, 22, 37, 38, 63–4, 68, 71, 80, 83
Averroes *see* Ibn Rushd
Awami League, 41–2, 44, 46
awqaf, 18, 25
al-Awwa, Muhammad Salim, 53, 54
Ayodhya mosque, 83, 104
Al-Azhar committees, 26
Baghdad, 11, 20
Bangla Bhai (Islamic terrorist), 45
Bangladesh, 33, 35, 38, 39, 40, 47, 48n23
Bangladesh Mohila Parishad (NGO), 42, 40
al-Banna, Hassan, 67
bath houses, 19–20
Bektashism, 106–7
Bengal, 34–5, 40, 42, 44–5
Berger, Peter, 102
Berlin, Isaiah, 99
Bernières, Louis de, 6n3
Bin Laden, Osama, 58
Bin Nabi, Malik, 51
Blair, Tony, 58
blasphemy, 91
BNP (Bangladesh National Party), 41, 42,
44, 45
Bosnia, 102, 106
Brazil, 96

INDEX

- Britain, 13, 87, 94, 104
 British Empire, 35, 84, 105
 Bruno, Giordano, 105
 Buddhism, 84, 105
 Bulgaria, 106
 Bush, President George W., 58, 85, 87
- caliphates, 11; *see also* Ottoman Empire
 capitalism, 23, 53, 57
 Capitulations system, 13
 caste system, 81, 104, 105
 Catholic Church, 13, 55, 59, 103, 105
 cemeteries, 18
 censorship, 19, 21, 22, 24, 26, 27, 91
 Chakma, Kalpana, 39
 Chakma community, 41, 42
 charities, 18
 Chechnya, 102
 China, 61
 Christians/Christianity, 10, 11, 103, 105
 clergy, 19
 exclusivity, 55
 and Muslims, 56, 57, 59, 84
 politicised, 68
 specific dress, 13
 Christman, John, 65
 CHT (Chittagong Hill Tracts) Affairs
 Ministry, 39, 42, 46
 Churchill, Winston, 88
 Ciller, Tansu, 101
 cinema, 25, 26, 27, 81
 citizens' forums, 46
 citizenship, 10, 12, 36, 53–4, 67, 74, 89
 civil rights movement, 90
 civil society, 33, 34, 47, 67, 80–1
 academia as, 40–1
 Bangladeshi, 41–4, 45
 conflict management and, 36–9
 Indian, 79
 Iraqi, 80
 NGOs as, 39–40
 civil war, 11, 13
 civilisation, 20, 98
 “clash of civilisations”, 58, 83–5, 107
 classical pluralism, 13, 62–3
 co-operation, 67, 74–5
 coffee/coffee houses, 18–19, 24
 Cold War, 33, 36, 38, 49, 100
 Cole, Juan, 24
 collective reason, 75, 76
 colonialism, 35, 52, 54, 57, 84–5, 86, 92
 communalism, 10, 14–15, 44–5, 74
 communism, 25, 107
 communitarianism, 21, 22
 Comte, Auguste, 99
 conflict, 22, 58, 71, 80, 83–5, 87–91
 conflict management, 33, 36–9
 Connolly, William, 62
 conscience, freedom of, 63, 73, 101
 “conscience collective”, 95
 constitutions, 43, 44, 45, 52, 53, 72–3, 90,
 99, 101
 contracts, 11, 12, 54
 Cook, Michael, 22
 Coptics, 54
 corporatism, 10, 87
 corruption, 45, 46, 53, 57, 86–7, 88, 101
 courtship, 27
 crime, 36, 74
 Crusades, 84
 CSDA (Center for the Study of Developing
 Societies), 34
 culture, 2, 23, 50–1, 54, 61
 Bengali, 34, 44–5
 colonialism and, 84
 control, 100–2
 diffusion and, 94, 95–6
 diversity, 1–6, 55–6, 68
 drinking, 20
 Hindu, 81, 82
 identity and, 91–2
 modernity and, 26
 Ottoman, 106–8
 symbiosis and rejection of, 102–6
 twentieth-century, 25
 Western, 57, 97–8
 youth, 27, 97
 customs, 96, 102
- Dahl, Robert, 62
 Dalrymple, W., 104–5
 Damascus, 11
 Dar al-Harb, 58
 Dar al-Islam, 55, 58

