Religion, Religiosity and Politics: East and West

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Orientalism arose in the context of European imperialism. Ulama constructed orthodoxy in the second and third centuries of Islam in the context of an enormous empire. The newly independent states of North Africa seized upon Islam as a tool to enhance legitimacy and promote national unity. Sayyid Qutb wrote his scathing indictment of the modern *jahiliyya* from the discomfort of Nasir's jails. Said and Arkoun have both attuned us to think of change in the study, ideological exposition, and practice of religion as a product of political conditions. Arkoun has often observed that his own political position, beyond the reach of authoritarian regimes bent upon enforcing their own interpretations of Islam, has permitted him to rethink the Islamic tradition by reflecting upon its totality.

Despite these teachings and insights, contemporary social science still seems riveted on the converse of that proposition: that religion and religiosity affect political outcomes. The arguments seems to fall into at least four categories. 1) A country's political system reflects the character (authoritarian or democratic) of the country's dominant religion. 2) The configuration of a country's religious organizations (monism, pluralism, extreme pluralism) will affect stability and the chances for democracy. 3) A high level of national religiosity appears to reinforce nationalism and unity, whereas low religiosity weakens the nation-state. 4) Individual religiosity correlates either with highly conservative attitudes or with revolutionary behavior.

The common assumptions of these propositions is that religion and religiosity reflect enduring aspects of culture and individual character. As Inglehart puts it, "Culture changes but it changes more slowly." Change flows from society and culture toward the political. The positivistic approach, fundamental to sociology and to contemporary versions of modernization theory, sees democratization as an outgrowth of social changes involving the secularization of culture. Religion must transform itself as did Christianity in the Protestant Reformation in order for society to be industrialized and politics to be "rationalized."

While it would be foolhardy to deny that religion and religiosity have some effect on political life, the contrary proposition, brought to our attention by the work of both Said and Arkoun, seems much easier to defend even though it gets much less attention. Some of the primary propositions would be these: 1) That the character of a state shapes the character of religious institutions: authoritarian states breed authoritarian religion. Democratic states tend to produce democratic theology and democratic religious institutions. 2) The growth of the welfare state has provided a set of incentives and disincentives that have shaped and reshaped religious institutions. 3) That a state's need for power and legitimacy necessarily affects state attitudes toward religious beliefs and organizations. Political opportunity structures affect religious

ideology, religious organization, and religious practice. 4) That religiosity in many states tends to rise and fall with the nature of political opportunities.

If there is plausibility in these hypotheses, and if, therefore, the flow of causality is at least as great in the direction of politics-religion as it is in the other direction, religion-politics, as the work of Said and Arkoun would lead us to believe, then one can wonder whether solutions to the problem of authoritarianism lies with those who would reshape Islamic thought. One must ask whether a fresh, tolerant, democratic understanding of philosophy and religion ("emerging reason" is Arkoun's term) is a likely cure for ideological thinking and political authoritarianism.

Religion and Religiosity as Cause of Political Behavior

The most frequent form of the claim that religion affects politics stems from the Weberian analysis of the Protestant Reformation and its impact on capitalism. By his logic, echoed today in the work of Ronald Inglehart among others, a shift in orientation toward achievement in this world—Luther's notion of "calling"—pushed Protestants to begin accumulating wealth. The ever more prosperous bourgeoisie eventually demanded liberty, and the result was an ever diminishing role for religion in political life. The success of Protestantism, and its unique tendency to effect secularization in the name of religion, explain the early advent of liberalism in Northern Europe and America. Catholic Europe lagged in both economic and political development.[1]

The breadth of support for the secularization hypothesis comes from even from unlikely quarters. Gramsci regretted the lack of a Protestant Reformation in Italy. Muhammad Abduh and fellow reformers seemed bent on an analogous rationalization of Islam. Mustafa Kemal embraced the French notion that only a radical separation of religion and politics could open the way to a new era.[2] Catholicism, on the one hand, and Islam, on the other, constituted the pillars of traditionalism and authoritarianism, hence threats to economic and political modernization.[3]

In some quarters, secularization theory became "ideology" and hence impervious to logic and evidence.[4] In other quarters, inconvenient data created doubts if not repudiation.[5] Early Protestant states in northern Europe were models of authoritarianism. Catholic countries did become bastions of liberal-democracy. Protestant countries such as the United States continued to demonstrate high levels of religiosity and deep complicated entanglement of religion in political matters.[6] Religion powered the Civil Rights movement but it also engaged in long-term conservative protest against Roe vs. Wade, the Supreme Court's decision on abortion. The Islamic Republic of Iran embraced elections that were remarkably competitive and free.

