Islam, Democracy and Secularism
The Question of Compatibility

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Introduction

Islam, Democracy and Secularism represent some of the major concerns in the current intellectual discourse. That this should be a subject of enquiry and research is necessary and understandable. This is so in view of a prevailing perception in the West that Islam and democracy are incompatible in terms and that secularism is a precondition for democracy. The Western tradition of intellectual hostility to Islam is well and alive, and during the past two decades it has undoubtedly nurtured the new ideology of Islam as Fundamentalism. To some of the most leading Western scholars of contemporary Islamic politics the political history of Muslim polities during the past two centuries has been the unhappy story of endless power struggles rooted in historical Islam, which made submission to political leaders a religious duty. The net result of this was tyranny and despotism. Western scholars writing in this tradition were certain: "democracy is quite alien to the mind-set of Islam."[1]

According to one source this impression is due to:

a) Systematic and deliberate distortion of Islam by its enemies and those who consider Islamic resilience and its uplifting function in many Muslim countries a threat to their dominance, control and exploitation; distortion of Islamic project is considered an insurance for their continued primacy;

b) A tradition of scholarship where the terms of reference and the agenda for research have been defined by Western experience with

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either an imperial legacy that assumed a superior value system or a quasi-liberal tradition seeking knowledge of, rather than involvement in Islam; in both tradition Islam was " the other", the subsequent and in varying degrees, "the alien";

c)   Similarly, Islamists in many instances, while justifiably reactive, were either more confrontational than persuasive. A few sought acceptance by signaling readiness to be co-opted, others by assuring a posture of a defensive apologia. In the process, a coherent Islamic projection was delayed while a heightened interest in Islam became urgent[2]. It is against this context that the urgency arises of investigating some contemporary Islamic movements that are articulating attitudes and programs which accept a pluralist and participatory political model, and at the same time investigating the positions of those Islamicists who reject such an orientation. The second major thrust of this paper is to investigate the divergent attitudes and perceptions of the Islamicists concerning the democracy-secularism nexus.

The Islamicists and Democracy

The pure idea of democracy, according to its definition, is the government of the whole people by the whole people, equally represented[3]. Therefore, democracy means only that the people have the opportunity of accepting or refusing the men who are to rule them[4]. Although the term democracy is now used as a statement of commendation, the attitudes of the Islamicists concerning the term are divergent. We can identify three positions among Muslim writers and activists concerning the question of compatibility between Islam and democracy: the proponents, the opponents, and those who accept democracy but with major reservations. Most of our analysis will focus on the first two groups.

The Proponents of the Compatibility Thesis

This group of Islamicists generally holds the position of accepting political pluralism and view it as a natural and inevitable evolution in society.

This pluralism, they suggest, must be regulated by commitment to a framework of values shared by the majority of the people, who are predominantly Muslim. Some of the proponents of this thesis would even argue that secular parties, liberal or communist, can exist legally and express their political views freely, provided that they do not undermine the foundations of the Islamic polity[5].

The intellectual roots of this thesis go back to the nineteenth century reformist ideas that flourished in the Arab world at that time and found their expressions in the writings and activities of those early Muslim modernists. One of the earliest figures of this trend was the Egyptian Rifa' R. al-Tahtawi (1801-73) who traveled to France to further his education. Upon his return home, Tahtawi advocated the notion that there was no basic contradiction between Islam and democracy, and that citizens of a Muslim state could and should participate fully in the process of governance[6]. Another thinker who wrote in the same vein was the Tunisian, Khairuddin Pasha (1810-99), who wrote urging Muslims to seek inspiration using the European experience. His thesis was simple in logic: the basis of Europe's strength and prosperity was political institutions based on justice and freedom, i.e. accountable cabinets and legislatures[7]. Al-Tunisi argued that the notion of an accountable minister is similar with the Islamic idea of the good *wazir* who renders counsel without fear or favour, and responsible parliament and free press are equivalent to *shura* (consultation) in Islam. He further asserts that members of parliament are the equivalent of *ahl al-hall wal-a'qd* (those who loose and bind) i.e. knowledgeable jurists and notables of an Islamic state. Based on this, he concludes that adopting European institutions of government is in tandem with the purposes (*maqasid*) of Shari'a[8].

A pioneer of Islamic modernism with clear anti-imperialist tendency and advocacy of pan-Islamism of that period was Jamal al-Din al-Afghani (1838-97). He argued that the absence of '*adl* (justice), *shura* (consultation) and non-adherence to the constitution by the government, were the root causes of decline of the Muslim world. One way to remedy this was that people should be empowered to participate in government through *shura* and elections. Al-Afghani lamented the prevalence of absolutist governments of

the Muslim world, instead he advocated a republican system of government which was a 'restricted government' i.e. a government which was accountable to the masses[9].

