ISLAM AND THE TRAJECTORY OF GLOBALIZATION

RATIONAL IDEALISM AND THE STRUCTURE OF WORLD HISTORY

Louay M. Safi

Islam and the Trajectory of Globalization

The book examines the growing tension between social movements that embrace egalitarian and inclusivist views of national and global politics, most notably classical liberalism, and those that advance social hierarchy and national exclusivism, such as neoliberalism, neoconservatism, and national populism. In exploring issues relating to tensions and conflicts around globalization, the book identifies historical patterns of convergence and divergence rooted in the monotheistic traditions, beginning with the ancient Israelites who dominated the Near East during the Axial Age, through Islamic civilization, and finally by considering the idealism–realism tensions in modern times. One thing remained constant throughout the various historical stages that preceded our current moment of global convergence: a recurring tension between transcendental idealism and various forms of realism. Transcendental idealism, which prioritizes egalitarian and universal values, pushed periodically against the forces of realism that privilege established law and power structure. Equipped with the idealism–realism framework, the book examines the consequences of European realism that justified the imperialistic venture into Africa, the Middle East, and Latin America in the name of liberation and liberalization. The ill-conceived strategy has, ironically, engendered the very dysfunctional societies that produce the waves of immigrants in constant motion from the South to the North, simultaneously as it fostered the social hierarchy that transferred external tensions into identity politics within the countries of the North. The book focuses particularly on the role played historically by Islamic rationalism in translating the monotheistic egalitarian outlook into the institutions of religious pluralism, legislative and legal autonomy, and the scientific enterprise at the foundation of modern society. It concludes by shedding light on the significance of the Muslim presence in Western cultures as humanity draws slowly but consistently towards what we may come to recognize as the Global Age.

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Preface and acknowledgment

Globalization often appears as a geopolitical and economic spectacle, but on a deeper reflection it reveals itself as a transformative force anchored in transcendental values and human empathy. The values and attitudes that form our current historical moment grew within the monotheistic traditions that shaped the trajectory that took us down the corridors of history and placed us at the verge of a global order. The work presented in this volume purports to shed light on this exceedingly complex and remarkably dynamic process at the heart of world history and to reveal the creative synthesis achieved by the monotheistic traditions that make our current global moment possible. The claims might sound a bit startling in the face of modern scholarship's sustained efforts to obscure the role played by monotheism in general, and Islamic monotheism in particular, in setting the foundation of the unfolding global age the world cautiously approach. The ongoing efforts to unite different peoples and cultures in a system of heightened cooperation that recognizes the equal dignity of diverse humanity have never been perfect, but they have been attempted twice in the last two millennia by monotheistic traditions. The first took place under the Islamic civilization, and reached its pinnacle in the fifteenth century, while the other is currently underway, driven by universal ethos rooted in modern civilization.

The fuzzy sketch of an ever-globalizing world outlined above grew gradually in my mind over the years and inspired me to explore the ideas and values at the core of the globalization process in its first and second manifestations and understand the sources of the millennia-old convergence that has gradually pulled humanity into a singular global experience. My early fascination with globalization goes back to my formative years, ever since I became aware of the ability of the transnational corporations to elicit the cooperation of hundreds of thousands of people across diverse cultures. I was not only puzzled by the source of the ambition that drive people to build enterprises that can make profits many folds beyond the immediate and future needs and desires of those who passionately run them but also at the ability of enterprises of such magnitude to maintain the high level of cooperation required for its persistence and growth. My intellectual interests in global cooperation, however, were shaped during my postgraduate research that was

later published under the title of *The Challenge of Modernity: The Quest for Authenticity in the Arab World*. The book focuses on issues of modernity and tradition and the impact of modernity on pan-Arab and pan-Islamic thought and politics. Much of my subsequent research addresses various facets of Islam and modernity, peace and conflict, and religion and politics, so the current volume is in many ways the culmination of three decades of contemplating the questions tackled in this book.

I have been equally fascinated with religion and religious commitments, as I have been always curious to understand the connection between the structure of consciousness and social structures. Religion, as a human experience anchored in transcendence, appeared to me as having much broader influence than modern literature is willing to admit. I was able to observe religious sentiments in clearer light in areas of human endeavors that appear far removed from what we subsume today under the rubric of religion. I could see the religious spirit in social action and interaction that belong to realms we define as "secular," including actions we define as artistic, political, financial, social, or patriotic. These observations highlighted in my mind the mystical core of human experience and problematized the modern tendency to ignore the internal ground that inspires collective actions. Somehow, we the moderns succeeded in separating spiritual values from their religious foundation but continued to embrace them as guidelines to direct social and political decisions and to judge the personal character of individuals around us. This awareness inspired the search that culminated in this study, as the following chapters present religion in a broader light than it is usually allowed in literature dealing with history and society, as the religious is often confined to the institutions charged with managing religious rituals and dogmas. Rarely does modern scholarship associate religious consciousness and action with the work of political leaders, scientists, or soldiers who do not eagerly advertise their faith in their day-to-day endeavors.

Another remark relevant to religion, in the context of assessing the role of monotheism in the rise of the global order, concerns the habit of fragmenting monotheistic traditions, and to treat Judaism, Christianity, and Islam as separate religions, rather than seeing them as different facets of the same religious awareness. This distinction between religions is at once desirable, real, and unavoidable, as each has its distinctive founding prophet and its own specific religious rituals, language, and history. Yet as this study illustrates, they all share in the Abrahamic faith that extenuates the principles that distinguish them from other world religions. In addition to their unity in the person of Abraham, and the line of prophets that preceded and succeeded him, they also share core moral values and common understanding of the meaning of human life and the purpose of history. Furthermore, their understanding of the purpose of revelation has converged over the last millennium as a result of theological and intellectual exchange and mutual leaning. The convergence has been far more than what the religious leaders of different Abrahamic traditions would like us to believe. Toynbee who spent his academic

career studying world religions and civilizations concluded, as will be expounded later, that when future historians look back on the twentieth century, they will not distinguish it by its technological, medical, or political advancement but will rather see it as the time when religions converged.

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Introduction

On the Threshold of the Global Age

Islam resurfaced in the last decades of the twentieth century on the world stage with an angry grumble generated by its fiercest supporters and utmost critics. It came back on the international scene after decades of withdrawal into complete silence that stretched through the first part of the twentieth century. On the surface, the return appears to take the form of angry protests, violent outbursts, and unapologetic rejection of modernization, westernization, and globalization. It came back with old garment and Bedouin accent, and with the chant of "God is great" often expressed at the most unfortunate moments. The return of Islam with the level of noise we all heard in the last three decades is still an enigma that has not been explained, particularly when the return contradicts every prediction advanced by modernization theory. Daniel Lerner, a leading modernization theorist, confidently declared in 1958 that Islam was on the way out from exerting any significant influence on Middle Eastern society, let alone outside its historically recognized boundaries:

> Whether from the East or the West, modernization poses the same basic challenge: the infusion of "a rationalist and positivist spirit" against which scholars seem agreed, "Islam is absolutely defenseless."[1]

Modernization theory itself disappeared suddenly in late 1980s without fanfare and, ironically, without ever having to explain what happened in the Middle East that led to the complete turnaround that brought Islam back as a major player in the region and beyond. Perhaps its fatal prescriptions for "the passing of traditional society" might have to do with its decision to flee the scene without attempting to mend the divisions it sowed under the guise of progress. Or could it be that the angry face of Islam, which many Muslims have real difficulties recognizing, is the product of the process of modernization itself? Many scholars who have a deeper understanding of the Middle East and Islam, like Olivier Roy and Judith Butler, testified in their writings that the Islamic fundamentalism that popped up suddenly on the scene, and practiced a nihilistic form of jihadism, is "modern" at heart and has little resemblance with traditional Islam.

The picture becomes a bit more intricate and complex when we realize that Islamic resurgence does not have one face but multiple expressions and that its relationship with modernity and globalization is much more complicated than many specialists are willing to admit. Like the neoliberal agents of globalization, Islamist neo-fundamentalism is not content with state boarders but is more at ease operating on a global level, using technology and social networking to advertise its intentions and actions. The profiles of the perpetrators of 9/11 terrorist attacks reveal a picture of financially stable and highly educated and aspiring young individuals. They were all well calculating, trained in modern education systems, capable of navigating the modern world at ease, had no difficulties with mastering the advanced techniques of flying jetliners, and had no issues in violating the traditional teachings of Islam's prohibition of the deliberate attacks against noncombatant, declaring it to be as evil as wiping out the human race.[2] There are many questions concerning the way Islam emerged on the global scene and why some of its followers are behaving the way they do that cannot be answered from within the current modernization theory framework, because the theory assumes that modernity could be articulated from within the horizons of the Enlightenment, while the social forces that do impact modern society and the globalization process that continues to expand in scope are rooted in events and sociopolitical patterns and trends that precede the Enlightenment and even the Protestant Reformation that made it possible. The proper horizons for understanding the rise of sociopolitical forces like classical liberalism, neoliberalism, neo-fundamentalism, or national populism are not that of the Enlightenment but of the Axial Age in which monotheistic idealism unleashed the globalization process and set it on a particular trajectory that we need to examine to appreciate its momentum and direction. Gaining insights into the emergence of Islam and other sociopolitical movements at this moment of globalization and examining their impacts on current debates and actions, as well as on future developments, are essential to this book, as we try to pursue a number of key questions within a broader historical framework.

In exploring Islam's impact on globalization, we need also to examine the latter's structure and dynamics more closely. Is globalization an economic and technological process signifying the projection of Western power? Or is it a series of transformative moments in world history delineating profound sociocultural changes destined to usher in a global age? The debate over these questions is in full swing, but the jury is still out as the evidence presented by the two sides of the debate is inconclusive. Seen from one vantage point, the interconnectedness of the world has never been at this level before. Production, communication, education, science, technology, commerce, entertainment, social mobility, and a host of other forms of human interactions have become greatly interdependent and integrated so as to render even the mere suggestion of reversing this trend unthinkable. Yet viewed from the opposite side, the world is still experiencing incongruent diversity and fierce resistance to current globalization trends, thereby making any talk of a new global age

unreal. As we see in subsequent chapters, Islam and Muslim societies are generally believed to be among the most visible antagonists of globalization. Given the fact that Muslims constitute more than one-fifth of world population, and that they are geographically spread out across the globe and situated in key strategic locations, a global age in which a significant part of the human race is opposed to its materialization is unstable if not altogether untenable. The opposition though is not limited to Muslims but can also be found in many cultures and states, including Western democracies.

The return of Islam is not however limited to violent outbursts. The first surge of contemporary Islam took an intellectual and self-critical form in the mid-nineteenth century in response to colonial aggression by European powers. The nineteenth and the early twentieth centuries gave rise to a host of reform movements such as the Young Ottomans in Turkey, the Constitutional Movement in Iran, and the Arab Awakening Movement in the Levant. The same period witnessed the advent of reformist thinkers, including Jamaluddin al-Afghani, Muhammad Abdu, Abdulrahman al-Kawakibi in the Near East, and Sayyid Ahmad Khan and Muhammad Iqbal in India. The period of intense debates generated critical thinking regarding lost meanings and distortions, raised questions about sources of Muslim decline and stagnation, and suggested strategies and approaches to overcome those challenges. Ideas, activities, and experimentations that aim at reform are central to Islamic awakening. Modern Islamic thinking forced Middle Eastern societies to reevaluate themselves and realign their priorities and values. Similarly, Islam's encounter with Europe and the modern West through young generations of Western Muslims and the struggles of immigrant Muslims who seem genuinely committed to a life of faith while immersing themselves in local and global politics have pushed the modern West to undertake a similar evaluation as it tries to figure out issues of meaning, spirituality, and diversity in ways that it has never experienced since the Enlightenment. The return of Islam to Europe has many problematic aspects but has also positive ones, as it coincides with great transformations in Western society and a global order that began to manifest non-Western influences and inputs for a more inclusive global modernity.

Contemporary political and sociological scholarship has the tendency to locate the origin of rational discourse in the Enlightenment thought and to present modern rationalism as completely independent from anything that has ever transpired in human history. The only rational thought recognized as relevant to modernity is that of the Greek philosophy and culture. Yet, a careful examination reveals that modern thought is more intimately connected with Islamic rationalism than with Greek philosophy, as the latter has little resemblance with modern ethos. Islam appears at first glance as the opposite of modernity and its complete other, while as this book illustrates, the main ideas and institutions that shape modern experience are rooted in transcendental idealism that was perfected over a millennium, before it was adopted, adapted, and systematized by the modern West. Modernity as we

know it today has been nurtured and shaped by Western society but received its founding ideas and institutions from the Arabic civilization that provided a creative synthesis of the Axial–Age civilizations. This assertion is particularly interesting given the perception that Islam serves today as the main disrupter of the current modernization trajectory, forcing new realignments and self-evaluation as humanity stands at the verge of what appears as a global breakthrough into new state of consciousness and reality. For those who are eager to set a global aristocracy, Islam suddenly reappears at the dawn of the global age out of a state of dormancy, and in a way that defies all scholarly wisdom and expectations. It returns in modernized forms that do not fit comfortably with its early historical manifestations, except its unwavering rejection of social stratifications and hierarchies. Most Muslims are startled as they watch the growth of the unfamiliar face of Islamist extremism, while some Western scholars, including Judith Butler and Olivier Roy, recognize it as a postmodern mutation and assert that Islamic neo-fundamentalism has a familiar modernist character.

Modern scholars are, though, far from an agreement on the nature of the current Islamic resurgence, as they are divided in their assessments of the reasons behind the rise of Islamic resurgence and its future potentialities. Neo-fundamentalism has been identified as a counter-globalization response and anti-Western reaction, as well as a sign of the rigidity of Islam itself. Anyone who has some familiarity of Islamic history and society knows that the diversity and adaptability of Islam make such claims problematic if not completely absurd. Islam cannot be at once the ground of modernity and globalization, as well as the social force that conspires to undermine them. While Islamist violence is real and disruptive, we need to find its root causes, and understand how it relates to the internal dynamics of contemporary Islamic societies, as they continue to actively involve with Western ideas and powers. As we argue in this book, the Islamic resurgence we currently experience represents a reaction borne out of the transcendental idealism that has historically emerged to counter all forms of realism and positivism, whether these forms of consciousness and social organization take transcendental or materialistic forms. While Islamic fundamentalism reacts in violent and destructive ways, Islamic idealism has increasingly taken more intellectual and measured reactions, partly to contain the violent outbursts of fundamentalism, through the work of Muslim intellectuals like Ai Mazrui, Mahmud Soroush, Sherman Jackson, and Seyyed Hossein Nasr. Western rational idealism has also emerged recently to undertake a similar project through the work of neo-Kantian intellectuals like John Rawls and Jürgen Habermas.

To sort out the intricate issues of postmodern society, this work aims to understand the global transformation currently underway by connecting the global moment we confront today, a moment of ambivalence toward the past and uncertainty toward the future, to the Axial Age where humanity invented the first written form of intellectual communication, transforming casual conversations to deep and systematic elaborations. Human progress

accelerated exponentially with the invention of scrolls as early civilizations were able to leverage intellectual exchange of ideas and information, thereby commencing the process of accumulation of knowledge and the documentation of human experience. The thread that made such a connection possible is subsumed in this work under the rubric of "transcendental idealism," a set of notions, values, and attitudes that were initially rooted in the monotheistic traditions, particularly in the Islamic rationalism of the Mutazilites where we encounter the first full-fledged intellectual movement within the Abrahamic traditions. The connection appears at the beginning as a strange and puzzling claim, for the Axial Age seems quite remote from modern experience, and so is monotheism which has been outpaced by the modernization project. The modern is frequently presented as the moment in which Europe liberated itself from its premodern religious dogmatism and from the structure of tyranny that modern historians are quick to associate with it. Such a presentation of history undoubtedly captures elements of the past but fails to grasp the sociopolitical dynamics that led to the rise of dogmatic thinking in Latin Christianity. Understanding that dynamics and identifying the grounds of the modern moment of Western civilization in earlier moments that preceded the Enlightenment is a major thread in this investigation. The Enlightenment moment is an important juncture in the human journey toward the modern age, but it was an advanced juncture in a road that began way back in the Axial Age. The journey, examined in Chapter 3, began much earlier in Abraham's rebellion against objectified divinity and inauthentic faith. The Abrahamic faith evolved for centuries in living communities that experienced frequent upheavals and underwent numerous changes in religious practices through successive reformist movements led by the Hebrew prophets, before it was articulated in an intellectual form as monotheistic prophecies ended and the rational articulation of faith began first in Latin Christianity and later in the Islamic discursive tradition. These moments of contemplation, articulation, and reform constitute together the breakthrough path that propelled humanity to its global moment that we confront today. While the monotheistic traditions formed the social movements that carried the discursive tradition that clearly emerged in Islamic rationalism, it was the transcendental idealist tradition in those sociohistorical movements that produced the progressive elements in the monotheistic movement and, therefore, holds the key for delineating the ideas and the forces that brought us to our modern moment, as it also holds the key for untangling the strings that hold us back and prevent us from overcoming the misgivings, confusions, and fears that define our current postmodern predicaments.

The book is about globalization and the place and role of Islam in the emerging sociopolitical reality that constitutes late modernity. The modernization process that was initially envisaged as a process of convergence by the twentieth-century scholars began to bifurcate as the century drew to a close, producing anxieties and ambiguities about its trajectory. Islam also seems to bifurcate into competing interpretations as Muslim experiences take new

forms in relation to the modern order and as Muslim reformers attempt to reconcile Islamic and modern epistemes. Meanwhile, autocratic regimes in the Arab world have managed to breed new forms of violent extremism under conditions of extreme repression and suffocating external manipulation and control. The new breeds of radical Islamism often mirror in their ruthless and brutal attacks the brutality they experienced under Middle Eastern regimes in the name of modernization. The social agony and psychological anguish experienced for decades in Muslim societies eventually spilled over into Western societies with the inflow of Muslims and the incursion of the very practices that produced the inflow in the first place. This development has also coincided with increased fragmentation of Western politics, and the difficulties in developing inclusive notions of the common good, as well as with the renewal of the religious–secular tensions as religious narratives conflict with liberal values and democratic principles, both in the West (the fight over abortion) and in the Middle East (the fight over Palestinian rights). The sociopolitical map gets more complicated as the conservative religious alliance gives birth to another significant alliance between the vocal voices of Western Muslims against the excesses of neorealism in Muslim societies on the one hand and those of liberal progressives who condemn what they see as unsustainable practices of the economic imperialism of the neoliberal elites and the political imperialism of the neoconservative movement. The rising tensions cannot be reduced to any singular reason, but one of the more apparent reasons is the lack of inclusion, which is often cited by protest movements that question both secular elitism and neoliberal exclusivism. Secularism has gradually grown from a formal framework, consisting of a set of principles intended to advance religious tolerance and provide free space for generating political consensus, into a substantive discourse, committed to historically limited assumptions and understandings, and intolerant of interpretations opposed to the dominant secular discourse of the day. To safeguard the secular order, essential for maintaining a civil space and preserving individual freedom, secularism should be reexamined and rethought in order to allow for more meaningful engagement with evolving moral epistemes and social experiences intrinsic to the globalizing world of the twenty-first century.

The sociopolitical experiences and transformations we need to explore in this study are significantly broad and expansive and appear at times overwhelming as the horizons we chose to think about globalization stretch back in time to the Axial Age, around the year 500 BCE. The task is made more daunting by identifying Islam as the locus of the historical breakthrough that channeled the ideas and experiences of Axial-Age civilizations, as it undertook the creative synthesis that set the global ground. The challenge lies in the contrast between the popular perception of Islam as an anti-modern religion and culture and the historical presentation that portrays it as the ground for modernity and possibly an essential partner in ensuring smooth sail toward the global age. Such a project requires more expansive theoretical work, and my hope is that this book does provide enough evidence to

challenge the current assumptions that make any meaningful debate difficult if not impossible. I would consider this endeavor satisfying if it succeeds in stimulating further debates and explorations of the issues raised here, and if it generates interests in pursuing further philosophical insights relevant to the objectives stated above, and in matching those insights with the historical records that are available on the subject. I also attempt in various chapters, but particularly in the last one, to outline a possible strategy to redefine the political and religious in ways that facilitate the inclusion of Islam and Muslims in the public spheres of secular society. As we will see in Chapters 3 and 4, the concept of religious and political pluralism can be traced back in Islamic experience to the Medina constitution (732 CE) and the interreligious contracts that formed the foundation of the moral autonomy enjoyed by confessional communities under Islamic law.

The book purports to develop an understanding of the nature of the process of globalization in both world history and modern societies. It particularly focuses on Islam's place in world history as the last civilization that shaped certain intellectual and cultural forms that impacted Middle-Age Europe and shaped the development of Western modernity. It begins by reviewing the two main interpretations of the trajectory of modern society advanced by Fukuyama and Huntington; the former based in the theory of cultural convergence and the latter in cultural conflict. I argue in the next two chapters that the two conceptions capture only part of the emerging reality and therefore arrive at partial and contradictory conclusions. I attribute their divergent conclusions to the horizons in which they contemplate the origin and patterns of globalization, as both assume that it was born in the age of Enlightenment, and suggest that a better understanding requires broader horizons, comparable to those afforded by the Axial Age as proposed by Karl Jaspers. For it is in the Axial Age that we find the roots of the six world civilizations that Huntington reviewed with great suspicions and deep concerns and assumed that they are incapable of sharing a framework of cooperation with Western civilization. At that distant but relevant age we encounter the emerging framework of cooperation, that grew to reach its premodern zenith in the Islamic civilization. The framework does not immediately provide any working model for us today but give us insights to new possibilities that could replace the open conflicts predicted by Huntington with cooperation and competition within a global framework. The ability to come to this conclusion is markedly enhanced, I contend, by recognizing the patterns of world history. From the Axial-Age horizons we could see the beginning of world convergence and patterns of unity and cooperation among nations and religions. From there we could also see Islam's close affinity to Western civilization, thought, and morality. The new horizons for contemplating modernity would, I propose, help us recognize with some clarity the ground for modern global experience.

I argue, throughout the chapters of this book, that globalization is a historical process rooted in the worldviews of the monotheistic religions and the

Abrahamic moral traditions. It is rooted in the humanistic visions and values inspired by the prophetic traditions that focused on the transformation of human society into a more just and compassionate society. Such an assertion might be difficult to fathom for many readers, but it is difficult precisely because of the absence of the historical records that are necessary to connect the modern age with the Axial Age, where the much-acclaimed Greek heritage is located. I argue in Chapters 3 and 4 that transcendental idealism that emerged in the monotheistic traditions rooted in the Abrahamic faith, and in the Hebrew prophetic reforms and Islamic rationalism, constitutes the breakthrough that led human civilization down the history to the modern age, where the European Enlightenment was the recipient of intellectual and cultural traditions that emerged from a multitude of human civilizations. Islam in the Middle Age presents us from this vantage point with the moment of unity and provides the creative synthesis and the intellectual inheritance that were further developed by the West into the current forms we experience today. From our new vantage point, Islam appears as a partner for the development of modernity. The fact that this narrative is absent from the common understanding of modern society is a sufficient reason for shedding light on the grounding of modernity, as the unfortunate absence of the grounds of the Enlightenment rational traditions is creating doubts about its meaning not only to non-Western societies but even for the internal debate of Western rational traditions.

The values and beliefs that define transcendental idealism were articulated in a discursive tradition throughout the history of ancient Israel, as the prophetic mission never ceased but took rational forms in the Islamic monotheism as it became clear that it was the responsibility of the scholar and intellectual to assume the reformist mission assumed earlier by prophets. This gave rise to the rational idealism of the Mutazilite movement. The movement set itself against the transcendental realism of the *hadith* movement obsessed with defending the status quo and ensuring the unity of the Muslim community. The transcendental idealism of the Mutazilites was crucial for confronting political usurpation and misuse of power and for pushing Islamic society toward higher realization of its ideals by transcending the hard compromises made by the realists. The Mutazilite movement was instrumental in persuading the Abbasid Caliphs to support philosophy and science and translate the scholarly work of early civilizations. They justified such an enterprise by asserting the universality of the scientific enterprise and the unity of humanity. By the ninth century, the Mutazilite rational idealism was characterized by its commitment to reason, moral agency, science, and humanity. By the twelfth century, the Sufi movement created the most ambitious synthesis in the history of monotheism, combining the three scholarly traditions of mysticism, rationalism, and realism.

Modern historians of science, who anchor modern thought in the Greek philosophy, have all along argued that the eight centuries of Islamic scholarship and science added nothing new to scientific knowledge and, therefore,

Western thought owes nothing to the Arabic and Muslim civilization. Recent investigations and translations of a specimen of Muslim scholarship and science have shown, at least to those who engaged in such research, that this claim is not true and that modern West would have been impossible without the huge amount of copying and borrowing from Muslim learnings. What is problematic about the effort to hide the modern connection to Muslim learning, whether intended or not, is not simply a matter of giving credit where credit is due but of disconnecting modern science and scholarship from their intellectual roots. Western historians and sociologists continue to ignore the contributions of Middle Age Muslim philosophers and scientists. This has done modern scholarship great disservice given the extent to which modern scholarship found its vocation by engaging for centuries Islamic works. By so doing it has locked the doors and throw the keys to the place where some of the secrets and unsolved puzzles of modern intellectualism is hidden. The lack of grounding laid at the feet of modern rationalism by postmodern philosophers is partially related to the Enlightenment efforts to hide the origins of its concepts and notions in the scholastic works of the Middle Age that led to Europe's religious reformation and the origin of Middle Age learning in the work of Islamic philosophers and scientists.

Anchoring modernization in diverse historical experiences opens the possibilities to diverse paths to modernity and lifts the burden of limiting the grounds of modern intellectualism to Greek philosophy. Freeing our modern understanding from the limitations of Greek-to-modernity path opens new avenues for us to contemplate the possibilities of new creative forms of human interactions and organizations apart from the European path. As the European understanding of Western experience began to dominate the intellectual debates, increased demand for the secularization of the social space increased, producing reactions that could threaten the very notion of the secular state. This concern is evident in the recent works by liberal scholars whose commitment to secularism is never doubted, including those of John Rawls, Jürgen Habermas, and Richard Taylor.

Forces and patterns in historical transformation

Are there discernable patterns and identifiable structures of historical change? This question occupied for centuries many philosophers of history, and we will review the main theories of world history in Chapter 2. For now, I would like to identity certain patterns and dynamics that seem to repeat themselves over time, particularly in the history of monotheistic cultures that are the focus of this study. The sociopolitical dynamic of historical change appears to follow certain configurations that can be discerned through historical analysis. It might be helpful at this point, before we begin exploring and analyzing the social forces that help shape modern society, to outline the sociocultural dynamic that leads to the historical process we call globalization. The dynamic is complex, intricate, and subtle and cannot therefore

be fully captured in a comprehensive conceptual framework. This does not mean, however, that we should shy away from providing a simplified framework capable of reproducing key elements of the dynamic that govern the historical evolution of humanity. The intellectual rendering of the historical dynamic is crucial for any theoretical endeavor to understand the meaning of history. Since illuminating the historical grounds of modern thought and political formation is at the heart of this study, we will attempt the second-best thing by examining the sociopolitical forces responsible for shaping modern society. We will have to reduce complex historical patterns into a set of key concepts, posited as ideal types, and then strive to relate these concepts to each other to formulate an explanatory framework. The dynamic of the historical process is explained in reference to four interrelated notions: idealism, realism, positivism, and materialism. These categories are in turn subsumed under the meta-categories of transcendentalism and naturalism.

The most important element in the historical process of globalization is *idealism*, particularly *rational idealism* that asserts the primacy of the transcendental ideals that were originally encountered in the monotheistic prophetic tradition, particularly the ideal of equal dignity of all peoples and the moral responsibility of rational humanity. Idealism grounds human experience in rational and teleological consciousness and in the transcendental essence of the material world. Idealism can be observed in history in the Hebrew prophetic tradition, Islamic rationalism, and the German idealism. Idealism, while asserting the moral nature of the ultimate reality, bifurcates into theistic and pantheistic forms. Theistic idealism insists that the ultimate reality transcends the phenomenal world and, hence, cannot be fully experienced within temporal existence, while pantheistic idealists contend that the ultimate reality is immanent in the world and can be fully experienced in history. The pantheism we encounter in Hegel for instance has clear elements of realism and represents hence an effort to compromise the ideal with the real by idealizing the contemporary real. Kant's moral philosophy provides the best modern example of theistic transcendental idealism, while Hegel's thought represents an instance of pantheistic idealism. Hindu and Greek Neoplatonism provide counterexamples of pantheism outside the monotheistic traditions, though both belong to transcendental realism. *Realism* is the counterforce to idealism as it represents the belief that the essence of reality is captured in the actual representations of the individual expressions and in the manifestations of coercive power through bilateral and multilateral relationships. Realists accept the human condition of any sociopolitical situation on its face value and deals with it as a presentation of being rather than that of becoming.

Realism is consistent in both its transcendental and naturalist manifestations as it has always shown the tendency to privilege socially and historically established powers and, hence, assumes a high degree of determinism. Realism can be observed historically in the approach of Jewish rabbinical order and Latin Christianity and in the attitude of the juristic tradition in Islam. In modern times, realism is associated with the efforts of both liberal and conservative

actors to promote imperialism and political domination in general, including intellectuals such as James Mill, Hans Morgenthau, and Henry Kissinger. Positivism is another counterpart to idealism as it is characterized by the belief that laws and their operation derive validity from the fact of having been enacted by authority or derived logically from existing decisions, rather than from any moral considerations, such as supra-legal equality or justice. The belief may be systematized into a naturalist belief system, such as naturalism or deism, when it asserts that only that which can be scientifically verified or is capable of logical or mathematical proof can be claimed to be true, thereby rejecting metaphysics and theism. Leibniz, Comte, and Weber are important proponents of positivism. Finally, *materialism* is another sociopolitical force that emerged in opposition to idealism as it promotes a worldview that privileges material possessions and physical comfort and considers them more important than spiritual values in explaining the world and guiding action. This belief takes a naturalistic turn among individuals who deny the supernatural ground for existence and therefore concludes that nothing exists except matter and its mutations and transformations. Marxist thought is the most important instance of materialism in contemporary times. Yet materialism could be well subsumed under transcendentalism, as it often emerges during the advanced stages of sociocultural development of monotheistic traditions distinguished by a life of plenty and extravagance. Of course, the grounding of realism, in both its positivist or materialist manifestations, cannot be easily established and detected unless it is discursively articulated in a worldview. However, even when the worldview is expressed, we often need to examine the way the ideas are acted out and not only their discursive representation. The tensions and interactions between the various sociocultural forces and worldviews are schematically summarized in Figure 1.

In the political realm, and in the policy formation exercise, realism is a higher category that subsumes both the positivist and materialist understanding of the social order. The most salient features of positivism relate to its insistence that positive law is the final criterion for judging actions and its uncritical support of those who exercise political power. Materialism, on the other hand, is mainly concerned with the accumulation and allotment of societal wealth. As we will see in various chapters, these strands of social movements are
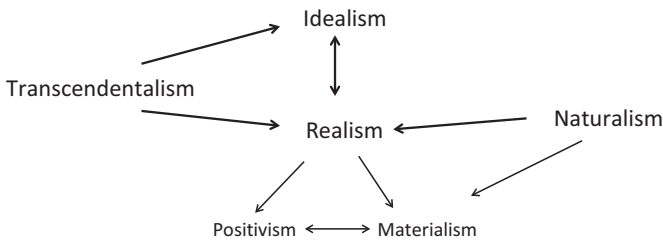

Figure 1 Dynamic of sociohistorical movements.

evident in the tendencies of positivists and materialists to generate imperialism and social hierarchy. Political idealism, on the other hand, privileges egalitarian politics rooted in universal human values and the moral necessity to ever pursue their potential realization in society. They also manifest themselves in social movements that demand reform of deformed social structures so as to ensure fairer distribution of power and the accountability of those who control financial resources and political power. The tendencies of sociopolitical movements in many ways complement each other and create a healthy interaction that ensures the stability of society, as long as the channels of communication remain open and social forces remain responsive to the demand of other social components of society. Obviously, maintaining positive institutional relations among sociopolitical movements is desirability, as it ensures the combination of stability and progress necessary for any functioning society.

The above key concepts are crucial for understanding the forces and processes of the evolution of global human society under the influence of religion over time. They reveal patterns we encounter across time, beginning with the ancient Israelites and later through the Islamic intellectual traditions, and finally in the Enlightenment rationalism. Although these categories and patterns in which they appear and repeat themselves are elaborated in some details in subsequent chapters, identifying those patterns here and commenting on the way they interact among each other should help the reader anticipate those patterns and the significance of their formation and transformation. We will first encounter those forces and processes in the discussions presented in Chapter 1, in the context of understanding what is posited as a shift from the politics of social unity into fragmentations and the rise of identity politics. The fragmentation is evident, for example, in the sociopolitical transformation of American society from the single identity expressed in American liberalism to identity politics in which American liberalism shows signs of fragmentations and social divisions. While identity and difference are intrinsic to social grouping and have always provided the mechanism for social mobilization, their appearance in an advanced stage of modernity, widely recognized as "post" modern, assumes a problematic and concerning form. Identity politics brings modern society back to nationalism as it repudiates the idea of global convergence, bringing the international order closer to the Lewis's and Huntington's notion of clash of civilizations. Convergence and divergence, unity and plurality, cooperation and conflict, and coexistence and clash have always been intrinsic to human progress, and as such they could not be avoided all together. The unnecessary provocation of destructive conflicts that could be avoided, as was the case with the moment of rapprochement between the United States and China in the early 1960s. The Sino-American agreement represented a moment of reconciliation between two projects, capitalism and communism, that were competing over world dominance with each hoping to achieve global convergence. The agreement cemented a clash-avoidance strategy that turned the clash into competition and reduced the possibilities of destructive wars. Eventually, the

Soviets rolled back and imploded as China chose the route of cooperation and limited convergence. China embraced globalization and internalized specific aspects of liberalism that seem to resemble the neoliberal model of limited social hierarchy, albeit a model that is more colored by a traditional Chinese conception of political authority and organization. Because this study focuses on societies with a predominantly monotheistic traditions, no claims are being made as to the meaning and significance of Chinese transformation over the past 30 years. However, China has practically passed the communist ideological phase, although it is still governed under the same political structure.

The possibility of realizing global peace is in jeopardy unless identity politics is reformed into a more equitable and inclusive political order. The ongoing convergence is unlikely to be completely reserved, but the world might enter into a prolonged period of conflict and misuse of resources that would significantly delay the process of convergence. Obviously, the clash is unlikely to produce a dominant force but could produce new realignment away from any exclusivist force that may seek global domination. But if history is of any guide, any exclusivist force, whether religious or nationalist, is likely to meet the fate of the nationalism forces of the twentieth century and bring self-destruction to those who chose to move against the flow of history that goes back several millennia. Exclusivist movements are more likely thought to produce internal frictions alongside any international friction. The realignment is already at work in political societies across the world, as current convergence and divergence are driven by the divergence of values and interests among transnational social movements. The realignment is already at work currently in the international system along the lines that separate three major sociohistorical forces: idealism, materialism, and positivism. These sociohistorical worldviews have already fragmented liberalism into three political groups: classical liberalism, neoliberalism, and ethnic nationalism. Figure 2 illustrates this fragmentation schematically.

Classical liberalism has already set the foundations of the international order in the 1950s and 1960s and perfected its legal framework in the form of international law and organizations. This meaningful and inclusive system seems to fade away under the erosive actions of neoliberalism and nationalist realism, which continue to dig at its foundation, driven by greed and self-interests.
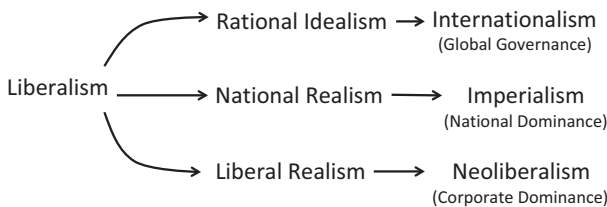
Figure 2 Liberalism and elite worldview.