To rescue the secularization hypothesis from oblivion, its defenders have sought to retouch it by saying that "private religion" does not count; watered-down Protestantism of the American type cannot be taken as indicative of genuine belief and be counted as a political force. Inglehart seems to argue for diverse patterns of development but then suggests that countries are moving "southwest to northeast" on a graph where east is toward post-bourgeois attitudes and

north is secularization. The wealthy countries of Scandinavia fall in the northeast corner. For him development means moving from traditionalism (linked with religious attitudes) toward modernization and then post-modernity. A full flowering of democracy occurs in those states where post-modernity is most advanced.[7]

The secularization hypothesis encompasses at least two views: democratization can be achieved only when authoritarian versions of religion give way to more democratic varieties or when religion loses its hold on society. Islamists take exception to the determinism of the argument, but they embrace the fundamental proposition that religion must shape politics and society. The imperative is moral rather than sociological, but the direction of causation is the same. As Arkoun observes, ". . . Islam is undergoing secularization on a large scale through the actions of those very groups who believe they are restoring it to its initial purity and efficacity—always dreamed of, always put off. . . ."[8]

A second version of religious influence on politics focuses on structure. The domination of a single great religion, as in France or Saudi Arabia, favors political monism. Pluralism, which characterized England in the 17th century and the United States from the founding of the republic, favors toleration and, eventually, pluralistic politics. Extreme pluralism (Belgium and Lebanon would be prime examples) threatens national unity and renders normal democracy difficult if not impossible.[9]

The theory of civil society being applied to the Middle East embraces some of this thinking. Islamist groups have challenged the authority of the ulema in a number of countries; Egypt would be a prime example. Some groups have taken up arms and put themselves in open conflict with the state, but others, many under the broad wings of the Muslim Brotherhood, have founded publications, established schools, taken on the management of health clinics, formed Qur'anic study groups. These groups have recruited membership and sought a voice in public policy, broadening the base of political input and increasing the religious tone of discourse. The ulama of Al-Azhar, once reduced to a mere echo of regime wishes, has found increasing autonomy in this atmosphere. Independent preachers and Sufi groups further complicate the contemporary picture of Islam in Egypt.[10] For Eickelman and Piscatori, this "complication" equates to increasing pluralism, which in turns favors the emergence of a more democratic climate.[11]

Religion may affect politics in a third way, by reinforcing nationalist sentiments. Inglehart demonstrates that high religiosity (those who rate God important in their lives) correlates with a strong sense of national pride.[12] The United States is one example, and the finding is not surprising. Even in the 19th century Tocqueville saw how the Protestant churches in America constituted a thousand points of support for the Republic.[13] Churches have generally supported the country in wartime, and when a few churchmen such as William Sloan Coffin and the Berrigan brothers opposed the war in Vietnam, the fact brought attention by virtue of its violation of the rule. India, Ireland, Poland and Turkey are other cases where there is correspondence between religiosity and national pride.[14]

Finally, many have found that religiosity affects political attitudes on policy issues. High religiosity anchors conservative attitudes on social issues. The French Right normally does best in the West, where religiosity remains relatively high. Republicans in the United States have enjoyed the support of the Moral Majority and Focus on the Family. One study suggested that the religiosity of donors to the Republican party affected their views on a broad spectrum of issues.[15]

High religiosity is not always linked, however, to conservatism. Levelers, Puritans, the Southern Christian Leadership Conference, the Assassins, the protagonists of the Iranian Revolution, and Islamic Jihad are all evidence that religion can also serve revolt and even revolution. It seems unclear whether religiosity or religious attitude would be a better predictor of such behavior. A study done in Egypt, for example, showed no correlation between religiosity and the peace treaty struck between Egypt and Israel. Knowledge of the Muslim Brotherhood and its doctrines did correlate with opposition to the peace treaty.[16] High religiosity in Israel could well describe Naturei Karta, who have never ceased so oppose the Zionist State, and the Gush Emunim, who favor its expansion to include Biblical sites on the West Bank.

None of these four hypotheses about the relationship of religion to politics can be dismissed out of hand, but none of them is entirely convincing, either. To make any of them fit the data requires adept manipulation. What they have in common is the conviction that religion is a relatively enduring aspect of culture everywhere, and culture is more stable than politics. Inglehart writes: “Cultural theory implies that a culture cannot be changed overnight.”[17] Culture affects political life. Politicians and political regimes tend to be seen as dependent variables. The positivistic stance of sociology prevails: the independent variables lie in society and culture, and religion is one of them.