One of al-Afghani's disciples went even further than his mentor in an attempt to reconcile Islamic precepts with European ideas. To Muhammad Abduh (1849-1905) *maslahah* (interest) in Islamic thought is the equivalent of *manfa'a* (utility) in Western thought, *shura* of parliamentary democracy, and *ijma'* of public opinion[10].

Two disciples of Abduh, Abdul Rahman al-Kawakibi and Muhammad Rashid Rida shared the same reformist vision. The former attributed the success of Western polities to their adoption of logical and well-practiced rules that have become social duties in those advanced communities which are not adversely affected by what appears to be a division into parties and groups, because such dichotomies are only over the methods of applying the rules and not over them[11]. The latter reformer attributes the backwardness of the Muslim world to the fact that Muslims have lost the truth of their religion, a matter that has been encouraged by despotic rulers. Rida argues forcibly that Islam involves two basic principles: acceptance of the Unity of Allah and consultation in matters of governance. He observes that corrupt rulers have tried to make Muslims forget the second of these two principles by encouraging them to compromise the first[12]. In Rida's view what is needed to restore the Islamic political system to its prominence is consultation between the rulers and the guardians and the interpreters of the law. This requires two things: a class of real *'ulama* and a real Islamic ruler who is a true *caliph*[13].

It is clear that the nineteenth century Muslim thinkers were influenced by European democratic thought and practice. The backdrop for this reformist thought was the crisis of government and a class of inept and despotic Muslim rulers. Based on the principles of *maslahah* (interest), those reformers legitimized borrowing certain aspects of the Western model of government which was compatible with Islam and that could resolve the crisis of governance within Muslim polities.

This reformist trend has been augmented during the twentieth century with the intensification of the crisis of governance of Muslim polities. The

political thought of two contemporary writers deserves close scrutiny, because in their respective writings they demonstrate Islam's capacity for power-sharing and, thus, its compatibility with the modern democratic West. The Egyptian Ahmed Shawqi al-Fanjari and the Tunisian Rachid al-Ghannouchi are among the boldest and most influential writers who deduce every conceivable democratic right and duty from the Qur'an, the *Sunnah* of the Prophet and the practice of the first four caliphs.

Al-Fanjari, following the example of his predecessors such as al-Tahtawi, al-Afghani, Khairuddin and Abduh, asserts that every age adopts a different terminology to convey the concepts of democracy and freedom. Accordingly, what is called freedom in Europe is exactly what in Islam is called justice (*'adl*), truth (*haqq*), consultation (*shura*) and equality (*musawat*). He further elaborates, "the equivalent of freedom in Islam is kindness or mercy (*rahmah*) and that of democracy is mutual kindness (*tarahum*)"[14]. Al-Fanjari goes on to remind his audience that the Qur'an instructs the Prophet to leaniency and forgiveness in the very same verse as he is ordered to consult the believers in the affairs of the community. The Prophet is reported to have said in turn that Allah " has laid down consultation as a mercy for his community". It follows from al-Fanjari's interpretation that, contrary to the dogma propagated by some Western and Muslim writers, Islam is indeed compatible with democracy because there is no place in it for arbitrary rule by one man or group of men. The basis of all decisions and actions of an Islamic state should be not individual whim and caprice, but the *shari'ah*[15].

The second contemporary Muslim thinker who so eloquently formulated his thesis about the democratic potential of Islam is Rachid al-Ghannouchi. Ghannouchi's overall output is very prolific, covering such themes as human-rights, the nation-state, civil liberties, Islam and the West, the role and future of Islamic movements, Islamic minorities, the rights of non-Islamic minorities living in Islamic states, civil society, and women's rights. However, our concern here is to focus on his thesis that Islam and democracy are actually compatible. Ghannouchi leads a school in modern Islamic political thought that advocates democracy and pluralism. He and

those who follow his school believe democracy to be a set of mechanisms for ensuring the sovereignty of the citizens and for the provision of safety valves against tyranny. Ghannouchi does not accept democracy blindly. He rejects the widely held assumption by Western political thinkers that secularism is an essential prerequisite of democracy. He treats democracy not as an ideology, but as a tool for electing a representative government, and for removing that government from office once it loses the backing of the electorate. Ghannouchi's contribution to the current debate among Islamicists concerning the nature, duties, and restraints of government in Islam is included in an important book he authored a decade ago[16]. In his advocacy of democracy and pluralism, Ghannouchi benefits from Imam al-Shatibi's theory of *al-masalih* i.e. exigencies. Drawing on al-Shatibi, Ghannouchi refers to guidelines and regulations the objective of which is the protection of basic human interests from infringement and corruption. These regulations form a framework that includes all known fundamental rights such as the right to life, to freedom of choice, to education, to private property, to participation in public life, and the foundation of a just and an accountable system of government[17]. Ghannouchi acknowledges that Western democracy is blemished by "broken promises", he is also critical of the role played by finance and the media in the West, which ultimately produces choices which represent not the majority of the people but rather influential financial and political interests. He suggests that an Islamic model of democracy would avoid such failures because of the restraining role played by *Shari'ah*. To him the Islamic contribution would be primarily in the form of a code of ethics, a transcendental morality which seems to have no existence in contemporary democratic practices[18].