The latest transformation makes the world more susceptible to clashes and conflicts, as both neoliberalism and ethnic nationalism possess imperialist impulses. The current sociopolitical formation also suggests that unless rational idealism represented in the thought of intellectuals like Rawls and Habermas takes the lead, globalization is likely to abandon the global governance trajectory and likely to further push on the self-destructive trajectory of corporate and national dominance, a trajectory that is more likely to exhaust modern civilization itself. Convergence and conflict are two conceptual frameworks that have been invoked by Fukuyama and Huntington in their efforts to identify the trajectory of globalization. The concepts form a conceptual duality and are closely interrelated in systematic thinking and historical progress. The convergence-divergence fluctuation in relation to the sociohistorical movements is schematically illustrated in Figure 3.

They both are internal to a dialectical relationship that is essential for social change, for convergence and conflict are internal to social grouping as interests and values in any social setting converge and diverge, leading to alignment and realignment of social forces. This dialectical relationship was captured in the work of the German idealists, beginning with Kant, but more clearly in the work of Fichte and Hegel. Hegel posited the dialectics as the logic of historical change. The dialectic signifies the nature of the relationships among sociopolitical forces that aim to shape human reality in accordance with competing values and interests. The relationship takes the form of individual and group struggles as the result of conflict of interests and/or values. Marx has adopted the same logic to develop his theory of historical materialism, but he nonetheless remained Hegelian despite rejecting the primacy of ideas. In the end he embraced the same triumphalism we encounter in Hegel as both assert a moment of ultimate triumph of a particular type of social formation.

The temptation to declare the end of history in the moment of observation of the dialectical unfolding of history, similar to the one experienced by Hegel and Marx, or most recently by Fukuyama, must be resisted as it violates the very logic of the dialectal process. The end of the historical process is neither triumphalism nor the end of history. Instead, the process is by definition
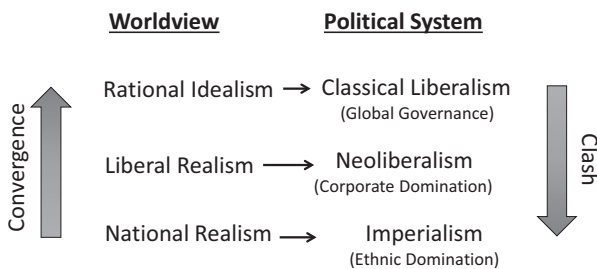
Figure 3 The politics of convergence and clash.

endless involving repeated synthesis that combines antithetical historical mo-
ments, unless one is willing to assert that humanity has arrived at the moment
of absolute perfection. The Germanic state that Hegel thought it was the end
of history was nothing more than the antithesis of the aristocratic spirit and its
egalitarian negation, leading to the republican principle that grounded elite
competition in popular choice. Similarly, communism as posited by Marxism
as the end of history appeared from a materialist framework as the triumph
of the impoverished proletariat over capitalism. What we instead achieved
was the synthesis of the two opposing moments in the welfare state that were
introduced in Europe and North America in the aftermath of World War II
and the efforts to role it back by triumphant capitalism since the rise of the
Reagan-Thatcher neoliberalism. Hegel's and Marx's writings and analyses
have been quite helpful in providing a penetrating analysis of the nature of
the sociopolitical forces of their times, but they both failed thoroughly in
their predictions, precisely because they violated the logic of history they ad-
vanced. The end of history cannot be predicted by philosophical insights by
those who are trapped in its waves and cycles. Rather, portraying history as a
dialectical process means that we can only anticipate the trajectory outlined
by the dialectic but can never identify or foresee its conclusion.

The flaws of the Enlightenment account of progress and historical changes
become visible in the postmodern moment, as the postmodern critique illus-
trated to all that can behold that modern thought has eroded over the past
two centuries the very foundation upon which its formidable fortress is built.
Postmodern analysis reveals that modern ideas, values, and postulates require
a theoretical and historical foundation to stand firmly on. The postmodern
analysis shows that the Enlightenment is not the ground of modernity, be-
cause it is itself in need for a ground. It reveals what modern scholars and
historians have managed to keep out of the public view for centuries, that the
foundations of the modern ideas and values are grounded in previous times
and spaces and that the founding text of the modern age is missing and need
to be discovered. It is in the postmodern moment that we feel the urge to
search for broader horizons to identify the beginning of the modernist narra-
tive and to find more concrete grounding for the evolution of human knowl-
edge and experience. The pronouncements of the Enlightenment scholars
and the claims of achieving a rupture with the human past and the ancient
world were to a great extent a rupture with Middle-Age Europe but not with
earlier human civilizations. The rupture that the Enlightenment achieved
was not substantive but formal and was not sculpted in the evolution of the
historically constituted ideas and values but in the way they were represented
and arranged.

Topics and themes

In the context of examining the interplay between Islam and globalization,
this book focuses on the interrelationship between Islam and the West as has

evolved over a millennium and the way Islamic societies have been coping with Western modernity. It is also about shedding light on the area of tensions and misunderstandings that result from the fact that the Western and Islamic cultures seem to operate in different historical time-zones, never able to fully understand each other or understand their strong historical and intellectual connections. The two cultural time-zones seem to be joined at the hip while their minds and thoughts are wondering in different directions. Over the last millennium the Western and Muslim worlds have interacted deeply, learned from each other, and drew closer to each other in many ways that exceed what the two civilizations are willing to admit. By admitting and recognizing their similarities they must see the globalization project—which was developed historically through the profound contributions of their two monotheistic sociohistorical movements that struggled for centuries to bring about a global society—as grounded in a more or less similar set of transcendental values and the vision of humanity that was first articulated in their sacred scriptures. What is at stake here is whether the world would converge to create a global order on the basis of universal human rights or whether it will clash to undermine an inter-millennial struggle and take humanity back to exclusivist nationalism or tribalism that would only undermine human progress. As we will see throughout the book, the efforts to impose one's own worldview on the other would not work and would eventually exhaust the rivaling traditions.

The postmodern moment of globalization offers great opportunities to overcome misunderstanding and create more cooperation as Western Muslims struggle to become an integral part of Western experience and allow more direct and contemporaneous debate. The emerging Muslim communities in Europe and North America under the conditions of religious and political pluralism, never experienced before, should help in developing new understanding of similarities and differences, and appreciate the rich cultural developments this experience could achieve. The jury is out on how the current experimentation would proceed, given the rising tensions, orchestrated by rigid and fundamentalist views within the three Abrahamic traditions. *Islam and the Trajectory of Globalization* is concerned with understanding the sociopolitical structures that control the processes of convergence and divergence and the dynamics that govern sociocultural change. The research uncovers the key components that placed the historical process of globalization in motion by focusing on the interrelationship between the powerful impact of transcendental ideals on the rational pursuit of meaning and purpose and, more specifically, on the efforts to connect the revelatory elements of the monotheistic tradition with the tradition of rational idealism.

We endeavor in subsequent chapters to advance several interrelated themes that aim at showcasing Islam's historical contributions to the rise of a more inclusive and progressive political order and the challenges posed by Western imperialism, disguised as political realism, toward the formation of a

more inclusive and peaceful global order. As we proceed through the various chapters of the book, a number of important themes emerge, including the following:

1   Globalization is a historical process that accelerated in the past three decades under neoliberalism, but the neoliberal approach to globalization is unsustainable, and it has been increasingly generating anti-globalization forces that threaten to undermine the liberal democratic foundations of the international order, which is essential for the stability of globalization.

2   The globalizing socioeconomic order we experienced since the collapse of the Soviet Union is rooted in sociohistorical epistemes that date back to the Axial Age. The ideas and values that give the modern world its structural dynamics transpired in the monotheistic civilizations and acquired their rational intellectual forms in the Islamic civilization, before it was later developed to their current forms in the Western civilization.

3   Modern civilizational structures and institutions are grounded in transcendental idealism, and the progressive elements of modernity are inspired by the rational idealism strand of the evolving monotheistic traditions.

4   Transcendental idealism that characterizes the drive toward equal dignity in modern times emerged in its foundational forms within the Islamic rationalist movements of the Mutazilites and Asharites, and contemporary Muslim reformers have been drawing from the same foundation in an effort to reconcile Islam and modernity.

5   Autocratic regimes in Muslim countries use secularism and liberal claims as tactics to stifle democratization and frustrate the process of reconciliation. The sociopolitical conditions developed under Arab autocracies are breeding violent extremism, forcing waves of South-to-North migrations, and are threatening to undermine global convergence and increase global conflicts.

6   Islamic reform has been underway since the mid-nineteenth century, and Islamic reform movements have the capacity to make a positive contribution to a more liberal and democratic future, but that is conditioned on their ability to disavow extremist voices and overcome autocratic rule.

7   The emergence of Islam in Western society and the growing Muslim communities in Western democracy provide an opportune moment to create more meaningful and direct communication between Islam and the West and could potentially contribute to overcoming the millennia-long confrontations and aggressions over the Christian-Muslim frontiers.

8   Islamic presence in the West might be a necessary condition for developing the pluralism the world needs to ensure a fairer and more engaging global governance. However, the ability of the interactions to generate a cross-cultural consensus is still a work in progress, surrounded with uncertainties and dangers.

9   Engaging non-Western cultures and religions in a globalizing social
     setting cannot rely on the subjective rationality proposed by Kant in
     his reliance on universal maxims or the organic rationality proposed by
     Hegel which has succumbed to positivist limitations. Instead, there is
     a need to adopt rational rules developed through dialogical consensus,
     similar to the overlapping consensus developed by Rawls, and to achieve
     cross-cultural pluralism based on the principle of equal dignity of all
     human beings.

These major themes are discussed over the ten chapters that constitute this
book. In Chapter 1, we lay out the various layers of the globalization process
and explore the subordination of the cultural and moral dimensions of life to
the economic and geopolitical interests of the corporate world that reduces the
meaning of human development to financial growth. We examine the transfor-
mation of international liberalism, envisaged by classical liberals like Locke and
Kant as world peace, into neoliberalism under the influence of political realism
and neorealism and shed light on the role neoliberalism plays in undermining
liberal democracy abroad and at home. We look at the two major conceptions
regarding the trajectory of globalization into the future: convergence and clash
of social orders. Convergence is often promoted by the advocates of liberalism
as best represented in the work of Francis Fukuyama, while the clash theme is
advanced by conservatives and neoconservatives and best articulated by Samuel
Huntington. We finally take note of the efforts by ethnic nationalists to de-
monize Islam and paint it as the complete 'other' of modern civilization.

   We turn in Chapter 2 to review theories of world history in an effort to
understand the relationship between culture and civilization and to assess the
trajectory of liberal democracy. We look into the idea that world history is the
theater for the evolution of freedom proposed by Kant and later developed into
a full-fledged theory in the philosophical writings of Hegel. We also review
the works of two prominent philosophers of history, Spengler and Toynbee,
and explore the complex relationship between culture and history, pointing
out that unlike what Huntington assumes, culture forms the intellectual and
moral ground on which economic and technological developments we associ-
ate with civilizations take place. We also explore the proposition of the "Axial
Age" introduced by Karl Jaspers and underscore the qualities that make this
period in human history an important starting point to understand historical
change in general and the monotheistic outbreak in particular.

   The role of monotheism in setting the stage for the evolution of humanity
from the Axial Age to the modern age through the process of globalization is
examined in Chapter 3. We identify transcendental idealism with its four dis-
tinctive features (rational agency, moral responsibility, universal equality, and
purposive history) as the dynamics that drove the monotheistic communities
and set them on their historical journey that forms the essence of globaliza-
tion. We examine the role of the intellectual, who emerged as the promoter
of transcendental rationalism, leading to the rise of rational idealism that
was advanced first by Islamic rationalism, and later by Western liberalism.

We also explore the contributions of Islamic rationalism to the development of the theory of natural rights that was adopted by European scholasticism beginning with Thomas Aquinas, before it was used by the Enlightenment thinkers to justify democracy and classical liberalism.

In Chapter 4, we further investigate the bifurcation of Islam into rational idealism and juristic realism and shed light on the idealism-realism dialectics under Islam, and the generation of a discursive tradition that was crucial to keeping the socio-religious and socio-historical groups engaged in an open debate. This leads us to examine the ethical foundations and the humanistic dimension of Islam that gave rise to religious pluralism and facilitated the establishment of worldwide civilization that brought unity to the Axial-Age societies and to the rise of the high culture in metropolitan cities from Central and South Asia in the East to the Iberian Peninsula in the West. We also examine in this chapter the contractual relationships between Muslim and non-Muslim communities that allow non-Muslims greater moral and religious autonomy.

The ability of Muslim jurists to keep the state out of the legislative process throughout Muslim history is discussed in Chapter 5. We focus in this chapter on the consequences of the Muslim jurists' success in maintaining their autonomy through their collective power to promulgate Islamic law. Not only did the Muslim jurists acquire the power to check state actions and limit its influence on legal and constitutional matter, they were also successful in keeping civil society vibrant and independent of state power by developing the institution of Waqf (public trust) and protecting it from external interferences by political and social actors. The Waqf institution also helped the jurists to maintain financial independence as it provided funding to social and public services, including setting schools, paving roads, and circulating wealth to less fortunate social classes.

The influence of Islamic philosophy, science, and culture on the rise of modern West is discussed in Chapter 6. Between the tenth and fourteenth centuries, European students of philosophy and science oozed into Andalusian universities, particularly the University of Cordoba, from all regions of Western Europe. Andalusia formed historically the Western frontier of the Islamic civilization with Europe and was as such a zone of contact where Christians interacted with one of the most advanced centers of Muslim learning. The fall of Cordoba to the Visigoths gave Europe access to Cordoba's library and to priceless source of philosophy, science, and literature. We examine in this chapter the rise of European learning as a result of their exposure to new sciences and shed light on the breadth and depth of the transmission of knowledge from Muslim Spain to Western Europe and show that contrary to the claims of many European historians modern sciences that emerged in Europe through the eighteenth century were the outcome of centuries of labor by Muslim scientists and philosophers and have little resemblance with what European sources claimed to be grounded in the Greek philosophy of the Axial Age.

Chapter 7 examines the rise of European colonialism and its impact on the Muslim world. We review in this chapter Europe's efforts to remold Muslim societies in the image of the West and the reaction of Muslim intellectuals and

societies to these efforts. It highlights the extent to which Muslim societies have internalized Modern European thought and culture. It also uncovers the European obsession with transmitting European cultural practices and not only liberal ideals, and the willingness of Western powers to support tyrants and dictators to do so at the expense of the internal stability and well-being of non-Western populations. We also point out why the secularization project in the Middle East was ill-conceived and identify the struggle for reform undertaken by Middle Eastern intellectuals and social movements.

We turn in Chapter 8 to study the impact of Western management of the Middle East on the growth of economic disparity internationally and locally and on the waves of migration from the countries of the South to the North. The encounter of Europe with its increasingly religiously conscious Muslim populations is discussed in this chapter, exploring the meaning and implication of such encounters for the globalizing world. We also look into the nature of neo-fundamentalism and its roots in modernity and contrast it with the struggle of mainstream Western Muslims to engage in self-assessment and adaptation to bring transcendental values and ideals to the modern age.

Chapter 9 shows that Muslim transformations and policies adopted by neoliberal and neoconservative elites are having varying impacts on Western society and on the growing populist antagonism toward both liberalism and globalization. We examine protest movements that pose a challenge to liberalism and liberal thoughts, focusing particularly on far-right and neoconservative political discourse, as we also shed light on the resurging national populism. We explore in this chapter the role played by right-wing political movements and the advocates of neoliberalism to mobilize Western societies against their fellow Muslims and against Islam in general and show why such efforts are ill-conceived and wrongly heading.

Finally, Chapter 10 reviews attempts by leading Western thinkers grounded in neo-Kantian idealism, most notably John Rawls and Jürgen Habermas, to come up with a new understanding of pluralism and social consensus in the postmodern society and to identify the ground rules and procedures that would allow a morally and culturally diverse humanity to engage in more inclusive social consensus and political decision-making. We also explore the capacity of modern Muslims to engage in national and global debates to bring out overlapping consensus and ensure that political pronouncements and public policy continue to rely on public reason rather than subjective beliefs and understanding.

Notes

1 Daniel Lerner, *The Passing of Traditional Societies* (Glencoe, IL: The Free Press, 1958), 45.
2 "…if anyone killed a person not in retaliation of murder, or (and) to spread mischief in the land—it would be as if he killed all mankind, and if anyone saved a life, it would be as if he saved the life of all mankind" (Qur'an 5:32).

1 Globalization facts and faults

Globalization as currently perceived is a historical process originated in Europe and has its roots in the rational impulse of the Enlightenment. The impulse is liberal democracy that has survived the turmoil of the twentieth century, including two world wars and a long cold war that produced countless skirmishes. With the defeat of European nationalism in WWII, communism expanded into East Europe, further invigorating the former Soviet Union. The liberal democratic project nonetheless continued with the same vigor, as it remained confident of the superiority of its vision that it developed a new field of modernization studies that anticipated the eventual transformation of non-Western societies, particularly those of the Middle East, from religious–traditional to secular–modern cultures. Modernization theory's assessment was not without merit, as Middle Eastern societies embraced liberal democracy, first in Egypt in 1919 as a result of a popular revolution that ended British colonial rule and established a parliamentarian democracy, and later in Syria in 1947 as it ended the French colonial rule and established the first republic in the Arab world. Liberal democracy did not survive for long in the Arab societies and was replaced by military rule. The collapse of the two Arab liberal regimes was not protested by Western democracies. Instead, the new military dictatorships were immediately embraced; for example, two coups were orchestrated by the Truman's administration in 1949 and 1952 in the Middle East. By the early 1970s, the call to return to traditional Islamic culture and politics was echoed across Arab and Muslim countries, as an increasing number of people became disillusioned with coercive secularism and fake elections managed by the Arab junta, as well as the open attacks on Islamic symbols and cultural traditions. One such attack took place in Syria, in 1981, when Hafiz Assad, the father of the current president, sent his paramilitary forces to the streets of Damascus to force women to take off their headscarves.[1]

The Soviet Union eventually collapsed in the late 1980s, leading Fukuyama to declare the end of history and the triumph of liberal democracy as the United States won the cold war against Soviet communism. Yet two years later, Huntington surprised the academic world when he declared the end of hope in modernization's ability to plant the spirit of liberalism outside

the Western world and urged the West to end its faith in global convergence and focus instead on the coming clash of civilizations. The far-right and the anti-globalization forces took Huntington's thesis to heart, as it spoke to their fears and prejudices. Huntington's clash of civilizations thesis soon became the rallying cry of the neoconservatives and, most recently, of national populists who have invoked it frequently to explain international and local events, particularly violence committed by Islamist groups. The clash paradigm constructed by Huntington is disturbing not only because it forecloses the possibility of greater cooperation but also because it empowers extremist movements across the world. The clash paradigm represents an impulsive reaction by a decorated scholar who decided to bail out from the intellectual framework he embraced throughout his academic career. The arguments he makes are complex and reveal contingencies and raise questions that he never considered or asked. Why did liberal democracy fail to establish a foothold in Muslim societies? Did the United States pursue the right strategies in the Middle East, Africa, or South America to bring the populations in these regions closer to liberal democracy? Could liberal democracy take alternative forms, and pursue different paths, in non-Western societies? These are relevant and important questions in the debate about the future of globalization and the fate of liberal democracy that need to be asked, and we will address two of these questions in this chapter, leaving the third question to be tackled in subsequent chapters.

World order and the global threshold

The fall of the Soviet Union in 1989 emboldened the advocates of convergence theory that anticipated the emergence of a global culture, galvanized around the notions of democracy, open society, and free enterprise. Francis Fukuyama published in the same year his widely read and cited article, later expanded into a full-fledged book titled *The End of History and the Last Man*. The article-turned-book declared the end of the rivalry among competing political ideologies and the triumph of liberal democracy, announcing thereby the end of the search for alternative political ideologies. The formal dissolution of the communist system and the emergence of a democratic Russian Federation led to more intense discussions in political and academic circles about the nature of the emerging reality that replaced the cold war. This led to various formulations around the notion of "globalization." Globalization as an academic notion predates the end of the cold war but has become quite popular since the early 1990s, as its usage underscores the need for a new term to describe the expanding networks of social processes and new models of communication, collaboration, and exchange that brought greater integration among social, economic, and political actors. Along with the collapse of the Soviet Union came the liberation of Eastern Europe from totalitarian governments, the reunification of Germany, and the weakening of authoritarian regimes in South America and East Asia.

Fukuyama labored in *The End of History* to ground his arguments in Hegelian philosophy, which gave his thesis greater depth as he placed it firmly in world history. He did that partly by uncovering patterns of historical change and partly by grounding his arguments in Greek psychology. Before we turn to examine his arguments and their theoretical foundations, it might be useful to contemplate the significance of the historical moment that distinguishes our current sociopolitical conditions. Undoubtedly, the fall of the Soviet Union generated, for those who believe in freedom and accountable government, new optimism and excitement, as the end of the greatest totalitarian system accompanied the advent of new technologies, particularly in the field of digital communication that made information easily and freely accessible across the globe. The advancement in computing technology, the explosion in Internet use, the mushrooming of global TV networks, and the convergence of information technology in the smartphones and tablets, all reduced distances and brought people closer in ways never experienced before. The last decade of the twentieth century has also seen the expansion of world trade and the rise of China and the Asian Tigers: Hong Kong, Singapore, South Korea, and Taiwan. The economies of these East Asian and Southeast Asian countries were celebrated by neoliberal economists as miracles and as testaments for the wonders of neoliberalism.

Yet globalization cannot be explained purely by technological and economic developments, as we must consider the sociopolitical dynamics generated by the advocates of classical liberalism. Technological advancements and recent breakthroughs in communication and transportation technologies have been instrumental in bringing about the phenomenon we call globalization, but at the heart of this new experience lies international systems and worldwide networks that facilitate collaborations and exchanges among political, economic, and corporate actors. Globalization as we know it today is shaped by the development of international law and organizations, and advanced by optimistic political and intellectual visionaries, who believed in the power of global cooperation for improving the human condition. Globalization owes its ability to expand in the postcolonial world to international law and organizations that provide the infrastructure for economic and political cooperation. The call for building governing institutions to maintain world peace was first introduced by the United States at the conclusion of WWI and led to the foundation of the League of Nations. President Woodrow Wilson who led the efforts was rebuffed by the United States Congress and by the American public that was then wary of imperial politics. The United States was also instrumental in the second attempt to form an international governing body after WWII, as President Roosevelt announced the formation of the United Nations (UN) Organization in 1945. Globalization is rooted today in an elaborate international system that grew gradually around UN activities. This relatively brief international experience has successfully laid down the infrastructure for a burgeoning global governance, which we may perceive as "the sum of the many ways individuals and institutions, public and private,

manage their common affairs. It is a continuing process through which conflicting or diverse interests may be accommodated and cooperative action may be taken."[2] The word "governance" is key here as it distinguishes the evolving political structure that lies at the foundation of the emerging global order from a closely related and more familiar term, i.e. "government." Both government and governance refer to a system of rules administered by political agencies. However, while government involves activities undertaken and supervised by a formal authority, commanding law enforcement bodies to ensure compliance, "governance refers to activities backed by shared goals that may or may not derive from legal and formally prescribed responsibilities and that do not necessarily rely on police powers to overcome defiance and attain compliance."[3]

Global governance is a better term to describe the complex system of rules, agencies, and networks that coalesce to produce the international conditions that place us at the threshold of an emerging global order. At its most basic level, global governance includes the system of international norms shared by peoples who belong to different nations and cultures. The rules of international law, which grew out of treaties and agreements among the member-states of the UN, have created a system of soft law administered by a growing number of intergovernmental organizations (IGOs). By the turn of the twentieth century, over 3,666 multilateral new treaties were concluded, administered by a myriad of IGOs, including the United Nations Environment Program (UNEP), the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), the International Court of Justice (ICJ), the World Trade Organization (WTO), and International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), to name just a few. These organizations provide many services necessary for formulating and implementing decisions and policies made by the specialized bodies within the UN, including "information gathering and analytical functions, dispute settlement procedures, and operational capabilities for managing technical and development assistance programs, relief aid, and force deployments."[4]

One interesting aspect of the growing networks of organizations linked to global governance, that could potentially have a far-reaching impact on the emergence of a global civil society, relates to the formation of nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) that work along with IGOs. The number of NGOs has grown to more than 6,500, with considerable input and influence over the work of the international governmental organizations. Topping the list of internationally active NGOs are household names, such as Wikimedia Foundation, Partners in Health, Oxfam, BRAC, International Rescue Committee, PATH, CARE International, Médecins Sans Frontières, and Danish Refugee Council and Ushahidi. The institutions of global governance have no enforcement mechanism and rely completely on the voluntary agreements of member-states to abide by international treaties. However, many member-states find themselves unable to resist the benefits they could get by abiding by international rules. The existence of IGOs and NGOs dedicated to the

verification of compliance of established rules is helpful but far from being effective. There is still considerable amount of arbitrariness, unfairness, and inadequacy in the way global governance works. We will return to consider further this aspect of the current system of global governance, but, for now, it is important to point out that the system is in full sway as many states are eager to enjoy the benefits of direct capital investment and reduced tariffs and thus must submit to the WTO and, in turn, are subject to considerable fines or loss of membership if they fail to abide by the WTO rules. Similarly, the IAEA, set up to ensure that signatories to Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty and the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty, provides an incentive to states that voluntarily abide by the terms of treaties in the form of technical assistance programs to non-nuclear weapon countries for developing peaceful uses of nuclear energy.[5]

The myriad of institutions and organizations currently involved in the international system has evidently laid the foundation for global governance, but the ability of the system to grow into the framework necessary for the emergence of just global order remains in doubt. There are still many issues and challenges that need to be overcome with regards to public accountability of IGOs and NGOs, the accessibility to the international power structures, and the need for democratic processes and mechanisms for ensuring the fairness of global governance. Given the remarkable developments achieved over the past century, these challenges are not insurmountable, particularly if some of the stumbling blocks that divide humanity today are overcome and a more inclusive and tolerant culture committed to the principle of equal dignity of all peoples is promoted. Advancing global governance that brings a democratic order while ensuring high degree of autonomy for participants is highly desirable for world peace. Whether such a thing is possible is a wholly different matter and must be thoroughly examined. Engaging in intellectual debates on the global level and identifying possible paths toward the desired end are undoubtedly a part of the efforts to overcome the current conditions that make the international order subject to manipulation and abuse. The political idealism that set the foundation of international law and organizations has receded by the early 1980s, and institutions of global governance are increasingly controlled by neoliberalism, led by corporate power that has broken out of the control of the nation–states and is increasing its global networks and using its newly founded power to control the nation-state system. This is not exactly the international order that was envisioned when the UN was set in pursuit of global peace.

The triumph of liberal democracy

Many advocates of modern liberalism see in the drive toward free markets and democratic governments a clear evidence of the superiority of liberal democracy in comparison with all competing political ideologies. The newly founded liberal optimism was best articulated by Francis Fukuyama who

underscores, in *The End of History*, the ability of liberalism to outlive its main existential challenger: the Leninist-Marxist ideology. Drawing on Hegel's philosophy, Fukuyama outlines a clear vision of globalization, whereby future progress within the emerging global order can only lead to the consolidation of liberal democracy. Tracing the progress of liberal democracy over the past two centuries, Fukuyama sees the emerging order as one rooted in the Swiss, French, and American revolutions that paved the way to the formation of the early liberal democratic governments around 1790. He notes the constant increase in the number of societies that embraced the liberal democratic tradition from 3 in 1790, to 5 in 1848, to 13 in 1900, to 36 in 1960, to 61 in 1990. The pattern demonstrates a clear and unmistakable embrace of democratic governance over the past two centuries, reaffirming a "common evolutionary pattern for all human societies—in short, something like a Universal History of mankind in the direction of liberal democracy."[6] The failure of communism to mount a successful challenge to the liberal spirit should be seen, Fukuyama insists, as the vindication of the ideas of the liberal visionaries of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Indeed, Kant saw this moment coming three centuries ago as he argued that the "[h]istory of the world is none other than the progress of the consciousness of Freedom."[7]

The connection between human drive to freedom and the structure of world history, that Kant intuitively asserted, was later elucidated in the work of Hegel. Hegel believed that freedom was the outcome of a dialectical logic that governs world history. He argued that human progress is the result of social contradictions and the struggle to overcome them. The struggle produced profound changes in behaviors, institutions, and technologies. Social evolution and political change eventually led to the rise of liberal democracy where, for the first time, social contradictions, which form the motor of historical change, ceased to exist. With the disappearance of inner contradictions, humanity reaches the end of history with the advent of the liberal democratic state.[8] While social contradictions helped develop equal freedom in history, the advancement of science and rational thinking, the emergence of industrial societies, and the massive movement of rural populations to urban centers have expanded the realm of freedom and rationality across cultures and societies. "It is the demand for rationality that imposes uniformity on the social development of industrializing societies."[9] The application of scientific methods, the pursuit of economic development, the use of modern technology, and the implementation of rational organizations, have all served to bring uniformity to modern societies and, hence, bring about the convergence predicted by modernization theory.

On the surface, global expansion is shaped by economic dynamics, but the motor of historical change is rather psychological as it is rooted in "the struggle for recognition."[10] Drawing on Alexandre Kojeve's interpretation of Hegel, Fukuyama presents a somewhat complex conception to explain the psychological drive that underlines sociopolitical progress, namely "the

desire for recognition." The concept of "recognition" embodies three distinctive yet interrelated layers of meaning: the sense of *personal worth*, the quest for *glory*, and the drive for *equal dignity*. The sense of personal worth is an innate human quality associated with people's desire to be recognized, respected, and acknowledged. This innate sense of self-worth is manifested in the expectations people have that others treat them with dignity. People expect to be treated as end in themselves and not as object to be used by others. Individuals desire to be treated as autonomous persons and as worthy members of the community. When their dignity and self-worth is ignored, people respond with anger and indignation; when the individual fails to live up to his or her self-worth they experience shame; and when their self-worth is recognized they experience a moment of pride and self-esteem.[11] In early societies, when people lived in a state of nature prior to the development of the state of law, the struggle for recognition led people to compete for superiority and control. Dignity was then achieved by those who were willing to risk their lives to stay free and impose their will on others. Those who stayed alive after losing the battle, and feared to end their lives in violent death, were reduced to slavery. This was the beginning of lordship and bondage, and the rise of the society of masters and slaves that distinguished antiquity.[12] The drive toward the recognition of the superiority of those who were willing to risk it all for prestige was historically epitomized in the aristocratic society of antiquity, where people were divided between two classes: the aristocrats and the peasants. The struggle between these two classes eventually led to the rise of modern liberal democratic society.

Fukuyama finds in the master–slave dialectic proposed by Hegel a better explanation of historical change than the class struggle identified by Marx. Hegel placed "warrior ethos" at the center of social transformation from aristocratic to democratic Europe, affording the Hegelian conception of class stratification and struggle deeper insight than that of Marx. Many traditional aristocratic societies initially arose out of the "warrior ethos" of nomadic tribes who conquered more sedentary peoples through superior ruthlessness, cruelty, and bravery. After the initial conquest, the masters in subsequent generations divided the land into separate estates and assumed an economic relationship as landlords exacting taxes and tributes from the vast mass of peasantry slaves over whom they ruled.[13] In contrast to the warrior ethos that distinguished the aristocratic strata of society, the subjugated population whose survival depended on its ability to produce gradually developed work ethos, which proved to be much more powerful for reversing the power relationship with the aristocratic class, producing a power struggle that culminated in the liberal transformation and the birth of democracy. The working slaves found their recognition in work and production. As such, work proved to be a more important element for the evolution of humanity and the development of human society. Work, no less than freedom, is the essence of humanity and the motor of history, for it is "the working slave who creates human history by transforming the natural world into a world habitable by

man."[14] While the master class may successfully induce work among the slave population, forced labor alone is insufficient for the emergence of a "culture of work." Such culture presupposes "work ethic" which in the European case is the result of a particular work ethic, the "Protestant ethic." Fukuyama rejects the utilitarian basis of capitalism and embraces the Weberian argument that capitalism is an economic system grounded in the Protestant ethic that emerged with the Protestant reformation in the fifteenth-century Europe.

Weber argued that the development of capitalism was influenced by new religious consciousness brought about by religious reformers such as Luther and Calvin, whose religious teachings connected salvation to the worldly success in pursuing one's "calling," or one's career niche in society. The Protestant ethic that laid emphasis on "frugality, self-discipline, honesty, cleanliness, and aversion to simple pleasures" was at the root of the work culture that brought about industrialization and economic development in the modern world.[15] The puzzle of the passion for work exhibited by capitalist society can easily be explained by the this-worldly asceticism of Protestant religiosity. Fukuyama argues that the religious consciousness that induces capitalist entrepreneurship is not limited to Protestantism but can be found in other religions, including the *Jodo Shinshu* that informs Japanese work ethic.[16] Yet Fukuyama, following the example of Hegel, has ambivalent and conflicting views of the impact of Christianity on the evolution of liberal democracy. While acknowledging the contribution of Christianity to the promotion of human equality in modern times, he distinguishes between Christian and liberal sense of equality. Liberals understand human equality through the notion of equal rights, whereas Christians see human equality more in terms of the moral capacity that people equally share and the equal competence people have in making moral choices. In the same manner, Christianity recognizes human freedom but managed to reconcile human freedom with a life of slavery. Eventually Fukuyama agrees with Hegel that Christianity has the tendency to produce a servitude ideology.[17] Fukuyama's description of the Christian and the liberal attitudes toward the notion of equal dignity is evident in the main, but the distinction could be tricky and the categories of Christian and liberal are not necessarily mutually exclusive, particularly in the American settings.

Despite of its intellectual rigor and elaborate exposition of the founding ideas that ushered in the liberal tradition, Fukuyama seems to be uninterested in the reality of the liberal democratic order as it has been exercised and lived in the late twentieth century. Liberal ideas can eventually be assessed not in their theoretical arguments, but in their historical manifestations and the way they manifest themselves in actual society. Fukuyama is not interested, for example, in examining how liberal democracy is experienced in its economic exposition through the ideas and policies of neoliberalism. Throughout his book he seems completely oblivious to the impact of the neoliberal order on the populations of the countries that have embraced liberal democratic

government in one way or the other. Most notably, the book is completely silent on neoliberal policies that seem to increase economic disparity between developed and emerging economies, as well as within the developed economies of liberal democracies. We turn, therefore, to examine two sets of ideological systems rooted in the liberal tradition: classical liberalism and neoliberalism. The two systems are presented as subsets of the liberal tradition, but as we will see in the next two sections they represent two completely different approaches to political organization that diverge from the initial liberal impulse, with the neoliberal brand exhibiting the greatest divergence of all.