The implication is that fundamental change in political life can only occur when there is fundamental change in culture. Orientalism made that argument in negative terms: Islam obstructed innovation and modernization. Ataturk bought into the argument. Many Islamist movements and some governments subscribe today. For example, the effort of the Saudis to prevent exposure of their people to foreign cultures surely reflects this same conviction. If the culture and religion change, political authority will be endangered. In some measure all governments attempt to socialize their citizens and reduce the risk of serious misalignment of political culture and political structure. But they do more: they also shape and reshape the religion itself.

Politics as a Cause of Religion and Religiosity

Politics affects religion and religiosity in at least four ways. 1) State decision-making often determines the character of religious organization and practice within a society. 2) The structure of a state necessarily shapes the structure of religious organization. 3) State ideology conditions religious ideology. And 4) political issues and crises provoke variations in the level of religiosity within a society.

Henry VIII made England a Protestant state. That France remained Catholic and German states became bastions of Protestantism similarly reflected state decisions.[18] Shah Ismail established Shiʿism as a state ideology in Persia. The Ottomans made a version of Sunni Orthodoxy the predominant religion in their empire. The Founding Fathers of the United States, confronting a situation of religious diversity among the colonies—almost all of them dedicated to a particular brand of Protestantism—decided that there would be no established religion.[19] These facts are perhaps so self-evident that do not perhaps deserve even this brief recital.

It is also clear that the national decisions taken by countries of the contemporary Middle East have more to tell us about the nature of religion in those countries than anything we can learn by studying Islam itself. The Kemalist decision to strike against the most pre-eminent symbol of Islam, the caliphate, and to establish presumably free of religious influence and even hostile to religion continues to mark Turkish Islam. The Saud family's alliance with the Wahhabi movement created a pattern of religious organization and practices not to be found in any other Muslim state. Islam in Iran still reflects Shah Ismail's basic decision, but it also reflects the decisions of the Ayatollah Khomeini and those who wrote the Constitution of the Islamic Republic. Ongoing political debates and resulting decisions continue to re-articulate what it means to be a Muslim in that country.

Islam in Egypt today scarcely resembles the Islam of the Nasirist period, and Sadat's accession to power was the turning point. His decision to fight leftists by releasing Islamists from jail and his subsequent decision to make the shariʿa "a principal source of legislation" in the 1971 constitution initiated change in the organization and practice of Islam in Egypt. These decisions, augmented by the subsequent decision to make the shariʿa "*the* principal source of legislation," go far to explain why Islam now figures in every Egyptian political debate while it often seemed irrelevant in the Nasir years.

The impact of state structure on religious structure is just slightly less obvious. Hierarchical political structures dependent upon and insist upon hierarchical religion to legitimate and support. Religious dissidents languish in jail, if they are lucky. But as regimes open themselves to advice and participation, they may create the opportunity for openness or even mild plurality in religious authority. The adoption of the welfare state with its efforts to provide social services carries with it a set of opportunities for religious organization. Increasing pluralism seems to draw religious groups into the political process, depending on the incentives and disincentives offered by the political system.

From Muhammad ʿAli to Gamal ʿabd al-Nasir, Egyptian rulers sought to centralize power at the expense of autonomous groups including the ulema. As the state took over the administration of waqf land, undermining the financial autonomy of the ulema, it subordinated Al-Azhar and the great majority of mosques and preachers to state authority. By the 1960s, Al-Azhar and the Dar al-Ifta came to be regarded as little more than spokesmen for the regime, rubber stamps for whatever projects the *rais* might undertake. The great challenge to religious and political authority, the Muslim Brotherhood, languished underground, its leaders in jail.

When Anwar al-Sadat decided, perhaps because he had little choice if he wished to retain power, that he would curb Nasir's secret police, free the Muslim Brothers as long as they remained within the law, and opened up the Egyptian economy to greater competition, he opened the way for a transformation in the structure of Islam. The emergence of radical groups bent on violent overthrow of the government alarmed leaders and caused them to woo the non-revolutionary elements who could help keep the masses beyond the influence of the radicals. Suddenly the Muslim Brotherhood and other groups of the Islamic Trend were not just tolerated by cultivated. Al-Azhar and the Dar al-Iftaʿ regained prestige and authority by virtue of the regime's need to respond to heightened religiosity without condoning its own destruction by terrorist attack.[20] Sadat's assassination testifies to his own lack of success in this enterprise, but Mubarek, pursuing roughly the same formula, has survived and perhaps managed to get the upper hand over terrorism.