Ghannouchi's unorthodox ideas gained him many political foes and ideological opponents, who could be classified into two groups: members of a traditionalist Muslim elite who view him as too concessionary to the West and Western ideas; and a group of Muslim modernists of leftist or liberal orientations who find Ghannouchi at fault for what they call his failure to recognize some of the serious shortcomings of Western democracy and its inapplicability to Muslim societies[19].

To refute his opponents' criticism, Ghannouchi came with the theory of *faraghat* (plural of *faragh* i.e. space or vacuum). Meaning that Islam includes areas which have been left for Muslims to fill in accordance with their respective needs and exigencies of changing time and place[20]. Ghannouchi finds strong evidence of these *faraghat* in the biography of the Prophet and the conduct of his companions (*sahaba*). He draws a distinction in the activities of the *sahaba* between what he identifies as *al-dini* i.e. the religious which is concerned about matters of *'aqida* (faith) and *'ibada* (worship); these matters have been settled by *shari'ah* and there can be no dispute over them. Disputes, however, might arise in conjunction with what Ghannouchi calls the *siyasi* (the political or the profane) i.e. on how to administer political affairs, on how to manage disputes, and on the qualifications and powers of rulers. Because no fixed prescriptions have been given pertaining to *al-siyasi*, Ghannouchi argues Muslims are to exercise their ijtihad to come up with practical solutions for emerging problems since Islam fits for all times and places[21]. Based on this *faraghat* theory, Ghannouchi suggests that an Islamic model of democracy is viable. This model is based on the separation of powers and political pluralism. This system is embedded in *shura*; and despite his criticism of Western liberal democracy, Ghannouchi sees it as an excellent mechanism for the realization of the Islamic concept of *shura*. In this shura-based system of government, democracy represents the hope of salvation and deliverance from exclusion and persecution which characterize most Muslim polities today[22].

Although Ghannouchi is the most prominent Muslim thinker among his contemporaries concerning the compatibility between Islam and democracy thesis, he is by no means the only one. Suffice here to consider briefly the positions of four contemporary Muslim thinkers: Malik Bennabi, Hassan al-Turabi, Mohamed Salim al-'Awa and Tawfiq al-Shawi.

Bennabi addressed the question "is there democracy in Islam?". His answer is that democracy, as an attitude, exists within Islam. To him, Islam should be viewed as a democratic enterprise. This is inspired by the verse: " We have honoured the children of Adam."[23]. To Bennabi this verse was revealed to lay the foundations for a democratic model that is superior to

every other model. Thus, a kind of sanctity is endowed upon man raising his value above whatever value other models may give to him. Bennabi argues that the first forty years of Islamic history witnessed the founding of an Islamic democratic system based on a Qur'anic theoretical foundation. This system made strong guarantees of individual rights and imposed restrictions on rulers and the sources of legitimating their authority. These principles were not confined to the political democratic rights, but extented to social democratic ones which had been established in the form of economic principles such as the imposition of *zakat* (alms) and the prohibition of *riba* (usury), *maysir* (gambling), and all other practices that might promote monopoly. Bennabi admitted the fact that the nascent Islamic democratic system did not last long because of the *Ummayyad* coup against *al-Khilafa al-Rashidah* (the rightly Guided Caliphate)[24].

At least two other contemporary Islamic thinkers share the opinion that "democracy" has Islamic roots and that there is an organic link between the two concepts. Tawfiq al-Shawi makes the assertion that democracy is a European version of Islam's *shura*. Muslims abandoned *shura* in the wake of the Guided Caliphate; whereas the European nations succeeded in establishing a shura-based system of government they call democracy[25].

Likewise, Hassan al-Turabi stresses the Islamic origin of the modern democratic thought and traces it back to the contract of *bay'ah* (oath of allegiance). Turabi argues that in the primitive age of direct democracy, some political practices were known. These only found their constitutional expressions toward the end of the Middle Ages. The Europeans derived the origin of this democratic theory from their contacts with the Islamic political *fiqh*. The Islamic concept of *bay'ah*, according to Turabi found its way to the West in just the same way as Islamic concepts in theology, politics, natural and social sciences found their way to European thought[26].