Neoliberalism and the perturbation of the liberal tradition

Neoliberalism has played a crucial role in the evolution of the global economic system that governs economic interactions throughout the globe. On its face value, neoliberalism is rooted in the American anti-statist attitude toward political power and the deep mistrust of concentration of power. It is grounded in the faith corporate leaders place in the superior capacity of the free market to self-regulate transactions among market agents in comparison to regulated markets by governmental agencies. Neoliberal economists have driven global economic policies in the past three decades. On closer examination, one can see neoliberalism has been able to break out from state control by dominating electoral politics and ensuring that the state is unable to regulate private enterprise. Neoliberal ideas and views dominate both academic and policymaking circles, as they insist that they alone have the right formula to grow the economy. The early steps that led to the rise of neoliberalism took place during the Bretton Woods Conference (New Hampshire, 1944) that culminated in the establishment of two powerful international economic organizations: the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank (WB). Three years later, the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT) was added to help shape and enforce multilateral trade agreements. GATT has been incorporated into the WTO that was founded in 1995.[18]

The dominant economic system today came to life in the wake of WWII, and continues to play a key role in opening national markets around the world to free trade, facilitating the movement of capital, and providing loans to developing countries when they agree to integrate their markets to global economy under IMF terms. By 2010,

> the total value of world trade exploded from $57 billion in 1947 to an astonishing $14.9 trillion in 2010. In that year, China, the world's leading manufacturer, was responsible for 11 per cent of global exports while the US, the world's most voracious consumer, accounted for 13 per cent of global imports.[19]

This staggering financial growth does not reflect, however, real growth, as much of it happened in "high-risk hedge funds" and future market dealings.[20] The IMF and World Bank play central role in the transformation of national economies and linking them to the global economic system. The secret of this success lies in the structural adjustment policies, a set of ten stipulations attached to loan offered by the World Bank and administered by the IMF.[21] Structural adjustments aim to curb budget deficits by reducing government spending and downsizing bureaucracy, reducing tax and tariffs, undertaking trade and financial liberalization, and other measures to stimulate direct investment and free exchange. The ten stipulations, otherwise known as the Washington Consensus, are applied uniformly to all countries requiring loans for economic development.

While stimulating trade, neoliberal policies came under criticism for effecting serious problems that threaten the global economy, most notably contributing to a staggering rise in public and private debts, and generating economic disparities and unequal global development. Global debt as of July 5, 2020, exceeds $61 trillion.[22] This amounts to 44% of global GDP, which approached $139 trillion as of July 5, 2020.[23] Economic inequality between rich and poor countries is enormous. Median income in countries like Burundi, Nigeria, Sudan, or Kazakhstan is less than 2% of that in rich countries like France, Switzerland, or Belgium.[24] Similarly, neoliberal policies are generating an environmental crisis. The degradation of world ecology as the air quality continues to degenerate as gas omission reaches a critical level. Uncontrolled air pollution threatens to increase global temperature and hence causing unrepairable damage to the global ecosystem. At the heart of the critique of neoliberalism is the controversial IMF's structural adjustments that seem to be tailored toward protecting the interests of the creditor nations at the expense of the economic development of debtor nations. IMF is accused of forcing reduction in public spending crucial for the development of human capital, thereby undermining the capacity of developing countries to achieve economic competitiveness. Neoliberal demands on smaller governments "inevitably lead to poorer performance in education and other programs that develop human capital."[25]

The lack of sensitivity to local needs was the subject of an extensive study by Cal and Evelyn Clark on the impact of structural adjustments policies in two countries, Chile and Taiwan. They found that the IMF's insistence on reduction of government spending across the board in Chile resulted in the deterioration of the overall economic conditions as the result of the reduction in education spending. Chile's compliance with the required reduction in government spending meant that the goal of allowing the country access to more capital conflicts with its ability to improving its social capital. In effect, the additional income that was made available by IMF's stipulations, intended to service Chile's outstanding national debt to international creditors, is achieved by forcing it to spend less on the education and health of its own citizens. IMF policies have had therefore devastating effects on Chile's

long-term prospects for real growth. Taiwan was able, on the other hand, to escape Chile's fate by ignoring the neoliberal ideology and sidestepping its tenets of deregulation and reduction in government spending:

> The major argument in this book is that Taiwan's export-led development strategy succeeded precisely because it discarded the ideology of neo-liberalism and unfettered laissez-faire. In particular, rapid industrialization in Taiwan could only occur because the government promoted a series of fundamental economic transformations during the post World War II era. In addition, radical land reform and mass education reduced inequality and created the human capital necessary for an industrial workforce and highly entrepreneurial business class. In sharp contrast, neoliberalism in Chile worked primarily to reinforce the economic position of the traditional economic elites; indeed, it actually undercut the economic position.[26]

This assessment of the neoliberal policies has been shared by a growing literature that focused on the human toll of structural adjustments and their long-term impact. There is a growing sense that neoliberalism does not only undercut the long-term economic growth of countries that come under their influence but that it also undermines the very principles of democracy and liberty. Neoliberalism, the argument goes, threatens the "livelihoods, social cohesion and environmental conditions" of societies subjected to its philosophical outlook.[27]

Neoliberal policies tend to create unequal development and growth not only among nations but also within societies where it prevails. This can be seen in both India and China. Both countries have experienced, ever since they embraced neoliberal remedies, disparity of income among their populations. Growth in China is taking place mainly in the commercial and industrial centers of Shanghai, Shenzhen, Qingdao, Guangzhou, and Tianjin. Similarly, India has experienced enormous development in financial and industrial growth in few cities, such as Bangalore, Chennai, and Kolkata. While growth in financial and industrial centers has produced an enormous wealth, only small segments of highly educated and well-connected individuals benefit from the newly founded economic transformation. The rest of the population are growing poorer with less control over their immediate environment and life.[28] The corrupting impact of neoliberalism is not limited to splitting the populations into haves and have-nots; it is increasingly reaching to NGOs that emerged initially to repair the damage caused by financially focused governance and to challenge the neoliberal approach responsible for social, educational, and ecological damage. NGOs, particularly in developing countries, are susceptible to the influence of neoliberal elites running the government and the economy, as they need funds to run their operation. NGOs are increasingly drawn into the neoliberalism orbit, and some have even been charged as becoming "the 'rolling out' of neo-liberalism."[29]

The adverse consequences of the unequal development of national econ-
omies of developing nations can be observed in the rise in the number of
immigrants who leave the crumbling economies of their home countries to
more advanced economies, as they flee the increasingly suffocating socio-
economic conditions in the countries of the South. This South-to-North
migration can only be understood in light of internal dynamics created by
unequal economic conditions stemming from neoliberal policies. Increased
migration is the unintended consequence of the one-size-fits-all IMF poli-
cies that entail high cost for working classes in countries of the South. A study
of the impact of neoliberal recipe for economic growth has shown steady
increase in unemployment in countries that adopt such policies promoted by
IMF. The initial high growth in GDP experienced by Ghana and Poland as
a result of implementing IMF requirements in the 1990s was associated with
rise of unemployment, as internationally supported enterprises paralyzed lo-
cal ones. After the initial 5% rate of GDP growth in the 1990s, Poland's GDP
growth fell to 1.2% by 2002, reducing the annual per capita income to less
than $5,000. This pattern is also replicated in Ghana in the 1980s and 1990s,
as the sharp increase in in GDP was followed by reduction in growth, as
"two-third of the country's parastatal enterprises and significant reductions
in its civil service."[30] Both countries experienced rapid outmigration of their
skilled labor force, which in turn led to the degradation of their socioeco-
nomic conditions.

Neoliberal policies raise serious questions about the locus of liberalism in
the neoliberal approach to society and the economy. Neoliberalism is overly
concerned with creating free markets that work well for the sustained growth
of capital, with little regards given to the well-being of current and future
societies. The freedom of movement is guaranteed to capital but not to labor.
The only exception is reserved to skilled labor, as immigration and naturali-
zation policies in many advanced economies favor highly educated segments
of the populations of the developing South. Furthermore, in examining the
direction of neoliberal policies one starts to see convergence between neo-
liberalism and political realism. An increased concern with power and will-
ingness to tolerate rising inequalities within local populations and among
nation-states are evident. The convergence between neoliberalism and neo-
realism is observed in two Arab countries in a recent study by Nadine Kreit-
meyr. In a paper published in 2018 under the title "Neoliberal Co-optation
and Authoritarian Renewal," she charged that several neoliberal organiza-
tions have been engaged, for almost two decades, in nurturing

> social entrepreneurship networks (SENs), composed of social entrepre-
> neurs, business and political elites, and international actors in the MENA
> region. The paper analyzes how the local actors in SENs actually "join
> up and foster the renewal of authoritarianism via neoliberal means."[31]

The paper focuses on Jordanian and Moroccan social entrepreneurship net-
works (SENs), illustrating the efforts to align SENs with the political agendas

of authoritarian regimes. Drawing on the findings of growing literature that covers the activities of SENs in the Middle East/North Africa (MENA) region and South America, she documents the efforts of transnational organizations, including Ashoka (United States), Synergos (United States), the Schwab Foundation (Switzerland), and the Skoll Foundation (United Kingdom), to groom authoritarian elites in Morocco and Jordan "to respond aggressively to the triple threat of globalization, markets, and democratization."[32]

What is different about the types of support offered by these neoliberal organizations relates to the selective nature of the networks of entrepreneurs and political elites, the closed and long-term membership of the operators within those networks, and their connectedness to authoritarian state power:

> Analysis of these international organizations shows that they differ from other types of support organizations with regard to the types of linkages they have with social enterprises and entrepreneurs. They provide a combination of financial support, advice and skill development through fellowships and awards. They cultivate novel types of relations and are based on a selection process that includes personal recommendations or nominations, documentation, interviews and field visits. Although the terms of these fellowships and awards vary from support organization to support organization (e.g. duration, selection process, extent of support), they share several commonalities. Instead of merely applying for and receiving project grants, social entrepreneurs get stipends for a specific period of time (2–3 years) or a cash prize and become fellows for life who can attend meetings and training sessions.[33]

Neoliberalism is evidently committed, in this rapidly globalizing world, to foster anti-liberal and anti-democratic forces in the MENA region. It is practically engaged in social engineering whose likely outcome is the perpetuation of the very social hierarchy that liberalism emerged to dismantle. Rather than advancing the liberal tradition that laid emphasis on equal opportunities for all people and the conformation to a form of government that represents the citizenry and protects their civil and human rights, neoliberalism has developed into an elitist platform concerned with the perpetuation of political and economic privileges of global elites that have undergone a gradual transformation from striving for human liberation to aiming at political domination. Neoliberalism appears increasingly as the amalgamation of international liberalism with neorealism. Traditionally, the egalitarian and optimistic inclination of liberalism stands in complete contrast to the power-centered and pessimistic ideas propagated by neorealism. This divergence seems to change with the recent mutations in the two significantly antagonistic doctrines. However, as the international system approached the global threshold, and with the realist's abandoning of the principle of national sovereignty as the locus of power, it started to embrace a new approach that seems in tune with neoliberal thinking. For the neorealists, sovereignty is still attached to the state, but not all states. Only states that enjoy "national decision-makers as

rationally pursuing a pluralist world order based on 'sovereign' states which are strong in terms of independent legal authority and hard power" are entitled to the privilege of sovereignty.[34]

There is a general agreement within the international relations studies that neoliberalism and neorealism, while they defer significantly on the level of macro-theory, share more nuanced approach to international politics, shaped by constructivism that brings them closer at the level of policymaking.[35] They both share an epistemology firmly rooted in rational positivism,[36] as they stand in dichotomy with rational idealism that guides the advocate of liberalism. They also share the paradigm of the anarchic international order. The difference is that neoliberals, while agreeing that the international system lacks an overarching authority, have greater optimism in the capacity of states to engage in economic cooperation rather than being occupied, as the realist would have it, in a constant state of antagonism and war. What is of interest for understanding the manipulative environment created by the neoliberal–neorealist paradigm is the rejection of any ethical foundation for human interaction in matters of politics. This rejection leads them to treat the rules defining international relations from a constructivist perspective rooted in Hugo Grotius's understanding of interstate relations.[37] The rules that define international relations are not based on international law or norms. Rather, they are rules of the game nations play. Contrary to classical liberals, neoliberals and neorealists do not recognize that the interaction between nations produces international norms worthy of affirmation as the rules of international law. From the constructivist perspective embraced by the neorealist–neoliberalist paradigm, no "tacit rule or norm is socially destructive."[38] Consequently, it is not international norms, human rights, or any other sets of shared values that matter, but rather the identity and rational thinking of the decision-makers. And while neoliberal and neorealist diverge in their evaluation of the institutional context of decision-making (the realists being keen to give more deference to the national structure of authority, whereas the neoliberal locates it in the international structure), they converge in those situations where national social structures align with international social structures.[39] This is a disturbing frame of reference for any attempt to develop world peace, but it is equally important for contemplating the source of unscrupulous foreign policy actions taken by Western democracies on the world stage. The paradigm also raises concerns about the disruptive impact of neoliberalism on global politics.

The clash of civilizations and the arrival of identity politics

The optimism we encountered in Fukuyama's account of a world converging toward liberal democratic order was utterly rejected by Samuel Huntington, who published in 1993 his controversial article "The Clash of Civilizations" in *The Foreign Affairs* journal. The article begins by asserting that the source

of all future international conflicts would be cultural rather than ideological. No more will conflicts take place among states that collide because of clash of ideas and interests, "but between nations and groups of different civilizations. The clash of civilizations will dominate global politics. The fault lines between civilizations will be the battle lines of the future."[40] These dramatic and shocking conclusions seemed completely out of place and uncalled for, as they profoundly contradicted the dominant thinking in academia and international politics. But what appeared to be weird fragments of thought became in less than two decades the defining moment and the idea that was celebrated by radical voices throughout the world. Perhaps the most sticking part of Huntington's argument lies in his use of the notion of civilization. The notion was made into a full-fledged concept in the works of Oswald Spengler and Arnold Toynbee few decades earlier. Both made a clear distinction between culture and civilization and established a dynamic relationship between the two. Huntington, on the other hand, makes no significant distinction between culture and civilization, as he presents the difference in terms of geographic expansion. "Civilization and culture both refer to the overall way of life of a people," he argues. "They both involve the 'values, norms, institutions, and modes of thinking to which successive generations in a given society have attached primary importance.'"[41] The main difference is in size, as "a civilization is a culture writ large."[42] As such, a civilization is the largest unit of cultural unity in which different societies, states, and cultures share common values and worldviews. Moreover, civilizations are "mortal" as they persist over generations and can survive "political, social, economic, even ideological upheavals."[43]

Huntington identifies seven major civilizations that are likely to clash with Western civilization, with varying degrees of severity: Sinic, Japanese, Hindu, Islamic, Orthodox, and Latin American.[44] He dismisses the idea of a universal world civilization, opting more toward the idea of a perpetual rivalry and competition among civilizations.[45] His dismissal of universal world civilization is not complete, as he seems to recognize that the return to the rivalry among the seven major civilizations is the result of the decline of Western powers and the demise of unidirectional impact of Western civilization. The decline of Western civilization, therefore, marks a transition from a phase whereby the West was dominant to a new phase of "intense, sustained, and multidirectional interactions among all civilizations."[46] The impact of the West on other civilizations represents the triumph of political ideology over religion. Huntington argues that Western civilization, unlike previous civilizations, produced no major religion. Instead, it gave rise to myriad of political ideologies. He asserts that the great political ideologies of the twentieth century, including "liberalism, socialism, anarchism, fascism, and Christian democracy," were all the "products of Western civilization."[47] The decline of the West will therefore have a monumental impact on the nature of world conflicts, transforming them from intra-civilizational clashes among political ideologies to inter-civilizational clashes among cultures and religions.

Huntington realizes that globalization has brought many societies closer to one another, creating common values and understandings, but he dismisses the increase of cultural affinity as a sort of "Davos Culture" whose impact is limited among power elites. "Davos culture," as important as it is, would not suffice to create a universal culture. "Worldwide, however, how many people share this culture?" Huntington asks. "Outside the West, it is probably shared by less than 50 million people or one percent of the world's population," he retorts. Apart from the relatively small number of people around the world who share common culture, this group of people are not in a position to promote this shared culture, he insists, because these leaders "do not necessarily have secure grip on power in their own societies." Huntington examines at length the prospects for "universal civilization" only to deny the possibility of such eventuality. He contends that the similarities produced by the expansion of Western values, institutions, and cultures are quite superficial, limited almost to the food and entertainment industries. "The essence of Western civilization is the Magna Carta, not the Magna Mac. The fact non-Westerners may bite on the latter has no implications for their accepting of the former."[48]

Westernization, Huntington insists, is not working because the modernization process is producing alternative advanced cultures instead of unifying diverse world cultures in the Western mold. As modernization advances outside the West, it tends to revive indigenous cultures of the non-Western societies and eventually results in the de-Westernization of non-Western societies. "Modernization then alters the civilizational balance of power between the West and the non-Western society and strengthens commitment to the indigenous culture."[49] For Huntington, the problem is not simply that the forces of globalization, which have expanded the process of modernization beyond Western societies, are failing in creating world civilization and universal culture. Rather, modernization has contributed to the decline of the West, relative to non-Western civilizations, and has created a lash back against Western hegemony.

> The non-Wests see as Western what the West sees as universal. What Westerners herald as benign global integration, such as proliferation of worldwide media, non-Westerners denounce as nefarious Western imperialism. To the extent that non-Westerners see the world as one, they see it as a threat.[50]

Huntington spent much of his academic life before writing his influential work, "the Clash of Civilizations," celebrating the convergence of world cultures into modern democracy and heralding the coming of democratic rule to developing societies. His sudden turnabout came as a big surprise. It is not clear what brought his remarkable departure from his early line of thinking, but his new stance on political development is astounding. Convergence of world cultures is not possible because, as he puts it, it presupposes the

emergence of universal culture or civilization, while recent history shows no evidence of that. More specifically, the two main conditions necessary to bring about universal convergence, namely the emergence of universal language and universal religion, are far from being at hand.[51] Huntington's disillusionment with democracy and the spread of democratic culture is due largely to the very fact that democratic consciousness no more does inspire non-Western cultures to wholeheartedly embrace Western culture. To the contrary, democratization is increasingly affirming local cultures and religions, rather than Western culture and religions.

> In the 1960s and 1970s Westernized and pro-Western governments in developing countries were threatened by coups and revolutions; in the 1980s and 1990s they are increasingly in danger of being ousted by elections. Democratization conflicts with Westernization, and democracy is inherently a parochializing not a cosmo-politanizing process. Politicians in non-Western societies do not win elections by demonstrating how Western they are. Electoral competition instead stimulates them to fashion what they believe will be the most popular appeal, and those are usually ethnic, nationalistic, and religious in character.[52]

It is not difficult to see in the worldview of Huntington that none of us is safe unless we live in a world that has completely converged into a single global culture. But is this really what we need to establish world peace? Do we have to do away with all religions and embrace one secular creed to survive? Must we engage in global wars because we do not share one global culture? These questions do not come up in any of Huntington's writings precisely because he is convinced that the answer to them is in the affirmative. World history shows that this is not true. The Persian, Roman, and Islamic civilizations flourished over long periods of time while showing openness to diversity and nurturing multi-ethnic, multi-religious, and multi-cultural civilizations. And they flourished, as we will see later, not despite of the diversity of their civilizations but because of it. Huntington's insistence on cultural uniformity as the only way to achieve global peace can only be explained from within the limited horizons that he considers for coming to his conclusion and underscores the importance of broadening those horizons beyond the Enlightenment. Huntington recognizes that the religious resurgence of the late twentieth century is provoked by the very nature of the modernization process itself. For the resurgence of religious consciousness is indeed a "reaction against secularism, moral relativism, and self-indulgence, and a reaffirmation of the values of order, discipline, work, mutual help, and human solidarity."[53] Religious resurgence was also prompted by the failure of state bureaucracy to respond to the social needs of society; "the provision of medical and hospital services, kindergartens and schools, care for the elderly," he contends, "prompt relief after natural and other catastrophes, and welfare and social support during periods of economic deprivation."[54]

Although Huntington regards all religious resurgence movements as anti-secular, anti-universal, and anti-Western, he seems to be particularly alarmed by Islamic resurgence. Islam poses serious challenge to the West, he contends, because its cultural, social, and political resurgence exhibits an evident "rejection of Western values and institutions."[55] In Muslim societies "Islamic fundamentalist groups in the few elections that have occurred" have succeeded in mobilizing society "against Western-educated and Western-oriented elites."[56] The challenge lies though in the fact that Islamic resurgence is not limited to fundamentalist and extremist groups, but is more pervasive, encompassing broad intellectual, cultural, social, and political movements prevalent throughout the Islamic world.[57] Huntington devotes a good deal of discussion to the relationship between Islamic and Western civilizations. It is obvious that he sees a monumental collision between Islam and the West in the making, a collision that is much more serious than the skirmishes currently taking place with Islamic militants across the globe. An important ingredient for his pessimistic view of the Islam–West relations comes from the extended historical conflict between Islam and Christianity that, he believes, dwarfs the contemporary conflict between liberal democracies and the communist block throughout the cold war.[58] In portraying the evolving relationship between Islam and the West, he seems to lean more toward the views advanced by Western Orientalists such as Bernard Lewis and Michael Walzer—that the Islamic attitude toward the West is intrinsically antagonistic and completely irrational.[59] He is quick to dismiss any critique coming from the Muslim world regarding Western practices in the Muslim world as hostile, as he did with Fatima Mernissi's work, *Islam and Democracy*. The fact that Mernissi was equally critical of views and practices rooted in modern Islam does not matter in the face of her criticism of the exploitative practices by the West toward Muslim society, subsuming these practices under a label commonly used in social sciences such as "militaristic," "imperialistic," and "colonial terror."[60]

Nor does it matter that Western policies and practices toward Muslims have led to the very antagonism that unsettles Huntington. More concerning though is Huntington's resentment of a Muslim scholar for being critical of Western imperialism and considering such critical views a justification for switching from cooperation to conflict, from convergence to clash. Religious resurgence and reaffirmation of religious identity transform, Huntington is now convinced, the nature of conflicts from ones that take place among ideological states to ones that occur among civilizations. The new wars do not set states against one another, but pit civilizations against each other. According to Huntington, Western civilization, dominated by Catholicism and Protestantism, has three major rivaling civilizations: the Orthodox, the Confucian, and the Islamic. Russia, China, and Muslim countries pose the future threat to Western civilization, but none among them is more threating than those countries that have experienced Islamic resurgence. This is because the global political shift constantly creates new fault lines that run at the fuzzy borders

of the seven major civilizations, and the most dangerous are those that deline-
ate the borders of the Islamic civilization. In a section titled "Islam's Bloody
Borders" Huntington has the following to say about the emerging fault lines:

> The overwhelming majority of fault line conflicts, however, have taken
> place along the boundary looping across Eurasia and Africa that separates
> Muslims from non-Muslims. While at the macro or global level of world
> politics the primary clash of civilizations is between the West and the
> rest, at the micro or local level it is between Islam and the others.[61]

To explain the reasons behind Islam's bloody borders, Huntington points to
three factors: (1) Islamic militarism and the fighting spirit of Islam, (2) the
"indigestibility" of Muslims and their refusal to dissolve in other religious
communities, and (3) their proximity to non-Muslim groups as they move
into territories inhabited by people of other faiths.[62]

Huntington dismisses as irrelevant the argument that "Western imperial-
ism and the subjugation of Muslim societies in the nineteenth and twentieth
centuries produced an image of Muslim military and economic weakness and
hence encourages non-Islamic groups to view Muslims as an attractive tar-
get."[63] He however rejects this argument as an unconvincing cry of "Muslim
victimization" that does not explain "conflicts between Muslim majorities
and non-Muslim minorities in countries such as Sudan, Egypt, Iran, and
Indonesia."[64] The division of the world into separate civilizations was not
intended as a tool to make sense of the various cultures and their historical
grounding in the premodern age; rather, it was used as a tool to build thick
boundaries and declare an open war across civilizations. I will not attempt
to examine here the grounds of Huntington's notion of civilization and will
postpone its full examination to Chapter 2. Instead, I will explore the affinity
of the civilizational clash he advocates to political realism and to his defense
of white American culture. The ground of the radical shift in thinking about
international relations is brought to the fore in the last book he published in
2004 under the title *Who Are We?* In responding to this question, Hunting-
ton abandoned the idea that America is built by immigrants from the four
corners of the world, who are united in the American creed built around the
country's founding ideas of liberty, equality, individualism, democracy, and
constitutionalism. For him, those ideas do not provide the full story, as they
all constitute only one dimension of the American identity, the political di-
mension. Before the United States was built by "immigrants" it was founded
by "settlers," who shared four additional characteristics that are central to the
American identity: race, ethnicity, culture, and religion.[65] With the Amer-
ican identity defined in those piercing terms, Huntington opened fire on
multiculturalism, declaring the process of evolving more inclusive Ameri-
can culture as betrayal of the Eurocentric essence of the American culture.
Multiculturalism is, he proclaimed, an anti-Western ideology.[66] Huntington
protested that immigrants from Latin America and Muslim countries were

not keen to assimilate but that the metaphor of the "melting pot" as the path of immigrants to get integrated in American society is replaced by that of the "tossed salad." This new reality posed a threat for Huntington since the Latin American and Muslim cultures were inferior to the European culture.[67]

Huntington's assertion that culture and religion are intrinsic to the American identity is preposterous as both comprised of a complex set of beliefs and values specific to the early settlers. The argument in support of the universality of a Protestant culture is Eurocentric at best, as the most sympathetic explication of such claim is to affirm that non-European Americans are incapable of generating authentic and moral expression on their own. This is an astonishing conclusion, given the fact that Huntington wants to define the universal in cultural and religious terms. In what sense can the historically bound European experience be described as universal? The irony of the above sentiments aside, the question we need to ask is, how could anyone declare his particular culture, rather than a set of universal values, the criterion for judging other actual and potential forms of social consciousness and organization? And whence can we find it acceptable to close human horizons and deny other cultures the potential to take humanity to higher grounds? The absurdity of Huntington's thesis cannot be shoved aside, as it speaks to the convictions of a significant segment of society, who have for decades been inhibited to share their preposterous thoughts with the world but do now feel empowered by the arguments of a leading public intellectual. Nor can we overlook the assumption made by Fukuyama that liberalism is the system that governs the Western society or is truly leading the globalization process in the late twentieth or early twenty-first centuries. Exploring the theoretical foundation for Fukuyama's contention of the end of history and examining the inevitability of the clash of civilizations will be the main focus of Chapter 2. I would like in the remainder of this chapter to locate the origin of the ongoing hostility toward Muslims, and the demonization of Islam, in the broader framework of political realism, which has cleverly and successfully transposed the imperialist impulse of old Europe to post-WWII American foreign policy.

Political realism and the drift toward imperialism

Political realism emerged in the United States after WWII, with the arrival of European emigres, most notably Hans Morgenthau, George Liska, Nicholas Spykman, and Henry Kissinger.[68] Before the emergence of realism, it was generally accepted that classical liberalism dominated political discourse. This was Louis Hartz's main thesis in his widely read and acclaimed work, *National Liberalism*, published in 1955. For many American thinkers of the time, realism's pessimism and its saturation with power seemed at odd with the optimism of the American liberal tradition and its forward-looking outlook, as well as its deep faith in human progress. Realism's frame of reference seemed more in tune with "European-formed" thinking.[69] Commenting on

George Kannon's realism, David Mayers underscores the pessimistic views of human nature that he shared with the leading scholars of international theorists, particularly those upheld by "Reinhold Niebuhr, Hans Morgenthau, and Henry Kissinger."[70] Gradually however, realism found place in the hallways of American power and became the favored outlook of American bureaucrats serving in the state department and foreign missions and has most recently metamorphosed into its more current form—namely, neorealism. The realist framework became the weapon of choice for the diplomatic game, ready to be deployed whenever the political leaders of developing countries adopted a policy or a political position contrary to perceived Western interests. Liberal and democratic concerns were not completely abandoned, and talk of human rights never ceased, but they were apparently considered secondary to national interests as defined by those who were in charge of foreign policy at the time. We do know that realism advocates see politics as a game to be played on rules specific to the case at hand, but we do not have sufficient database to judge the extent to which this game has been played in the Middle East and other countries of the South. What we know, however, that it was indeed played countless times to bring down legitimately elected governments in Africa, the Middle East, and South America, and that three of them took place in the Middle East against countries that never recovered from the disruptive impact of the realist interventions.

Ever since Middle Eastern countries achieved independence from European colonialism, successive American administrations have resorted to security agencies who have used both overt and covert operations to ensure that Middle Eastern countries are governed by pro-American elites, even if that meant that they would be ruled by political elites who act in the most illiberal and undemocratic fashion. There are widely accepted rumors by Middle Eastern people that the United States and European countries secretly manipulate their rulers and give them all the support they need to suppress their populations and keep them in check. But these are just "rumors" that lack a clear evidence to support. For sure many of the rumors do rise to the level of conspiracy theories intended to lift the responsibility for missteps taken by local leaders and place them at the feet of former colonial powers. Yet what is difficult to deflect as rumors are few cases we are more certain about, as they are supported by concrete and plausible evidence, that show that the Pentagon and other U.S. intelligence and security agencies have been employed to compromise military generals and use them to undermine genuine democratic processes in pursuit of real or perceived American economic or geopolitical interests. These subversive interventions persisted through both liberal and conservative administrations.

The Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) has been involved, since its inception in 1947, in missions that aim at supporting strong dictators as long as they remain committed to advancing American objectives in the region. The most publicized CIA operations in the Middle East took place against democratically elected governments and in support of two dictators. Both

were undertaken in the name of modernizing and secularizing the Middle East. Syria and Iran are today under sectarian governments that have become the breeding ground for violent extremism. The first military coup d'état against an elected government took place in Syria in 1949. Steven Meade, a WWII veteran and CIA officer, was tasked to help a Syrian colonel—Husni al-Za'im—to plan and execute a coup against the government of Shukri al-Quwatli, the first president to be elected after Syria achieved independence from France in 1947. Meade, who officially served as a military attaché in the American diplomatic mission in Damascus, worked under Miles Copeland Jr. who was in charge of CIA operation in Syria and who later worked with Kim Roosevelt to plan and execute Operation Ajax, the 1953 coup d'état against then prime minister of Iran, Mohammad Mosaddegh.[71] The details of this operation is well documented in Meade's memoir and several other books authored by Copeland with detailed accounts of covert operations conducted by the CIA in the Middle East. Although the official accounts of his operations were mired in controversy, Copeland's account of the CIA's involvement in the coup has been collaborated by Deane R. Hinton, a junior political officer in the U.S. legation to Syria. According to Copeland account, in his 1969 book *The Games of Nations*, one could only conclude "that Za'im's coup plan was a CIA operation from start to finish."[72] Although Meade later walked back from his early account, his role in orchestrating the coup was confirmed by Deane Hinton, who later "went on record stating that Copeland and Meade had indeed conspired with Za'im."[73] Testimonies of individuals involved in the coup also reveal that Za'im was aware of the need to support American priorities in exchange for the support of the United States, as he made his intentions clear to his CIA handlers. Evidently, the CIA's support of Za'im was provided in exchange for two strategic interests: ratification of oil pipeline project and reversing the Syrian government's position of supporting the Palestinians and opposing the recently established state of Israel. Indeed, in the 113 days he was the absolute ruler of Syria, he moved on to "ratify the much-delayed TAPline concession (delighting ARAMCO's James Terry Duce and Bill Eddy in Washington)."[74] Similarly, shortly after assuming power, he "announced his plans to improve Syrian relations with both Turkey and Israel," and expressed his willingness to resettle a quarter of a million Palestinian refugees in Syria and even meet personally with the Israeli prime minister, David Ben-Gurion.[75] He, indeed, directed his prime minister Muhsin al-Barazi to begin secret negotiations with the Ben-Gurion Office, and the announcement of the meeting was in the working when he was toppled by another coup masterminded by another military officer and he was executed shortly thereafter.

What is of significance to our examination of political realism is the attitude and thinking behind those operations in which Meade himself was a key player. The attitude was revealed by a key player in the Middle East, Kermit Roosevelt, the nephew of President Franklin Roosevelt who oversaw another military coup against a duly elected government in Iran in 1953 that brought

the government of Mosaddegh down. While ostensibly providing support to democracy in the Arab world, he had the following to say about Arab democracy. Hugh Wilford, the historian who documented the CIA's operations in the Middle East, reflects on Roosevelt's justifications of his subversive actions of democratically elected governments by noting:

> American democracy was, he now pointed out, the product of a specific set of historical conditions that were not necessarily present in the modern Arab world, while the position of the Young Effendis had been severely compromised by recent events. In these circumstances, such universal human values as "dignity, decency, and individual liberty" might stand a better chance of being defended by a form of government other than "a self-styled 'democracy,'" even if that meant the United States supporting autocracies. "To favor democracy and oppose imperialism," Kim concluded, ominously, "cannot … entirely do away with the hard fact that empires have existed and, though abbreviated, still do exist."[76]

Given Roosevelt's conviction, the 1949 coup become, according to Copeland, a standard reference point for future operations in the countries of the South and was "studied in CIA training classes for the next two decades."[77] The modus operandi used in Syria was reportedly repeated in Egypt, as Kim Roosevelt was tasked in 1951 by then CIA director Allen Dulles to support a coup against King Farouk if he refused to undertake reform demanded by the United States. Roosevelt developed a friendship with Gamal Abdul Nasser, who led in 1952 a military coup, along with the group of young Egyptian military officers, that ended the constitutional monarchy rule and established a republic that was ruled by an iron-fist dictatorship.[78] The details of Nasser's collaboration with the CIA are sketchy, but the coup in Egypt was a replica of the one undertaken in Syria in 1949, though Nasser was more shrewd a leader than Za'im of Syria, and proved later that he could not be owned completely by his American handlers.

   These forms of clandestine interventions provide us with perfect examples of subordinating the advancement of liberty and democracy in favor of special economic and geostrategic interests, promoted by successive Western governments since WWII. Half a century later, the realist insistence on micromanaging the Middle East has gradually turned the Middle East into a region of failed states, in the case of Lebanon, Syria, Iraq, Yemen, and Libya, and into hostile and resentful states, particularly in Iran and Turkey. The games played in the Middle East to advance corporate interests and colonial control were later played in Latin America and have been supported by both Democratic and Republican administrations. Realist "games" are not only creating great miseries for countries that have been subjected to an arbitrary and inconsistent foreign policy approach; they are also increasingly affecting Western democracies, with the influx of refugees from the South nations to the North and do increasingly threaten to undermine liberal democracy in

the North. The game theory approach has crept into the United States and can be observed in the way American elites attempt to use undemocratic and illiberal methods to deal with a multicultural society that characterizes the West today and with the influx of refugees from countries in an increasingly impoverished South. The Middle East has been drifting toward a state of anarchy and turmoil as the result of haphazard "game play" operations. Dealing with the Middle East as a theater of games-of-nations never ceased, as the United States and Europe continue to support right-wing Israeli governments that insist on suffocating the native populations within cantons in the occupied territories, and justify holding Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza under the conditions of colonial rule, undercutting the very possibilities of realizing liberal democracy and privileging nationalism and religious exclusivism. In many ways, the outcome of the realist approach has been simply the short exchange of advancing democracy with promoting imperialism in the name of short-term national interests, dealing a serious blow to the declared goal of advancing a liberal democratic world order.

Given the essential analytical concepts of neorealism, the clash-of-civilizations paradigm introduced by Huntington embraces the main neorealist tenets: anarchy, hierarchy, power, national interest, and pessimism (incorrigibility). While he does not seem to believe that the international order is chaotic, his analysis reveals an attitude toward the globalizing older that borders on anarchy. He has lost his faith in the possibility of globalization leading to a cooperative world, despite the many signs that point in that direction. China as a rivaling power might have been an element in his new worldview, but more so is the resurgence of Islamic identity. His solution to the diversity of the world is not based on negotiation and communitive action, or on advancing a middle ground; rather, it centers around the use of power and force. Yet, aside from power politics among states, the account provided by Huntington and Fukuyama of the nature of Islamic assertiveness and Muslims' relationships with, and attitudes toward, the West is simplistic and misinformed. It lacks contextualization and proportionality. Fukuyama's summary evolution of the role of Islam seen through the fundamentalist prism is benign but could not see the forest for the trees. Fundamentalism is indeed an outburst of a larger problem, partially a sign of internal tensions within Muslim culture and partially a problem connected with autocratic governments and external pressures by Western powers to mold Middle Eastern societies in *modern* (read *European*) cultural forms. We will return to examine the path of modernization in Muslim societies in later chapters of this book—Chapters 7 and 8.