- Das, Veena, 104
- decolonisation, 33, 79, 85, 91
- deism, 68
- democracy, 57, 87
 - civil society and, 37–9
 - conflict and, 80, 87–91
 - elections, 85
 - Indian, 80
 - just institutions, 62, 65–75
 - liberalism, 63, 65
 - majoritarian, 41–2
 - participatory, 37
 - totalitarianism compared with, 53
- democratisation, 24, 25, 45–6
- Derrida, Jacques, 63
- Dhaka University, 38
- dhimma*, 11, 54
- dialogical interaction, 66, 67, 74–6
- differentiation, 13, 55, 65–6, 100, 102, 105, 106
- discrimination, 55, 81
- dissent, 12, 37, 38
- divine governance, 52, 56
- divine law, 70, 71
- divine sovereignty, 53, 68–70
- divorce, 12, 91
- Dumas, Alexandre, 24
- Durkheim, Emile, 95
- Eck, Diana, 2
- economics, 41, 62, 68, 84–5, 94
- education, 18, 23, 35, 40–1, 52, 68, 80, 82, 83, 89, 90
- Egypt, 17, 24, 49, 50, 56, 80, 81, 91
 - anti-British protests, 51–2
 - European culture and, 98
 - minorities in, 54, 58
 - Muslim Brotherhood, 52
 - Napoleon's invasion of, 84
 - Nasirism, 25
 - political Islam, 26, 27–8, 54, 58
 - Urabi revolt (1882), 24
- electorate, 85–6, 88, 89, 101
- Elias, Norbert, 98
- emigration, 94
- English civil war, 13
- epistemic authority, 64–5, 75, 76, 89–90
- equal opportunity, 37, 55, 66, 71
- Ershad, Hussain Muhammad, 38, 44
- ethnic minorities, 41–4, 46
- ethnicity, 10, 13, 33, 36, 41, 55, 102, 104–6
- EU (European Union), 101
- Europe/Europeans, 11, 12, 38
 - colonialism, 84
 - culture, 24, 97–8
 - drinking culture, 20
 - ethnic assimilation, 104–5
 - ordinary, 89
 - tolerance, 55
- Evangelicalism, 55, 102
- everyday life, 95–6, 104
- exclusion, 55, 65–6, 68, 73, 75
- families, 96, 97
- fashion, 27, 97
- fatwas*, 24, 50
- female genital mutilation, 96
- feudalism, 84
- financial markets, 94
- fiqh (usul al-fiqh)*, 12, 21
- First World War (1914–18), 49
- Foucault, Michel, 63
- France, 13, 50, 52, 84, 87, 99, 100, 104
- freedoms, 11, 34, 63, 72, 73, 101, 108
- fundamentalism, 45, 47, 59, 83, 85; *see also* Islamists
- gahwa* (coffee houses), 18–19, 24
- Gandhi, Mahatma, 34, 47n2
- Geertz, Clifford, 55, 60
- gender relations, 26, 27, 72, 83, 90, 91, 96
- Georgeon, François, 20
- Germany, 11, 99, 107
- al-Ghannoushi, Rashid, 67, 70, 74
- al-Ghazali, Muhammad, Abu Hamid, 22, 57
- Gibb, Hamilton, 60
- globalisation, 37, 94–108
- good, conception of the, 63–4, 73, 75
- good and evil conflict, 22, 71
- Gough, Kathleen, 104
- guilds, 17, 20, 80
- Gujarat pogrom, 83