Today in Egypt the proliferation of religious groups and religious publications makes it certain that not one but many viewpoints address public policy issues from what their authors believe is a religious perspective. The regime does not control either the mufti or Al-Azhar as thoroughly as it once did, and those official institutions do not dominate Islam in Egypt any more. Interviewed by a foreigner, an ʿalim at Al-Azhar reportedly said: "Well, you know we are not the only ones to speak for Islam in Egypt." It was a simple affirmation of fact. An outpouring of scholarly pieces confirms an increasing pluralism in the structure of Islam in Egypt—and elsewhere, for that matter.[21]

Eickelman and Piscatori call our attention to the objectification of faith that has swept the Islamic world, a product of improved communication, increased mobility, and, especially, if increasing levels of education.[22] Religion has become a matter of choice, not just a condition of existence. Islamists call upon Muslims to choose membership, to choose modest dress, to choose their schools, and to choose public policy. These same forces have affected the political process and underpin the demand for greater openness, but the increasing diffuse and pluralistic structure of religion depends upon political change. It is difficult to imagine contemporary developments in Islam within Egypt or Jordan or Morocco or Iran without the political openness to permit them.

In the case of Iran, a hierarchical regime had never succeeded in subordinating the religious establishment. As the clerical class in Iran solidified its own hierarchy in the 19th and 20th centuries, and edged ever so gradually toward a more explicitly political role, it nonetheless left room for dissent. Ruhollah Khomeini challenged the hierarchy with his bold statement about the governance of the *faqih*, and his mastery over the Shiʿa clerics was never complete, even at the moment of victory. A political structure that balances the power of the faqih against that of an elected majlis and an elected president, themselves checked by a Council of Guardians, has generated an enduring debate about Islam and its relationship to politics. It has also split the clerical class between those who embrace direct involvement in politics and those who believe that distinguished members of the ulema would better spend their time studying and tending the spiritual needs of the faithful. The political openness of the Islamic Republic has accentuated

divisions among the clerical class and among those non-clerics they have authorized to be candidates for political office. The result appears to be greater openness and pluralism in the structure of Islam in Iran.

American religion in all its complexity and diversity serves to illustrate the dependence of religious structure on political structure. The lack of an established religion eliminates all incentive for unification; quite to the contrary, the decentralized federal structure and the undisciplined, almost non-existent party system coupled with federal tax incentives for religious institutions creates an opportunity structure unparalleled, perhaps, in its richness and diversity. Churches and non-church religious organizations muster their members to protest school curricula, to campaign against gay rights, to provide social centers for teenagers, to run Sunday schools, to oppose abortion. The political system both promotes religion by inserting its symbolism into every occasion, underwrites it financially by exempting religious property from taxation, and relegates it to a set of activities that reflect the structure of American politics much more than they reflect any theological thinking or any organizational structure traceable to European Christianity.

Perhaps the size and role of the state figure most significantly in the transformation of religious structure. Under the pressures of modernization, religions have progressively lost their monopolies over functions such as education and social services. In the West, sociologists have described the process as one of secularization. Religion is said to become a matter of private conscience, no longer relevant in decisions of public policy, but in fact it remains utterly relevant to the whole set of moral choices reflected in the policies of the welfare state.[23] Religious organizations can and do mobilize to promote, enjoin, protest, and help execute such policies. They are also quick to organize and fill the gaps where the state is deficient in its services. Thanks to the plurality of these policies, local needs, theories and approaches, religious structure tends itself to become plural and diversified.

Political decisions shape religion, political structure shapes religious structure, and political ideologies necessarily influence religious ideologies. Authoritarian regimes need the support of religious legitimation that affirms the rightfulness of authoritarianism. They may, inadvertently, foster religious ideologies that tend to contest or undermine authoritarianism, either in the name of a greater authority or in the name of popular consultation. Liberal democratic regimes tend to foster democratic theology.

As David Nicholls has argued, most religious human beings imagine the authority of God by invoking images they derive from the political authority they have experienced.

> The working hypothesis adopted in this study is, then, that images and concepts of God are commonly borrowed from political discourse and carry with them political connotations; but, having come into being, they assume a life of their own and will indeed affect the way later generations think, not only about God, but also about their social and civic life. Theological rhetoric, child of political experience, may also be mother of

political change."[24]

He argues that eras when rulers were often arbitrary, God, too, was often regarded as decisional. As government came to be associated with law, God tended to be seen as acting lawfully, according to rules established for the universe. Scholars must discover those laws. Governments must act in God's image by obeying and implementing them. And as politics becomes more democratic, the will of the majority becomes identified with God's will. Constitutional arrangements in the United States come to enjoy such sanctity.