The West-backed dictators understand these contradictions and shrewdly represent themselves as the defenders of liberal values against reform movements, who they accuse of undermining freedom and free choice. Less appreciated is the fact that dictatorships have provided the breeding grounds for extremist movements. Rather than contributing to expanding liberal ethos, they are undermining freedom and distorting the

image of liberal democracy which they pretend to support by employing an iron-fist strategy toward opposition and critics. The surge of political Islam throughout the Muslim world is fueled by the presence of brutal and corrupt dictatorships, who fight efforts to hold them accountable by curtailing free speech and closing the political space in the name of fighting terrorism and extremism. This inconsistency between espousing liberal democratic values and the preference for dictatorial regimes that advance the narrowly defined national interests of established democracies is at the heart of global tensions and the rise of political extremism in many Middle Eastern countries. The failure of liberal democracies to be true to liberal values and the domination of antidemocratic values and practices by neoliberalism and neorealism should also be part of the political debate about future trajectory of globalization. The rise of economic disparity between the rich and the poor undermines liberal democracy; so does the selective use of economic and military power in responding to the plight of oppressed communities, as we saw in places such as Rwanda, Palestine, and, most recently, in Myanmar and Syria. The interconnectedness of societies, the advanced level of integration in capital and labor markets, and the emergence of sophisticated global governance have made limited impact in improving the quality of life in emerging economies and societies. Despite tremendous economic resources, a large number of people continue to experience abject poverty, and despite the development of international law and organizations, powerful nations continue to dominate and exploit less developed societies. Exploitation is often done in the name of advancing national interests of powerful nations, and justified by layers of theoretical frameworks, such as the dominant theories of political realism, which seriously undermine the efforts to develop a principled approach to international politics.

Islam's rejuvenation and disavowal

The liberal ethos of Western society balances out the amoral approach of political realism and has been able to overcome realist thinking on several occasions, most notably in Bosnia in the mid-1990s and in Kosovo a decade later. Yet liberalism has displayed ambiguity and indifference in supporting democratic transition in Arab and Muslim societies, evidently because democratic forces in Muslim societies have consistently appealed, with varying degrees, to Islamic ethos. This ambivalence is evident in Western response to popular struggle to end military dictatorship in Iran in the 1950s, Algeria in the 1990s, and most recently in Egypt and Syria after the popular uprisings better known as the Arab Spring. The main source of the ambivalence has to do with the Islamic ethos evident in these uprisings and the presence of small but vocal faction of religious extremists. The inconsistencies of the liberal democratic approach to emerging Muslim societies was recognized by Bernard Lewis, who was the first to describe Muslim revolt against Western

dominance as "a clash of civilizations." Lewis portrayed the clash of civilizations in striking terms (*The Roots of Islamic Rage*, 1990):

> It should by now be clear that we are facing a mood and a movement far transcending the level of issues and policies and the governments that pursue them. This is no less than a clash of civilizations—the perhaps irrational but surely historic reaction of an ancient rival against our Judeo-Christian heritage, our secular present, and the worldwide expansion of both. It is crucially important that we on our side should not be provoked into an equally historic but also equally irrational reaction against that rival.[79]

Lewis went on to assert that Western civilization has been guilty of imperialist practices, only to excuse those practices as falling in line with similar imperialist practices historically committed by the Ottoman, Mongol, and Arabs, and earlier civilizations.[80]

While intellectuals like Lewis and Huntington justify political realism in dealing with Muslim societies, Fukuyama sees the situation from a slightly different perspective. Fukuyama locates Islam among the competitors of liberal democracy.[81] He contends that Islam seems to be successful in overtaking liberal democracy in the Middle Eastern countries that experienced Islamic resurgence, but he insists that the appeal of Islam is limited to the very Muslim countries that have had this experience.

> The appeal of Islam is potentially universal, reaching out to all men as men, and not just to members of a particular ethnic or national group. And Islam has indeed defeated liberal democracy in many parts of the Islamic world, posing a grave threat to liberal practices even in countries where it has not achieved political power directly.… Despite the power demonstrated by Islam in its current revival, however, it remains the case that this religion has virtually no appeal outside those areas that were culturally Islamic to begins with.… Indeed, the Islamic world seem more vulnerable to liberal ideas in the long run than the reverse, since such liberalism has attracted numerous and powerful Muslim adherents over the past century and a half.[82]

Fukuyama's juxtaposition of Islam with liberal democracy reveals a deep misconception as to the relationship between faith and politics in Islam. He also seems oblivious to the role played by Muslim scholars and scientists in advancing the groundwork necessary for the emergence of liberal thought in Europe and the formation of modern outlook. Given the growing rift between the Christian and Muslim worlds, between the West and the East, it is imperative that this interconnectedness is revealed through a systematic examination of how Islam relates to modern society and to the very liberal tradition that is at the root of liberal democracy.

Similarly, Huntington in the *Clash of Civilizations* links the attitudes he ascribes to Muslims to the Islamic faith, asserting that the problem lies in Islam and not simply in certain groups or cultures within the global Muslim community. In an astounding sweeping generalization, Huntington writes, "The underlying problem for the West is not Islamic fundamentalism. It is Islam, a different civilization whose people are convinced of the superiority of their culture and are obsessed with the inferiority of their power."[83] Then he goes on to remove any fault from Western powers that have been managing the Muslim world for over a century, as he denies that the CIA or the U.S. Department of Defense have anything to do with the unfolding political tensions and the violent outbursts by fringe groups taking advantages of the missteps of U.S. foreign policy:

> The problem for Islam is not the CIA or the U.S. Department of Defense. It is the West, a different civilization whose people are convinced of the universality of their culture and believe that their superior, if declining, power imposes on them the obligation to extend that culture throughout the world. These are the basic ingredients that fuel conflict between Islam and the West.[84]

This astounding statement reverses completely the dynamics of the situation, so now the Muslims who have for all partial purposes embraced modern culture, and whose societies have all the imprints of the modern West, are the ones who reject the West as the bearer of universal values and not the West as a force possessed with domination and imposition. Evidently for Huntington, the expectation is that all cultures and societies are required to accept without any question or protest Western culture in all its details. The question is now how do we make sense of this serious misreading of the Islam-West relationship? Is it possible that the clash of civilizations anticipated by Lewis and Huntington is conditioned in the first place by clash of perceptions and a serious misreading of the conditions of the Islamic other? The attitude toward Islam as the other has a long history in European thought that could be traced back to the work of European Orientalism. This attitude was well exposed by Edward Said's *Orientalism*. Said's critique transformed the way Islam has been approached in the field of Islamic and cultural studies but did little to change the mind of scholars of international relations. Said points out to the impact of media coverage of Islam on general perception and attitude in his book, *Covering Islam*, and faults dishonest scholarship for the media's misrepresentation.[85] The book not only undertakes an extensive review of misrepresentations of Islam in Western media but also manages to identify examples from the work of international relations specialists. Evidently, the media takes its clues from intellectual and literary sources, and there are plenty of them to support prejudicial views of Islam that facilitate the misrepresentation and demonization crucial for every act of othering. On the other hand, Muslims have enough people in their ranks, particularly

at the religious extremes, who are more than willing to provide examples that feed into the narrative of Western detractors of Islam. Extremist voices in all religious communities have no problem to wear their values and faith on the outside but make little efforts to examine their own lives and actions in the light of the faith and values they proudly profess. The problem is exacerbated by the absence of meaningful channels of communication across cultures, to complement and check the official channels of diplomacy occupied and managed by the agents of political realism.

Meanwhile, those committed to deepen the divide out of either ignorance or malice are at work painting Islam and Muslims with one brush. There is no shortage of examples to illustrate the systemic efforts that aim at othering Muslims by demonizing their faith. We will review some of the more systematic and highly financed projects to undermine Muslim communities in the West in Chapters 8 and 9, but let us for now look briefly at the campaign led by Geert Wilder, the Netherlander MP who leads the Party of Freedom, and whose main agenda has been to discredit Islam and marginalize European Muslims in the name of freedom. Wilders has campaigned to stop what he views as the "Islamization of the Netherlands."[86] He has compared the Qur'an to Hitler's *Mein Kampf* and has campaigned to have the Muslim sacred book banned in the Netherlands.[87] He advocates ending immigration from Muslim countries and supports banning the construction of new mosques. Wilders was a speaker at the Facing Jihad Conference held in Israel in 2008, which discussed the dangers of Jihad, and has called for a hardline stance against what he termed "street terror" exerted by minorities in Dutch cities. His controversial 2008 film, *Fitna*, featuring his views on Islam is widely criticized for its extreme vilification of Muslims and their faith. Wilders, who views himself as right-wing liberal,[88] aligns himself with European far-right leaders such as Jean-Marie Le Pen of France and Jörg Haider of Austria. Wilders was able to successfully form a parliamentary group in the European parliament that claimed parties from nine European countries, including French National Front, Austria's Freedom Party, Italy's Northern League, and Belgium's Flemish Interest. Wilders has laid many accusations against Muslims evidently without showing any interest in dialogue or to find the truth behind his claims. For example, he complained against the apathy of moderate voices within the Muslim communities, claiming that they never condemned the attack that took the life of Kurt Westergaard, who drew a cartoon depicting the prophet of Islam wearing a turban shaped as a bomb. As he put it, "If the attack was a reaction to Kurt Westergaard's drawing of the Muslim prophet Mohammed with a turban shaped as a bomb, then it should be rejected and condemned by all Muslims."[89] This was a false claim as two years prior to the publication of the book, the Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC) issued a statement condemning the attack and was reported on the CNN news on January 4, 2010. Indeed, OIC has denounced the call for the use of violence against the cartoonist as early as 2006.[90]

   The sentiments shown by Wilders are not confined to controversial politi-
cal figures, but ones that can be confronted among scholars who should know
better. Michael Walzer has addressed the issue of Islam and Islamic extrem-
ism more delicately and made an important distinction between Islam and
Islamic radicalism. The issue that attracted his attention most recently was
not rising Islamophobia in the West, but the sympathy of intellectuals of the
left with Islamic movements, as well as their efforts to link the Islamic rage
to Western imperialism. To convince the left of the need to speak freely, and
to give them some tips as how to overcome the fear of being called "Islamo-
phobic," he wrote an article in which he reminded the left that "the Islamic
revival is a kind of testing moment"[91] for both the left and the right. Wal-
zer raises legitimate concerns with violence committed by extremist Muslim
groups he cites, such as al-Qaeda, the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria (ISIS),
Hezbollah, and Boko Haram but rejects any efforts to link such violence to
U.S. foreign policy or to examine its root causes. Walzer focuses instead on
side issues, most notably his claim that the left has been quiet, even sympa-
thetic to Islamist movements for fear of Islamophobia. Despite his efforts to
separate the "moderate" from "extremist" Muslims, he remained oblivious
to Muslim pain and suffering and the adversarial conditions created by the
occupation of Muslim territories and to Western support to Arab and Muslim
dictators. He does not hide, for instance, his feeling of being offended when
the Muslims in Europe are called the "new Jews."

> I have heard Muslims called the 'new Jews.' that's not a helpful analogy,
> since Muslims in today's Western Europe have never been attacked by
> Christian crusaders, expelled from one country after another, forced to
> wear distinctive dress, barred from many professions, and slaughtered by
> Nazis.[92]

The pathetic attempt to trivialize the targeting of Muslims by the far right,
Walzer did not miss the chance to take a jab at Edward Said for claiming that
contemporary Arab world "is an intellectual, political, and cultural satellite
of the United States," lamenting that "Islamic revivalism is nowhere antic-
ipated in Said's book."[93] In *Covering Islam*, Said cited an article titled "The
Islam Explosion," published in *The New Republic*, as an instance of Orientalist
logic of mystifying Islam by treating it as an immediate object of contempla-
tion incapable of any type of mediation or qualification by historical time or
geographical space. Said takes Walzer to task for addressing his general audi-
ence by pretending that he was a layman about important issues and making
unacceptable generalizations that are bound to obscure the subject and con-
fuse the audience. As Said put it:

> A noteworthy instance [of mystifying Islam] is an essay by Michael Walzer
> in the December 8, 1979 issue of *The New Republic*. Walzer's title is "The
> Islam Explosion," and he deals as a self-confessed layman with the vast

number of important if (according to him) largely violent and unpleasant twentieth-century events—in the Philippines, in Iran, in Palestine, and elsewhere—which, he argues, can be interpreted as instances of the same thing: Islam. What all these events have in common, says Walzer, is first of all that they show a persistent pattern of political power encroaching on the West; second, that they are all generated from a frightening moral fervor (for instance, when Palestinians resist Israeli colonialism it is Walzer's firm assertion that such resistance is religious, not political or civil or human); and third, that these events shatter "the thin colonialist facade of liberalism, secularism, socialism, or democracy." In all three of these common characteristics it is "Islam" that can be discerned, and this "Islam" is a force overriding the distances in time and space that otherwise separate all these events.[94]

The only way to make sense of this insistence on blaming Islam for all the ills and mistakes, regardless if they originate with Muslims or Western actions, is to recognize that Islam is being used as a scapegoat and buzzword. It is a convenient tool used by scholars and politicians who must be able to distinguish actions rooted in political struggles from those grounded in faith, but still prefer to bring Islam as the favored explanation, for they know that the term invokes an irrational reaction borne out of intergenerational prejudice. Although anti-Islam rhetoric is confined to small group of people, their impact is amplified because of the absence of strong Muslim constituency to push back and bring clarity to the ongoing debate. Globalization though has changed the dynamics and might well provide a new opportunity to overcome one of the longest standing religious antagonism of all times.

Notes

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3 Margaret P. Karns et al., *International Organizations: The Politics and Processes of Global Governance* (Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2015), 4.
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5 Ibid, 13.
6 Francis Fukuyama, *The End of History and the Last Man* (New York: Avon Books, 1993), 48.
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11 Ibid, 164–67.
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36 S. Smith, "Positivism and Beyond," in *International Theory: Positivism & Beyond*, eds. K. Booth et al. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 17.
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39 Ibid, 123.
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41 Samuel Huntington, *The Clash of Civilization* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2003), 45.
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43 Ibid, 43.
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48 Ibid, 58.
49 Ibid, 76.
50 Ibid, 66.
51 Ibid, 59.
52 Ibid, 94.
53 Ibid, 95.
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2 World history and globalization patterns

The fall of the Soviet Union produced two competing theories regarding the emerging global order, which we examine in this chapter. The political rivalry between the United States and the Soviet Union throughout the better part of the twentieth century locked these two superpowers in a power struggle for global hegemony. The struggle ended in 1989 with the capitulation of the Soviets and the demise of communism and the triumph of free economic enterprise and liberal democracy. Frances Fukuyama produced in the same year the first theory of the emerging world order in his widely cited work, *The End of History and the Last Man*, a theory that announced the end of the political evolution of human societies, ushering in the worldwide embrace of liberal democracy. Three years later, Samuel Huntington challenged Fukuyama's account of the future direction of world politics in an article published in 1992 under the title, "The Clash of Civilizations," where he rejected global convergence, warning instead of an imminent clash of civilizations and signaling Islamic and Confucian states as the most likely civilizational contenders for the imminent clash.

   Although the two accounts are diametrically opposed, they both seem to explain aspects of the behavior of the sociohistorical forces that have impacted in significant ways the current state of the world affairs we call globalization. The markedly divergent views of two leading public intellectuals, highly regarded not only in the academia but also among political practitioners, point to the complexity of historical changes that began around the close of the twentieth century. They also point to the state of influx that characterizes world politics in the post-cold war era. The two competing narratives advanced by Fukuyama and Huntington do not only rally facts and observations to support their claims; both are also grounded in events and philosophical arguments of modern history. The fact that the two narratives represent broader views in the intellectual and political communities makes the task of examining the global realities they describe unavoidable and indeed informative. Furthermore, the narratives at hand underscore the importance of religions and cultures in shaping world history while still leave a great deal to be desired in their account of the impact of religious and cultural diversity on the convergence and conflict that shape both world history

and human consciousness. They, in particular, mystify how various religious and cultural forces interacted historically in their efforts to shape our global reality. Given the contradictory historical patterns they present, and the conflicting narratives of the evolution of our globalizing world, an effort to achieve partial or total reconciliation is in order. Equally in order is the need to unpack the confounding presentations of the inner dynamics of religious and cultural traditions and their patterns of conflict and exchange. Indeed, understanding these patterns is crucial for making sense of the flow of history that continues to shape our reality today, as it is crucial for our ability to judge which of these diametrically opposing accounts is better grounded in long-term historical experience.

The two versions of world history and modern historical evolution, which we discussed in some detail in the previous chapter, are predicated on the notions of reason, progress, culture, and civilization and are organized into two unifying themes: convergence of cultures and clash of civilizations. We identified two competing grand theories influencing the way we think today about human progress—one is rooted in the optimistic conception of human nature, enshrined in liberal idealism that emphasizes human inclinations to work together and cooperate for the greater good of all, whereas the other is rooted in the pessimism of realism and, to some extent, neoliberalism which has close affinity to it. Liberal idealism gave rise to the dominant views among the Enlightenment scholars, which were used by Fukuyama to ground his theory of global convergence, whereas conservative realism with its obsession with power politics and zero-sum games pushed Huntington to project a future with perpetual conflict among civilizations. Huntington's use of the notions of culture and civilization, central to his account, is contrary to main theories of civilization and, hence, requires further examination particularly in light of the frequent use of his narrative by conservative groups to explain unfolding world events. The study of civilization occupies the work of Oswald Spengler and Arnold Toynbee, but Huntington does not construct his notion of history from their works; instead, he uses the popular imaginary of the millennial conflict between Christianity and Islam to advance his notion of history.

Taken at face value, both narratives concerning the patterns of globalization are rooted in modernization literatures and derive from concepts originated in the Enlightenment traditions, though Huntington's worldview is more grounded in the history of European politics and traditions that predates the Enlightenment. His attitude toward the future is fairly influenced by his views on Islam and its resurgence in the second half of the twentieth century. His views are also grounded in the Protestant traditions that shaped the consciousness of the modern West, as he conveyed equal apprehension and skeptical attitude about the capacity of the Latino culture to advance the American liberal ideals, through his work, *Who Are We?*, which was published after the terrorist attacks on the United States in 2001 (or 9/11). This would require us to examine the historical exchange between Christianity

and Islam and the significance of their grounding in the Abrahamic faith. Our concerns with the nature and meaning of the global moment we began to experience, our interest in understanding the trajectory of human progress, and the process of globalization, all lead us to devote this chapter to answer some important questions that seem essential for examining the possibilities of convergence and divergence, peace and conflict, and cooperation and hostility. Several questions are paramount: Is there such a thing as world history? Is human history interconnected? Are their patterns of development we could clearly identify in world history? And if the answer is in the affirmative, what are those patterns? How do they influence our world today as we stand at the verge of the global threshold?

Convergence and divergence in history

The forces of convergence among nations and cultures have accelerated in the past century. The past 50 years in particular have brought about a new experience unparalleled in human history, namely the emergence of what has been termed the *global village*. Marshall McLuhan recognized the ongoing formation of a global human experience in as early as the 1960s and coined the term "global village" to describe it. He used the term in two books he published successively in the early 1960s, first in *The Gutenberg Galaxy: The Making of Typographic Man* (1962), and later in *Understanding Media* (1964), to illustrate how the once-fragmented world societies have increasingly become integrated and united as the result of employing advanced technologies.[1] New technologies permit fast and easy transport of people and commodities across the globe and the instantaneous transmission of information from the four corners of the world to every geographical location.[2]

Convergence among peoples and cultures is not a recent experience though, as it has persisted over the past three millennia, ever since the Roman and Persian Empires brought diverse cultures and religions under centralized legal orders. We are more familiar with the Pax Romana that relied not only on a highly disciplined military force to keep the Roman Empire together but also on the rule of law to keep the peace and was later transformed into a more exclusive and uniform political order with the triumph of Roman Christianity. The Roman Empire was greatly weakened as it split into Eastern and Western realms, leading to the collapse and fragmentation of its Western wing with the invasion of the Germanic tribes. This coincided with the rise of the Arabian tribes into a world power, as they were united in the new Islamic faith. Islam further expanded the global unity brought about by the Romans and Persians. Islamic empires brought together numerous religious and ethnic communities as they unified the territories once occupied by both. The Islamic order stimulated trade and cultural exchange from the Iberian Peninsula, Southern Italy, the Balkans, and East Europe in the West, through Africa, Central Asia, and India, to China and Southeast Asia in the Far East. These very diverse communities have become interconnected

through an elaborate system of trade, scientific, and cultural centers across the globe. In many ways, the expansion of Western civilization literally encompassed the entire globe, first through colonialization and direct military occupation, and most recently through the soft power of the United States and Europe, backed by a military force that has been used occasionally to assert their imperial world status. The questions on the mind of many today relate to the nature of current political arrangements and the direction of the unfolding of postmodern society and politics. Does current globalization constitute the last stage of the expansion of Western civilization? Or are we confronting a new global age unlike anything the humanity encountered before?

Historically, the experience of bringing greater unity among separate populations and diverse cultures has always coincided with the advanced stages of major world civilizations, as these stages are often distinguished by the expansion of dominant cultures across large territories and populations. The expansion of Persia and the rise of the Persian Empire in the sixth century BCE, followed by the expansion of Rome and the creation of Pax Romana in fourth century BCE, provided the conditions for extensive commercial and cultural exchange and brought about remarkable convergence in ideas, institutions, and traditions. The expansion of the Islamic civilization reached its peak in the fourteenth century as it spread out from southern France at the boarders of the Iberian Peninsula through North and West Africa to China and South Asia, before it retreated under the expansion of the rising European powers, first in Spain and later in East and Southeast Asia. Are we facing a similar situation today, as Huntington is apparently convinced that the current Western civilization is threatened by a burgeoning Confucian and Islamic civilizations?

Huntington's suggestion that Western civilization is losing its ground to reemerging civilizations rooted in the pre-modern world is problematic, as it ignores the participation of those "civilizations" in the very global infrastructure developed in the past century. It ignores the remarkable convergence achieved in ideas and institutions; in social, political, and economic organizations; and in education and cultural attitudes. Democratic governance is becoming the new model of political organization throughout the world, and is now embraced by the majority of world populations, though in varying degrees of success. Russia and the Central Asian republics have already rejected communism and are gradually drifting toward liberal democratic forms. The Arab Spring movement reveals a strong desire by new generations of Arabs who challenged their autocratic elites, demanding a liberal democratic form of government and paying the ultimate price for such a demand. In addition, there is a broad sense of equality and shared humanity across cultures. Education systems, scientific learning, and professional training and practices across the globe carry the imprint of the modern West. In particular, there is a broad acceptance of political ideas matured in Western cultures, including such ideas as accountable governance, political participation, and human

rights. Attitudes and practices are not uniform across societies and cultures, and many societies continue to suffer from authoritarian regimes and corrupt governments, but the overall trend is moving steadily in the direction of open societies governed by the notions of equal rights and opportunities.

The frameworks provided by Fukuyama and Huntington are helpful in underscoring challenges and forces at play in globalization but have not been able to provide clarity as to how to deal with such challenges meaningfully and effectively. The two accounts have provided us with general patterns that need to be reconciled. It is not clear, for instance, whether the reemergence of postmodern "civilizations," asserted by Huntington, is happening within the overall patterns of convergence or in opposition to those patterns of convergence. Do these patterns represent efforts to push back against the excesses of Western powers? Or are they pushing for the return to premodern political structures? Are we seeing the beginning of a metamorphosis toward a global order capable of coordinating through institutions of global governance? Or are we seeing the emergence of global anarchy? These questions require that we further examine the notions of culture and civilization and engage the broader literatures that deal with cultural formation and the way by which cultures relate to civilizations. We need equally to explore the very notion of civilization that has been used by Fukuyama and Huntington without grounding it within any philosophical and sociological understanding of its formation and structure. We turn therefore in the next section to explore the meaning and structure of civilization in the work of two influential thinkers who devoted their works to examine the reality and inner dynamic of civilization and its formation and structure.

Cultures and civilizations

The twentieth century gave us two incisive observers of world history—Oswald Spengler and Arnold Toynbee. Both saw world history as the theater on which successive cultures shaped by vibrant religions give birth to successive civilizations. Both rejected the unilinear view of history advanced by the eighteenth- and nineteenth-century philosophers of history, most notably, Hegel and Marx. And both observed the toil and creativity of early civilizations embedded in the most recent ones. Toynbee began building his theory of civilization by realizing that the state is more a territorial than transformational force in world history. For sure, states are important for understanding the politics of the day, but the understanding of the direction of interstate rivalries requires broader units of analysis, namely civilizations. "While the state of which we happen to be citizens makes more concrete and more imperious claims on our allegiance, especially in the present age," he contends, "the civilization of which we are members really counts for more in our lives. And this civilization of which we are members includes—at most stages of its history—the citizens of others states besides our own."[3] States and political societies are centers of action and allegiance, but their history

and sociopolitical developments can only be understood when located in the larger social context of a civilization. American or French history and institutions are only intelligible in the context of Western civilization.[4]

Toynbee locates the nation-state within the larger historical and cultural settings of civilizations. Civilizations constitute distinct "worlds" in which the cultural activities and the social and political institutions of a particular society can be understood. These civilizations or worlds are closely associated with particular religions. Hence states such as "the United States or Great Britain or France or Holland" are parts of a larger grouping which Toynbee refers to interchangeably as "Western Christendom, Western Civilization, Western society, the Western World."[5] The larger formation of political societies, which he calls "civilization," is closely associated with a particular religious tradition. To understand the history of countries such as Greece, Serbia, or Russia, we arrive at "Orthodox Christendom or Byzantine World."[6] Similarly to understand the history of Morocco or Afghanistan, we arrive at the "Islamic World."[7] Toynbee sees world civilizations as living entities in constant evolution and change. They have beginnings and ends, they expand and contract, and they rise and fall. They learn from each other and build on the achievements of one another. "While civilizations rise and fall and, in falling give rise to others, some purposeful enterprise, higher than theirs, may all the time be making headway, and, in a divine plan, the learning that comes through the suffering caused by failures of civilizations may be the sovereign means of progress."[8] He identifies 21 civilizations that appeared throughout world history. All are dead except five: the Sinic, the Hindu, the Christian Orthodox, the Islamic, and the most dominant of all, the Western civilization.

Civilizations have complex structures and formation processes, Toynbee asserts. They come to life and develop through the interaction of three elements: culture, religion, and the universal state.[9] Out of the three elements, Toynbee identifies religion as the most significant in shaping civilizations,[10] while he credits culture for its expansion and growth. In examining Islamic civilization, for instance, he identifies the Syriac culture, the Islamic religion, and the Abbasid state as the three elements whose interaction produced the Islamic civilization.[11] Islam, he points out, "was not alien from, but native to, the Syriac Society," and "drew its inspiration primarily from Judaism, a purely Syriac religion, and secondarily from Nestorianism, a form of Christianity in which the Syriac element had recovered its preponderance over the Hellenic."[12] The dynamic of the formation of new civilizations and the deconstruction of old ones is fairly complex. It consists in the interaction of the "universal state," "church," and "barbarian heroic age."[13] The barbarians are the nomads, the property-less tribes, and the proletariat. The church, or religion in general, acts against old "universal states" as it helps shape new "universal states." The Roman Empire was brought down with the internal proletariat made of the surviving Roman church and the external proletariat made of the Germanic tribes. The fall of Rome resulted from clashes between

these forces and the dominant minority that lost its ability to lead through its creative ideas and was hence reduced to an oppressive force against the larger population. Surprisingly, the new creative culture came out from these same proletariats, the Christian church that expanded the religious foundation of European society, and the Visigoths who appropriated the civilizing culture of Arab Spain. Toynbee suggests that the proletariat is formed as the result of popular migration (*Volkerwanderung*) of alienated "barbarians." Toynbee rejects, however, the suggestion made by European historians who credited the invigoration of Western civilization to the "infusion of new blood" by the Germanic tribes into the collapsing Roman Empire, instead of crediting the rise of Western civilization to the religious values that reshaped European culture.[14]

As to the dead civilizations that disappeared, even though they are no more represented in any particular living society, they have not completely disappeared from the surface of the earth but have been assimilated by the living ones and in a sense have contributed to their structure and formation. World civilizations have succeeded each other in such a way that those who fade away into extinction, or step aside into the shadow, pass on their learnings and technologies to the rising civilization, thereby contributing to a process of accumulation and progress. The accumulation process, undertaken by successive civilizations, is combined by another process of geographical expansion and convergence. This has been achieved in the most recent civilization produced by the West or, as Toynbee prefers to identify it, by Western Christendom. Under Western civilization, the world has been unified into a singular world system, dominated by the West.

> As a result of these successive expansions of particular civilizations, the whole habitable world has now been unified into a single great society. The movement through which this process has been finally consummated is the modern expansion of Western Christendom. But we have to bear in mind, first, that this expansion of Western Christendom has merely completed the unification of the world and has not been the agency that has produced more than the last stage of the process; and, second, that, though the unification of the world has been finally achieved within a Western framework, the present Western ascendency in the world is certain not to last.[15]

Yet, the unification of the world, accomplished under the auspices of Western civilization, is incomplete, as it has not brought into harmony the civilizational components that make up the global society that has been created. The "equilibrium" necessary for creating a stable world civilization has not been achieved so far. Such a stage is yet to come as it presupposes a restructuring of global values and institutions in such a way that the West give up its dominant position in the world and join other civilizational forces around the table, something the West is not evidently ready to do.

> In a unified world, the eighteen non-Western civilizations—five of them living, fourteen of them extinct—will assuredly reassert their influence. And as, in the course of generations and centuries, a unified world gradually works its way toward an equilibrium between its diverse component cultures, the Western component will gradually be relegated to the modest place which is all that it can expect to retain in virtue of its intrinsic worth by comparison with those other cultures—surviving and extinct—which the Western society, through its modern expansion, has brought into association with itself and with one another.[16]

Toynbee suggests that the desired equilibrium will be achieved not as a result of current inclinations by Western powers but as a direct consequence of the gradual decline of Western civilization. The decline itself results from inherent contradictions in Western civilization, not the least of which is the failure of modern West to eliminate the two major sins that brought down earlier civilization—"War" and "Class." The contradiction is quite evident when one considers that Western civilization that has promoted the tradition of universal human right is guilty of failing to translate its declared humanitarian concerns into meaningful and effective policies and practices. Instead, it exacerbated the level of destruction in warfare and expanded the extent of exclusivism, from economic inequality to national and racial discrimination.[17]

   Toynbee's indictment of modern civilization's overreliance on power and overindulgence in war brings him closer to Oswald Spengler's announcement of the imminent demise of Western civilization in his widely acclaimed work, *The Decline of the West*, first published in 1918. Spengler rejects the Eurocentric and linear view of history expressed in the ancient-medieval-modern tripartite, advanced by most modern historians and philosophers of history, including Hegel. He instead advances a multicultural and cyclical view of human evolution in which various cultures successively contribute to the evolution of world history in perpetual drama of rise and fall, growth and decline.

> I see, in place of that empty figment of one linear history ... the drama of a number of mighty Cultures, each springing with primitive strength from the soil of a mother-region to which it remains firmly bound through its whole life-cycle; each stamping its material, its mankind, in its own images; each having its own idea, its own passions, its own life, will and feeling, its own death. Here the Cultures, people, languages, truths, gods, landscapes bloom and age as the oaks and the stone pines, the blossoms, twigs and leaves.[18]

For Spengler, a rising culture is not an accident of history but the culmination of all previous cultures. The relationship of a culture to the civilization in which the culture culminated is that of soul to the body. Culture is the locus of the inherited ideas that grow and materialize in a civilization.[19] Spengler concludes that it is culture, and not civilization, that shapes world

history—"Culture is the prime phenomenon of all past and future World history."[20] The journey of a culture from birth to demise is not, however, purely biological, limited to the growth of material strength of economic and technical nature; instead, it is rooted in the spiritual awakening and the actualization of a definitive spirituality that takes the form of ideational and normative ethos.

> A culture is born in the moment when a great soul awakens out of the proto-spirituality of ever-childish humanity and detaches itself, a form from the formless, a bounded and mortal thing from the boundless and enduring. It blooms on the soil of an exactly definable landscape, to which plant-wise it remains bound. It dies when this soul has actualized the full sum of its possibilities in the shape of the peoples, languages, dogmas, arts, states, sciences and reverts into the proto-soul.[21]

All great cultures are rooted in spiritual awakening and religious experience that generate the energy necessary for their formation. Culture grows spiritually and generates new and more advanced forms of human development and eventually culminates in a thriving civilization of great creative capacity, productivity, and power, with far-reaching impact beyond its birthplace. Surprisingly, though, the most advanced state of material and artistic growth of a culture, comprising what Spengler calls "civilization," also constitutes the last stage in its lifecycle that denotes its conclusion and demise.

> For every Culture has its own Civilization. In this work, for the first time the two words ... are used in a periodic sense, to express a strict and necessary organic succession. The Civilization is the inevitable destiny of the Culture.... Civilizations are the most external and artificial states of which a species of developed humanity is capable. They are a conclusion, the thing-become succeeding the thing-becoming, death following life, rigidity following expansion, intellectual age and the stone-built, petrifying world-city following mother-earth and the spiritual childhood of the Doric and Gothic.[22]

The spiritual vibrancy of a culture comes from its inherent "idea … which is the sum total of its inner possibilities."[23] A great culture is distinguished by its religion, which forms its real essence. This essential element gradually disappears as great cultures transform themselves into dominant civilizations. Civilizations manifest themselves in the city life, in the megalopolis that shuns religious life and embraces irreligiosity.[24]

> The megalopolis itself, as against the old Culture towns—Alexandria as against Athens, Paris as against Bruges, Berlin as against Nürnberg—is irreligious down to the last detail, down to the look of the streets, the dry intelligence of the faces.[25]

The above insight into Spengler's world history sheds light not on the affinity between his insight and that of Toynbee but shows the influence that Spengler had on Toynbee's perception of the interrelationship of culture and civilization. Toynbee replaces Spengler's poetic and ecstatic portrayal of cultures and the rise and fall of world civilizations with a socio-psychological and political explanation. We can also sense Toynbee's more optimistic views with regard to the future and the possibilities of its survival. Despite the unprecedented destructiveness of military conflict and economic disparity of Western civilization, Toynbee remains optimistic toward modern social transformation and future possibilities. His optimism is derived from the extraordinary convergence in religious traditions. The convergence is not quite evident to most people, he admits, but it will become crystal clear to future humanity. "Historians of A.D. 5047," he proclaims, will find "social unification of mankind" not "in the field of war and politics, but in the field of religion."[26]

The inability of the Westerners to see people outside their own civilization as partners in the emerging modern civilization is part of the failure of mainstream Western scholarship to relate to members of other civilizations. The tendency to recognize members of other civilizations as exotic people, or as he puts it, "native," is a problematic attitude stemming "from illusions due to the world-wide success of the Western Civilization in the material sphere."[27] Thinking of other peoples as "native" is not only wrong; it also entails serious consequences, including an inclination to "terminate" and "domesticate" people who are perceived as "natives."