INDEX

- Habermas, Jürgen, 16
hakimiyya, 52, 56
 Hamas, 85
 Hamilton, Malcolm B., 4
 hammam (bath houses), 19–20
 Hanbalite school, 12
 hashish, 17, 19
 Hattox, Ralph S., 18
 Hegelian philosophy, 99
 hegemony, 36, 37, 40, 94, 101, 108
 Herzen, Alexander, 99
 hijab, 27, 90, 100–1
 Hikmatul Jihad organisation, 45
 Hindus/Hinduism, 34–5, 40, 45, 84, 103, 105
 Bangladesh, 41–3
 Bengali, 34–5
 and Muslim “minority” in India, 81, 82, 83
 Hitchens, Christopher, 85, 87, 91
 Hourani, Albert, 50
 human rights, 42, 53, 56–61, 72, 73–4, 101, 108
 human security, 36–7, 47
 Huntington, Samuel, 58, 85
 Husrev Pasha, 20
 Huxley, Aldous, 102
 HWF (Hill Women’s Federation), 39, 46
- Ibn Rushd (Averroes), 21, 54
 Ibn Taimiya, 22
 identity, 35, 51, 55, 72, 91–2, 100–1
 Ignatieff, Michael, 85
 “imagined community”, 23, 24
 immigration, 94, 102–3
 inclusiveness, 38, 47, 66, 67, 68, 75, 108
 India, 14, 52, 91, 94, 96
 British conquest of, 84
 ethnicity, 103–5
 languages, 104, 105
 Muslims, 79–83
 NGO culture in, 38
 Partition, 34, 36, 81, 104
 Indian National Congress Party, 80, 82
 indigenism, 14–15
 individual rights, 63–4, 66, 69, 71, 73–5
 individualism, 10, 89–90
- Indonesia, 50, 60
 inheritance law, 12, 13
 intellectuals, 40–1, 85, 90, 99
 interest pluralism, 63, 71, 73
 international arms trade, 94
 International Declaration of Human Rights, 56
 Internet, 25, 90
 Iran, 22, 85, 96, 101–2
 communism, 25
 Constitutional Revolution (1906), 99
 guilds, 17
 political Islam, 26–7
 secularisation, 23, 27
 Shari’a law, 26–7
 Iranian Revolution (1979), 25
 Iraq, 10, 14, 49, 60, 61, 80, 81, 91
 Baghdad, 11, 20
 communism, 25
 invasion of, 58, 85
 legal reforms in, 12
 Iraq War, 58
 Islam, 5, 48n23, 55, 56, 90–3
 Bektashism, 106–7
 diversity of, 78, 79
 European Christendom and, 84
 internal conflict, 85–7, 91
 liberalism and, 49–61
 mainstream/fundamentalists, 58–60
 Shia, 10, 12, 105
 socialism and, 50
 Sufism, 17, 18, 21, 35, 60, 81, 105
 Sunni, 10, 53, 54, 58–9, 105
 Wahabism, 48n23; *see also* Muslims
 Islamic Oikkyo Jote, 43
 Islamic state, 52–4, 56, 67–8, 70–1, 74, 75, 76
 Islamisation, 68
 Islamists, 25–8, 38, 49, 50, 51–6, 62, 67–76, 85
 “difference”, 100–1
 divine sovereignty, 69–70
 elections, 85–6
 human rights, 56–61
 just, democratic institutions and, 62, 67–76
 and ordinary Muslims, 86, 91