Theological and philosophical speculation comes from a context of political authority. Arkoun argued that Miskawayh's thought reflected the politics of his time.[25] The thrice closed corpus Arkoun identifies with Sunni orthodoxy acquired these characteristics under the pressure of political authority, whose interests were served. Arkoun notes that the caliphs wanted answers from the ulema: "Thus contingent political authority preempts transcendent political authority by requiring decisions . . ."[26] Mutawakil's fling with Muʿtazilism, however exhilarating, enhanced political decisionism, but his successors saw advantage in the predictability of orthodoxy. Both the embrace and rejection of Muʿtazilism reflected political conditions and pressures.

Nicholls notes that Karl Barth opposed Hitler by asserting the absolute sovereignty of God.[27] Sayyid Qutb took a similar route in opposing Nasir. He argued that God alone is sovereign. No human being can pretend to that role. Human domination of other human beings conflicts with the teachings of Islam, he said. Such a conception would seemingly be consistent with a democracy founded on the equal impotence of all human beings. It would also seemingly permit a person or group acting as God's vice regent on earth to exercise absolute authority.

Khomeini's effort to overturn an authoritarian regime similarly depended upon an argument for absolute authority: the power of the faqih, acting in the absence of the hidden imam. Khomeini had never been suspected of democratic sympathies, yet, perhaps because of Iran's constitutional tradition—honored largely in the breach—the Islamic Republic retained an elected majlis and provided for the election of a president and a prime minister, as well. Political contingency trumped Khomeini's thought as well as tradition. The election of Khatami created even further tensions between the defenders of expertise and authoritarianism and the reformist camp, ready to let popular will play a larger role in redefining an Islamic polity and society.

What happened in Iran did not coincide with the revolutionary ideology developed by Khomeini or with anyone else's prescription. The revolution did come from a ferment of ideas critical of authoritarianism, of Westoxication, and of establishment Islam. And it created an atmosphere of openness where such ideas continue to flourish, albeit with restriction. The Ayatollah Montazeri suffers house arrest in Qom but nonetheless gives a foreign interview in which he explains his conviction that Islam means government by consent of the governed.[28] The constitution adopted in Iran, even more bizarre than the American in its determination to set one

branch of government against another, has unleashed an atmosphere of intellectual ferment and renewal that could be interpreted as a struggle to find a convincing Islamic rationale for the foundations of modern government. The structure of the Islamic Republic appears to be engendering new theologies to support or subvert it.

The nature of religion, the structure of religion, and even religious ideology appear to reflect political decisions, political structure, and political ideology. The level of religiosity characteristic of a given state appears to reflect political conditions, crises, and strategies for resolving those crises—all of them somewhat more transient than decisions, structures, and ideologies. Political movements have appealed to faith, encouraged adherence to ritual and traditions, urged believers to dress and behave differently as a sign of their devotion to God (and to the movement). Under certain political conditions, these movements have known success. Similarly, and sometimes in response to such movements, government have themselves responded by encouraging religiosity, but, however beneficial in the short run, such a strategy can also prove costly.

Huntington has argued that Americans believe deeply in a political creed that is internally contradictory and therefore never fully realizable. The result is an inevitable gap between the theory of the creed and the ugly reality, marred by inequality, injustice, and prejudice. At certain moments, Americans simply ignore this gap. At others they turn hypocritical and pretend it doesn't exist. At still others they are utterly cynical. But at several clearly identifiable periods in their history, Americans have sought to reduce that gap. Huntington calls them "creedal passion periods," and they seem to occur about every sixty years.[29]

In the American experience, these periods have coincided with moments of religious revival. ". . . It . . . cannot be a coincidence that the four major creedal passion periods in American political history have been matched by what historians of religion have identified as the four great awakenings of the religious spirit."[30] The latest such "creedal passion period," that of the 1960s, manifested itself in the Civil Rights Movement sparked by Martin Luther King and the Southern Christian Leadership Conference. His language was that of Chrisitian moral indignation, as was the language of subsequent protest against the American involvement in the Vietnam war. It was a moment of heightened religious fervor, that carried over into the 1970s and perhaps set the stage for sharp religious protest, albeit from a different segment of the religious community, over the Roe v. Wade court decision on abortion in 1973.