> So long as we think of them as "natives" we may exterminate them or, as is more likely to-day, domesticate them and honestly (perhaps not altogether mistakenly) believe that we are improving the breed, but we do not begin to understand them.[28]

The illusion is not singular, but multifaceted as it includes, along with the "egotistic illusion," the illusion of "the unchanging East" and that of "progress as something that proceeds in a straight line."[29]

Toynbee concludes his examination of the cyclical theories of history that identify the conditions that led to the breakdown of earlier civilizations, including the organic life of a culture advanced by Spengler, and the spiritual and moral degeneration of the culture advanced by Ibn Khaldun, on a positive and optimistic note. There is no natural process or fate the necessitates the decline of modern civilization, and therefore we "are not compelled to submit the riddle of our fate to the blind arbitrament of statistics." Staying alive and prospering is, however, subject to a subtle condition, as Toynbee suggests that modern civilization to march on as long as the "divine spark of creative power is still alive in us, and, if we have the grace to kindle it into flame, then the stars in their courses cannot defeat our efforts to attain the goal of human endeavor."[30]

It would be useful here, before we conclude this section on culture and civilization, to zoom in on a concern that was raised by Toynbee in the context of examining world history in his *A Study of History*, as it becomes the focus of a short paper he published in 1956 under the title "A Study of History—What I Am Trying to Do." During his examination of what he called the "egocentric illusion" of the West, that is often reflected in the form of "chosenness" characteristic of all Abrahamic religions, Toynbee illustrates the harmful nature of this illusion in the story of the Chinese Emperor Ch'ien Lung who received in 1793 a request from King George III to establish a British consulate to oversee trade between the two kingdoms. Emperor Lung was so insulted by King George's request that he responded with an angry letter that revealed the emperor's egocentrism. In one section of his letter, the emperor described with great pride the superiority of his "Celestial Court," informing the King of England, with emphatic certainty, that he and his empire that possess "all things, set no value on objects strange or ingenious, and have no use for your country's manufactures."[31]

The egocentric illusion revealed in the emperor's self-righteous expressions, Toynbee noted, is equally apparent in the Europeans' reference to other people as "native" is no different than what the ancient Israelites "called 'gentiles', and the Greeks called 'barbarians'."[32] He saw egocentrism as a flaw and trap that causes those who hold it a great harm, forcing them to live and act through an illusion that often comes back to haunt those who entertain it, as did the Chinese experience in less than a century after Emperor Ch'ien Lung issued his self-exalting response. Toynbee expressed in the 1956 article his concerns for the increased presence of egocentric illusion in contemporary Western thought and action as part of a larger pattern. Up to the end of seventeenth century, the pattern has been one of the Israelites,

> which Christendom and Islam had taken over with modifications in their own favor. In this Jewish-Christian-Muslim view, history had appeared to be an act of God beginning at the Creation and destined to end in the Last Judgment, while Israel (or Christendom or Islam) had been singled out as being the people chosen by God for carrying out His purposes.[33]

However, by the end of the eighteenth century, the pattern took the form of eradicating the role of religion and religious reformation in the rise of modern civilization. Instead of looking to explain the current moment in light of the previous one, secularism repeated the same mistake "by cutting God out of the picture and dealing with the Christian Church as the Church had dealt with Israel."[34]

In the end of his article, Toynbee called for a comparative study that thoroughly examines the five living civilizations to unlock their ideas and values, and he sensed the need to embrace a more inclusive approach, transcend the old ways of denying the other, and grow out from the adolescent attitude of 'I did it alone, and I do not need the cooperation and help of peoples beyond

my own culture and civilization.' It is definitely a worthy invitation and one that can potentially save modern civilization from its self-destructive tendencies. Given the fact that Toynbee is no more seen as relevant to the historical debate, one can only wonder if anyone is listening.

Dialectics of consciousness and possession

World history as outlined in the work of both Spengler and Toynbee does not fit into the unilinear view of human progress from the ancient through the Middle Ages to the modern that became widely embraced by European historians. The unilinear model of historical progress was popularized in the works of two German philosophers of history who made bold claims and predictions with regards to the meaning and direction of world history: G.W.F. Hegel and Karl Marx. Hegel argues that history flows in particular patterns of progress in a singular direction from the East to the West. History begins in the Orient and gradually moves to the Occident where it ends. As the sun rises from the East and sets in the West so human civilization and progress pass through the same geographical trajectory across the globe. In the West, and particularly in the Germanic state, humanity has reached its ultimate perfection.[35] "The History of the World is the discipline of the uncontrolled natural will," Hegel contends,

> bringing it into obedience to a Universal principle and conferring on it subjective freedom. The East knew and to the present day knows only that One is Free; the Greek and Roman world, that some are free; the German World knows that All are free.[36]

Hegel makes it abundantly clear in the *Philosophy of History* that human history is the history of the objectification of individual freedom. With the advent of Western civilization, the entire society is made of free individuals whose freedom is not only subjective, experienced internally, but also objectively experienced out in the world. The reason that objective freedom took a long time to materialize is due to the time needed to develop the psychological and social conditions necessary for humanity to evolve and mature. At the dawn of human history in the Far East only the monarch was sovereign and free, even though moral discipline was then developed and objectively experienced in society. The arbitrary will of the individual has then achieved the discipline needed to form social order, but the moral discipline was outwardly located in the rules of an objective law, imposed on society by a king who enjoyed divine presence. The constitution was a theocracy and the order imposed by the king was that of the Kingdom of God.[37] In the Oriental world, "the Kingdom of God is to the same extent also a secular Kingdom as the secular Kingdom is also divine."[38] As history moved westwardly toward India, the complete unity of society with no distinction between its members started to break down. We now observe distinction among members

of society in the form of the caste system that privileges one caste over the others. Yet for Hegel the distinction does not reflect the development of individuality and individual consciousness, as the "different castes are indeed, fixed; but in view of the religious doctrine that established them, they wear the aspect of natural distinctions."[39] The distinction between the castes took a materialist rather than spiritual form. The freedom attained by the upper cast was not internalized and remained objective freedom without a subjective essence. The individuals within the distinction of the caste system are "still stripped of proper personality."[40]

The later stages of human evolution as history moved further westward witnessed the development of subjective morality. Subjective morality now is shaping society and regulating social order, but "leaving the sovereign unrestrained."[41] This is the situation we observe in Persia and later in Rome. Hegel struggles to separate Greek spirit from both of that of the Orient and Rome, but his work in this area was choppy and reductionist. He claims for instance that in Greece, "[d]emocracy was the fundamental condition of political life, as in the East, Despotism."[42] He could not spell out how the democratic spirit of Greece disappeared from the Romans who inherited the Greek culture and civilization and who themselves exhibited some affinity to the "democratic" spirit through their Republican phase. Hegel seems to suggest, in his own abstract and evasive writings that shun details and see them as obstructions, that the force that characterized the expansion of Rome has become the true spirit of Rome. "A State which had first to form itself, and which is based on force, must be held together by force."[43] For him, the Romans were not necessarily void of morality, but their moral behavior was socially conditioned.[44] Roman *virtus* was not moral but valor. Yet, to claim Roman manliness as virtue is so broad and loose a concept to be able to explain Roman despotism. Manliness does not contain sufficient layers of meaning to explain the entire history of states that frequently resorted to violence to subdue its subjects. It would be a more sensical explanation to say that the Roman Republic used force as any imperial power does, including modern imperial powers that should have been familiar to him.

The most interesting turn in Hegel's pursuit of the journey of subjective freedom lies in the discovery of the spiritual nature of the divine. This discovery of triune nature of the spirit brings, he contends, a new meaning to the spirit's journey in search of its objectification in the real world, as such understanding comes as he announces the arrival of Christianity in the Roman age. For the spirit has a complex manifestation; it is revealed in both human and divine forms. Christianity illustrates that that not only the essence of humans is spiritual, but God is now recognized as having a spiritual essence. Hegel, whose Christian faith is present throughout his philosophical work, sees the birth of Christianity in striking light, describing it as the moment "on which the History of the World turns. This is the goal and the starting point of History. 'When the fulness of the time has come, God sent his Son,' is the statement of the Bible."[45] Christianity, which flows from

within the Jewish tradition, is now set to uplift the Jewish pain by affirming God and monotheism within the Roman body and to replace the Stoicism that counseled people to ignore the pain that kept growing as time went by. The new faith Christianity brings to the world is grounded in "the unity of Reality, of Subjectivity, with the substance of the One Essential Being."[46] Evidently, Hegel sees in the coming of Christianity the "Axial Age" that holds the key to the modern world, or the Germanic world as he prefers to call it. But for Christianity to flourish it had to wait until Islam reached its full fruition.

Hegel assigns a key place to the vocation of Islam in the unfolding of world history, for in Islam the unity of the human and the divine appears in its most unadulterated form, yet a form that appears to him to be too excessive as to qualify for the category of fanaticism. Hegel sees in Islam the first attempt to bring balance between the spiritual and the mundane, the universal and the particular, the divine and the natural, and eradicate the arbitrariness of the "political edifice of chance, entanglement and particularity, the very opposite direction necessarily made its appearance in the world, to produce the balance of the totality of spiritual manifestation."[47] Unlike the Roman world to which Christianity was coopted and unified into the central structure of the Roman Empire via the Roman church, Islam remains an intrinsic part of society as it refused to succumb to centralized structures, that even in its legal expression it defied all the efforts made to attach it to state power. Hegel, who was consumed with his pursuit of the freedom of the spirit, found the spirit exhibiting boundless freedom in the Islamic faith, as he called the revolt of Islam against all formal limitations by state structures the "Revolution of the East." The revolution represented itself in Muslims' complete devotion to the one God and in their refusal to be fully associated with any particular person or institution. For unlike Judaism that bound God with the holy land, Islam saw the entire reality the domain of the divine and all humans as creatures of God. It became the vocation of Muslims, completely devoted to the absolute unity of God and of humanity, as they moved out of their geographically limited region to reshape the world in relation to the One.[48]

Hegel sees the simple and free spirit of Islam as the force that propelled the world into the conditions of the modern civilization on several fronts. First, it rejected all limitations imposed historically on the human will and imagination. It rejected all constructivist limitations: national, caste, racial, political privilege, and socioeconomic status:

> The leading features of *Mahometanism* [Islam] involve this—that in actual existence nothing can become fixed, but that everything is destined to expand itself in activity and life in the boundless amplitude of the world, so that the worship of the One remains the only bond by which the whole is capable of uniting. In this expansion, this active energy, all limits, all national and caste distinctions vanish; no particular race, political claim of birth or possession is regarded—only man as a believer."[49]

The commitment of Islam to transcendental God, not objectified in any shape or form in the natural or social order, was termed by Hegel as "fanaticism." Muslims were committed to abstraction; abstraction in worship, art, and thought. The enthusiasm for abstract thinking is of course not exclusive to the world of Islam but shared by many religious and cultural traditions. Yet, Muslim enthusiasm toward abstract thought and expression, Hegel contends, is all-encompassing and, hence, fanatical. This could also be seen in the social and political structures and relations, as the most insignificant member in society would approach the ruler as his or her equal.[50] Perhaps the most impotent aspect of Islam that attracts Hegel's attention is its ability to reconcile the religious and temporal worlds by subjecting the latter to ethical judgments of the former. This reconciliation, while beginning with early Christianity, accelerated and took a more advanced form, Hegel argues, in Islam. The Christian reconciliation of politics and ethics remained abstract before Islam, as it failed to grow into a political form. With the advent of Islam this relationship was transformed, and therefore Hegel called Islam, or the 'Mohammedan Principle', the enlightenment of the Oriental world.

> the Reconciliation presented in Christianity, but only in the germ, without national or political development. We must therefore regard it as commencing rather with the enormous contrast between the spiritual, religious principle, and the barbarian Real World. For Spirit as the consciousness of an inner World is, at the commencement, itself still in an abstract form. All that is secular is consequently given over to rudeness and capricious violence. The Mohammedan principle—the enlightenment of the Oriental World—is the first to contravene this barbarism and caprice. We find it developing itself later and more rapidly than Christianity; for the latter needed eight centuries to grow up into a political form.[51]

For Hegel, the real Enlightenment took place in the West, not in the East. For there, self-consciousness reached its more complete form both at the level of knowledge, by reaching Absolute Knowledge, and on the social and political forms in the Germanic state. The exposition of these aspects of the modern spirit, Hegel reserved to other works, particularly his *Phenomenology of the Spirit* and later in the *Philosophy of Right*. We will return briefly to some aspects of his philosophy as we examine the Marxist conception of history, particularly the Hegelian dialects and the concept of civil society.

Marx provides us with the most profound critique of capitalism ever attempted and then connects his analyzing of capitalism to a comprehensive theory of history which was later publicized by his intellectual partner Fredrick Angels under the rubric of "historical materialism." Marx built his theory of history by using the Hegelian phenomenology of history as a template, replacing the "means of production" as the alternative building blocks to the Hegelian "Idea." The replacement is sophisticated but arbitrary and utopic and would hence completely fall apart when we take away the Hegelian

scaffolds that hold it together. Marx's historical materialism is thoroughly dependent on Hegel's philosophy of history and would completely disappear if there were no Hegelian thought. Indeed, the Marxian world history was the first element of his thought to fall apart, as European Marxian thinkers, from Gramsci to Althusser, have struggled to stay away from Marx's "historical materialism."

Marx adopted the Hegelian dialectic based on contradictions between ideas when they take social forms, resulting in new ideas embodied in new social forms. This process concludes in a creative synthesis between the idea and its opposite. Marx branded Hegel's philosophy as an ideology that emanates from false consciousness and then endeavors to hide the real process of historical change. For him, the contradiction does not take place at the level of superstructure where ideas play out, but at the level of infrastructure between social forces that act out their real interests. In commenting on the role of civil society in the formation of the state, Hegel argues that the democratic state was the synthesis of the contradictions between civil society and the family that have taken under the feudal order a political role. Hegel concluded thus that the democratic state transcends both civil society and the family without negating them. Marx rejected this formulation in his *Contribution to the Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Right* (1843). He takes issue with Hegel's assigning subjectivity to family, civil society, and the state, accusing him of disregarding the fact that the state is made of the individuals who are once grouped under the "family" and then under "civil society." He sees in the Hegelian "ideas" of society and family a clever attempt on the part of Hegel to assign objectivity to pure "ideas" rather than the people who are subsumed under those ideas.[52] Marx sees the ideas of "property," "family," and "civil society" at the heart of the Hegelian philosophy as mythical notions created from within religiously conscious individuals and have therefore been turned into instruments in the hands of the bourgeoisie to perpetuate its control over society and the economy. Marx insists that these are not true objects of consciousness, for they are consumed with the daily efforts that aim at procuring the necessary provisions for survival. For the consciousness of working people, property is experienced as the alienation of labor and as something that was produced through the laborer's toil but controlled by the property owner and in general by the owners of the means of production, to perpetuate the workers misery. The real contradiction is not between illusory ideas but between actual social forces, namely between the workers and the owners of the means of production.[53] The emancipation that is urgently needed is that of the worker, and for that to happen, property, family, and society should be abolished, and religions that gave rise to them all must be negated and abolished.[54]

For Marx, the state is always controlled by those who owns the means of production, and world history is the history of the struggle between workers, whether they are peasants or laborers, and property owners. Under capitalism, the contradiction is between the workers and the bourgeoisie. The

Marxist theory of history is based on two main concepts—"socioeconomic formations" and "class struggle." The "socioeconomic formation" relates to the nature of the social relations that correspond to the ownership structure of the means of the production in a particular historical stage of the human development. Marx identifies four stages based on the mode of production: tribal ownership by small families, the Roman private ownership by small minority, the feudal ownership by estate, and the bourgeois ownership by modern capitalists. Like Hegel, Marx envisaged the end of history, not in the Germanic state, but in communism, a utopian society organized in accordance with one principle: "From each according to his ability, to each according to his needs!"[55] Marx's analysis of the impact of free enterprise in imperfect market conditions was penetrating, particularly since he experienced firsthand the devastating shocks of the industrial revolution in England. His work shed light on the interrelationship between economic and political elites under capitalism. Similarly, Marx described the nature of accumulation of capital and its role in cheerleading political expansion that gave rise to neocolonialism and modern imperialism. His failure to appreciate the importance of ethical judgment, and its grounding in religious traditions, led him to place his faith in a communist utopia. His systematic critique of Hegelian thought and German idealism, which he describes as the German ideology, provides an important reality check and underscores the value of focusing on details that were left out by German idealism and to shed light on the need to bring philosophy in general, and the philosophy of history in particular, down to earth.

The account of world history we find in Hegel brings significant insight into the maturation of human consciousness as the accumulated experiences of various cultures and civilizations that shaped humanity. Hegel also affirms the importance of religion in general in shaping cultural experience and giving its main features. He evidently assigns higher significance to monotheistic traditions and presents the dialectical relationship between Christianity and Islam in a new, and more complementary, light. The apparent conflict between the two monotheistic religions is not necessarily religious but one that involves the temporal energy and ambition of Arab and European dynasties. The Hegelian narrative highlights the importance of the pre-Enlightenment cultures and civilizations for understanding modern civilization and even suggests that the birth of Christianity marked an "Axial" moment in human history.

The role played by premodern society in shaping Western modernity was highlighted in Karl Jaspers' "Axial Age" thesis which he announced in 1949 in a book he published right after WWII. Jaspers' thesis has generated since then considerable interest, particularly in the past decade, and different aspects of it have been embraced by influential contemporary philosophers and sociologists, including Robert Bellah, Charles Taylor, Karen Armstrong, and Shmuel Eisenstadt. We turn now to examine Jaspers' thesis and engage the growing literature around it.

The Axial Age and the monotheistic breakthrough

Karl Jaspers remarks, in *The Origin and Goal of History*, that Western historians often ground modern society in European history, and particularly in the Christian faith, from St. Augustine to Hegel, ignoring the impact of other religions and other cultures and civilizations on the formation of modern society and life.[56] Our current understanding of history is colored by the standards and meanings borne out of modern experience. Yet world history is by definition "the history of mankind," and its proper understanding requires that we engage premodern history in order to make the present intelligible.[57] Jaspers suggests, early on in his seminal work, that the period of human history that exerted the greatest impact on modernity, which he calls the "Axial Period," revolves around 500 BC and stretches roughly between 800 BC and 200 BCE. It was in this era that humanity as we know it today was shaped. Major religions, civilizations, and empires appeared in that age to make it an Axial period:

> The most extraordinary events are concentrated in this period. Confucius and Lao-tse were living China, all the schools of Chinese philosophy came into being, including Mo-ti, the Chuang-tse, Lieh-tsu and a host of others; India produced Upanishads and Buddha and, like China, ran the whole gamut of philosophical possibilities down to skepticism, materialism, a challenging sophism and nihilism; in Iran Zarathustra taught a challenging view of the world as a struggle between good and evil; in Palestine the prophets made their appearance, from Elijah, by way the Isaiah and witnessed Jeremiah to Deutero-Isaiah; Greece Witnessed the appearance of Homer, of the philosophers—Parmenides, Heraclitus, and Plato—of the tragedians, and Archimedes. Everything implied by these names developed during these few centuries almost simultaneously in China, India, and the West, without any one of these regions knowing of the others.[58]

The significance of the Axial Age relates to the fact that it was the time when Greek, Indian, and Chinese philosophers provided us the most lucid ideas that connect the transcendental to the social and during which the mythical world that shaped human imagination receded. It was also the age when religions took their ethical turn, and myth was replaced with spirituality. Moreover, it was during the Axial Age that ideas become mobile, traveling across geography and social distances; when academies were established and philosophers wandered from one place to another, seeking both knowledge and the spread of their ideas.[59] We started to see human reason and human personality take their premodern forms in the Axial period, as the devotion to the sacred was translated to social solidarity, as the sacred was revealed to humanity in different parts of the world, so the essence of humanity and its relationship to the divine took its familiar structure.[60] Jaspers attributes the acceleration of historical development and the formation of vibrant cultures

to the increase of exchange between cultures and societies, the improved transportation and commerce across the globe, and the establishment of centers of learning in China, India, Persia, and Greece.[61] The transformation of humanity into more cultured and civilized societies was a reaction to the carnage and savagery during the heroic age. Human pain during the heroic age became unbearable, and the tragedy of history necessitated the historical transformation to a new age of higher culture and civilization. The heroic age that produced ancient civilizations was not peculiar to Greece. It was everywhere. It was experienced by the Indians, Celts, Slavs, and the Persians. The tragedies of the heroic age gave birth to the spirit of the ancient imperial states that united large regions of the earth and brought a semblance of peace to the world.[62]

For Jaspers, the obsession with declaring the independence of Western civilization from the influence of other civilizations was not simply an expression of the sentiments of proud peoples; rather, it was rooted in the rejection and non-acceptance of the claim of "exclusive truth by the various Biblical religions, including Islam." Yet the West has displayed more thorough exclusivity and a more profound need to set itself apart from the rest of humanity. "It was only in the West," Jaspers exclaims, "that the totality of this claim appeared as a principle that ran without the whole interruption through further course of history."[63] Jaspers warned that the West can ignore its formative past at its own peril. Jaspers felt the need to locate the West within world history so that a full narrative of the cultural and the religious context that led to the rise of modern society "might unify humanity and help us all to move forward together peaceably."[64] He saw in his efforts to shed light on the Axil Age not only the obligation to affirm quite relevant historical events but also an opportunity to display the interconnectedness of human cultures and civilizations. After all, our understanding of the past has profound impact on the decisions we make in the present and the future.[65] Like Marx, Jaspers took aim at the German ideology, though the thrust of his criticism went into the opposite direction. He accused the German philosophers, from Fichte and Hegel to Schelling and Nietzsche, of undermining faith by turning religion into ideology. In the process, the depth of the spirit that brought about the modern transformation was lost.[66] And like Marx, Jaspers took aim at Hegel, accusing him of reducing the understanding of world history into an ideology whose purpose is the exaltation of one's own culture and religion. For Hegel has practically made world history revolving around Christ, as he made "the appearance of son of God … the axial of world history."[67] Undoubtedly, the efforts of Hegel to reduce human history to that of the West smacks the non-Western reader as an exercise in self-exaltation.

Jaspers particularly objected to the reduction of human history to the consciousness of liberty, and for closing the historical horizons, limiting the historical possibilities to the certainty of the moment. No human mind should be allowed to assume an Archimedean point without being challenged. He rests the case he strove to establish throughout his critical work by concluding:

history is actually, and for my consciousness, unclosed. I hold myself open to the future. It is an attitude of waiting and of seeking the truth, of not yet knowing already is, but which will be fully understandable only from the vantage of the future. In this basic attitude even the past is unconcluded: it still lives, its decisions are not totally, but only relatively, final; they can be revised. That which was is still capable of reinterpretation. That which seemed to have been decided become once more a query.[68]

By the end of his insightful work, *The Origin and Goal of History*, we do realize that the origin and goal of history is still unknown. All we can know is that the modern reality we are part of is shaped by ideas and social formations that first appeared in the Axial Age around 500 BCE. We obviously need to delve deeper into that history to identify the patterns of change that led to our current moment and must do that systemically and with intellectual discipline and vigor. Jaspers' work invites us to expand our horizons to be able to develop a better understanding of the meaning and direction of the modern age. He also injects a word of caution into our intellectual pursuit of meaning, warning us from falling into the egocentric tendencies that afflicted earlier readings. His arguments help us understand the limitations of the philosopher and the historian, but we must not take it as a reason to undermine earlier intellectual and cultural contributions.

The Axial-Age thesis has been received with a mixture of reactions, varying from enthusiasm, to cautious reservations, to thorough dismissal as a "convenient myth."[69] Obviously, there is a considerable amount of speculation in the effort to construct the reality of the Axial Age out of scattered information we have about a somewhat distant past. But given the archeological and discursive knowledge we have about the civilizations, religions, and personalities of the Axial Age, no dismissal of that past is credible. What is less certain is the existence of a full account of that age, and the breakthrough that links that relatively distant age to our modern age. Lain Provan, who described the "Axial Age" as a "Convenient Myth" in a book with the same title, took an issue with Jaspers' claims of the unity of history in the period 800 to 200 BCE. Drawing on Eric Voegelin's critique of Jaspers' thesis, he questions the assertion that people were able to communicate from the same horizons of consciousness when in reality members of different ancient civilizations came from completely different systems of faith, built around markedly different views of the cosmos.[70] This objection only underscores the limitation imposed on inter-civilizational communication, and the difficulties of seeing eye to eye on broad scope of issues, but cannot form the ground of an utter refutation of the claim, as the author of the *Convenient Myth* suggests.

Voegelin is equally suspicious of the claims made by Jaspers because the open communication across different religio-cultural systems assumes the presence of uniform categories of thinking, as it disregards the order of ranks that separate different civilizations.[71] Yet such an objection is only valid with

regard to casual conversation among members of the nobility that represent competing sociopolitical orders. It would not be true among merchants involved in ongoing trades or students of learning engaged in prolonged studies of ideas. For we know that despite the closed cultural spheres to which we confined the higher classes of ancient civilizations, exchange among traders and seekers of wisdom and learning persisted across time, even among the warring Christian and Muslim dynasties in the Iberian Peninsula and the Near East. Voegelin's more penetrating critique of Jaspers, and also of Toynbee, relates to the exclusion of "Judaism from the representative assembly of 'higher religions'," and in eliminating it from "the earlier and later spiritual out-bursts of Moses and Christ, or of Mani and Mohammed."[72] This critique is quite valid, and I would add to this list of impactful spiritual personalities Abraham, the patriarch and the founder of the monotheistic traditions. These critical observations do not negate Jaspers' thesis all together but only point to certain soft spots that no theory of history can escape. These flaws in the Axial-Age theory of world history should serve to refine the theory but cannot be the ground to rejecting it as a "convenient myth." The flaws and insufficiencies in Jaspers' account are not limited to identifying the spiritual force in the Axial Age that was at the core of the "breakthrough" that led to a historical path, culminating in what could be termed the global age. But in grounding modern science, he seems to jump from the Indian to Greek to modern civilization, ignoring the fundamental and profound contribution of Muslim worldview and civilization, a question we will return to discuss in some details in Chapters 4 and 5.

Perhaps the most intriguing aspect of Jaspers' theory of world history lies in the Axial-Age breakthrough. What is the nature of the revolution that led to the modern age? Jaspers seems to suggest that it is the scientific revolution, which he locates in the passage of science from China to the West via India. Charles Taylor raised the question of the "Axial Revolution" and suggested that it has to be found in the "new tension 'between the transcendental and mundane orders'."[73] More specifically, it could be located in the desire to transcend social distortion of the Axial-Age religions within societies that claim to embrace those religious traditions. Taylor referenced the Hebrew prophets who lived in the Axial Age, beginning with Prophet Jeremiah, and found themselves in opposition to the practices of Israel in the name of God that they condemned as contrary to God.[74] The critical stances taken by the Hebrew prophets are incidents of "transcendental" motive, both in the sense of appealing to the transcendent, from whom they acquire their motivation, and in the sense of moving beyond the conditions being condemned. Taylor seems to find the Axial-Age breakthrough in the "higher religions" of the Axial Age, particularly those that emphasized the values of "social order, cosmos, human good." This emphasis could be found in its most unique and lucid form in Christianity as emerged in the Roman world, and later in Middle-Age Europe, with its emphasis on the absolute benevolence of God and on forgiveness. He even suggested that it could be the amalgamation of

Christianity with Stoicism that contributed to the founding of these values in the Western society.[75] Taylor was eventually drawn toward the Enlightenment with its emphasis on rational cosmology and saw in it the more likely locus of the Axial-Age revolution.[76]

Bjorn Wittrock contends that the Axial Age helped to affirm the boundless possibilities for future that transcends the constrains of any historical moment, thereby opening the door for transcending the bounds of any specific social formation and embracing new "cosmologies that made an explicit and sharp distinction between a mundane and a transcendental sphere."[77] The tension between the transcendental and the mundane is not uniform across the different Axial-Age religions and, hence, takes different forms in the cultural-cosmological formations of different religions. The variations open the door to different paths to modernity, as well as "multiple axialities." He identifies five forms of modernity: the ancient Israel, Sinic, Indian, Persian, and Greek. Among the five, the transcendence-mundane tension is more dominant in ancient Israel.[78] Other breakthroughs took different cultural-cosmological forms, including the philosophical–political of Greece, universal–inclusive of China, pluralistic–semantic of India, and dualistic–agential of Iran.[79]

While transcendence is embedded in all religions, it is evidently in ancient Israel, or the Abrahamic spirit, where transcendence was intensified, combining the sense of both going beyond the moment and the transcendental sense of the divine as existing beyond the world. Could this be the motor of the breakthrough that we are searching for? We will examine monotheism and the Abrahamic traditions in some details to understand the sense of transcendence that grew within one of the longest transcendental-interpretive religion in human history. The idea of transcendence is, therefore, central to the formation of the Axial Age, because it is instrumental in the development of human consciousness in its relationship to its total existence and to other human beings. The idea of transcendence pushed humanity beyond itself and forced it to recognize its own consciousness in the life of unfamiliar strangers, so much so that "It is impossible for man to lose transcendence, without ceasing to be man."[80] The idea of transcendence has been, as such, a humanizing principle throughout human history.

Jaspers' Axial-Age thesis represents a bolder step to broaden the discussion about the ground of the modern age than was once the focus of Weberian sociological patterns half a century earlier. Weber also wanted to look beyond the European Enlightenment, the Eurocentric focus of European historians and philosophers, particularly away from the Hegelian historicism. Still, Weber's views remain Occidental to the core. In the process of examining various paths of rationalization, he presented modern European society in the familiar line of exceptionalism. Everything in European society was unique, from the distinctive features of Western society and its unique capacity to develop advanced science, for "Only in the Occident is there 'science' at the stage of development that we today recognize as 'valid'."[81] Similarly, the system of "legally trained civil servants" is unique in world history. Eventually,

the Weberian account of Western society is one of self-congratulation and exaltation. It goes without saying that the Enlightenment has produced impressive philosophical and scientific advancement, but the obsession with affirming Western uniqueness and exceptionalism reflects a sense of insecurity in presenting its own achievements. There was a deep need to declare the unprecedented and unmatched capacity of European achievements and an emphasis on the superiority of Occidental society and culture. Modernist theorists took this self-congratulatory spirit a bit further by declaring that Western modernism was the only possible way to modernity.

Our journey to trace the patterns of modern developments has taken us all the way to the Axial Age, where we discovered the significance of the idea of transcendence in achieving the Axial breakthrough that brought us to the modern age. The structure and nature of the idea of transcendence remains, however, blurred and unclear. To clarify it we will turn to study the monotheistic traditions to find out if these traditions have advanced the type of transcendental ideas and social dynamics that gave rise to our modern world and how those traditions affect our world today and influence the possibilities of a global breakthrough.

Notes

 1 Marshall McLuhan, *Understanding Media* (Corte Madera, CA: Gingko Press, 1964, 2003), 6.
 2 Marshall McLuhan, *Letters of Marshall McLuhan* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1987), 254.
 3 Arnold Toynbee, *Civilization on Trial, Civilization on Trial* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1947), 223.
 4 Ibid.
 5 Ibid.
 6 Ibid.
 7 Ibid.
 8 Ibid, 15.
 9 Arnold Toynbee, *Study of History*, Vol. I-IV, (New York: Dell Publishing, 1946), 21–27.
10 Ibid, 31.
11 Ibid, 32–37.
12 Ibid, 37.
13 Ibid, 31.
14 Ibid.
15 Ibid, 158.
16 Ibid.
17 Ibid, 23–24, and 150.
18 Oswald Spengler, *Decline of the West*, trans. Charles Francis Atkinson (Random Shack, 2016), 38.
19 Ibid, 127.
20 Ibid, 128.
21 Ibid, 129.
22 Ibid, 49.
23 Ibid, 127.

24 Ibid, 384.
25 Ibid, 385.
26 Toynbee, *Civilization on Trial*, 216.
27 Toynbee, *A Study of Civilization: Abridgement by D.C. Somervell* (Oxford University Press, 1946), 55.
28 Ibid, 55.
29 Ibid, 55–56.
30 Ibid, 297.
31 Ibid, 55.
32 Ibid, 55.
33 Arnold Toynbee, "A Study of History—What I Am Trying to Do," *Diogenes*, vol. 4, no. 13 (January 1, 1956), 6–10.
34 Ibid.
35 G.W.F. Hegel, *The Philosophy of History*, trans. John Sibree (Kitchener: Batoche Books, 2001), 121.
36 Ibid, 126.
37 Ibid, 127–128.
38 Ibid, 129.
39 Ibid, 130.
40 Ibid.
41 Ibid.
42 Ibid, 298.
43 Ibid, 302.
44 Ibid.
45 Ibid, 338.
46 Ibid, 342.
47 Ibid, 372.
48 Ibid, 373.
49 Ibid.
50 Ibid, 36. Hegel relates the story of how an "insignificant old women," and similar "meanest Saracens" approached the first Caliph Abubaker as their equal, commenting that "unreflecting naivete does not stand in need of culture." Still he viewed such acts as examples of the virtue of the freedom of his Spirit.
51 Ibid, 127.
52 Karl Marx, "Contribution to the Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Right," in *The Marx-Engels Reader*, ed. Robert C. Tucker (New York: W.W. Norton, 1978), 16–17.
53 Karl Marx, "Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844," in *The Marx-Engels Reader*, ed. Robert C. Tucker (New York: W.W. Norton, 1978), 66–90.
54 Karl Marx, "The Jewish Question," in *The Marx-Engels Reader*, ed. Robert C. Tucker (New York: W.W. Norton, 1978), 36–45.
55 Karl Marx, *Critique of the Gotha Programme* (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1970), 5.
56 Karl Jaspers, *The Origin and Goal of History* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1953), xiii–xvi.
57 Ibid, xiii.
58 Ibid, 2.
59 Ibid, 3.
60 Ibid, 28.
61 Ibid, 46–58.
62 Ibid, 54–57.
63 Ibid, 64.
64 Lain Provan, *Convenient Myths: The Axial Age, Dark Green Religion, and the World That Never Was* (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2013), 2.

65 Ibid, 5.
66 Jaspers, *Origin and Goal of History*, 244.
67 Ibid, 1.
68 Ibid, 260.
69 Lain Provan called the Axial Age a "convenient myth," but has been able only to show the incompleteness of the evidence provided by Jaspers and that several claims made by Jaspers belong to a speculative philosophy. Jaspers himself did not hide the speculative nature of his attempt.
70 Provan, *Convenient Myth*, 9.
71 Ibid, 25.
72 Ibid, 26.
73 Charles Taylor, "What Was the Axial Revolution?" In Robert N. Bellah and Hans Joas, *The Axial Age and Its Consequences* (Harvard University, 2012), 30.
74 Ibid.
75 Ibid, 34–36.
76 Ibid, 89.
77 Björn Wittrock, "The Axial Age in Global History," in Robert N. Bellah and Hans Joas, *The Axial Age and Its Consequences* (Harvard University, 2012), 106.
78 Wittrock, "The Axial Age," 118.
79 Ibid, 114–118.
80 Ibid.
81 Ibid, 103.

3 Monotheism and transcendental idealism

The structure of world history provides us with a better vantage point to identify the patterns of the historical evolution of humanity and exposes us to broader horizons to understand our current location within the global trajectory than that of the Enlightenment. The Enlightenment is often perceived by modernist thinkers as the axial moment for understanding the entire human history. This vantage point, conveniently selected by modernists, only provides us with a partial view of world history, precisely because the Enlightenment itself is grounded in the moment of the Protestant Reformation, which is similarly grounded in the monotheistic traditions that informed its moment of birth. The Enlightenment leaders themselves spoke the language and employed symbols rooted in Islamic rationalism, as will be illustrated below, that constituted the unification of the Axial intellectual landscape. The language of transcendental rationalism that informed the epistemological horizons that shaped modernism belonged to earlier traditions that proceeded from the Axial Age to the modern age. We need, therefore, to explore further the inner workings of an extensive monotheistic tradition and to understand the dynamics that govern its journey from the ancient Israelites to the dawn of the Occident modernity. What is missing from the modernist explanation is the connection between the Axial Age and the Occidental world where modernity was born. The connection cannot be assumed to be the Roman Church, for we know very well that the church was hostile to any scientific expression that fell outside the church doctrine, so much so that it had already outlawed any inkling of thought that could revive the study of rational philosophy. We also know, albeit somewhat vaguely, that it was the Muslim Spain that provided the initial fuel that set the modern civilizational project going in the farthest corners of the then-inhabited world. As we argue in this and the next two chapters, the Arabic civilization that flourished in Spain for six centuries was crucial for the rise of the modern age.