Mohamed Salim al-'Awa argues that if one recognizes the pluralistic nature of humans, and their right to disagree, one must inevitably recognize pluralism in the political sphere. Al-'Awa believes that the Islamic traditional thought which rejects political pluralism and adopts monism leads to an unjust despotic rule or permanent tyrannical government. He attributes this

distortion to the fact that Islamic political thought continues to be constrained by the unquestioned adoption of ancient writings (*taqlid*), copying them, building on them and considering them fundamentals and references for analogy (*qiyas*). Al-'Awa refutes the arguments made by those Islamicists who reject the democracy thesis. The arguments of those writers are, first is that Islam does not know party politics; the second is that early Muslims did not practice political pluralism. In his rebuttal of the two arguments al-'Awa asserts that the non-mentioning of something implies that it is permitted; as to the second argument, the fact that the earlier Muslims did not practice it does not stand as proof to invalidate political pluralism[27]. It follows that contemporary *ijtihad* must inevitably arrive at supporting the concept of political pluralism and democracy. From the above discussion it seems that modern Islamic polities should endorse the democratic procedure, by licensing political parties, permitting political pluralism, and guaranteeing their citizens basic political and civil rights. However, these polities may and probably they should stipulate that this should be done within the framework of Islam. We now turn to discuss the anti-thesis of this stance.

The Opponents of the Compatibility Thesis

The central theme in contemporary Islamic thought we have discussed above is that democracy is compatible with Islam, and that Muslims need to incorporate it into their political thought in order to institutionalize the Islamic concept of *shura*. This theme is based on the premises that civilizational products and achievements are universal. These ideas and political stances have earned the proponents of the compatibility thesis many critics within and outside Islamic circles. The Islamic hostility towards democracy ranges from considering democracy antithetical to Islam to considering it a Western conspiracy against Islam.

The most prominent figure in the rejectionist camp is Sayyid Qutb (1906-66) who was the leading theoretician of the *Ikhwan* (Muslim Brotherhood) in Egypt from the mid-fifties until his execution in 1966. Qutb authored a book titled *Ma'alim fi al-Tariq* (Milestones) in which he forwarded his core thesis of *al-jahiliyya* (pre-Islamic period of barbarity and

idolatry). Qutb categorized all social systems into two broad groups: the order of Islam and the order of *jahiliyya*. The second social system that of *jahiliyya* was decadent and was typical of people revering not God but other humans disguised as deities[28]. Developing his thesis further, Qutb categorized Muslim society itself into two: that of Islam and that of *jahiliyya*. Looking at the world as a whole, Qutb concluded that *jahiliyya* was its most dominant feature and that the incredible inventions and high-tech of today could not hide this fact. This *jahiliyya*, Qutb asserts, is based on rebellion against God's sovereignty on earth. It transfers to man of the major attributes of God, the *hakimiyya*, thus making some men lords over others[29]. What Qutb laments is that *jahiliyya* "is now present not only in the capitalist West and the Communist East, but that it has made its inroads in the world of Islam."[30] All that around us is *jahiliyya*. It is only in the Islamic way of life, Qutb forcefully argues, do all men become liberated from the overlordship of some other men. Based on this Qutb, inter alia, rejects democracy as man-made political system which contravenes the principle of *hakimiyya* (sovereignty of God)[31]. The twin concepts of *jahiliyya* and *hakimiyya* recur in the writings of S.A. Mawdudi, who like Qutb, distinguishes between Islamic and *Jahili* societies[32].

These theses, especially those of Qutb, became the backdrop in the thought of those Islamic groups and individuals who reject democracy. Ayman al-Zawahiri , one of the erstwhile leaders of the Egyptian Jihad Movement, and at present the second-in-command of al-Qaeda organization, asserts that democracy is *shirk billah* (associating partners with God)[33]. He conceptualizes *tawhid* (monotheism) to mean that the only law-maker is God, whereas in democracies the legislators in fact are people, not God. Based on this fact, al-Zawahiri equates democracy with *shirk* (idolatry), since that system of government takes away the right of legislation from God and vests it in men; since democracy recognizes the sovereignty of the people, it follows that it denies God His *hakimiyya* (sovereignty)[34]. Al-Zawahiri was highly critical of the Ikhwan (Muslim Brotherhood) and other Islamic political parties that accept democracy and considered that they have strayed away from the path of God[35].