- reductionist tendency of, 71
 worldview, 56–61
- Israel, 27, 52, 72, 83, 86
- Istanbul, 18
- Ja'fari school, 12
- Jains, 105
- Jamaat-i-Islami, 45
- Janissaries, 19, 20
- Japan, 61, 94, 96
- Jatiyo Adibashi Forum, 46
- Al-Jazeera, 88–9
- Jesuits, 105
- Jews, 11, 13, 72, 105, 107
- jihad*, 58
- Jinnah, Muhammad Ali, 34
- Jordan, 56, 59
- Judaism, 55, 57
- al-Jundi, Anwar, 57, 67
- jurists, 21, 54
- just, democratic institutions, requirements
 of, 62, 65–75
- Kant, Immanuel, 63
- Kemal, Namik, 24, 99
- Khomeini, Ayatollah, 67, 102
- King, Martin Luther, 90
- knowledge, 40–1, 68
- Koestler, Arthur, 102
- Kotb, Sayyid (Qutb), 52, 53, 57, 67
- Kothari, Rajni, 38
- Kurds, 10, 108
- Laclau, Ernesto, 62
- Lane, Edward, 97–8
- language(s), 24, 96, 102
 Bengali, 35
 European, 98
 Indian, 104, 105
 Turkish, 101–2
 Urdu, 81–2, 83
- Larkin, Brian, 96
- Latin America, 68
- law, 21–2, 23, 90, 108 *see also* Shari'a law
- Leach, Edmund, 95
- Lebanon, 14, 52
- Lefort, Claude, 62
- legal system, 11, 12, 13–14, 105
- Lévi-Strauss, Claude, 95
- Lewis, Bernard, 97, 98, 107
- liberal pluralism, 62–3
- liberalism, 25, 49–61, 65–6
- liberty, 67, 68, 73, 108
- Libya, 49
- Lipset, Seymour Martin, 62
- literacy, 23, 24
- literature, 20, 23, 24, 25, 27
- Locke, John, 13
- Lyotard, Jean-François, 63
- Madan, T. N., 104
- madrasa (madaris), 18, 80, 83
- magazines, 24–5
- Mahfouz, Neguib, 17
- Mahmoud of Ghazni, 12
- Mahmud II, Sultan (Mahmoud), 20, 97
- al-Majd, Ahmad Kamal Abu, 53
- majoritarian democracy, 41–2
- majority rule, 72–3, 83, 87
- Malinowski, Bronislaw, 96
- al-Manar* (magazine), 24–5
- Mannheim, Karl, 23
- Maqamat* of Hamadhani, 20
- Marcus, Abraham, 19
- market places, 17, 21, 24
- marriage, 17, 27–8, 91, 96
- Marxist socialism, 53
- Al-Masjid al-Jami*, 18
- al-Mawdudi, Abu al-A'la, 52, 53, 57, 67
- Mazower, M., 106
- media, 25, 88–9, 96–7, 101
 Bangladesh, 42
 cultural control of symbolism, 102
 discussion of Islam, 79
 negative, 38
 print, 24, 46, 97; *see also* television
- middle class, 23, 24, 35, 82, 101
- migrant workers, 48n23
- Miller, Harry, 103
- Millet system, 55, 106; *see also* Ottoman
 Empire
- minorities
 in Bangladesh, 41–2, 43, 45, 46
 civil society and, 39

INDEX

- defensive mentality of, 87
 in Egypt, 54, 58
 jurisprudence of, 57–8
 majoritarian democracies and, 37
 Muslim, 79, 87–8, 91
 rights of, 46
 Tamil, 105–6
 missionaries, 52, 55, 57, 102
 modernity, 15, 16, 18, 20, 21, 23–5, 50–1,
 55, 83, 85; *see also* secularism
 monarchy, 38, 88, 99
 monopoly of power, 66, 70
 Montazari, Ayatollah, 27
 Montesquieu, Charles de Secondat, 3
 morality, 26, 27, 63, 89
 Morocco, 60
 mosques, 17, 18, 26, 43, 83, 104
 Mouffe, Chantal, 62
Muhtasib, office of, 21, 22
 mullas, 27, 103
 multiculturalism, 10, 14, 36
 Murad, Sultan, 19
 music, 19, 21, 22, 26, 27, 81, 98
 Muslim Brotherhood, 25, 52, 54
 Muslim Youth, 52
 Muslims, 40
 Bengali, 34–5
 diversity, 79
 Hausa-speaking, 97
 hijab, 27, 90, 100–1
 India, 103
 and Islamists, 86, 91
 Partition, 34
 pluralism, 9–15
 social change, 3–4, 50; *see also* Islam
 mutual respect, 2, 64, 65, 67, 75, 76; *see also*
 tolerance
 mysticism, 21, 106
 mythology, 95

 Nafisi, Azar, 22
 Nandy, Ashis, 34, 104
 Napoleon, Emperor, 84
 al-Nasr, Hamid Abu, 54
 al-Nasser, Jamal ‘Abd, 25, 52
 Nathan, Dev, 47
 nation-states, 2, 3, 11, 51, 55, 104

 nationalism, 3, 25, 35, 38, 47, 56, 57
 Bangladeshi, 44, 45
 Bengali, 44–5
 Egyptian, 24
 knowledge and, 40
 Turkish, 52
 NATO (North Atlantic Treaty
 Organisation), 50
 natural law, 56
 Nawas, Abu, 20
 Nehru, Jawaharlal, 34
 Nepal, 38
 neutrality principle, 64–5, 67, 71, 73
 newspapers, 24, 46, 97
 NGOs (non-governmental organisations),
 37–40, 42–3
 Nigeria, 97
 Nijera Kori (NGO), 42, 43
 non-Muslims, 11, 12, 43, 53–5, 58, 72, 74,
 91