The focus of this chapter is on monotheism and its evolution from the Axial Age to the modern age. We will argue that as monotheism formed the axial breakthrough, via Protestantism, at the dawn of Western modernity, it also formed the axial breakthrough during the Axial Age via the Abrahamic faith. Monotheism itself went through three moments: the ancient Jewish,

the Latin Christian, and the Middle-Age Islamic. Monotheism has gone through a number of transformations, reaching its revolutionary moment in the Islamic transformation, or what Hegel referred to as the revolution and the enlightenment of the Orient. The nature and extent of this "revolution" and "enlightenment" is not clear in our collective perception of the trajectory that led to the modern breakthrough. This is true not only because the European discourse about the birth of modernity dismisses the role of Islamic monotheism as marginal, confined to preserving Greek sciences and passing them on back to their true European owners, but also because the Islamic transformation of the monotheistic spirit is complex and protracted.

The monotheistic path in world history

Perhaps no sociologist has left a lasting impact on our understanding of the complex processes that culminated in modernity more than Max Weber. It is true that Weber's sociology does not provide us with any full-fledged theory of world history and that he never intended in his writings to present us with a particular structure of world history, but his work is nonetheless very crucial for understanding the social and rational development of humanity since the Axial Age. Karl Jaspers himself tried unsuccessfully to draw on Weber's sociological work to identify the structure of history. He interestingly drew the wrong conclusions from his readings of Weber, as the picture he painted was one of utter chaos. Summarizing Weber's views, Jaspers concluded,

> history has no unity and hence structure, and no other meaning than that contained in the incalculably numerous causal concatenations and constructions, such as also occur in the processes of nature, save that in history they are much more inexact.[1]

For sure, Weber was not at all interested in showing a structured unity of world history, but he nonetheless saw patterns running across religious traditions and cultures. His writings also emphasized the importance of religion for the development of world civilizations, as he placed the prophetic visions at the beginning of the rationalization process that created advanced cultures. In discussing religious esthetic, he points out, in *The Sociology of Religion*, some obvious patterns of religious expressions that suggest certain consistencies in world history:

> Orgiastic religion leads most readily to song and music; ritualistic religion inclines toward the pictorial arts; mystic religions of love favor poetry and music. All experience over the world history shows this relationship: Hindu literature and art, the joyous lyricism of the Sufis, so utterly receptive to the world; the canticles of Francis of Assisi; and the immeasurable influences of religious symbolism, particularly in mystically conditioned mood.[2]

While it is not easy to draw an intelligible structure of world history in the work of Weber, aside from the patterns that traverse any particular religious and cultural experience, he evidently identified historical paths through which the semblance of world history can be detected. Of particular interest is Weber's identification of the roots of universalism in the "prophetic advocates of the cult and ethic of Yahweh."[3] His attribution of universalism to the Hebrew prophets appears initially to be out of place, given the self-perception of the Israelites as the chosen people, beholden to a territorially bound deity. For Weber, it was the instinctive urgency of survival against existential threats from aggressive neighbors that necessitated the historical shift in the identity of Yahweh among the Israelites. As soon as the tribal confederacy turned to a kingdom, he noted, "the ancient warrior god of the confederacy, who had become the local god of the city of Jerusalem, took on the prophetic and universalistic traits of transcendently sacred omnipotence and sovereign."[4]

Weber focuses in his voluminous work, *Economy and Society*, and later in the *Sociology of Religion*, on the charismatic leaders of the Axial Age, such as Buddha, Confucius, and the Hebrew prophets, but never recognized the Axial Age as an important sphere for shaping the modern world. One can hardly find in Weber's writings any obvious connection among the founders of the great religions, let alone a framework of unity. He could nonetheless see paths of rationalization flowing in different geographies down the stream of history. Only one of these rationalization streams appears to speak with a "universalistic" tone, namely the Abrahamic monotheism—"the universalistic monotheism of Christianity and Islam must be regarded as derivative of Judaism, while the relative monotheism of Zoroastrianism was in all likelihood determined at least in part by Near Eastern rather than within Iranian influences."[5]

The universalistic ethos of monotheism was not quite clear in Judaism, but one still could identify some facets of outward looking in the kingdoms of David and Solomon. What is clear in Judaism, though, is its ethical character as manifested in the assertions and positions taken by a long line of the Hebrew prophets. Out of all the transcendent religions that Weber examined in world history, he concluded that only in Judaism, Islam, and Protestant Christianity that one can find "consistent monotheism." Weber attributed this failure to "the powerful material and ideological interests vested in the priests."[6] Not all priests formed, though, an appendment to the full and consistent development of monotheism but only those who resided close to the center of power did. To the contrary, Weber assigned an important role for the "independent and professionally trained priesthood" in the development of both "metaphysical rationalization" and a "religious ethic" that were essential for equipping the community with the necessary tools to "cure the souls."[7]

The ability of the monotheistic priestly class to undertake spiritual renewal is due to a long line of prophets, who were the true bearers of the transcendental ideals and who returned periodically to renew the divine revelation

and develop their monotheistic communities.[8] The prophetic spirit with its clear passion and devotion toward transcendence and its desire to replicate itself inwardly and outwardly did not only serve as a restorative power to prevent the corruption of the faith but also helped in connecting populations across the Near East and beyond. Weber speculated without any clear evidence that the power of monotheistic revelation reached a new height during the time of Elijah, and pushed across geography to Greece, even to the great world empires in Asia, and hence served in "the intensification of international commerce after a long interruption."[9] This observation bears directly on the "Axial Age" theory advanced by Jaspers, though, unlike Jaspers, Weber surprisingly sees prophecy as the catalyst for enhancing greater commercial exchange, not simply a vehicle for greater cultural and religious exchange.

Gradually though, it was the intellectual, rather than the prophet or the priest, that began to shape human consciousness as well as social meaning and structure. The intellectual role stems from religious concerns over individual salvation, Weber contends, as much as concerns over human development. The intellectual's contributions to the formation of modern consciousness in particular has to be found, he points out, in their drive to bring meaning and unity to social order plagued with conflicts and in the struggle to overcome "inner distress" that stems from the constant turbulence of social reality. The intellectual assumed in the post-prophetic times the responsibility to find meaning and unity among human beings and between them and the cosmos.[10] While acknowledging the birth of the intellectual in the Hellenic and Islamic societies, he makes passing reference to both, focusing on the role of intellectual in post-Reformation Europe. He does not, in fact, see any significant role for the intellectual in early Christianity and characterizes Latin Christianity as anti-intellectual.[11]

Weber seems to have mixed feelings about post-Enlightenment intellectualism, dismissing it as rising out of the "need of literary, academic, or cafe-society intellectuals to include 'religious' feelings in the inventory of their sources of impressions and sensations, and among their topics for discussion, has never yet given rise to a new religion."[12] Yet, in his *Protestant Ethic*, he shows that modern capitalism is rooted in the ascetic spirit of Protestantism, particularly in the Lutheran notion of "calling" and the doctrine of "predestination." The idea of calling is unique in that it is the result of the Lutheran translation of the Bible, using the German word *beruf* to translate the word "vocation."[13] The Lutheran doctrine of predestination was, similarly, unique in the history of monotheism. The doctrine of predestination can be found in both Islam and Calvinism, but in completely different forms. The doctrine's significance lies in its ability to greatly energize in Islam and Protestantism the faithful's "rational and religious power." The doctrine of predestination in Islam is understood as "grace" or "fate" and is intended to anchor the faithful's well-being in the hands of the divine. But among the prophets and people of faith, predestination forcefully energized those who were seeking

rational and religious power, as in the case of Calvin and Muhammad, each of whom was convinced that the certainty of one's own mission in the world came not from any personal perfection but from his situation in the world and from God's will. In other cases, for example of Augustine and Muhammad, faith in predestination may arise as a result of the necessity for bringing human passion under discipline and control and the conviction that such a task could only be accomplished through transcendental care, beyond the power available in the capacity of individual actors.[14] In Protestantism, and particularly in Puritanism, the doctrine takes the form of what Weber calls the "double decree," as it unites the destiny of the individual in the life to come with their destiny in the earthly life. The destiny of the persons of faith in the afterlife must be demonstrated in everyday life through good work.[15]

Weber credits, in *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*, the rise of capitalism as an economic system to the Protestant faith and ethical code. For the Protestant faith did not only provide the faithful with the energy to prove their individual worth and demonstrate their faith in this life; it also gave them the ethics needed to generate the capital young entrepreneurs need to pursue their calling and begin business enterprises. Weber linked the rise of capitalism to the work ethics of trustworthiness, keeping promise, and diligence and hard work, nurtured by Protestantism. These virtues assured young entrepreneurs the capital they need to raise from their neighbors and communities in order to start their business ventures. These practices, Weber asserts, were unique to the Protestant world and could not be found in Catholic communities, not even in communities that are made of mixed religions such as East Germany.[16]

Weber shares a short essay written by Benjamin Franklin, in which Franklin underscores the importance of hard work, of keeping one's words, of maintaining honest relationships, and in which people assert that "time is money," "credit is money," and "money begets money" and that the "good paymaster is lord of another man's purse." Weber warned the German reader of mistaking the virtues invoked by Franklin as fragments of utilitarianism. These are, Weber asserts, the very ethics that gave rise to modern capitalism that has been enshrined in the American spirit. For Weber, American's materialism obscures for the casual observer the hidden secrets of its financial success, namely its own spirit and faith. The faith that harbors the virtues needed to create an economic miracle cannot be fully grasped from the outside in Franklin's casual prescriptions but can be found in his deeply held faith and in his biography:

> Benjamin Franklin himself, although he was a colourless deist, answers in his autobiography with a quotation from the Bible, which his strict Calvinistic father drummed into him again and again in his youth: "Seest thou a man diligent in his business? He shall stand before kings" (Prov. xxii. 29). The earning of money within the modern economic order is, so long as it is done legally, the result and the expression of virtue

and proficiency in a calling; and this virtue and proficiency are, as it is now not difficult to see, the real Alpha and Omega of Franklin's ethic, as expressed in the passages we have quoted, as well as in all his works without exception.[17]

Capitalist materialism, and its obsessions with growing money and increasing capital, is grounded, Weber would argue, in the Puritan faith. The secret of the growth of capitalism in the past two centuries is buried deep in Puritan asceticism. The implication of the Weberian account of the rise of capitalism in the United States, and modern European society in general, is that the erosion of ascetic foundation of capitalism poses the greatest danger of all for its future. This question is becoming more relevant to us today, as one may ask whether the ever-increasing personal greed by corporate leaders is connected to the erosion of work ethics and of religious morality at the foundation of modern economic prosperity. We will return to examine this question in subsequent chapters. For now, we need to explore further the role played by monotheism in achieving the breakthrough that led to the rise of modernity and to develop a greater understanding of the structure and inner workings of the monotheistic tradition.

Transcendental idealism and the spirit of monotheism: the Kant–Ghazali connection

Transcendental idealism as a concept is associated today with the Kantian philosophy, particularly with Kant's efforts to establish the conditions for the human understanding. Yet this very effort exemplifies the spirit of specific tradition borne within the monotheistic religions long before Kant. Responding to the urgency of the moment, Kant struggled to work out a solution that could preserve the horizons of monotheistic rationalism in its thinnest-ever form. For monotheism has always rejected, since the moment of its birth, naturalism with all its materialist and positivist tendencies, embracing instead the path of transcendental idealism and, occasionally during its weakest moments, the path of transcendental realism. Being a rational idealist, who was evidently committed to transcendence, Kant was concerned about the rise of deism and positivism and wanted to make sure that rational idealism, which defined his inner spirit and deepest instincts, would not suffocate under these two benign forms of naturalism. Deism was introduced first in Leibniz philosophy and later expounded in the work of Christian Wolff, a highly prolific and influential philosopher in the Holy Roman Empire and a contemporary of Kant. Logical positivism found home in the ideas of Auguste Comte and David Hume. Hume built his positivist philosophy on John Locke's epistemology and the assertion that the human mind is empty at birth of any innate knowledge and that people acquire all their thinking qualities from experience. Locke was, however, an idealist who had grounded his idealism in revelation rather than epistemology, and his notion of the mind as a blank

sheet did not have any practical implications on his commitment to the ideals of freedom, justice, and equality. Kant, on the other hand, could not ignore the theoretical implications of accepting a consciousness devoid of transcendental capacity. The impact of Wolff in the Germanic world during the time Kant contemplated his philosophy was so immense that his ideas, expanded in more than 50 voluminous books, were taught in most German universities in the first half of the eighteenth century. His influence reached out far beyond Germany, as he could count among his prominent adherents and admirers, such personalities as "Voltaire, Emilie du Chatelet, Moses Mendelssohn, Frederick the Great (who had a hand in translating one of his works), and Catherine the Great (who offered him a pension)."[18]

Given the weight of the intellectual arguments advanced by the "Leibnizian-Wolffian philosophy," Kant succeeded in rescuing, in *The Critique of Pure Reason*, the categories of time and space from being lost to positivism, as he successfully claimed them as categories of transcendence. He started the book by making a reference to Wolff as "the greatest of all dogmatic philosophers," not the nicest reference from a Kantian point of view by any stretch of the imagination. Kant persistently shunned throughout his philosophical work all dogmas, preferring to establish the notion of God on pure faith. He kept time and space within the world of transcendence, perhaps because these were the only categories that could be broadly accepted by a German culture that has by then became beholden to the "Leibnizian-Wolffian" philosophical system. Given the nature of his practical reason, one could argue that he could have also posited human inclination to "goodness" and repulsiveness to "evil" as transcendental categories that exist in the mind prior to experience. These were the categories that Islamic rationalists, as we will discuss later in more details, claimed in the eighth century of being innate to the human understanding, despite the complaints of Islam's transcendental realists of the Hanbalite school. The strength of the postulation of the categories of good and evil as *a priori*, in the Islamic rational idealism, is evident in the fact that they continued to be embraced by the Asharite school, even after its founder made several important theoretical concessions to meet the Hanbalite scholars half way and to end the age-long conflict between the two schools of thought. Abu Hamid al-Ghazali, who we will engage shortly, was among those who were committed to pre-experience the presence of the values of "good" and "evil" even as he deconstructed, in a manner similar to that of Kant, all dogmatic arguments asserting that theoretical reasoning is incapable of ascertaining metaphysical knowledge.

Kant defines the word "transcendental" as a "cognitive faculty" and a condition that precedes human understanding. What is transcendental about human reason is not the substance of the understanding, but the form of human reasoning and "cognition that deals not so much with objects but rather with our way of cognizing objects in general insofar as that way of cognizing is to be possible a prior."[19] The transcendental is used by Kant to describe the structure of human consciousness as being independent of the physical world

of objects. This state of consciousness was further clarified by subsuming human cognition under the category of transcendental idealism, to be distinguished from transcendental realism.

> By transcendental idealism of all appearances mean the doctrinal system whereby we regard them, one and all, as mere presentations and not as things in themselves, and according to which space and time are only sensible forms of our intuition, but not determinations given on their own or conditions of objects taken as things in themselves. This idealism is opposed to a transcendental realism, which regards both time and space as something given in itself (independently of our sensibility).[20]

What Kant wanted to prove is that our experience of the objects around us is not an experience of the things as they are in reality but only appearances and presentations of the real thing. That our reason does not capture the essence of reality, or the numina, but only its presentation, or phenomena. Kant's demonstration was then, and still now, quite revolutionary and consequential, as it makes transcendence the ground of human experience. Equally important is the conclusion that our consciousness is grounded in a transcendental self, and so it is free from the control of the natural order. Human beings are not defined by the natural order. The natural order is the object and not the subject of their experience, and as such they control it, or attempt to control it, but are not controlled by it. The human subject remains free even when it is surrounded by the natural order arranged in accordance with laws of necessity. This we encounter in the ethical system Kant elaborates first in the *Critique of Practical Reason* and further expands in the *Critique of Judgment*. In both books he builds an ethical system on the free agency of people, guided by their sense of duty to promote universally ethical principles.

Kant's work provides an important alternative to realism, deism, and positivism. It could not for sure stop the naturalistic thrust of these systems, as realism and positivism continued to flourish as important treads within modernity, but it provided the foundation for both ethical and political claims grounded in the idealism of classical liberalism. Phenomenology became the alternative philosophical ground to discussing the metaphysical foundation of reality, and the Kantian system of rationality provided a solid sub-terrain for promoting notions of ethics and defending human rights. Kantian transcendental philosophy continues to serve as an antidote to the claim that ethics are a social construct and habitual norms and has therefore inspired contemporary neo-Kantians like John Rawls and Jürgen Habermas. Rawls, as we discuss in subsequent chapters, built his rational moral theory on Kantian transcendental idealism, and on Kantian ethics of duty, informed by the ideals of "justice," "goodness," and "rightness."[21] Kant also grounded his universalistic ethics in the notion of humanity, giving his moral philosophy the character of rational idealism. Rawls, unlike Kant, grounded ethics in pure rational arguments, and like Islamic rationalists, asserted the

natural disposition of human being toward moral values, insisting that "our awareness of these dispositions is not of empirical origin, but is known to us only from a knowledge of the moral law and its effect on our sensibility."[22] Kant's efforts to ground moral law in the concept of humanity, however, brings his ethical thoughts in line with the transcendental monotheism of the Abrahamic faith. Kant developed his fundamental law of moral conduct in the *Critique of Practical Reason*, where he associates moral conduct with universally constituted rules that have the form of a maxim he calls the categorical imperative: "Act only on that maxim by which you can at the same time will that it should become a universal law." Kant saw the categorical imperative as the ground for moral law conceived as law independent from morality formed through social interactions, thereby forming the essence of what early rational thinkers called laws of nature. In the *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals*, he asserts that the universal maxim forms the essence of natural law and proposes another formula of the categorical imperative: "act in accordance with maxims that can at the same time have as their object themselves as universal laws of nature."[23] This new formulation of the law is achieved by establishing the conditions for objective application of the universal maxim. These conditions relate to ensuring that the good the maxim aspires to achieve is identified with humanity and not only a good that satisfies personal inclinations of the lawgiver. As Kant put it,

> The ground of this principle is: rational nature exists as an end in itself. The human being necessarily represents his own existence in this way; so far it is thus a subjective principle of human actions. But every other rational being also represents his existence in this way consequent on just the same rational ground that also holds for me; thus it is at the same time an objective principle from which, as a supreme practical ground, it must be possible to derive all laws of the will. The practical imperative will therefore be the following: So act that you use humanity, whether in your own person or in the person of any other, always at the same time as an end, never merely as a means.[24]

The new formulation of the principle of categorical imperative was intended to move from the universal as something the individual can posit based on a personal understanding of the general good to the universal as representative of the notion of the common good identified through an intersubjectively recognized good. Kant is silent on the mechanism by which this intersubjectivity is ascertained; hence, intersubjectivity as the best method for its discovery must be revisited periodically to make sure that the identified general good continues to be intersubjectively valid. Yet, by bringing the notion of humanity into the finding of the general good, Kant falls squarely into the tradition of rational idealism whose roots, as will be argued shortly, could be found in the Mutazilite school that historically grew within Islamic rationalism.

Kant successfully denies, in *Critique of Pure Reason*, the possibility of the knowledge of supersensible matters and, hence, the possibility of the construction of metaphysical world out of the figments of human imagination. Since reason as the faculty of understanding cannot perceive metaphysical objects, its proper use must be confined to the sensible physical order. But since the human rational faculty is transcending time and space, it could lay the claim that spatiotemporality is ideal and, hence, affirms the human capacity to determine its practical freedom in accordance to rules whose aim is the highest good.[25] In the *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals*, Kant argues that while the ethical order is grounded in the practical reason of free human agency and rational consistency, the motive for ethics is dependent on faith. For "without a God and a world that is now not visible to us but is hoped for, the majestic ideas of morality are, to be sure, objects of approbation and admiration but not incentives for resolve and realization."[26]

Kant's philosophy of transcendence falls within the traditions of monotheism and within a particular transcendental tradition that grew historically within monotheism, first in Islam and was latter embraced by the scholastic philosophers of Middle-Age Europe. Kant's commitment to transcendence, humanism, and moral agency can only be understood when it is located within the monotheistic tradition. His refusal to allow a metaphysical system based on pure reason can only be understood when it is viewed from a standpoint that insists on grounding knowledge of the metaphysical reality in monotheistic rationalism and scriptural interpretations. Kant is not unique for doing so in the history of monotheism, for a similar philosophical critique was undertaken six centuries earlier by the Islamic philosopher, Abu Hamid al-Ghazali (1059–1111). Like Kant, Ghazali wrote *The Incoherence of the Philosophers* (*Tahāfut al-Falasifa*) to show that human reason cannot be the ground for understanding the metaphysical world. And like Kant, Ghazali was concerned about the uncritical acceptance of the Greek naturalistic metaphysics by Muslim philosophers, particularly Al-Farabi and Ibn Sina (Avicenna).

Ghazali is perhaps the most influential intellectual in the history of Islamic thought and occupies a commanding intellectual position comparable to that of Kant within modern liberal thought. He was a philosopher, theologian, and jurist with original contributions in all these branches of knowledge. One of his most impactful works is the *Incoherence of the Philosophers* which he wrote during his tenure as professor of law at the Nizamiyyah University in Baghdad, one of the most prestigious universities in premodern Islam. The book, written around the year 1095 CE, was intended to refute the claims put forward by Al-Farabi and Avicenna that denied the spirituality of the divine, reducing Him to a being that could only be described as "objective reason." The two philosophers made these assertions in compliance with the Greek depiction of the supreme being, in the system of divinity that involved a multiplicity of divine figures, who share different aspects of the metaphysical world. Ghazali took issue with the philosopher's claims that their approach to understanding the divine is more superior to that advanced by the scholars of

Kalam (*Mutakalimum*), a branch of Muslim scholarship devoted to the rationalization of Islamic metaphysics in conjunction with hermeneutical analysis of the revealed text. Not only did Ghazali disagree with the philosophers' claims, but he also set out to show that the foundation of Greek metaphysics was questionable and that it produced questionable conclusions.[27] Ghazali also objected that Muslim philosophers' endeavor to substitute the authority of Islamic scriptures with the authority of Aristotle and Plato and therefore insisted that a thorough examination of the Greek metaphysics would show that it does not stand on apodictic proofs (*burhan*) as its advocates contend.[28] Ghazali accepted the validity of Greek philosophy in the area of logic and physics, but set out, empowered by the instruments of Greek logic, to deconstruct the logically constructed metaphysical assertions of the philosophers.

Ghazali endeavored throughout the book to meticulously demonstrate that the philosophers' metaphysical arguments do not fulfill the standards of proof they agreed to and that "they are unable to fulfill demonstration (*burhan*) as they have set it out as a condition in logic. This is why most of the disagreements amongst them is in (the field of) metaphysics."[29] By refuting Greek metaphysics, Ghazali reoriented Islamic philosophy back on a monotheistic trajectory, as it became evident in the arguments advanced by Averroes. The ability of Ghazali to reorient philosophy away from Greek metaphysics to a metaphysics that favors the monotheistic view of the cosmos had had a real impact on ending the schism between philosophy and *Kalam*, compelling *Kalam* scholars to adopt methods and terminology that were exclusively used earlier by Muslim philosophers. In fact, the impact was felt far away from Baghdad where Ghazali lived and taught, as his work was translated into Latin by Dominicus Gundissalinus of Toledo (d. 1190) in collaboration with an Arabized Christian (Mozarab) with the name Johannes Haspanus, who served as the dean of the cathedral of Toledo in the late twelfth century.[30] The book, translated into Latin under the title *Summa theoricae philosophiae* [The sum of theoretical philosophy], "became a principal source on the teachings of the Arabic philosophers in books by authors like Albert the Great (d. 1280) and Thomas Aquinas (d. 1274) that were essential to the development of the Latin philosophical tradition."[31]

To understand metaphysical and ethical concerns that united Kant and Ghazali, despite the great distances that separate them, we need to examine the transcendental tradition that united them within monotheism. The tradition is complex and multifaceted, as it stretches out from the Axial Age to our own time, as we evidently continue to undergo sociohistorical transformation, possibly toward a global age. An elaborate account of the monotheistic transformations that brought us to the modern age will be provided in the next two chapters. We will confine our discussion in the remainder of this chapter to identifying the foundations of monotheism and provide insights into key moments in the trajectory of the development of a particular tradition within monotheism—namely, the tradition of transcendental idealism.

The Abrahamic journey and transcendental ideals

Theologians and historians may not agree on much of what constitutes the three monotheistic traditions but will all agree that monotheism is grounded in the Abrahamic faith and in the actions Abraham took to vindicate his faith at the greatest cost to himself and those who surrounded him. Historians disagree on his exact place and date of birth, and on the trajectory of his journey to the holy land, where he lived most of his reportedly long life. Theologians disagree on which of his two sons was the object of his aborted sacrifice, the reasons for splitting his family into two, and the nature of the law he honored. Yet all agree that he was a person through whom the monotheistic traditions are connected, so much so that we know them today as the Abrahamic traditions.

The fact is that Abraham was, and continues to be regarded as, a central figure in the sacred narratives that define Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. After centuries of bickering and fighting, when the three great religions reached out to one another in modern times they found their clearest connection in Abraham, the Patriarch. In many ways, Abraham is not only the starting point of monotheism; he is also its point of convergence. In Abraham (or Ibrahim as he is known to Muslims) we find the beginning of monotheism's long historical journey in its clearest and lasting expressions. The story of Abraham starts in the Hebrew Bible, the Old Testament, and the Qur'an in his uncompromising stance against the idolatry of his people; in his utter rejection of the idols and unwavering embrace of the one God, the origin of all things. The idols, he notes in his conversation with his father, as stated in Genesis, are made by the very people who worship them, carry them around, and mold them in "dumb" forms. Abraham goes on to question his father as to why would he bow to them instead of worshipping the "God of heaven, who causes the rain and the dew to descend on the earth, and does everything upon the earth, and has created everything by His word, and all life is from before His face."[32] The same story is repeated in the Qur'an, in strikingly similar details. The Qur'an provides though some additional information, describing Abraham's journey to faith as one of contemplation, reviewing different heavenly bodies in search for a deity worthy of worship. He contemplated the stars, the sun, and the moon before he came to the conclusion he announced to his community: "I am free of that you associate with God. I have truly turned my face towards Him who created the heavens and the earth: I have chosen sincerity and am not an idolater."[33]

Abraham's journey to faith reveals certain attitudes and beliefs that would become central to all monotheistic religions and pivotal to ethical expressions associated with the three Abrahamic traditions: the quest for meaning beyond positive experience, a transcendental meaning of the transient state of human existence, and a profound sense of agency the individual has above and beyond being a member of society. It is true that the Abrahamic faith in its strongest and most obvious form is expressed in the community of the

faithful and continues to do so even today. But the faithful's accountability resides outside the community, in the commitment to the Absolute and the Beyond. The search for meaning, and the rejection of meaningless worship of idols constructed by those who bow down to them, is evident in the exchange between Abraham and his father. Subtler is Abraham's sense of moral agency, for the reader has first to understand how difficult it was for any individual in ancient society to challenge established customs and traditions, let alone traditions that are associated with the socially accepted sense of the sacred. Abraham was fully aware of the dangerous territories he was treading into, for the exchange referenced above concludes with Abraham's father explaining the reasons that prevented him from rejecting idol worship, even though he was not convinced of the value of his act: "if I tell them the truth, they will slay me; for their soul cleaves."[34]

There is another important element of the Abrahamic faith that illustrates its role in providing the intellectual and moral impetus that led to the Axial breakthrough and gradually set the globalization that brought religious and cultural communities into close contact. The Abrahamic faith asserted since its inception the duty the faithful has in effecting the salvation of humanity. The belief that humanity is made of brothers and sisters, who are the descendants of a single pair of male and female created by a transcendent God, inspired the humanism and sense of equality unique to the monotheistic traditions. This aspect of monotheism was clearly present in the life of the first monotheist. We read in Genesis:

> Go from your country, your people and your father's household to the land I will show you. I will make you into a great nation, and I will bless you; will make your name great, and you will be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, and whoever curses you I will curse; and all peoples on earth will be blessed through you.[35]

"All the people on earth [and in another rendition, 'the nations of the earth'] will be blessed through you" is often interpreted by Christian exegetes of the Old Testament as a "theological-prophetic vision of the Yahwist himself" and an assertion of the universal nature of the Abrahamic mission.[36] The Qur'an adds more clarity to the Abrahamic mission, as it asserts that God informed Abraham of the significance of his mission: "I will make you a leader of the nations."[37] It looks though that at no time in the history of monotheism one could appreciate the importance of the "blessing" and the "leadership" of Abraham than with the dawn of the twentieth century. The beginning of modern appreciation of the unifying authority of Abraham may be found in the Second Vatican Council that took place in 1962, when the Catholic Church issued its "'Decree of Ecumenism' to restore unity among Christians." The new doctrine also praised Jews as "the people most dear" to God because they received his covenant first. It hailed Muslims as those who "profess to hold the faith of Abraham and together with us adore the one,

merciful God."[38] Granted that the expression that "all peoples on earth will be blessed through you" is open to many interpretations, the suggestion of interconnectedness of humanity in the person of Abraham is a question worth exploring. All monotheistic traditions affirm at least that diverse humanity has a singular origin, and the Qur'an adds to this that this very diversity was intended to create the conditions of "mutual recognition" and "competition in pursuit of the good."[39]

The significance of the Abrahamic faith lies in the formation of the internal attitudes and commitments that were unique to the monotheistic traditions. This meaning was not always immediately clear to the generations that followed him. The full meaning of the monotheistic vocation had to await several millennia and had to undergo a long journey of faith. The Israelites who descended from Abraham's grandson Jacob (Israel) did not always share their father's transcendental values. Little is known about the life of the children of Israel between the time they joined Joseph, whom they miserably betrayed, in Egypt and the time of Moses, who grew up in the house of the Pharaoh against all odds and who was able to lead the Israelites out of slavery to a life of freedom. They moved out of the country of the "god-king" to form their own kingdom under King David and later under countless kings. What was remarkable in their story is that during their wandering in Sinai they entered into a covenant not with a human king but with God, as they became His loyal people and favored soldiers. Even after having kings of their own, the real king in their sight was always the King of heaven and earth.

The covenant that was set initially between God and Abraham became later a covenant between God and the people. In Sinai God did not make covenant with Moses, the prophet who was tasked with the mission of liberating the Israelites from their bondage in Egypt, but with the people themselves. Everywhere in the Near East, the people pledged allegiance to, and have covenant with, their own kings. Not so with the Israelites. Everywhere around them, people obeyed a law that was made by the king. Not so with the Israelites. They had to obey a law that was ordained by the divine, a law that was supreme over everybody, including Jewish kings and prophets. This type of covenant was unheard of and was revolutionary in every sense of the word. It was, as the renowned German Egyptologist Jan Assmann noted, "unique and revolutionary in antiquity."[40] Henceforth and for centuries, one prophet after another came to remind the Israelites of the covenant they upheld as the bearers of the monotheistic tradition. What was equally revolutionary for the Israelites was that their covenant with God became their identity-formation narrative. This was again unique to the faithful who followed the monotheistic tradition. Such identity-formation was in contrast to the neighboring nations. For the identity-formation stories of, say, the Greeks and the Egyptians "were not normative for people's behavior nor did they create their identity as a people. In contrast, prophets constantly called Israel to remember the covenant with Yahweh as their identity-forming narrative."[41]

The Hebrew prophets are all part of a transcendental tradition whose aim is to bring the Jewish community back to its own ideals, as the community continues to move forward from a federation of tribes to a powerful kingdom. All Hebrew prophets were reformers concerned with the deviation of their people from the ideals that defined the monotheistic tradition to which their community belonged. In a way, they constituted a tradition within a tradition, an idealist tradition within the monotheistic tradition. And because monotheism was transcendental, and seeking the transcendent, they constituted a particular tradition, one we may call transcendental idealism that was opposed to the transcendental realism of the aristocratic and priestly classes in their communities that emerged after David established a powerful kingdom. The Hebrew aristocracy and priesthood that evolved around the high priest became soon obsessed with the increase and consolidation of power within the Hebrew community that was already transformed from simple life of tribal communities to a more sophisticated civilization. The Hebrew prophets were all possessed with the ethical foundation of monotheism, in the ideals that formed the ground on which the Israelites were taught how to live and conduct themselves. They were all committed to the ideals of the sanctity of human life and the right of people to live free and have title to their work and property. They were saturated with the ethic of respecting the elderly, caring for the meek, and honoring honesty and fidelity. These were the original teachings of the founders of monotheism, from Abraham to Jacob, and from Joseph to Moses. The founders themselves were prophets and lived in accordance with the prophetic tradition to which they belonged. The Hebrew prophets were also saturated with a deep sense of agency and historical mission, which colored their work and turned the communities to which they belonged into the spring of historical change that marked the essence of monotheism as transcendental idealism and set it apart from other forms of transcendentalism we find in Confucianism, Hinduism, or Taoism. The prophets, the reformers within the Abrahamic tradition, all have the sense of historical mission, for the God they honored and expressed loyalty to

> was not a natural force to be manipulated by ritual, nor a nature god with whom intimate communion could be gained by the sacred dance or other ritual means; he was the Creator God, above nature, whose will was expressed in history and was to be obeyed.[42]

The belief in a transcendental god free from natural limitations, whose power can move and manipulate nature, and who is nonetheless portrayed in sacred scriptures in anthropomorphic terms, provided a unique worldview that had no equivalent in ancient times. Combining this worldview with the belief that the transcendent has entered into a covenant with a particular community at Mt. Sinai created a powerful faith. It was energizing, transformative, and empowering. "I will be your God; ye shall be my people" cemented the relationship between a community that was "chosen" by the universal God,

the source of all being and life who was in turn chosen by the community that was struggling to live up to the divine demands and expectations. The covenant created a union not only between the divine plan and the community aspirations but also cemented the interrelationship among the various Israelite tribes. The interrelationships, and the tensions, could also be seen in the dialectics of universalism and nationalism, of idealism and realism, and of transcendentalism and materialism. The fact that the covenant was conditioned on moral choice privileged the elements of transcendence, universalism, and idealism, whereas the elements of nationalism, materialism, and realism all stem from genealogical and naturalist choices.

The sacred text could, for sure, be selectively interpreted to favor one side of the dualism over the other, but, as a discursive tradition that requires a rational synthesis of its inner contradictions and dichotomies, nationalism would have to be reconciled with universalism, realism with idealism, and materialism with transcendence. However, in fallible human society characterized by diverse interests and limited rationality, the dualism could never be neatly sorted out and synthesized, as the history of monotheism has demonstrated in the four millennia that passed since the time of Abraham. So rather than maintaining a stable synthesis of the opposing forces, the history of monotheism has been one of push and pull between those forces, with times of balance and compromise and other times of internal divisions and open struggle. This dualism continues to plague members of the monotheistic tradition even today. For instance, we see this dualism symbolized today in the Biblical notion of the "promised land." Was the promise a "national" moment in a "universal" trajectory in expanding the circle of faith? Should the prophecy be privileged over the prophetic tradition that emphasizes justice and equality? Can Abraham and the promise given to him be exclusive to one monotheistic community, or is it a promise to all believers who believe in his moral and humanistic vision?