Al-Zawahiri's group and other similar groups mushroomed, particularly in Egypt, in the 1980's and 1990's and collectively were identified as *al-jama'at al-jihadiyah* (the jihadi groups). These groups believed that the existing governments of the Muslim World, particularly those linked to the Western powers, were not legitimate and those individuals who perpetrated them were apostates and unbelievers, hence such governments should be fought and removed by force. One of these groups succeeded in assassinating Egyptian president Anwar al-Sadat in October 1981, however, their attempt to destabilize and unseat the regime of his successor, Hosni Mubarak ended in failure. Following that many of the leaders of these groups were either arrested, or they went underground. Al-Zawahiri himself disappeared to resurface in 2001 in Afghanistan as the right-hand man for Osama bin Laden.

Apart from these extreme rejectionist groups, the Liberation Party (*Hizb al-Tahrir),* a trans-Islamic political party that was active in the 1950's and 1960's, particularly in Palestine, Jordan and Lebanon, considers democracy as a system of blasphemy (*nizam al-kufur*), which was being promoted in the Muslim world by the Western quarters in collaboration with their local 'Muslim agents'. Like the jihadi groups, the ideologues of *Hizb al-Tahrir* assert that democracy is completely alien to Islam, and that it is strictly *haram* for Muslims to adopt it.[36] The ideologues of *Hizb al-Tahrir* criticized the supporters of the compatibility thesis and considered them 'misguided Muslims' who had been infatuated by the utilitarian principles of Western civilization. Such supporters of the compatibility thesis were condemned as innovators (*mubtadi'un*) and apologists (*I'tizariun*)[37].

It is interesting to note that despite their rejection of democracy as a system of government, some members of *Hizb al-Tahrir* participated in democratic elections organized by Jordanian authorities in the past, however, they performed rather poorly in those elections[38].

Some supporters of the compatibility thesis criticize the rejectionist camp, such as *Hizb al-Tahrir*, as a modern manifestation of '*aqidat al-jabr'* (the ideology of fatalism) which appeals to the public for unconditional obedience to their rulers. *Al-jabriyah*, the school of thought that can be traced

to the early years of the Ummayid dynasty, emphasizes the inescapability of fate. The founders of this doctrine argued that if everything is predestined, it follows that whatever the ruler does is a reflection of Allah's will. The implications of such a doctrine are far-reaching: whoever challenges the actions of the ruler, whether good or bad, will be challenging the will of Allah[39]. The proponents of Islamic democracy thesis criticize *al-jabriyah* as a doctrine that encourages despotism and absolutism in the name of Islam. They equally assail Sufism because certain of its aspects deny that man had a will or a freedom of choice; that the *murid* (a sufi follower) should blindly follow his *sheikh* (sufi leader)[40].

The critique of the compatibility thesis is not confined to the *jihadis* and the *salafis* as outlined above, but it extends to non-Islamist critics. Since the 1950's there have been various theories and interpretations as to the political direction Third World Countries (including of course the Islamic Bloc) should, would or, indeed, could contemplate. These approaches roughly fell into three major categories: the Modernization School, the Dependency School and the Statist School[41]. Some Western writers made the claim that not all countries can avail themselves of pluralistic democracy for its development depends on a rigid set of conditions. According to them, within the model of competitive theory truly democratic countries were considered to be those with a high standard of living and a reasonable spread of income which tended to diminish social unrest. Therefore, poverty, illiteracy, hunger and ignorance all served to render a country unlikely to sustain democracy[42]. Based on this argument one would expect underdeveloped countries, including the Muslim countries, to be condemned to undemocratic government. Still some writers have depicted Muslim societies as: weak institutionally; divided ethnically, tethered to authoritarian structures of government; lacking in unity, political legitimacy and tolerance of opposition; exploited by external factor of the Cold War and recently, in thrall to fundamentalism, these societies have been regarded as possessing elements inimical to any form of democratization. Other writers held the claim that there is a central difference between the West and Islam which is rooted in their two "opposed philosophies": one based in secular

materialism, the other in faith; it is absurd to try to connect the two 'opposing philosophies'[43]. Some Western writers, however, disagree with this pessimistic view. Their argument is three fold: first, the situation in many parts of the Muslim World is changing, particularly in the post-Cold War era, and that there are positive implications of these changes for democracy. Second, the discussion on democracy should not solely be confined to liberal democracy. Third, there have been new developments in some Muslim countries, these include: the re-introduction of elections, the removal of bans on political parties and more generally in the sphere of participation. These developments may be viewed as steps paving the way for fuller democratization in a liberal democratic sense[44].

The Democracy-Secularism Nexus: an Islamic view

The mainstream orientation of those Islamicists who support the Islam-Democracy compatibility thesis argue that while transition to democracy in the West was not hindered by secularization, in the Muslim world, the same process produced exactly the opposite: authoritarian governments evolved, and despotism instead of *'adl* , repression instead of freedom, and underdevelopment instead of development prevailed[45]. The result of secularization in the Muslim world was the destruction of traditional society, while supporters of the Islamic democracy thesis equate with civil society and consider it as a precondition for the transition to democracy[46].