 Obama, President Barack, 103
 orientalism, 57, 78
 Orwell, George, 102
 Ottoman Empire, 13, 51, 97, 98–9
 drinking culture, 20
 ethnicity, 106–8
 Millet system, 55, 106
 nineteenth-century intellectuals, 23–4
 overlapping consensus, 72, 73

 Pakistan, 34, 35, 39–40, 44, 50, 79, 81, 82,
 85
 Palestine, 52, 53, 56, 58, 60, 78, 85
 Pamuk, Orhan, 19
 Partition (1947), 34, 36, 81, 104
 paternalism, 64
 PCP (Pahari Chatra Parishad), 46
 pederasty, 19, 21
 persecution, 12, 57
 Persia, 20, 35, 81; *see also* Iran
 philosophy, 21, 99
 pluralism, 1–6, 36, 40, 41, 44, 47, 57
 cultural and political, 55–6
 interest, 63, 71, 73
 Islam and, 49–51, 61
 justice and democracy, 66, 70, 80

- in Muslim societies, 9–15
 political justice, 65–6
 religious, 55–6
 theories of, 62–3
 value, 63–4, 68, 71, 72, 73
 poetry, 20, 21, 98
 politics, 24
 democratisation of, 45–8
 Islamisation of, 67–8, 76
 power, 46, 66, 68, 70, 71, 76, 85
 representation of women, 46
 twentieth century, 25
 see also electorate
 Poole, Edward Stanley, 98
 Portugal, 105, 107
 post-structuralism, 63
 poverty, 18, 81, 83
 power, political, 46, 66, 68, 70, 71, 76, 85
 power monopoly, 66, 70
 predisposition, 11
 press, 23, 24, 26, 27, 46, 58, 97, 106; *see also*
 media
 private sphere, 21–2, 26, 51, 52, 63, 64, 69,
 90–1, 92
 prostitution, 19
 Protestant Reformation, 13
 Protestantism, 13, 55, 102
 protests, 18, 34, 104
 public sphere, 51, 63, 64, 69, 71–2, 75–6
 censorship, 21
 modernity and, 23–5
 political Islam, 25–8
 sociability, 16–20
 versus private sphere, 90–1, 92

 qadi, 21
 al-Qaradawi, Shaykh Yusuf, 53
 Qur'an, 4–5, 22, 54, 55, 56–7, 59
 Qutb, Muhammad, 57
 Qutb, Sayyid (Kotb), 52, 53, 57, 67

 racism, 56
 Radcliffe-Brown, Alfred, 95, 96
 radical pluralism, 62–3
 Rahman, Zia ur, 44
 Ramadan, 19
 Rashid al-Din, 55

 Rashid Rida, Muhammad, 24–5, 52
 Al-Razi, Abu Bakr, 21
 refugees, 36, 94–5
 relativism, 55
 religion, 2, 3, 21
 conversion, 12, 82, 104
 division, 34–5, 41
 freedom of belief, 72
 madrastas, 18, 80, 83
 observances, 21–2, 90
 politicised, 25–8, 67–8
 private sphere, 51
 reform, 24–5
 state, 44, 73, 75; *see also* Christians/
 Christianity; Islam
 religious organisations, 17
 religious tolerance, 82, 103–4
 Revival of Sunna movement, 52
 revivalism, 13, 49, 51, 53, 55, 59, 60, 85–6;
 see also Islamists
 riots, 34, 104
 Roy, Asim, 34
 Rushdie, Salman, 85
 Russia, 99, 106
 Rwanda, 102

 SAARC (South Asian Association for
 Regional Cooperation), 41
 Sachar report (2006), 81, 93n1
 Saigol, Rubina, 40
 saints, 18, 106
 Sammolito Samajik Andolon (NGO), 42, 43
 satire, 19, 24
 Saudi Arabia, 16, 17, 22, 83, 88, 89
 Schirazi, Asghar, 26
 science, 11, 23, 68
 SDPI (Sustainable Development Policy
 Institute), 34
 Second World War (1942–45), 49, 52
 secularisation, 23, 25, 26, 27
 secularism, 4–5, 33, 44–5, 49, 50, 67, 72,
 74, 82
 security, 33, 36–7, 39, 47
 SEHD (Society for Environment and
 Development), 42
 Sen, Amartya, 14
 sexuality, 21, 27