The oscillation between idealism and realism, with their constitutive elements we identified above, is evident throughout the history of monotheism and could also be seen in other non-monotheistic forms of transcendence rooted in the religions of the Axial Age. The greatest test came with the transformation of the Israelite from a tribal community to a great kingdom with tremendous affluence. This transformation during the times of King David and King Solomon created a new reality and led gradually to the rise of nationalism, realism, and materialism and the creation of the cult of the priests who were empowered by the king and who devoted themselves to his empowerment. The Hebrew prophets rose to confront the cult of the king. Initially, the formation of a powerful kingdom under Solomon served as an important moment for the universalization of monotheism, as the power of the expanding kingdom was met with respect from its surrounding pagan neighbors. The universal outlook of monotheism was quite clear. King Solomon was a devoted monotheist, with a clear commitment to establishing the glory of God by building a towering shrine for the glorification of the God of monotheistic Judaism. His outward-looking faith was manifested in the

tolerance displayed toward other faiths. He understood that faith is a matter of the heart that cannot be imposed from the outside, and so he allowed the many wives he took "in political unions from ruling families of neighboring lands: Egypt, Phoenicia, Moab, Ammon, etc." to continue to practice their native religions in Jerusalem.[43] Initially, monotheism was able to capture the admiration of many non-Hebrew communities, from Syria to Yemen and later to Ethiopia. But gradually, pagan materialism and ritualism found place among the Hebrew, and certain rituals linked to the Canaanite God, Baal, found way into the religious parties of Hebrew farmers, who sought blessing for their crops from the "religion of Baal," a religion of farmers "concerned with the fertility of the soil and of beast and man."[44]

The transformation of the Israelites into a nation of military and economic power and the penetration of non-monotheistic beliefs and rituals into the growing Jewish communities reinvigorated the inner tensions between transcendental idealism and the materialism and transcendental realism that tainted the initial covenant. This recurring deviations from the original covenant, sanctioned by the priestly class, provoked a long line of prophets who sounded as complete outsiders to the established priesthood, from Amos to Elijah, Hosea, Nathan, and down to the time of John the Baptist and Jesus Christ. They all stood against the "cult" of the king, as did Jehu ben Hanani who protested against the cult of Baasha, or Elijah who stood against the cult of Baal, Jezebel, and the House of Ahab, to prevent a "Baalized" Israel.[45] Throughout their long history, the Hebrew prophets have all emphasized and reemphasized one and the same message, demanding the practice of justice inherent in the covenant Israel made with God.[46]

The call to return to transcendental idealism, embedded in the monotheistic mission, did not end with the Hebrew prophets. John Bright, a biblical scholar and pioneer in the biblical criticism school founded by William F. Fulbright, saw the message and the spirit of the Hebrew prophets being manifested in the work of religious reformers, including that of St. Paul and St. Augustine, as well as in the work of Martin Luther, the father of Protestantism. For him, the Hebrew prophets constituted a reform movement within the Jewish history comparable to the Protestants reformation. "Let us assert, then," he proclaimed,

> that Protestantism—the Reformation—is not merely an event in history nor a body of doctrine developed in time; it is a state of mind, a viewpoint, that expresses itself from time to time in history whenever men have tried to recover and act upon their heritage of faith.[47]

Rational idealism and the Mutazilite movement

The Mutazilites' rational tradition rose in the first century of Islam (eighth century CE) not only in reaction to the excesses of the Umayyad dynasty who indulged themselves in lavish lifestyle but also against the growing

support of these excesses by Muslim jurists and intellectuals who provided interpretations and opinions that supported the Umayyad's claims that their triumph against their political opponents was an evidence of divine approval of their rule. Initially, the Mutazilites were not organized in accordance to any particular doctrine or movement but were named after Ma'bad al-Juhani, an associate of Abu Dharr al-Ghifari, a companion of Prophet Muhammad and the first Muslim to openly advocate the obligation to speak against the misuse of political authority. Juhani was a precursor to the Mutazilites and was a critical voice against the Umayyad rules and against the scholars who justified the usurpation of power. The Mutazilites were viewed as members of a heterodoxy that included the Shiites who challenged the Umayyad rule as illegitimate and were quietly working to restore political authority to the Hashemites.

The Mutazilite doctrines revolved around five principles shared by their scholars, regardless of any other disagreements they have. These principles focused on the question of *Tawhid* (oneness of God), justice, moral agency, and promoting rightness and confronting corruption. They all agreed that God, being the creator of the world, transcend it in his being and attributes and that there is nothing like him. As transcendental, the divine is beyond human comprehension, even though he relates to humans through his spiritual qualities. These qualities are given in the Qur'an as the beautiful names of God and include such names as the peaceful, the just, the living, the loving, the sustaining, the knowing, the wise, and so on. They also agreed that humans are the authors of their actions and have been granted free will and are capable of actualizing it and should therefore take full responsibility for their actions. God bears no moral responsibility for human actions whether good or evil, but they do. They also agreed that those who commit major sin, such as killing innocent people, will be doomed in the next life. Furthermore, Mutazilite believed that God's actions are moral, as he abides by the very moral ideals he prescribed to humans. He acts only for the good and does not intend evil, and for that reason they disagreed with the Sunni majority who argued that both evil and good come from God.[48]

The Mutazilite rational tradition grew in opposition to the scholarly tradition that was predominantly legalistic and textualistic that confined cosmic and theological understanding to the literal interpretations of the text. The textualistic tradition gradually acquired a dogmatic bend, insisting on the falsity and deviance of any inferential readings of the text and the application of reason into the textual analysis of the sacred text of Islam—Qur'an. "Traditionalism" in Islam stands in opposition to "Islamic rationalism" and not just to modernism. This should be obvious because "modernism" as the term used today to describe the rational tradition grounded in the Enlightenment was intended to present that last stage in a particular conceptualization of history, based on the triad of ancient-medieval-modern. If, on the other hand, we use the term "modern" to signify the rational essence of social life then Islamic rationalism should signify modernity of a sort. Trying

to locate Islamic rationalism in the continuum of ancient-modern compels us also to question the juxtaposition of the modern with the traditional, as both concepts constitute a particular tradition. If by "tradition" we refer to a set of beliefs, principles, or ways of thinking or acting by a group of people, then traditionalism, rationalism, modernism, and postmodernism are all traditions. When we discuss the inner tensions among groups of people who share certain beliefs, understandings, or values, then we are discussing terms among different traditions, some of which privilege reason and its critical role in understanding the world over the uncritical reception of narratives and explications that relate to bequeathed knowledge. We use in this study the notion of rational tradition in the above signification, and we use "traditionalistic" to underscore a specific type of tradition that is obsessed with defending the status quo and inherited knowledge. This is not simply an attempt to free the term "tradition" from its use in modernist theories but also to shed light on the presence of traditions that stretch out over millennia that honor the place of critical thinking in the development of creative ideas and actions.

In Islamic thought, traditionalism, as a tradition obsessed with sticking to the surface meaning (*ma'na zahir*) of the text, was borne in the prophetic narrations associated with the Salafi and hadith-confined tradition, and all forms of textualism that privileged the narrated text, no matter how weak and uncertain its relation to the Prophet of Islam, over the use of analogy and other forms of rational analysis. The dichotomy between the rational and textualist traditions was partially overcome in the Asharite tradition that was forged by an originally Mutazilite scholar with the name of Abu al-Hassan al-Ash'ari. The Asharite thought presents a creative synthesis of the rational tradition of the Mutazilites and the narrational tradition of the Hanbalites. Initially, this transformation created a new front for the Mutazilites to deal with, as the Asharites sided with the Hanbalite interpretations on key religious doctrines. Eventually, the Asharites drew closer toward the Mutazilite worldview, and by the time Ghazali wrote his transformative scholarly work, theological Muslim thought took a major turn toward a more philosophical approach to understanding metaphysics that was more in keeping with the monotheistic worldview. For what was significantly different about the Mutazilite approach to understanding of how reason relates to divine revelation was their insistence on the capacity of reason to independently ascertain the truth in its essential and general forms.

For Mutazilites, human beings have the innate capacity to identify the truth that they encounter in the real world. Human reason, they maintain, has the categories of understanding and moral judgment prior to experience. Human intellect has the capacity to bring order to its surrounding by organizing the things of the world through the categories. The principles of logic are born internally, and the mind applies them to the external world to make sense of it and to rationally organize its diverse substance into an ordered universe. This part of their epistemology was shared by their rivals in the Asharite school of *kalam*. And this is exactly what Kant asserted in his *Critique*

of Pure Reason, albeit in much more thorough and abstract presentation. What was unique to the Mutazilites is their assertion that the human mind is capable of distinguishing right from wrong *a priori*. They asserted, in other words, that the moral agency of people is not contingent on divine revelation, as human beings do instinctively know that killing the innocent and stealing are wrong. What divine revelation does is to affirm what is innately known to people, at least in its general form. For the Mutazilites, ethical principles were not norms born within social judgment, but universal principles equally valid for human being and God. God's actions are subject to the same ethical principles, as they are constitutive of the universal truth.

> The Mutazilite defense of the belief that God is bound by the same code of value as human beings was often conducted via a defense of the view that moral values are independent from revelation, since the contrary perspective, taken up by the Ash'arites, consisted of the belief that acts acquire their values when divine command or prohibition attaches to them, and that it was revelation that promulgated the values of certain acts. The universal human knowledge of such moral truths—even on the part of those who adhere.[49]

For the Mutazilites, the principle of justice describes both the human and divine acts. Human knowledge of justice as a general category to guide human actions is therefore independent of revelation. Such knowledge is a necessary knowledge and forms an intrinsic part of the constitution of the human mind. It is a knowledge that precedes experience and not acquired through social interaction. The distinction between necessary (*daruri*) and acquired (*muktasab*) knowledge became part of the argument accepted by the Asharite, as well as by the thirteenth-century Hanbalite scholars.[50] What is a necessary knowledge is not the particular rules of ethics, but rather the universal moral propositions, such as "injustice is evil," "thanking the benefactor is right," and "it is obligatory to repay debts."[51] When challenged as to the ground of their assertion, the Mutazilite would direct their opponents to "turn inwardly" and examine the reality present in human consciousness. The evidence they claim is borne in one's retrospectively examining one's consciousness.[52] The Mutazilites did not speak the language of "consciousness" but only "innateness" (*fitra*); such language appeared around the eighth century within the *Sufi* tradition as "*wijdan*." But as Richard Martin put it, "if that is understood merely as a reification of one's moral knowledge, then one might say that for the Mutazilites, 'our conscience simply says so.'"[53]

In concluding this brief examination of the rise of rational idealism within monotheism, a rational foundation within the Islamic branch of discursive tradition that grew around the internal debates about how monotheistic values acquire their moral and legal forms, it is important to understand the notion of natural law as was presented in Islamic thought. The notion was expressed most lucidly in the ideas of the Mutazilite and, to lesser extent, in

the Asharites. At the heart of the Mutazilite tradition was the ever-present objective of demonstrating the "equivocity of moral values between the domain of the worldly or perceptible domain," the everyday world, and the metaphysical world that humans could intuitively "feel" its presence though it is unseen and empirically inaccessible through the senses.[54] So they did not limit the realm of the moral order to the human act in the natural world but insisted that the metaphysical world is governed by the same moral principles. For the Mutazilites, the law that must govern social behavior is a moral law and is grounded in human nature, i.e. in the innate qualities of conscious humans. People are born with a moral sense and can distinguish beauty from ugliness, good from evil, and right from wrong. Although they acknowledge the sacred text and were cognizant of the Qur'anic references to the innate goodness of people, they avoided bringing the revealed text to the discussion, knowing that their interlocutors are masters of textual manipulation and are equipped with an endless number of prophetic narrations that grew over the centuries that they could bring to back them up in any public debate.[55] The Mutazilites' insistence on privileging ethicality over power, even over omnipotence, was both remarkable and profound. They never wavered in their commitment to transcendental idealism, despite the tremendous pressure that was brought to bear on them by the traditionalists, even by Asharite rationalists. They did not have any unassailable response to their critics who themselves denied intuitive knowledge of right and wrong, apart from revelation, and demanded irrefutable proof. Their response was to refer to the intuitive capacity of human consciousness or a reference to the fact that "killing innocent people" is considered a crime and sin by all religious and cultural communities. This was not seen as irrefutable evidence, given the fact that people do entertain the possibility and the capacity to act against moral demands. Yet, the Mutazilite never claimed that all ethical statements and beliefs are innate but only general maxims that reason dictates appear, prima facie, as intuitively good (or beautiful) or intuitively evil (or ugly). Providing an irrefutable proof of certain innate moral qualities of the human being seemed to always conflict with the freedom of the human will and, hence, could only be ascertained subjectively or intersubjectively and affirmed through social consensus.

Natural law and the quest for equal rights

While Muslim jurists, both idealists or realists, had no quarrel over the equality of human beings or the need to recognize the equal dignity of people, as these values were explicitly presupposed by the Islamic law, their applications in a specific instance were subject to interpretation and debate. Furthermore, Islamic law was from the very beginning outside the preview of the Caliph and the Sultan and under the authority of the jurists' consensus. The Enlightenment thinkers, on the other hand, had to develop the social consensus, or the social contract, that would free the legislative authority from the

monarch and effectively shift the sovereignty of the law to the people. The conceptualization of natural law as inherent values was instrumental for Islamic rationalism, relating to the principles of jurisprudence, but natural law for Enlightenment thinkers was foundational and must be constructed completely through the power of rational arguments and must be based on social consensus. Enlightenment scholars differed over the source of natural law and its grounding, even though they acknowledged its importance for organizing human society. In fact, the philosopher whose name is often brought in any discussion on natural law and natural rights has denied completely any innate quality that one could assign to natural law or morality in general. John Locke expounded natural law and used it to establish human liberty and equality in his *Two Treatises of Government*, but still denied in his *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding* the possibilities that people are born with innate qualities of any sort. In the latter work, Locke affirmed that reason is capable of knowing many truths, but this knowledge is not based on any *a priori* intellectual capacity.[56] For him such knowledge undermines the need for a rational pursuit of truth, as such an assumption would deny people the ability to realize that truth is always the result of "the labour of our thoughts."[57] The bottom line for Locke for accepting the claims of innate knowledge is for it to be accepted universally. Since people could always deny innate morality, innate knowledge does not constitute a proper claim of natural law.[58]

Natural law arguments are, though, central to Locke's endeavors to build society on the basis of the equal dignity of citizens. He sets out to establish the equality of all people and deny that God gave kings exclusive authority over society or that it was based on any preordained patriarchy.[59] Locke argues that in a state of nature, prior to the formation of the state, people live as equals and are governed by natural law, more particularly the principle of reciprocity, whereby each person must treat others the way they want to be treated. In addition to equality and reciprocity (or fairness), natural law dictates that the life, liberty, and property of people be respected, so every person lives in the state of nature be treated fairly by others.[60] The problem though is that in the state of nature, people have to punish the offenders who violate natural law themselves. This task involves a level of violence that people would find it difficult to handle individually and separately.[61] While denying that natural law is rooted in human reason, Locke acknowledges in his analysis of the biblical story of Cain, that Cain realized upon murdering his brother that every other human being would now have the right, by nature, to slay him. He examined the psychology of Cain in order to prove that people do spontaneously recognize the dictate of a natural law.[62]

The challenge of enforcing the law of nature in the state of nature motivates people to enter society and establish civil government, whose aim must be to preserve their natural rights.[63] The first item of business in political society is to establish "legislative power" capable of promulgating positive law that governs everyone, including the legislature, to promote the public good within the confines of natural law.[64] Yet, for Locke, this equality that

empowers all members of society is not dependent on a fictitious society but is sanctioned by divine providence and empowerment, rooted in long history that stretches from Adam all the way to the Enlightenment time. It is not only natural right, borne out of an evident equality and the need to cooperate in a politically ordered union, that makes such a vision of society possible, but also

> revelation, which gives us an account of those grants God made of the world to Adam, and to Noah, and his sons; it is very clear, that God, as king David says, Psal. cvx. 16, "has given the earth to the children of men; given it to mankind in common."[65]

The biblical language is evident in the Lockean justification of society of the free and equal citizenry, despite the striking absence of equality in the early Enlightenment society that was made of lords, barons, warriors, and peasants. Social and political inequality was so pronounced around the time Locke presented his thesis that it must have sounded absurd, even irresponsible. Sir Robert Filmer, the mouthpiece of patriarchalism and the divine right of kings, could not imagine that anyone other the King would have the capacity to rule England, as he declared "that there cannot be any multitude of men whatsoever, either great or small … [but] one Man amongst them, that in Nature hath a Right to be King of all the rest."[66]

   As modern society gradually moved on, the work of Hobbes and Locke continues to be important as the authoritative ground of natural rights. Several attempts have been made to transcend the metaphysical grounding of the principle of equality and justice, including the latest attempt made by John Rawls in his *Theory of Justice*. Yet these attempts are less than satisfactory as they tend to be exceedingly theoretical and complex. The challenge of founding equality outside transcendental idealism remained extremely challenging. Jeremy Waldron points out "that Locke provides us with 'as well-worked-out a theory of basic equality as we have in the canon of political philosophy.' But for us it is a challenging theory because its foundations are unabashedly religious."[67] Waldron underscores the fact that the language of equality was substantiated with countless references to divine wisdom and providence: "God created all of us in what was, morally speaking, '[a] state … of equality, wherein all the power and jurisdiction is reciprocal, no one having more than another' (2nd T: 4), all of us lords, all of us kings, each of us 'equal to the greatest, and subject to no body' (2nd T: 123)."[68] Waldron contends that modern scholars who wrote extensively on social and political equality, such as Ronald Dworkin and John Rawls, took Locke's justification for granted, as they distanced themselves from the history of the concept and its grounding in the monotheistic traditions.[69] He points out that while Rawls' system of justice to which he devoted a lifetime to develop does still require a premise of equality, "strong enough to structure the original position and substantial enough to provide a basis for mutual respect in a well-ordered society."[70]

Sensing the difficulty of building equality on an abstract theory of justice, Rawls opted, in his theory of political liberalism, to build an overlapping consensus among social actors, including actors who derive their sense of justice from a religiously based justification. For sure, the ground need not be a direct reference to a sacred text, but it should also not intentionally exclude the history of political and rational thought and pretend that world history began in the twentieth century. Waldron, himself a legal positivist, sees the need to engage religious text if that is required for understanding its concrete context. To this we may add that its engagement become a must if the religious texts and sociohistorical movements are integral to the growth and evolution of modern society and its foundational institutions. Undoubtedly, liberalism founded its moment of birth in the European Enlightenment, but the moment came about within a transcendental tradition that grew within monotheism and was shaped by countless communities, and which, with a specific intellectual thrust, we term "rational idealism" and discuss it in detail in subsequent chapters. In the next two chapters, we delve deeper to identify trends that were shaped in the Islamic civilization that bear a direct impact on the shape of modern society and examine how those recurring patterns influence our modern world. Liberalism grew into a more complex movement in the twentieth century but never departed far from its founding ideas of liberty, equality, and government by consent. The fact that human rights are enshrined today in a universal declaration that has received a global consensus through the formal attestation of every nation represented in the United Nations provides a great testimony to the universality of human rights and the possibility of founding those rights on universal consensus. This should give us more hope for humanity's capacity for moving forward to ascertain globally, and through international law and organizations, the values of freedom, equality, and justice.

The debates concerning the values and ideas that should define the postmodern world involve ever-increasing segments of the human race, with growing convergence and interaction, but still with some profound disagreements about future directions, as we saw in Chapter 1. Yet, when we look at a longer stretch of world history, we see that those debates and disagreements have always been part of human society. Debates, mutual learning, and exchanges of thoughts and experiences have been part of human historical interactions in broader ways than many people realize today. We identified in this section a debate about human nature and natural law that spread across history and geography with regard to innate knowledge and the source of natural law. Lockean conception of human understanding on the existence of a priori knowledge clashed with those of the Mutazilites. But these disagreements have nothing to do with differences in historical epoch or religious diversity, as many contemporaries of Locke stand closer to the Mutazilite position than to Locke. Thomas Hobbes, for one, asserted in *The Leviathan* that natural law founded by reason consists of various maxims, including the maxim to preserve life, protect self against harm, seek peace, and so on.[71]

These are the self-evident truths that people of wisdom and integrity reach, despite their cultural, civilizational, and age differences. Natural law in the Hobbesian sense sounds much like that of the Islamic rationalist who lived eight centuries earlier.

Notes

1 Karl Jaspers, *The Origin and Goal of History* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1953), 270.
2 Max Weber, *The Sociology of Religion*, trans. Talcott Parsons (Beacon Press, 1992), 245.
3 Ibid, 24.
4 Ibid.
5 Ibid, 25.
6 Ibid.
7 Ibid, 31.
8 Ibid, 32.
9 Ibid, 48.
10 Ibid, 123.
11 Ibid, 130.
12 Ibid, 136.
13 Ibid, 198.
14 Ibid, 204.
15 Ibid.
16 Max Weber*, Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*, trans. Talcott Parsons (London: Routledge, 1992), 46.
17 Ibid, 62.
18 Matt Hettche and Dyck, Corey, "Christian Wolff," *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, ed. Edward N. Zalta (Winter 2019 Edition), https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/win2019/entries/wolff-christian/
19 Immanuel Kant, *The Critique of Pure Reason*, trans. Werner S. Pluhar (Indianapolis, IN: Hackett Publishing Company, 1996), 64.
20 Ibid, 401.
21 Benjamin J. Bruxvoort Lipscomb and James Krueger (ed.), *Kant's Moral Metaphysics: God, Freedom, and Immortality* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2010), 24.
22 Ibid, 5.
23 Immanuel Kant, *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals*, trans. Mary Gregor (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 44.
24 Ibid, 37.
25 Ibid, 133.
26 Quoted in ibid., 137.
27 Frank Griffel, *Al-Ghazali's Philosophical Theology* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009), 99.
28 Ibid.
29 Quoted in Griffel, *Al-Ghazali's*, 100.
30 Frank Griffel, "al-Ghazali," *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, ed. Edward N. Zalta (Summer 2020 Edition), https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/sum2020/entries/al-ghazali/ (accessed July 19, 2020).
31 Ibid.
32 Genesis XII 1–4.
33 "Then, when he beheld the sun rising in all its splendor, he said: 'This is my Lord? This one is the greatest of all!' But when it set, he said: 'O my people!

Surely, I am free from that you associate with God. I have truly turned my face towards Him who created the heavens and the earth: I have chosen the sincere way and am not an idolater'" (Qur'an 6:77–78).

34 Genesis XII 6.
35 Genesis 1–6. See also Martin Goodman et al. (ed.), *Abraham, the Nations, and the Hagarites Jewish, Christian, and Islamic Perspectives* (Leiden: Brill, 2010), 4.
36 Ibid, 19–21.
37 "And remember that Abraham was tried by his Lord with certain commands, which he fulfilled; He said; 'I will make thee a leader to the Nations.' He pleaded; 'And also (Imams) from my offspring!' He answered; 'But My Promise is not within the reach of evil-doers'" (Quran 2:124).
38 Bruce Feiler, *Abraham—A Journey to the Heart of Three Faiths* (Perfect Bound, n.d.), 124.
39 "O minkind, we created you from a male and female, and made you into nations and tribes that you may *recognize* each other. He who has more integrity has indeed greater honor with God. Surely God is all-knowing and well-informed" (Qur'an 49:12). Also,

> If God had so willed, He would have made all of you one community, but he has not done so, in order that he may test you according to what he has given you; so compete in goodness. To God shall you all return, and He will tell you the truth about what you have been disputing.
>
> (Qur'an: 5:48)

40 Matthias Wenk, "What Is Prophetic about Prophecies: Inspiration or Critical Memory?" *Journal of Pentecostal Theology*, vol. 26 (2017), 182.
41 Ibid, 183.
42 John Bright, "The Prophets Were Protestants," *Interpretation*, vol. 1, no. 2 (1947), 159.
43 Ibid, p 166.
44 Ibid, 165.
45 Ibid, 169.
46 Ibid, 177.
47 Ibid, 154.
48 Richard C. Martin and Mark R. Woodward with Dwi S. Atmaja, *Defenders of Reason in Islam: Mu'tazililism from Medieval School to Modern Symbol* (Oxford: Oneworld Publications, 1997), 11–15.
49 Ibid, 5.
50 Ibid, 16.
51 Ibid.
52 Ibid, 18.
53 Ibid, 22.
54 Ibid, 23.
55 The Qur'an speaks, for example, of "the natural disposition" that is innate to human beings.

> So set your face steadfastly towards the [one ever-true] faith, turning away from all that is false, in accordance with the natural disposition which God has instilled into man: [for,] not to allow any change to corrupt what God has thus created—this is the [purpose of the one] ever-true faith; but most people know it not.
>
> (Qur'an 30:30)

56 John Locke, *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding* (Prometheus Books, 1995), 4–5.
57 Ibid, 6.

58 Ibid, 11.
59 John Locke, *Two Treatises of Government and a Letter Concerning Toleration* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2003), 28, 61.
60 Ibid, 118–119.
61 Ibid, 120–121.
62 Ibid, 124.
63 Ibid, 122–128.
64 Ibid, 175.
65 Ibid, 182.
66 Jeremy Waldron, *God, Locke, and Equality: Christian Foundations in Locke's Political Thought* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 5.
67 Ibid, i.
68 Ibid, 6.
69 Ibid, 3.
70 Ibid, 45.
71 Thomas Hobbes, *Leviathan* (New York: Touchstone, 1997), 80–81.

4 Universal values and discursive traditions

Prophet Muhammad established a community of believers in the monotheistic message he proclaimed in the tribal federation of Medina, after he was rejected in his hometown of Mecca by the tribal leaders of Quraysh. War erupted between the two towns shortly after Meccan Muslims migrated to their new home in the Hijaz region of Arabia's west coast. After few skirmishes between the Muslims and Quraysh, a peace treaty was struck between the adversarial towns on the eighth anniversary of the prophet's migration, and two years later Muhammad and 10,000 of his followers entered Mecca triumphant without a fight. By the time he passed away in the year 632 CE, the whole of Arabia pledged allegiance to the City of Medina. No one could have guessed, watching this seemingly fragile tribal unity being broken by dissenting tribes in the eastern region who refused to recognize the successor to the prophet, the first Caliph Abu Baker, that in the next century, this small city in a remote region in the Arabian desert would defeat two major empires and expand its territorial control from the Iberian Peninsula to the Indus River in Central Asia. Even then, no one would have guessed that the newly Arab-founded empire would transform the old world into a new unified civilization with intellectual, scientific, and artistic enterprises in which people from different religions, cultures, and ethnicities would collaborate to move humanity to a new height of moral and scientific achievements never experienced before. The achievements of the Islamic civilization, which did not reach its full vitality until the sixteenth century, could only be surpassed by nineteenth-century Europe with the rapid growth of modern sciences and the technological revolutions that continue to unfold unabated.

   We examine in this chapter the rise of Islam and look closer at its founding values and beliefs, as they relate to monotheistic ideals. We also explore aspects of religious diversity in the late Axial Age, zooming in on the similarities between the Arab Muslims and Syriac Christians in their understanding of the nature of Jesus. The combination of tolerance toward doctrinal diversity and belief in the right of people to follow the faith closer to their hearts led to the reception of the Arab expansion into areas that were already home to monotheistic traditions. The Qur'anic injunctions that require Muslims to respect the religious freedom of the followers of monotheistic traditions and

the tradition set by Prophet Muhammad in Medina by entering into contractual relationships with confessional communities provided the background for establishing social contracts with the People of the Book, the term that the Qur'an uses to refer to the followers a revealed book. Contracts of social trust ('Aqdu dhimma) bound confessional communities across the old world from Iberian Peninsula to the Oxus valley, allowing non-Muslims to maintain moral, legal, and administrative autonomies while joining each other and the Muslim body in education, cultural, and economic exchange.

More fundamental changes took place in Islamic monotheism that transformed the intellectual into a central player in shaping society. While prophets and priests played a complementary role in ancient Israelites for keeping order and undertaking reform, under Islam the intellectual performed these functions. Jurists emerged as the custodians of Islamic law (sharia) and as *kalam* scholars (theologians) occupied with the task of delineating the doctrines that set Muslim worldviews and the moral and political obligations of the Muslim community. The scholars and jurists under Islam have no special sacred or divine qualities; instead, they derive their authority from their knowledge of the sacred text and from community respect and their ability to explicate the meaning of the text and then relate it to the ever-changing social order.

The birth of Islamic monotheism in the Arabian Desert

From its moment of inception, the self-image of Islam was located squarely within the monotheistic tradition, as it identified itself with the Abrahamic faith. The Qur'an declares that the followers of all prophets from Noah to Muhammad as one *ummah*; one monotheistic community.[1] The Qur'an also commands Muslims to seek common grounds with the "people of the book," or those who follow earlier monotheistic prophets.[2] Islam did not, therefore, set itself against any of the monotheistic traditions that flourished in the surrounding Axial civilizations, and the wars it fought with monotheistic communities, controlled by powerful dynasties and great empires, were essentially political in nature. In fact, Islam was then the foremost monotheistic religion to establish a political order that recognized religious diversity and respected the religious freedom of the followers of other faiths. Prophet Muhammad established in Medina a multi-religious community, based on a set of universal values that constituted the Medina Pact (*Sahifat al-Madinah*).[3] The various rules enunciated in the pact were aimed at maintaining peace and cooperation, protecting the life and property of the inhabitants of Medina, confronting aggression and injustice regardless of tribal or religious affiliations, and ensuring freedom of religion and movement. It is remarkable that the Medina Pact (or the constitution of Medina as W. Montgomery Watt would refer to it) placed the rules of justice over and above religious solidarity and affirmed the right of the victims of aggression and injustice to rectitude regardless of their tribal or religious affiliations.

The constitution of Medina formed the foundation of the political community established by Prophet Muhammad.[4] It established a number of important principles that defined the political rights and duties of the members of the newly established interreligious community, Muslims and non-Muslims alike. The Medina's written constitution adopted the principle of religious tolerance based on freedom of belief that was extended to all the members of the society, regardless of their faith or tribal allegiance. It conceded to the Jews the right to act according to the values and beliefs they held: "The Jews of Banu Auf are one community with the believers. The Jews have their religion and the Muslims theirs." The constitution emphasized the fundamentality of cooperation among the members of the Medina Pact to maintain justice and defending Medina against foreign aggression. "The Jews must bear their expenses and the Muslims theirs. Each must help the other against anyone who attacks the people of this Pact. They must seek mutual advice and consultation." It prohibited Muslims to commit injustice or retaliate against the followers of the Jewish religion without adhering to the principles of equality and goodness. "To the Jew who follows us belongs help and equality. He shall not be wronged nor shall his enemies be aided."[5]

The constitution, further, stipulated that the social and political activities in the new polity must be subject to a set of universal values and standards that treat all people equally. Sovereignty in the society would not rest with the rulers, or any particular group, but with the law founded on the basis of justice and goodness, maintaining the dignity of all. The constitution emphasized the fundamentality of justice, goodness, and righteousness and condemned in different expressions injustice and tyranny. "They would redeem their prisoners with kindness and justice common among the believers," the constitution stated.

> The God-conscious believers shall be against the rebellious, and against those who seek to spread injustice, sin, enmity, or corruption among the believers; the hand of every person shall be against him even if he be a son of one of them,

it proclaimed.[6] The constitution introduced a number of political rights to be enjoyed by the citizens of the Medina city-state, Muslims and non-Muslims alike, including (1) the obligation to help the oppressed; (2) outlawing guilt by association which was commonly practiced by pre-Islamic Arab tribes: "A person is not liable for his ally's misdeeds"; (3) freedom of belief: "The Jews have their religion and the Muslims theirs"; and (4) freedom of movement from and to Medina: "Whoever will go out is safe, and whoever will stay in Medina is safe except those who wronged (others), or committed offense."[7] The constitution established in effect a system of rights provided to individual members of Medina, expressed in legally binding terms, and extended to members as human beings. Clearly, the notion of providing legally sanctioned rights for members of a multi-religious

and multi-ethnic community on the basis of their humanity and with no regard to their creed or ethnicity was far removed from the dominant political culture that set the standards of the time and was far more inclusive than the one that prevailed in the Byzantine or Sassanian Empires. The set of rights and the collective protections were the rudimentary principles that grew over the centuries to the system of political rights that contributed to the modern idea of rule of law.

Islam expanded quickly into the territories controlled by two empires: the Christian Byzantium in Syria and Egypt in the North, and the Sassanian Empire in Mesopotamia and Iran in the North East. The two civilizations were much more advanced in philosophy, science, art, and technology than the tribal Arabs who came to rule them. For Islam was born in a tribal Arabia that has never experienced any period of intellectualism. Most Arabs could not even read and write. Their main intellectual gift was that of poetry, as many of them committed popular poems to memories. Arab poems were the repository of their wisdom, history, and down-to-earth hopes. The Arabic language was fairly developed to express deep feelings, profound wisdom, and meticulous descriptions of life and nature. The Qur'an, with its remarkable eloquence and artistic expressions, became for the Muslim Arabs the words that were worthy to be committed to memory. Many Arabs carried the new sacred book and the new monotheistic religion without fully appreciating the message and comprehending the full meaning of the words they took with them into the Axial-Age civilizations.

Soon, the Nile-to-Oxus region became the hotbed where the Islamic civilization matured. Historians put out many theories to explain the reasons behind this rapid expansion of Islam, first under the Umayyad dynasty, and later under the Abbasid. And while their theories are interesting, they put forward too many factors that might have played an important role separately or combined. An important part of the puzzle relates to the content of the transcendental values that formed the core of the Islamic revelation. Solving the puzzle might lie in the combination of the Arabs' commitment to the monotheistic values that emphasized fidelity to covenants, sincerity of faith, moral responsibility, justice, equal dignity, and universal humanity. The world that came under the control of the Arab conquerors was ready for a new monotheistic message that emphasized society instead of the state. The journey between the moment of birth and the blossoming of a universal civilization was riddled with all types of monumental obstacles and tribulations, and at each of them one could legitimately argue that the newly founded city of Medina was coming to an end. Upon the death of Prophet Muhammad, many powerful Arab tribes in East Arabia challenged the Medina authority and were subdued with the help of the powerful tribe of Quraysh and its many allies. With the assassination of the third Caliph Uthman, a civil war broke out between the two powerful clans, the Umayyads and Hashemites, the latter being the clan of the prophet. The Umayyads, who historically maintained political leadership within

Quraysh before Islam, succeeded under Muawiyah in grabbing power from Ali, the cousin of the prophet, through military discipline and sheer acumen. Civil war broke once more when Muawiyah passed away, and his son Yazid could not maintain the state for long. Umayyad recovered their authority a decade later under the leadership of Abd al-Malik ibn Marwan in 683 CE, and the Umayyads remained in power until the Hashemites under the leadership of the Abbasid Abdullah bin Muhammad recaptured the Caliphate in 750 CE.

The Christian communities of Syria must have been surprised about the swift advance of the Bedouin Arabs against the Byzantine empire. Damascus was then the major city in the Syrian province ruled from Constantinople and was mainly a city run by merchants and landed aristocrats. The Arabs were not only fierce fighters but excellent negotiators, qualities that served them well before Islam in the then-conflict-ridden Arabian Peninsula. The Syriac Christians themselves have been through unending conflicts relating to the nature of Christ and were divided over how to reconcile the claims of divinity with historicity of Jesus and his human qualities. This question created many variations that kept growing, and the disagreements led to the split of the Roman church into the Western church under the auspices of the emperor and eastern churches, divided along doctrinal lines over the true nature of Jesus after the Council of Chalcedon in 451 CE. The split revealed the extent to which Christianity was drawn to the Roman politics and culture. Emperors played a crucial role in pushing eastern churches to part with the Roman church. Roman culture played a decisive role in swaying the debate in favor of the divinity of Jesus because Rome needed to worship a god that it could behold. Never was there in the history of the Romans and Greeks a god that did not take a human form. While the biblical text, on which this controversy was built, uses both "son of God" and "son of man" in reference to Jesus, and hence permits different interpretations, the Roman church was adamant that Jesus was coeval with god. Considerable pressures were applied on successive church councils by emperors, particularly Emperor Justinian who hailed from a Roman tradition that bestowed, in its pre-Christian phase, divinity on emperors. It was unacceptable that the faithful would direct their loyalty and worship to a god that was transcendental through and through. The eastern churches with their sematic cultures and their demands for the worship of an abstract god were more than what the Greco-Roman churches could accept. Hegel expressed, over a millennium later, this agony in his comments on the Muslim "abstract worship," and called it "fanaticism," because he believed that the drive toward a thoroughly transcendental god would only create "abstract thought which sustains a negative position towards the established order of things."[8] Hegel saw nonetheless certain virtues in Islamic transcendence, particularly its commitment to universal values and uncompromising humanism, which makes it "capable of the greatest elevation—an elevation free from all petty interests, and united

with all the virtues that appertain to magnanimity and valor."[9] In fact, it was this very transcendental ethics of the Muslims that drew the Syriac Christian populations closer them.