While secularism in the West is interpreted to mean liberating the political from the authority of the religious, it is used by Muslim writers to describe the process of restructuring society during both the colonial and the post-independence periods[47]. Secularization in the Muslim World, and especially in the Arab region, has entailed severing society's cultural roots; its objective has been to affect a complete break with the past. For Muslim writers the origin and meaning of secularization is related to the colonial experience, where modernity which had been introduced by the colonial powers, meant a complete divorce with the past[48].

Although some of the supporters of Islamic democracy are critical of secularism, they maintain that in the Western tradition secularism is not only

justifiable but has had positive aspects. Those writers insist on distinguishing between Western secularism and the secularism that evolved, and has been advocated, for instance, in the Muslim countries. The latter form of secularism is neither justifiable nor constructive. They see the rise of secularism in the West as having been associated with the need by reformists, especially during the Renaissance, to free their societies from the constraints imposed on them by the clergy[49]. It is a historical fact that in the West reform movements such as the Renaissance, Humanism, Lutheranism, Calvinism, Deism, and Unitarianism were all secularizing forces within Christianity, purging faith and practice of immanentist conceptions of deity, progressively applying the canons of reason to doctrine, and reducing mystical, miraculous, sacramental, and sacerdotal claims. In this process, religious institutions ceased to be central in society and religious consciousness diminished[50].

Secularism was quite a recent phenomenon to Muslims. That intellectual model was only introduced to Muslim societies by the middle of the nineteenth century by Western colonialists. With its introduction a new set of standards alien to the Islamic standards was quietly introduced and it gradually gained enthusiasts and admirers of the West, particularly the Western-educated intellectuals.

In the Muslim Arab world secular ideas were promoted originally by a group of Christian Arab intellectuals such as Shibli Shumayyil (1850-1917), Farah Antoun (1874-1922), Georgie Zaidan (1861-1914), Salama Musa (1887-1958), and Nicola Haddad (1878-1954)[51]. Such thinkers succeeded in consolidating the foundations of Secularism in the Arab world, by praising the liberal thought of France and England and condemning the hegemony of traditions, including religion, over the human mind. It seems that the main aim of these intellectuals was the creation of a secular state in which Muslims and Christians could co-exist on equal basis[52].

There was also nineteenth century Islamic reformists, including Khairuddin al-Tunisi, Jamal al-Din al-Afghani, Mohamed Abduh, Abdul Rahman al-Kawakibi, Mohamed Rashid Rida, and Abdel Hamid Bin Badis, who emphasized that Muslims could benefit from European successes

without compromising their Islamic values and identity[53].

The next generation of thinkers, mostly Muslim followers of Abduh, branched into two conflicting schools of thought. One branch pursued *salafi* (traditional Islamic) course. The second branch, including writers like Qasim Amin (1865-1908) and Ahmad Lutfi al-Sayyid (1872-1963) endorsed in their writings the principles of secular society in which Islam is honored but no longer the guide of law and policy[54]. Contemporary enthusiasts of secularization of the Muslim World are a continuation of this second trend. This trend has translated itself in the emergence of many Pan-Arab groups in the Arab World such as Ba'athism and Nasserism, and authoritarian regimes that mushroomed elsewhere in the Muslim World.

The proponents of Islamic democracy describe this version of secularism that flourished in the Muslim world as a declaration of war against Islam. Under its tenets, Islam loses its essence if marginalized or restricted to a private sphere. One of them prefers to call this model pseudo-secularism. Muslims can achieve progress, development and democracy without secularizing their societies, and giving up their cultural identity[55]. These writers further argue that in contrast to Western secular states, the modern secular states of the Muslim world do not recognize power-sharing. They permit neither equitable distribution of wealth nor genuine representation of the will of the people.

To recapitulate, in our treatment of secularism, our main concern has been to focus on the impact of secularization on the Muslim World, and to highlight the fact that contrary to the situation in the West, it has in the Muslim World, been associated with authoritarianism and the absence of human rights.

Conclusion

The study has demonstrated that currently there is an active interaction among Muslim intellectuals seeking to reach an acceptable formula on democratization in the Muslim World. There seems to be a minimal agreement on a number of points. First, many Muslim intellectuals are hesitant to treat Islam and Western democracy as synonymous. The issue is

not to prove or disprove the compatibility of Islam and democracy, but to find out whether Islamic principles and values could lead to a representative pluralistic, and a system of governance in which the ruler is accountable to the ruled and the citizen's fundamental rights are safeguarded. Many Muslim thinkers today accept the notion that there are common grounds between Islam and democracy.