Almost everyone dates the Islamic resurgence in the Middle East to the defeat of the Arab states in the 1967 war against Israel. Gamal ʿabd al-Nasir himself, despite his repression of the Brotherhood and his devotion to secular ideologies (nationalism and socialism), began to speak about the lessons of the war in religious terms and to liberate some members of the Brotherhood. Sadat accelerated those policies in an effort to bury both nationalism and socialism and to mobilize his country for a new war effort. Islam became a great new vehicle for promoting regime objectives, and at the same time it became the primary vehicle for protest and opposition. Sadat's peace treaty with Israel and the revolution in Iran both heightened religious sensibilities

and facilitated the task of regime opponents.

One survey done in Egypt suggests that religiosity (a piety index) itself is not a good predictor of a respondent's policy positions. This is perhaps not surprising, since both government and opposition have been using religious appeals. "In Egypt, more than one-third of those classified as more pious did not support Islamic parties, whereas approximately half of those who did support these parties were not personally observant and devout."[31] Religiosity (measured by an index of "piety") did not correlate with attitudes toward the peace treaty with Israel, but a respondent's support for political Islam did correlate with opposition to peace with Israel.

Every state and every society offers a set of incentives and disincentives for he political expression of religiosity. Ideology can provide one set of such incentive. The ideologies of Iran and Saudi Arabia, for example, supply positive incentives. The ideology of secularism dear in various degrees to states of the Western world offers heavy disincentives. Stephen Carter has argued that even in the United States, where personal religiosity remains significantly higher than in most of Europe and where most Presidents trumpet their own commitment to religion, a prevailing doctrine of liberal secularism tends to demean any and all religious defense of political convictions.[32] Secular liberals tend to deplore the abortion protests of the Religious Right for their open espousal of religion as the source of their concern, even though such liberals did not criticize the Reverend Martin Luther King for that same dependence on religious revelation for the grounding of his belief in human equality. American public schools have become more and more reluctant to teach anything about religion, and some religious parents (like Carter himself) have elected to send their children to private, religious schools, even though they must continue to pay taxes to support the public school as well.

The United States never experienced the confrontation between Church and State that marked the history of states such as France and Italy. With republican institutions in those states constructed against the resistance of the church and state, both countries developed secular ideologies that they sought to promote in their schools. Mussolini reversed that trend in Italy, but the famous scarf incident in France demonstrates that the "école laique" still lives in France. Muhammad Arkoun deplores the unwillingness to engage in serious study of Islam in France, and he thinks, with good, reason that the unwillingness stems from the enduring adherence to the secular ideology, misunderstood as a badge of modernity.[33]

A study of public education in Egypt emphasizes the longstanding commitment of the government there to the cultivation of religious sensibilities, both Christian and Muslim, among all youth. Schools have typically devoted ten per cent or more of all available class time teaching students what it means to be a devout Muslim. From time to time the state has sought to adjust programs to reflect regime goals: in the 1950s and 1960s, with the Muslim Brotherhood's leaders securely in jail, the regime sought to show that a good Muslim would be nationalistic and support the state. In the 1980s and 1990s, the regime has tried to figure out how it can teach that a good, devout Muslim supports the state and not radical Islamic groups.[34]

Heightened religiosity in Egypt has fostered higher enrollments at Al-Azhar. It has also fed the proliferation of religious groups, some involved in charitable enterprises, others plotting violent overthrow, still others dedicated to affecting public policy by participation in debate inside and outside the parliament. How could one possibly measure all the consequences and judge whether they are on balance beneficial or detrimental to the regime? Even if the judgment were negative, any reduction of school emphasis on religion would cost the regime precious support. It has no choice but to promote religiosity with only the most modest of tools to regulate the effects. The effect on political stability may be negative.

The disincentives regimes impose on the political expression of religiosity are not necessarily successful either in promoting the stability of these regimes. The Turkish and Algerian examples come quickly to mind, although they are clearly distinct. The Algerian regime sought to support itself in the early years of independence by cultivating Islam. It organized "seminars" to promote Islam and recruited luminaries such as Arkoun to come engage in "discussion," which turned out to involve listening to harangues by regime-backed ideologues. The regime's push for Arabization in the schools went hand-in-hand with Islamaization. Yet, the emergence of an Islamic movement capable of challenging the secularist FLN for power shook the regime to its core and led to military intervention to preserve a secularizing ideology. In Turkey, by way of contrast, the regime has offered consistent disincentives for the political expression of religiosity but has never been able to prevent parties from making not-so-subtle religious appeals, especially in rural areas, and has not been able to prevent the emergence of an Islamist movement. The military has intervened to deflect Refeh participation in government and to disband parties that advocate religious expression as a fundamental right.[35] Secular ideology has not prevented the emergence of political religiosity as badge of opposition in both Turkey and Algeria. Perhaps regime efforts to minimize the role of Islam in politics, as in Turkey and Tunisia, guarantees the political expression of religiosity in the long run, just as does the official cultivation of religiosity in Iran or Egypt.