INDEX

- Shaltut, Mahmud, 53
 Shammolita Nari Samaj (United Women's Front), 39
 Shari'a law, 12, 22, 26, 53, 54, 56, 85, 91
 Shar'iyya Association, 52
 Shia Islam, 10, 12, 105
shura, 15, 53
 al-Sibai'i, Mustafa, 53
 Sikhs, 104
 slaves, 12
 sociability, 17–20
 social interaction, 66, 67, 68, 74–6, 100, 108
 social justice, 62
 social movements, 37
 social networks, 17
 social services, 97
 socialism, 25, 50, 57
 solidarity, 37, 40
 song, 19, 21
 South Asia University, 41
 South Yemen, 49
 Soviet Union, 49, 79, 100
 Spain, 21, 82, 105
 Sri Lanka, 94, 105–6
 state-building, 35, 36
 state religion, 44, 73, 75
 state terrorism, 38, 46
 storytelling, 19, 25
 subversion, 24, 27
 Sudan, 25, 49
 Sufism, 17, 18, 21, 35, 60, 81, 105
 Sunna, 52, 54, 56
 Sunnis, 10, 53, 54, 58–9, 105
 symbolism, 97, 100–1, 102, 108
 syncretism, 33, 34–5, 41, 42, 81, 83
 Syria, 18, 49, 50, 56, 58
- al-Tahtawi, Rifa' al, 98–9
 Talbi, Mohamed, 2
 Taliban, 60
 Tamil Nadu, 96
 Tanukhi, 20
tanzimat, 54
 taverns, 18, 20
 television, 25, 26, 88–9, 96–7, 100, 101; *see also* media
- terrorism, 36, 38, 46, 58, 60, 61, 79
 tolerance, 1, 2, 11–13, 12, 55, 73, 82, 103–4, 108; *see also* mutual respect
 totalitarianism, 53, 68, 69
 trademarks, 97
 traditionalism, 13, 14, 50–1, 58–9
 truth, 4, 23, 40, 54, 68, 75, 105
 al-Turabi, Hassan, 67
 Turkey, 17, 20, 50, 52, 81, 94, 96, 97, 99, 101–2, 106–8
 Turkish Welfare party, 100–1
 “tyranny of the majority”, 72, 73
- ulama, 18, 25, 81
 Umayyad dynasty, 12–13
 UNDP (United Nations Development Programme), 36
 unemployment, 36
 Union of Islamic Youth, 52
 United States of America, 27, 50, 61, 83, 86
 civil rights movements, 90
 democracy and conflict, 88
 geo-politics, 78
 immigration, 102–3
 intelligentsia, 90
 invasion of Afghanistan, 85
 Iraq wars, 58, 85
 media, 89
 political majority, 72
 universalisability principle, 64–5
 universities, 26, 38, 41, 43, 51, 99
 Urabi revolt (1882), 24
 urbanisation, 97
 Urdu, 81–2, 83
wafi (common-law marriage), 27–8
 Usque, Samuel, 107
- Vaishnavism, 35
 value pluralism, 63–4, 68, 71, 72, 73
 Venice, 98
 Verne, Jules, 24
 violence, 14, 34, 41–4, 53, 83, 103, 104
 vote banks, 41, 42, 80
- Wahabism, 48n23
 Walzer, Michael, 37–8

THE CHALLENGE OF PLURALISM

- Weber, Max, 28
- West/Western, 27, 50, 53, 78, 83
- colonialism, 35, 52, 54, 57, 84–5, 86, 92
 - corporate interests, 87
 - criticism of, 52, 56, 57
 - culture, 97
 - missionaries, 52, 57, 102
 - modernity, 15, 27
 - values, 49, 56, 57
- Westernisation, 101–2
- William the Conqueror, 12
- women's issues, 12, 17, 19–20, 27, 39–40, 46
- worldviews, 2, 56–61, 64
- Yemen, 56, 60
- Young Ottomans, 23–4
- youth, 27, 52, 97
- Zaghlul, Saad, 52
- Zamindari system, 35, 47n4
- Zoroastrians, 105