' Second, this paper has argued that the mainstream Islamic movements, not the extreme *salafi* ones, accept political pluralism and view it as a normal and an inevitable evolutionary process within Muslim society. There is need that this pluralism be safeguarded and nurtured by commitment to a framework of values shared by the majority of the citizens.

Third, secular movements can exist constitutionally on condition that they do not seek to sabotage the Islamic system. There is need in this regard to distinguish between secular groupings that might have reservations about Islamic policies and programs, and those whose platforms are completely at loggerheads with Islam, and are generally antagonistic to religions. In the process of democratization, the former should be allowed to operate, while the latter should be outlawed. Fourth, we observe that there is a growing acceptance by mainstream Islamic movements of the principles of power sharing and the transfer of power. Many of these political groupings no more conceive of themselves to be the sole representatives of Islam, nor do they deny other political groupings in the society their Islamic identity. Fifth, the model of secularism that has emerged in the Muslim world is a counterfeit that takes from Western secularism its most negative aspect and discards the positive one. Secularism has been an inevitable product of colonialism. It has been used to legalize authoritarianism and absolutism. Contrary to the claim of many Western writers, secularism cannot be considered as a prerequisite for the successful operation of democracy in Muslim societies, nor can it be considered a requirement of modernity. False modernity manifests itself in the deconstruction of Islamic society and then rebuilding it a new on non-Islamic basis.

The supporters of the Islamic democracy thesis have been preoccupied with the problem of resolving the crisis of governance in the majority of

Muslim states, namely despotism. They believe democracy to be the best available means of curtailing that despotism.

However, there is a tension perceived in the discourse of these Islamic reformists, namely their inability to build a coherent political thought on the issues they seek to address. Their mission is aimed at assimilating specific Western civilizational values and reproducing them into the Islamic environs and its epistemological system. Democracy could not automatically become *shura* or vice versa, a clear analytical distinction should be made between these two key concepts. Western democratic procedures need to be absorbed and then recast in a genuine Islamic package that considers revelation to be the ultimate frame of reference. A number of gaps remain to be filled within the thought of the proponents of Islamic democracy. For instance, little effort has been made as to what the modern Islamic democratic state would look like. The scanty works in this respect are modest and say nothing about the process of transition to democracy, nor do they highlight the risks inherent in this delicate process.

Whatever maybe said about the shortcomings of this school's discourse, it remains a very important and influential one, and can be used as a launching pad for modern Islamic political thought.

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5. Al Nahdah Movement of Tunisia in a communiqué announcing its establishment in June 1981 held that position. See Fathi Osman, *The Muslim World: Issues and Challenges*, California: Islamic Center of Southern California, 1989.

6. Cited by Azzam Tamimi, "Democracy in Islamic Political Thought", *Encounters*, vol. 3, no. 1, March 1997, p. 21.

7. Al-Tunisi's ideas are included in a book translated by Leon Carl Brown as The Surest Path to Knowledge Concerning the Condition of Countries, Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1967. PP.29-30.

8. Ibid.pp. 90-92.

9. Ali Rahnema, ed. *Pioneers of Islamic Revivalism*, London: Zed Books Ltd, 1994, pp. 11-13.

10. Albert Hourani. *Arabic Thought in the Liberal Age* 1798-1939. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1991, p. 144.

11. Azzam Tamimi, "Democracy in Islamic Political Thought... op. cit. p.24.

12. Albert Hourani, *Arabic Thought in the Liberal Age...op. cit.*, p. 228.

13. Ibid. p.239.

14. Quoted in John Keane "Power-Sharing Islam ?" in Azzam Tamimi (ed.), *Power-Sharing Islam?* op. cit. pp.19-20

15. Ibid.

16. *Al-Hurriyyat al-'Ammah fi al-Dawlah al-Islamiyyah (Public Liberties in the Islamic State)*, Beirut: Markaz Dirasat al-Wihda al-'Arabiyah, 1993.

17. R. Ghannouchi, "Human Rights in Islam" cited in Azzam Tamimi, Rachid Ghannouchi: *A Democrat Within Islamism*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001, p.91.

18. R. Ghannouchi, "The Basic Principles of an Islamic State", in Ibid, p.99.

19. For more detailed discussion of Ghannouchi's detractors, see Ibid, especially chapter 8.

20. R. Ghannouchi, al-Dini waal Siyasi fi al-Islam (The Religious and the Political in Islam), a lecture at Cardiff Islamic Society, Jan 1997, quoted in Azzam Tamimi, Democracy: The religious and the Political in Contemporary Islamic Debates, 1998, an unpublished manuscript.