Political decisions determine the nature of religion in a country by affecting the structure of religion and by affecting the character of religious ideology. Political circumstances and policies, incentives and disincentives, condition the rise and fall of religiosity. These observations share certain common presuppositions. First, religious structure, religious ideology, and the political expression of religiosity vary from country to country and from time to time. The nature of Islam and at any one place and time turns out to as much a product of politics as a condition for it. And because politics is itself idiosyncratic and contingent, a product of many forces, some of them utterly unpredictable, the character of Islam is also relatively unpredictable. Islamic organizations, ideologies, and religiosity are a product of changing political opportunity structures more than they are causes of those structures.

In this perspective theologies, moral codes, and presumed patterns of so-called "traditional behavior" diminish in significance as a predictors of social and political phenomena. All have meaning within the context of specific political systems. The ideas of the Ayatollah Khomeini reverberate differently in any Sunni country than they do in Iran. The Qutbian

ideology, though formulated in general terms, has special meaning in Egypt. Many tenets of Saudi Islam have little appeal elsewhere. Islam itself can scarcely be regarded as either a guarantee of modernity or an obstacle to its achievement, neither a protagonist of democracy and human rights nor an antagonist. It is rather a product of relatively unpredictable developments. Muslim politics, though formulated in language quite different from non-Muslim politics, turn out to be first and foremost politics: "a competition and contest over both the interpretation of symbols and control of the institutions, formal and informal, that produce and sustain them."[36]

Is there an "emerging reason" by which these two perspectives may be merged into a single understanding? Such a reason would eschew rationalism and determinism, on one hand, and sheer randomness on the other. Arkoun would have us understand liberal theory as arbitrarily wedded to ideological assumptions about secularism, into a set of positivistic assumptions about the eventual victory of only that which is rational. Liberal theory denies legitimacy to religiosity and especially to the political expression of religisity. On the other side, he abhors particularistic Islamic ideologies pretending this or that essential characteristic for the religion, whether than be democracy or authoritarianism. But how does one eschew those perspectives without reverting to the notion that rationalism is itself the answer? That is why he speaks of an "emerging reason" that would acknowledge the equal validity of all religious experience and belief.[37] In his view, responsibility for a finding a solution lies with the social sciences and philosophy.

I am arguing here, inspired by Arkoun, that a solution is more likely to come from the interplay of political forces than from intellectual reflection and academic endeavor. To find an intellectual solution one would have to posit favorable political conditions and thus conceptualize a political solution that reduces the role of contingency without resorting to deterministic formulations, old or new. Predictions about the ultimate victory of democracy, or the inevitable spread of human rights in the world, or the sweep of the globalization process, depend upon highly rationalistic language that Arkoun wishes to avoid.[38] All these expressions of certainty come from concrete settings. "The absolute cannot be thought except in a phenomenal world, in contact with postivities that are matter, life, work, language, power, wealth, value."[39] How can an emerging reason escape the ravages of the same force: historicity?"

Muhammad Arkoun resists the determinism of globalization theory as much as he resists the straitjacket of Sunni orthodoxy or the certainties of Islamist or secularist ideologues he deplores. Yet he hopes for a grounding, "an emerging reason," an intellectual framework we can grasp as we try to negotiate moral chaos. It seems to me that his own arguments about the political and historical bracketing of intellectual endeavor makes that task difficult if not impossible.

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NOTES

1. Peter Berger, *The Sacred Canopy: Elements of a Sociological Theory of Relgion* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1967), p. 124, argues that Protestantism merely accelerated forces already at work in the Old Testament; Marcel Gauchet, *The Disenchantment of the World: A Political History of Religion*, tr. Oscar Burge (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1997), p. 103, argues that Christianity is a religion to end religions.

2. Mohammed Arkoun, "Positivisme et tradition dans une perspective Islamique: Le cas du Kémalisme," *Diogène*, 127 (July-September, 1984).

3. Donald Eugene. Smith categorized religions by dogmatic authority, directive authority and the institutionalization of authority in order to predict the impact on patterns of political decision making, *Religion and Political Development* (Boston: Little Brown, 1970), Chap. 6.

3. Jeffrey K. Hadden, "Desacralizing Secularization Theory," in Hadden and Anson Shupe, eds., *Secularization and Fundamentalism Reconsidered: Religion and the Political Order Volume III* (New York: Paragon House, 1986), p.10.