21. Ibid.

22. Azzam Tamimi, Rachid Ghannouchi: *A Democrat Within Islamism*, op. cit., pp. 89-90.

23. *The Qur'an* 70:17

24. Malik Bennabi addressed his ideas about democracy in a booklet titled Democracy in Islam, our quotations come from Azzam Tamimi, R. Ghannouchi: A Democrat...op. cit., pp. 64-68.

25. Tawfiq al-Shawi, *Fiqh al-Shura Wal-Istisharah (Jurisprudence of Shura and Consultation)*, Cairo: Dar al-Wafa' Publication, 1993, quoted in Ibid, pp. 80-81.

26. Hassan al-Turabi, *al-Shura wa al-Dimuqratiya (Shura and Democracy)*, Casablanca: al-Furqan Publications, 1993, quoted in Ibid p.81.

27. Muhamed Salim Al-'Awa, "Political Pluralism from an Islamic Perspective", quoted in A. Tamimi (ed), *Power-Sharing Islam?* op. cit. pp. 65-74.

28. For the full explanation of this concept see S. Qutb, *Ma'alim fi al-Tariq*, Beirut: Dar al-Shuruq Publications, 1980.

29. Ibid.

30. Ibid.

31. Ibid

32. A. Mawdudi, A*l-Islam wa al-Jahiliyya (Islam and Ignorance)*, Beirut: Dar al-Turath al-Arabi, 1980, pp.14-15.

33. Ayman al-Zawahiri, *al-Hasad al-Murr: al-Ikhwan al-Muslimun fi Sittin 'Aman*, no place or date of publication given, p. 8.

34. Ibid.

35. Ibid. pp. 11-13.

36. Hizb al-Tahrir, *Al-Dimuqratiyah Nizam Kufur (Democracy is a System of Blasphemy)*, no date or place of publication is given, p.5.

37. See in particular Hizb al-Tahrir's attacks against R. Ghannouchi in Mahmud A. Hassan, " Radd Iftira'at 'Ala al-Imam al-Shatibi" (Refuting false allegations attributed to Imam al-Shatibi), *Al-Wa'y*, August, 1994, pp. 21-30.

38. Musa Z. Al-Kilani, *Al-Harakat al-Islamiyah fi al-Urdun wa Filstin (The Islamic Movements in Jordan and Palestine)*, Beirut: Mu'ssasat al-Risalah, 1991.

39. For more on 'aqidat al-jabr see Ibn Hazm, *Al-Fasl Fil-Milal wa al-Ahwa' wa al-Nihal*, Cairo: Al-Misriyah, 1964.

40. R. Ghannouchi is among the major critics of both *al-jabriyah* and Sufism as being detrimental to freedom of choice. See R. Ghannouchi, *Al-Dini wa al-Siyasi fi al-Islam*.op. cit.

41. All three schools are analyzed in V.Randall and R. Theobalds, *Political Change and Underdevelopment: A Critical Introduction to Third World Politics*. London: Macmillan, 1985.

42. One of the major proponents of this theme was S.M. Lipset, see his book, *Political Man, London*: Heineman Education, 1966.

43. G. Luciani, *The Arab State*, London: Routledge, 1990; and S. Ahmed Akbar, *Postmodernism and Islam: Predicament and Promise*, London: Routledge, 1992, P. 264.

44. Foremost among these Western academics are Michael Hudson, John Esposito and James Piscatori. See their respective works: J. Esposito

and J. Piscatori, 'Democratization and Islam', *Middle East Journal*, Vol. 45, No. 3, 1991; Michael Hudson, 'After the Gulf War: Prospects for democratization in the Arab World', *Middle East Journal*, Vol.45, No. 3, 1991.

45. R. Ghannouchi, quoted in Azzam Tamimi, " A Democrat..." op. cit. p. 107.

46. Ibid.

47. Ibid.

48. Ibid.

49. R. Ghannouchi, "" The Conflict between the West and Islam"... quoted in Ibid, p.109.

50. Mircea Eliade, ed. *The Encyclopedia of Religion*, Vol.13, New York: Macmillan, 1987, P. 159.

51. Albert Hourani, *Arabic Thought in the Liberal Age...* op cit, p.246-247.

52. Ibid. pp.256-57.

53. Ghannouchi, "Al-Hurriyyat.", op. cit. p. 252.

54. Albert Hourani, *Arabic Thought in the Liberal Age...*op. cit. pp.256-257.

55. R.Ghannouchi, " Al-Harakah al-Islamiyah wa al-Mujtama' al-Madani (The Islamic Movement and the Civil Society)", paper presented at Pretoria University, South Africa, August 1994, quoted in Azzam Tamimi, "R. Ghannouchi: *A Democrat* .." op. cit. p. 113.