5. See David Martin, "The Secularization issue: prospect and retrospect," *British Journal of Sociology 42(3)*, p. 466.

6. José Casanova, among others, has observed that American exceptionalism is often explained by arguing that American religion is not religions. See his *Public Religions in the Modern World* (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1994), p. 29.

7. Ronald Inglehart, *Modernization and Postmodernization: Cultural, Economic, and Political Change in 43 Countries* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1997) p. 93.

8. Mohammed Arkoun, *L'Islam: morale et politique* (Paris: Desclée de Brouwer, 1986) p. 79.

9. See David Martin, *A General Theory of Secularization* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1978) for an argument that depends upon analysis of individual states in such terms.

10. See, for example, Salwa Ismail, "Confronting the Other: Identity, Culture, Politics, and Conservative Islamism in Egypt," *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 30(1998), pp. 199-225;

11. Dale F. Eickelman and James Piscatori, *Muslim Politics* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996) p. 131.

12. Inglehart, p. 86.

13. Graham-Wooton emhasizes that all denominations have supported the state. See his "Religious pluralism in the United States: its nature and political significance." in Ehrlick, Stanislaw and Graham-Wooton, eds., *Three Faces of Pluralism: Politico, Ethnic, and Religious* (England: Gower, 1980), p. 154.

14. Inglehart, p. 86.

15. James L. Guth and John C. Green, "God and the GOP: Religion among Republican Activists," in Ted G. Jelen, ed., *Religion and Political Behavior in the United States* (New York: Praeger, 1989), pp. 223-241.

16. Mark Tessler and Jodi Nachtwey, "Religion and International Conflict: An Individual-Level Analysis," in Tessler, ed., Area Studies and Social Science: Strategies for Understanding Middle East Politics (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1999), pp. 106.

17. Inglehart, p. 19.

18. David C. Leege, "Toward a Mental Measure of Religiosity in Research on Religion and Politics," in Ted G. Jelen, ed., *Religion and Political Behavior in the United States* (New York: Praeger, 1989), pp. 45-64, begins by making this simple point.

19. Graham-Wooton, p. 154.

20. Jakob Skovgaard-Petersen, *Defining Islam for the Egyptian State: Muftis and Fatwas of the Dar al-Ifta* (Leiden: Brill, 1997), Chaps. 9-13.

21. Denis J. Sullivan and Sana Abed-Kotob sum up a good bit of the evidence in *Islam in Contemporary Egypt: Civil Society vs. the State* (Boulder: Lynne Rienner, 1999).

22. Eickelman and Piscatori, p. 39.

23. Casanova regards privatization as only one "option" and speaks of the deprivatization of religion under certain conditions, Chap. 8.

24. David Nicholls, *Deity and Domination: Images of God and the State in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centures* (London: Routledge, 1989), p. 14.

25. Muhammed Arkoun, *L'humanisme arabe au IVe/Xe siècle: Miskawayh, Philosophe et historien* 2nd. ed. rev. (Paris: J. Vrin, 1982).

26. Arkoun, *L'Islam: Morale et politique*, p. 171.

27. Nicholls, *Deity and Domination*, p. ???

28. Interview, *Middle East Journal*, ???

29. Samuel P. Huntington, *American Politics: the Promise of Disharmony* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1981), Chap. 5.

30. Huntington, p. 160.

31. Tessler and Nachtwey, p. 106.

32. Stephen L. Carter, *The Culture of Disbelief* (New York: Basic Books, 1993).

33. Mohammed Arkoun, "Religion, démocratie, sécularisation/laïcité: approche critique," unpublished manuscript, p. 14.

34. Gregory Starrett, *Putting Islam to Work: Education, Politics, and Religious Transformation in Egypt* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998.

35. See Umit Cizre Sakallioglu, "Parameters and Strategies of Islam-State Interaction in Republican Turkey," International Journal of Middle East Studies 28(1996), pp. 231-251.

36. Eickelman and Piscatori, p. 5.

37. For me, the most eloquent expression of the Arkounian project is still to be found in his "Islam and Développement au Maghreb" in *Critique de la raison islamique* (Paris: Maisonneuve et Larose, 1984), p. 374: "Comment remédier etc."

38. Thomas Friedman says countries have no choice but to put on what he calls the "golden straitjacket" if they want to join the world economy. Asked if he believes globalization is a good thing, he replied to defend capitalism in Marxist terms: "What I think is irrelevant. It is inevitable." Friedman, *The Lexus and the Olive Tree. ?????*

39. Arkoun, *Morale et politique*, p. 174.