   The Arabs captured Damascus after defeating the Byzantine army in Yarmouk in 636 CE, just a decade after Emperor Heraclius promulgated that Christ possessed no human will but only a divine will, further alienating Eastern Christianity from Rome. Among the Christians who were already alienated from the efforts of Rome to impose its own culture on the Christian faith are the Nestorians, who formed the backbone of the "'Church of the East', which 'became strong in Syria, the Sasanian empire, and across eastern Eurasia, even reaching Xi'an in China in the 630s'."[10] The church believed in "a single, human, nature (Greek *physis*)."[11] The Nestorians found protection under the Sassanians, continued their pursuit of rational thoughts, and held onto Greek philosophical works, as Western Christianity was growing less tolerant of diversity of thought and became increasingly defined in doctrinal rather than ethical terms. Nestorians were among those who found more affinity with Islamic transcendentalism, and they were eager to engage Arab monotheist in theological dialogue.[12]

   In addition to the Nestorians, two other groups found the new order set by the Arabs more acceptable than the Roman order, the Jews who maintained Jewish communities in southern Syria and in Persia, particularly Damascus and the villages surrounding it, and the Nazarene church that was declared heretic by the church fathers because of deep suspicion of maintaining link with Judaism. Nazarites rejected Jesus' divinity and continued to adhere to the Old Testament along with the gospels of the New Testament. This led to the expulsion of its followers who evidently joined the Eastern Church which was formed of those who rejected the doctrine of Miaphysitism that become official doctrine of the Roman church. St. Jerome, a highly respected father of Catholicism, rejected Nazarites as a heresy group, complaining that they continued to observe the "old law."[13] He also faulted them for living along the Jews and believing that Jesus was born of Virgin Mary and that he "ascended to heaven, after suffering under Pontius Pilate."[14] As we know today, many Nazarites were Jews who accepted the mission of Christ as the Jewish messiah and found no reason in the Gospel to renounce their Jewish history or calendar and were evidently very comfortable to worship the completely transcendent god that was reaffirmed in the Islamic scripture. The Arab found no shortage of help, understanding, and support among monophysites like the Nazarenes who believed that Arabs were god-sent to rescue them from the Roman imperial oppression. This is how it was seen by the ninth-century Syrian Christian chronicler Dionysius of Tel Mahre.[15] "Sebeos the Armenian had written as early as 661 that God had granted to Arabs the lands he had promised to Abraham and gave them victory over the impious Byzantines."[16] Interestingly, followers of the Roman Church, like Anastasios who belonged to Saint Catherine's monastery in Sinai, saw the Arab invasions as a punishment sent by god to the monophysites in Syria for their blasphemy.[17]

Ethos and characteristics of the Islamic civilization

Understanding the Axial Age, its culture and socio–religious dynamics, is crucial for comprehending the cultural environment to which Islam has stepped in to influence and be influenced by it. Marshall Hodgson lays in the *Venture of Islam* great emphasis on the role played by earlier monotheistic traditions, particularly "Zarathushtra (Zoroaster) in Iran and the Biblical prophets among the Hebrews," on the vocation of Islamic monotheism, and on its ability to transform the Axial world into a markedly more harmonious and productive civilization.[18] They all called their people to the worship of the transcendent god and demanded that people individually lead a moral life. Zoroaster, and to a greater extent Hebrew prophets, gave the moral struggle a cosmic dimension, a "struggle between good and evil, justice and injustice, light and dark; a struggle in which finally light and truth must be victorious."[19] Moral life demanded that the faithful should lead a life of sincerity and justice and make the good the aim of all actions.[20]

The Axial Age saw the emergence of four religious traditions in four separate regions at the four corners of what became later known as the "Greater Middle East," a large stretch of land from the "Nile valley to the Oxus basin." The Axial geography was centered in the "Fertile Crescent and the Iranian highlands" where the first alphabet was invented and "Cuneiform languages and Aramaic" were widely used.[21] It was there that advanced institutions to organize society were invented, before they were replicated elsewhere. Each of the four regions has its own orientation and developed its own religious and cultural focus. While they were in many ways different, they all shared cultural habits and religious worldviews that emphasized self-reflection, individual conscience, and rational responsibility. They all developed cultures that evolved around intellectual formulations and expressions. The Indic intellectuals concerned themselves with developing deeper understanding of the inner dimensions of individual spirituality to transcend social injustices and moral limitations of human experience. The Hellenic intellectual focused on the natural order and sought justice in cosmic harmony as it is manifested in the natural order. The Irano-Semitic monotheism that developed in the Axial Age took completely a different route as it pursued its moral understanding in history, in the struggle to bring social order in conformity with the divine command.[22]

The Islamic civilization did not simply bring these regions, religious outlooks, and intellectual orientations into harmony, but attempted to creatively synthesize them into a comprehensive moral and intellectual experience, turning those orientations into facets of a unifying culture and channeling their energies to develop an inclusive civilization that was not willing to give up ethnic, lingual, and religious diversity, as well as the diversity of the rich traditions that grew out of various spiritual, moral, and intellectual pursuits. If anything, Islamic civilization could teach us that it is possible for diverse humanity to live in a global order that provides a core institutional unity

while allowing great autonomy and diversity to people who could freely interact to enrich their collective life. In the great synthesis that enriched human cultures, intellectually, morally, socially, and spiritually, the Islamic civilization consisted of many cultural expressions united around the "high culture" that runs through the urban centers of the old world, a sort of a cosmopolitan culture that has become the center of intellectual debates. What is of particular importance to contemplate, as we examine the Islamic civilization and its contributions, is that what made it last for as long as it did is not the overall unity of its cultures, but the ability of the "high culture" to maintain a sense of unity among diverse ethnic and religious communities, as the center of civilization moved from one region to another. The high culture that permitted the global order of the Islamic civilization to remain intact was able to do so because it was defined not by ethnic and religious specificities, but universal claims embedded in rational and moral traditions that cut across all regional cultures.

The high culture that defined the Islamic civilizational experience was open to change and compromise, incorporating elements of various cultures, particularly those that enrich the collective human consciousness across vast regions. Those compromises, however, hampered the ability of Muslims to "implement the Qur'anic prophecy fully in all its implications," as Hodgson noted in his voluminous work that examined the Muslim historical experience.[23] This also created pushbacks and occasional revolts by those who deeply disagreed with certain transformation in the high culture that they could not, for whatever reasons, agree with. Very often the backlashes were generated by individuals and groups who felt the need to assert their faith whenever things seemed to drift far away from the center. Those revolts were the result of rising tensions between the rationalist and textualist traditions that run on different trajectories. This was not necessarily a negative experience as it forced the rationalists, who were keen on driving society toward whatever moral goals they envisaged, to slow down and consolidate or compromise to ensure that the cultures they represented are kept in harmony and that things are not driven to their extreme ends where no compromise or synthesis is ever possible. The Iraq province revolt against the third Caliph in 656 CE, the textualists' revolt in 827 CE against the Mutazilites' attempt to use the office of the Caliph to impose rational idealism during the reign of Caliph Al-Ma'mun (847–861 CE), and the Arminian revolt against the Abbasid in 850 CE during the reign of al-Mutawakkil are instances of such backlash.

Far from being an example of rigidity and backwardness, as modernist thinkers have understood it, tradition is presented here as a key to maintaining long-term change. Tradition is indeed the guarantor of social change and civilizational continuity rather than being their antithesis. Many leading philosophers suspect that the term "tradition" as being defined by modernist theorists and area study specialists is a misnomer. The list is considerable, as it includes important philosophers and social scientists such as Eric Voegelin, Hans Gadamer, and most recently Alasdair MacIntyre and Jürgen Habermas.

Tradition should never be confused with traditionalism, as many modernist thinkers do. Tradition consists of a set of convictions, principles, and ways of thinking or acting by an intergenerational school or movement. Tradition can take different forms, including traditionalism, rationalism, modernism, postmodernism, and many other "isms." When we discuss the inner tensions by groups of people who share certain beliefs, understandings, or values, we are discussing tensions among different traditions, some of which privilege reason and its critical role in understanding the world, over the uncritical reception of narrations and explications of inherited knowledge. In this sense, rationalism may be one of the oldest traditions of all, as it stretches out over millennia and includes all schools and movements that date back to the Axial Age, that honor the place of critical thinking in the development of human understanding and action.

Change and progress are always the result of inner cultural tensions, and this makes tensions essential for the development of human life. Development and progress, as the Enlightenment scholars were to discover in due time, are rooted in the historical dialectics necessary for perfecting social life. They are rooted in the logic of opposition and transcendence. This logic stems from human limitations and from the cumulative nature of human knowledge and power. The tension often takes the form of struggle between two traditions: the tradition of shared historical identity and the tradition that seeks to transcend the moment and advance ideals that have not been reached and actualized. It takes place between those who see the need to defend cultural identity and the dominant forms of life and those who aspire to transform the moment and change the current rules and institutions. The struggle is between those who are instinctively inclined to cultural preservation and those who yearn for change, between the certainty of the moment and the desire for perfection and to take the risk of displacing the safe and familiar with the disruptive and inspiring.

For sure not every tradition inspires change, as some traditions are mainly interested in preserving cultural practices rooted in an established moral or political order. This for sure is one form of tradition and like all traditions must be subject to both rational and moral evaluations. Such a tradition, no matter how much we rationally disagree with it, serves social and historical purpose as long as it continues to be alive and effective; that is, as long as it does not degenerate into a culture whose only purpose is the mere transmission of the past. A living tradition must be willing to engage in dialogue and justify itself though arguments and reason. Hodgson suggests that one may recognize three moments in the development of cultural traditions within Islamic civilizations: "a creative action, group commitment thereto, and cumulative interaction within the group."[24] Central to the formation of a tradition is an unceasing process of dialogue, both internal within the tradition and external with the other groups and traditions in the larger society. This continuous dialogue is essential for both the tradition and society in which it continues to function, as this dialogue has both cumulative and

creative effects. The dynamic can explain many developments in the history of Islamic civilization, and, as we argue in later chapters, the dynamic is central for the evolution of modern civilization and its ongoing transformation to a global society. This dynamic led, for example, to the rise the Shi'i tradition within historical Muslim society in response to a sense of exclusion and oppression by the followers of Ali ibn Abu Talib. The tradition served as a protest and opposition movement to the successive dynasties that ignored the Islamic ideal for selecting the ruler, before it eventually undermined its claims by being itself transformed into a dynasty. The Shi'i tradition gave rise to the Sunni tradition that was later galvanized around the notion of the "ummah," being the community that carries the monotheistic spirit to the world. The process could also be used to understand the dialectical relationship between two powerful traditions within Islam, the textualist tradition of *Ahl al-Hadith* and the rational tradition of Mutazilites. We argue in the next section that the dialogue between these two traditions was crucial for the development of Islamic law and society. But, before we do that, we need to say few words about another aspect of Islamic civilization, that is, the role played by populism within the Irano-Semitic monotheism.

Populism is an important recurring element of monotheistic traditions and is quite different from the parochial and tribal heritage one may find in the pre-Axial small communities, for it is rooted in the sense of moral and historical responsibilities one finds in monotheistic worldviews. Hodgson examined populism in the Axial societies and found that it exists mainly in the Irano-Semitic traditions. Monotheism shifted the moral responsibility from society to the individual and made the doctrinal elements more accessible to ordinary folks. Populism is expected in all confessional cultures, but it is strongest in the Abrahamic traditions. For in those traditions, history always has moral meanings and implications, and when historical development gets stalled and social life becomes degraded, then populism would be expected to kick off in response to the failure of the "high-culture" and the political elites to maintain grace and dignity in society.[25] So, no one should be surprised to see the surge of populism in Europe and the United States when political leaders have become the conduit for an oligarchical class, nurtured and justified by neoliberal ideology. The failure of the political class made mainly by corporate leaders' single-minded focus on enriching themselves, leaving the population that gives them the safe heaven to flourish and prosper in an unenviable situation, partially explains the rising of national populism. We will return to examine further the rise of national populism in Chapter 9.

The idealism–realism dialectics and Islam's discursive tradition

The Qur'an brought sober awareness to the people of faith, declaring that the value of individual life should never be measured by ease, luxury, and tranquility, but by the struggle and toil to advance the human condition and

uplift the human spirit. To improve the quality of human life, a struggle is essential, and adversity and challenges are to be expected. What the faithful should never compromise is their moral integrity and their willingness to employ the power and wealth they acquired to enhance collective life. The Qur'an, echoing an ancient monotheistic message, makes it clear that human beings are not perfect, and people will err or fall into sin, but they should repent and restore their moral integrity. They should keep their eyes on the ultimate good and should treasure the sacrifices they make for advancing the collective good. The true measure of good life lies in the individual's ability to add to the collective well-being through action and example.[26]

Contemplating the Qur'anic message with its emphasis on reward in the hereafter for moral actions intended to enrich human experience, one is encouraged to promote practices and institutions that embody the monotheistic vision of life. This vision took under Islam the form of rational idealism we discussed at length in the previous chapter. When the people who partakes in monotheistic vision is content with the dominant conditions of their society and feel personal fulfillment, then the experience is more likely to take an alternative form we call in this book the transcendental realism, particularly if the emphasis is placed on maintaining the legacy of the community's founders or on equivocating religious sentiments with the cultural identity of a particular community. The internal diversion into idealism and realism generates the necessary tensions for bringing about creative change, as long as the community as a whole remains anchored in its foundational values. This dichotomy is not merely theological in monotheistic traditions but often takes the form of praxeology as it assumes the form of moral or political activism. In Islam, the dichotomy and the historical struggle were manifested in the tension between rationalist and textualist movements and occasionally in the clash between populism and high culture, as we observe in the clash between the Mutazilites and the Hanbalites in the ninth-century Baghdad. In the intellectual history of Islam, the conflict was expressed in terms of the priority to be given to reason or the revealed text, with the rationalist Mutazilites favoring reason as the final arbiter and the textualist Hanbalites favoring the literal meaning of the text. For the rationalist, giving priority to reason over revelation meant that individual statements based on understanding of the divine text must pass rational judgment to be accepted, since the text must be interpreted.

The rational tradition grew in early Islam in confrontation with efforts on the part of some jurists within the Sunni tradition to support the de facto Umayyad dynasty, declaring any opposition to the de facto Caliph illegitimate. Those who dared to challenge the authority of the Caliph were deemed as violating the Islamic law. Most jurists, including the founders of the four schools of law within the Sunni tradition, as well as the Hashemite Imams who descended from Ali, the son in-law of Prophet Muhammad, kept distance from the office of the Caliph, and declined to comment on the conduct of the Umayyad rulers, even when they grew more oppressive

in their rule and led a life of extravagance that was in stark contrast with the early wise Caliphs. Some jurists openly justified usurpation of power by the Sultan, relying mainly on the prophetic traditions (*hadiths*) in the form of statements that were collected through narrations over the first three centuries of Islam by hadith specialists. One of those who were executed by the Umayyad Caliph Hisham ibn Abd al-Malik, the grandson of the second founder of the Umayyad dynasty, was Ghaylan al-Dimashqi who was critical of the extravagant life of the Umayyads. His execution was justified by Imam Uza'i, a respected jurist with significant following in Syria, and a trusted confidant of Hisham. Not all jurists, though, were quietists or realists. One of the highly respected jurists of the time was Abu al-Hassan al-Basri, a contemporary of Abd al-Malik ibn Marwan and his feared general al-Hajjaj. He took principled positions and spoke truth to power. He did not hold back his honest views regarding the excesses of the Caliph and his generals, but did not justify open rebellion against them, for he equally held the Shiite opposition responsible for the state of disorder in Iraq, and blamed the Muslim community, the ummah, for the chaotic state of affairs as it failed to practice and institutionalize Islamic ethics. To him injustice was not confined to the office of the Caliph but was linked to the practices of the larger community.

Basri's teachings attracted two young intellectuals, Wasil ibn Ata and Amr bin Ubaydillah, who joined his study circle for a while before he asked them to leave as they began to openly criticize the Umayyad rule. They consequently parted with al-Basri and established their own study circle and founded the Mutazilite, the rationalist movement that became instrumental in advancing intellectualism in Muslim society. The Mutazilites were the most powerful proponents of rational idealism and took on themselves the responsibility of challenging the rational realism that dominated society under the Umayyad rule, as they were also committed to challenging the moral quietist positions taken by the jurist class, and set out to refute the theological foundations of the dominant Sunni morality. They played a crucial role, through both their intellectual work and activism, in the development of Islamic theological and philosophical thought, as well as in the development of the "modern" scientific tradition. Islamic rationalism grew later to include the Asharite and the philosophers. The Mutazilite were catalysts in setting the foundation for the development of both philosophy and science. As we will illustrate in Chapters 5 and 6, the scientific tradition nurtured under Islam formed the foundation of modern science as we know it today. To do that, the Mutazilites had to confront a powerful textualist tradition championed by the hadith scholars and traditionalist jurists. The textualist tradition grew initially in the Hijaz region of Western Arabia, before it found a stronghold in Bagdad during the reign of the tenth Abbasid Caliph al-Mutawakkil (622–661). The textualist tradition grew around the work of the hadith scholars who insisted that the interpretation of the Qur'anic text and the elaboration of the Islamic law have to be grounded in the prophet's practices and sayings as collected in the books of hadith. These books were compiled by the hadith scholars who

rejected the rational methods of both rational jurists and theologians. The textualists found, in the middle of the seventh century, a strong leader in the person of Ahmad bin Hanbal, the founder of the fourth school of law in the Sunni branch of Islam. Ibn Hanbal was a student of Muhammad bin Idris al-Shafi'i, during the latter teaching tenure in Baghdad, and built on one of the doctrines Shafi'i advanced that elevated the prophetic narrations (hadith) to the level of the Qur'anic authority. Shafi'i insisted that the prophetic tradition (hadith) is divinely inspired on par with the Qur'an and as such could not be abrogated by the Qur'an. The community could not anymore regard the Sunnah as a secondary and additional source of Islamic norms but was obliged to abide by its injunctions.[27] Consequently, the Sunnah and hadith were vested with superseding authority. Although the Qur'an continued, in theory, to be regarded as the primary source of law, the hadith for all practical purposes became predominant in formulating ethical and legal rulings. The hadith was used not only to interpret the Qur'an but also to limit its applications and occasionally abrogate its injunctions.[28]

The practice of giving the oral tradition of the community an elevated divine authority was not limited to Islam, as it was practiced by Jewish rabbis and Christian bishops and priests. In early Judaism, the prophetic traditions formed the main source of religious beliefs and practices for the commoners. The scripture was considered the foundation of sacred traditions, but only religious authorities were capable of outlining the divine message embedded in the scripture. Members of the religious community believed that their religious leaders acted on the authority of god and had access to divine communication through revelation and inspiration. They were aware that divine communications between prophets and god were recorded in the scripture. They, however, did not concern themselves with exegetical work, leaving this task to the priests, rabbis, epistlers, and bishops. In Judaism, the foundational text that formed the core of the scripture is the Jewish Bible, or the Tanakh, consisting of the Torah and eight books of the prophets. Other books were added later, most importantly the Mishnah. The compilation of the Mishnah was completed around 200 BC and later became the most authoritative religious book for Judaism along with its commentaries (Gemara), which were completed in 500 BC. Its elevation to the level of divine authority was justified by asserting that "Mishnah words were given by God to Moses at Mount Sinai and faithfully transmitted through a process of oral formulation."[29]

For most Muslim jurists, though, the Qur'an remained the major source of exegesis and rational speculation and the most important fountain to elaborate Islamic law and doctrine.[30] Shafi'i produced in the seventh century the first work expounding the principles of Islamic jurisprudence (*usūl al-fiqh*) titled *Al-Risalah* (The Message). Shafi'i identified four major principles of *usūl al-fiqh*: the Qur'an, the Sunnah (prophetic tradition),[31] *ijmā'* (consensus), and *ijtihād* (juristic speculation). Early Muslim jurists, including the founders of the first two schools of law, Abu Hanifa and Malik, regarded the Sunnah as

the practical application of the Qur'anic injunctions as they were understood by the prophet and his companions. As such, the Sunnah was used by jurists to gain insight into the meanings and practical applications of the Qur'anic principles. Sunnah was invoked then in the form of either the living tradition of the community or the hadith, that is, individual narrations conveying the prophetic sayings and actions. Early jurists accepted a hadith only when it was supported by the Islamic principles established by the Qur'an, and they did not hesitate to reject it when it conflicted with generally accepted Qur'anic rules.[32]

Freeing early Muslim thoughts from historical specificity and the confines of literal understanding of the text was not limited, however, to textual analysis. One of the most prominent schools of Muslim theology (*kalam*) asserted the autonomy of human reason and the ability of human rationality to identify the truth on its own. Early Muslims who contemplated the rational foundation of the transcendent and the structure of Being never called their intellectual exercise "theology" (*Ilahiyat*) but rather *kalam*, which may be literally translated as speech or discourse. Indeed, the scholars of kalam produced a discursive tradition that engaged both reason and revelation to elaborate Islam's ethics and metaphysics, but the main purpose of kalam exercise was to underscore human responsibility and the ethical consequence of faith. The outcome of those contemplations and rational dialogues was a discursive tradition that brought the various schools of Islamic jurisprudence and theology into a rational exchange that became the binding intellectual tradition for delineating Islamic injunctions and doctrines. The Islamic discursive tradition involved the Mutazilites, Hanbalites, Asharites, and Shiites, the latter representing Shi'a traditions, particularly those associated with the Zaydi and Jafari schools.

At the helm of Islamic rationalism stood the Mutazilites, who recognized the Qur'an as the main source for ascertaining transcendental truth but insisted that human reason is capable of discovering its own rightness and justice, which revelation came to affirm. Reason, they asserted, is capable of judging in the first place the truth of revealed text. This claim could easily be grounded in the revealed text, as many verses of the Qur'an affirm that human beings have the capacity of judging right from wrong and recognize the true religion (*al-Deen al-Qayyim*).[33] The Mutazilites rejected the literalist understanding of the Qur'an and insisted on its historicity and the historical specificity of the early Muslim community (*salaf*). This led to a protracted controversy over the question of the "creation" of the Qur'an, which the Mutazilite made it into a litmus test to distinguish the traditionalists (Ahl al-hadith) from the rationalists (Ahl al-Ra'y). The question of whether the Qur'an is created or eternal is indeed a question of whether the Qur'anic pronouncements were bound to the historical community that first received it or whether it was transcendental and, hence, relevant to the life of subsequent communities. The Mutazilites used the office of the Abbasid Caliphs to persecute those who responded to the question in the negative and hence

were identified as anti-rationalists. In the end, the community-based traditionalists triumphed over the state-based rationalists, as the Abbasid Caliphate eventually realized that they could continue supporting the Mutazilites at their peril, as the ranks of the supporters of the traditionalists began to swell. The office of the Caliph was placed, as a result, in conflict with an increasing number of Muslims who thought the Caliph should not support any of the competing theological positions. The defeat of the Mutazilites did not immediately translate into the triumph of the traditionalists, who called themselves the people of Sunnah and community (Ahl as-Sunnah wa al-Jama'ah). Rationalists reconstituted themselves into the Asharite movement led by Abū al-Ḥasan al-Ashʿarī. The Asharites took the middle position between the Mutazilites and the Hanbalites, insisting on the final authority of reason in religious matters while agreeing with their traditionalist rivals that reason is not completely autonomous from divine revelation and must hence be guided by it.

The debate over the best approach to reconciling the claims of the eternity of the Qur'anic teachings and the fact that the Qur'an was revealed to a historically situated community continued after the demise of the Mutazilites. Eventually, the Asharites resolved the debate by differentiating between the universal, and hence transcendental, principles of revelation and the cultural practices relating to the particular social, economic, and political conditions of a historical community. One has to abstract the concrete experience of the early Muslim community and use the abstract and universal concepts and values to guide the experience of historical society.[34] The failure to distinguish the intended meaning of the revealed text from the circumstances that prevailed in early Muslim society has led to the rise of literalist interpretations of the Qur'an. The literalist understanding of the Qur'an often confuses the Qur'anic pronouncements against specific actions of the followers of particular faith community with the Qur'an's formal position regarding religious diversity. The Qur'an, for instance, condemned the unscrupulous behavior of several Jewish tribes in dealing with Muhammad and the newly founded Muslim community, in violation of their own religious oaths and teachings. Yet the Qur'an continued to urge the Muslims to respect the religious freedom of the Jews and the religious traditions of Judaism. Contextualizing the Qur'anic verses became, therefore, imperative to avoid literalist interpretations. Early Muslim exegetes developed an analytical technique known as the *asbāb al-nuzūl* (reasons of revelation) to understand the meaning of the revealed text in relation to the social circumstances of its revelation. This and other tools of textual analysis have helped avoid literalist interpretations of the text that often distort its intended meaning.[35]

Recognizing the imperative of rational mediation for understanding the rules of sharia, early jurists exerted a great deal of time and energy to define the grammar for interpreting the divine texts and the logic of explicating their implications. The differences in methodological approaches led to the differentiation of the various schools of jurisprudence. Because the Qur'anic

texts were given in a concrete form, providing commentaries on the actions and interactions of the early Muslim community, the jurists applied legal analogy (*qiyās*) to expand the application of the Qur'anic precepts to new cases. The desire of Hanafi and Maliki jurists to overcome the literalist approach that equates *ijtihad* with *qiyās* (à la shafi`i), or with the linguistic explication of the Qur'an by reference to hadith (à la Hanbalites), has inspired them to develop methods aimed at prioritizing sharia rules and principles. Methods such as *al-qawa`id al-fiqhiyyah* (juristic rules) or *al-maqasid al-shari`iyyah* (sharia purposes) aim at the systematization of the sharia rules by eliminating internal contradictions and constitute what is referred to today as the maqasid approach. Muslim scholars realized that the various rules (*ahkām*) purport to achieve general maxims (*qawa'd*) and purposes (*maqāsid*). The work of scholars such as Juwayni and Ghazali led to the recognition of the five purposes of sharia (i.e., the protection of religion, intellect, life, property, and dignity) and was later developed into a more sophisticated system that organized the particular rules of sharia by subsuming them under universal maxims in a hierarchical structure by scholars such as Izz al-Din ibn 'Abd a–Salam and al-Shatibi.

By its emphasis on meaning, reasoning, and purpose the maqasid approach provides a powerful tool for reformulating historical sharia, because it rejects the literal reading of statements apart from their rationales (purposes) and insists that those rationales cannot contradict basic Islamic values. The definitive exposition of this approach can be found in the work of the Andalusian jurist Ibrahim bin Ishaq al-Shatibi, *Al-Muwafaqat fi UsuI al-Shari'ah* [The Reconciliation of the Fundamentals of Islamic Law]. The *maqasid* approach expounded by Shatibi can be summarized in five points: (1) Sharia rules purport to promote human interests; (2) sharia consists of a hierarchy of rules, whereby the particular rules (*ahkam juz'iyyah*) are subsumed under universal laws (*qwanin kulliyyah*); (3) general rules must be modified to accommodate—whenever possible—particular rules; (4) particular rules that contradict general rules should be rejected or ignored; and (5) the various rules and laws of sharia aim at advancing five general purposes: the protection of religion, life, reason, property, and dignity.[36]

The *maqasid* approach, with its emphasis on universal principles and rules, was crucial for preserving the universal message of the Qur'an and, therefore, for overcoming the influence of the advocates of Arab supremacy within the Muslim community who gained followers among textualist jurists during the Umayyad Dynasty. The Qur'anic language with its universalistic undertones constituted that metaphysical groundwork for rational idealism in Islam that informed the Mutazilite and Asharite approach to political leadership and authority. The fact that the Mutazilites insisted on human responsibility and political accountability did not fare well with those who wanted to maintain the status quo, particularly in the Umayyad period when non-Arabs were called *mawali*, a tribal term denoting outsiders who lived in the tribe under the protection of strong households. Textualists found plenty of narrations

within the tradition that they could use to justify their position. One of such statements was reported by Tabari in *The History of Al-Tabari*:

> The Muslims were in Basra and its territories—and its territories at that time is the countryside and the Ahwaz region as we know it today. What they have conquered came under their control, and what they have acquired through the peace agreement remained under the control of the original inhabitants, who agreed to pay tax as long as they are guaranteed of privacy, protection, and complete security. The peace agreement was signed under the auspices of Hormuzan [a Persian General]. Omar [the Caliph] said: Enough for the people of Basra are their countryside and Ahwaz, and I wished that between us and Persia a mountain of fire existed so they would not approach us and we would not approach them.[37]

This statement which has been attributed to Caliph Omar is most likely fabricated during the Abbasid Caliphate by some Arabs who became nostalgic to Arab privilege during the Umayyad rule. The ethnic bias in the statement reflects antagonistic views that are clearly contrary to Omar's attitude and the statements he made during his tenure but was intended nonetheless to externalize Muslims of Persian origin from standing on equal footings with Arabs, thereby revealing ethnocentric sentiments, most likely provoked by ethnic tensions and frictions.

Transcendental ethics and the Abrahamic faith

It is important at this juncture to examine the nature of rational idealism as a tradition that grew within Islamic monotheism. Monotheism, as a worldview that aims to provide a sense of the complex human reality, has privileged since its inception in the Abrahamic faith certain notions and values. We examined in Chapter 3 the significance of Abraham's rebellion against idolatry, his rational journey to faith in the transcendent, and the universal implications of his mission being enunciated as a blessing to humanity. We turn now to examine the inner values that constituted the Abrahamic faith. After all, the notion of a supreme being was not completely absent in ancient religions. Pagans in ancient Greece and throughout the Levant believed that the world was created by one supreme being, while they worshiped idols that symbolized living deities that served as intermediaries between the human and the divine. This was the faith of the Egyptians, Canaanites, Greeks, and Romans, as well as the pre-Islamic Arab tribes. The faith of Abraham's monotheism was distinguished since its inception by its commitment to transcendental ideals that constitute the essence of its moral system and by the emphasis it placed on the free agency and moral responsibility of human beings. This vigorous faith was presented in the Qur'an in a simple and thought-provoking form, and Muslims were told that they belonged to a historical community that began with Abraham and traversed though all biblical prophets, including Moses

and Jesus. The Qur'an urged Muslims to follow the *millah* of Abraham, that is, his tradition.[38] Many Muslim exegetes interpret the term *millah* as *din* or religion, but this is not quite accurate rendering. *Millah* in Arabic means literally a "path" identified by walking in the footsteps of the people who traversed it before and has therefore a slightly different meaning than the term religion. Figuratively, *millah* is the path one takes in life by following the footsteps, or more accurately the ideals, of early travelers.[39] Islam as a religion, like all other religions, is rich with rituals, that is, the symbolic acts performed to acknowledge one's faith and to spiritually align one's values with those of the divine. In life, however, faith must be borne by the attitudes and acts of the faithful, and for this reason Abraham's attitude and actions remained throughout the history of monotheism the model par excellence for the faithful.

Faith in transcendence within the Islamic revelation signifies a search for the overall meaning of life that can be pursued but never fully captured. The divine manifested not only in his creative acts in the natural order but also in his beautiful names or attributes that take andromorphic moral qualities of justice, compassion, wisdom, kindness, and overbearing. These are not simply moral ideals for the human being, but they form the very qualities of god as they define his will and actions. When this religious outlook is internalized, it reveals itself in the moral dedication of its followers to transform the world into an ordered society that embodies these qualities. Of course, the deep commitment to transcendental ideals was not shared by a large number of Arab tribesmen, who could hardly take the new revelation beyond its basic teachings of prayer, charity, and avoiding major sins. Bedouin life was not given, after all, to deep thinking and contemplation, as most tribesmen were overwhelmed with questions relating to survival in harsh terrains, scarce resources, and somewhat Hobbesian struggles. Indeed, the Qur'an makes it abundantly clear that the Bedouin life is not conducive to deep faith.[40] Those who were deeply committed to the ideals of Islam were relatively few, but they enjoyed great authority to set the ground rules of public life.

The fights and skirmishes between the Byzantine and Arab armies and later the Turkic tribes in west Anatolia were not based on religious differences but on power struggle between two political orders vying for expansion and control. By the eighth century, Byzantium was pushed into Anatolia, and fighting broke out every now and then, but never involved Christian communities that were scattered throughout the Levant. Muslim communities maintained a positive and friendly attitude toward the People of the Book, even before the autonomy of Jewish tribes was recognized by the constitution of the Medina. Prophet Muhammad encouraged early Muslims who were targeted by Quraysh for persecution to migrate to Abyssinia. "Why would you not travel to the land of Abyssinia? For it is ruled by a king who would not let anyone suffer injustice in his court."[41] Abyssinia maintained its Christian identity long before and after Islam become a universal state, and successive Muslim powers never engaged Abyssinia with hostility or demanded tributes. Furthermore, Muslims continued to be part of the Abyssinian society

throughout history, without ever being invaded by Muslim armies.[42] From the beginning, Abyssinians showed good will toward the early Muslims who, escaping the persecution of Quraysh, had sought refuge in Abyssinia. The Muslim emigres were welcomed by the Abyssinians and were further protected from their persecutors who sent a delegation to bring them back home. Good relations between Abyssinia and numerous Islamic dynasties continued, the former being the only kingdom to acknowledge Islam since its early formation, long before it grew to a universal state.[43] The relationship between the Muslim and Christian communities was never perfect, and one could always refer to frictions here and there over the long history of their co-existence, including the monumental military clashes during the eight Crusades between the eleventh and thirteenth centuries. The commitment of Muslim society to religious freedom and the rule of law remained, however, strong and firm. The early Muslim community was cognizant of the need to respect a plurality of religious law to ensure moral autonomy, while working diligently to maintain equal protection of the law as far as fundamental rights were concerned.

Thus, early jurists recognized that non-Muslims who have entered into a peace covenant with Muslims are entitled to full religious freedom *and equal protection of the law* as far as their rights to personal safety and property are concerned. Muhammad bin al-Hasan al-Shaybani (749–802 CE) states in unequivocal terms that when non-Muslims enter into a peace covenant with Muslims,

> Muslims should not appropriate any of the non-Muslims' houses and lands, nor should they intrude into any of their dwellings, because they have become party to a covenant of peace, and because on the day of the Peace of Khaybar, the prophet's spokesman announced that none of the property of the covenanters is permitted to the Muslim. Also, because the non-Muslims have accepted the peace covenant so as they may enjoy their properties and rights on par with Muslims.[44]

Similarly, early Muslim jurists recognized the right of non-Muslims to self-determination and awarded them full moral and legal autonomy in the villages and towns under their control. Therefore, Shaybani, the author of the most authoritative work on non-Muslim rights, insists that the Christians who have entered into a peace covenant have all the freedom to trade in wine and pork among themselves, even though such practices are considered unlawful by Muslims.[45]

The public space formed a political order that required moral evaluation of all public acts and insisted on safeguarding free exchange and debates about religious ideas and ethical principles. The open collective space provided a unique environment for the development of high culture that united numerous religiously diverse communities. What was even more impressive was the extent to which the Persian world was ready to engage the new religion

and participate in its intellectual development. In the new society that was created across expansive geography from Andalusia to the Oxus, which was once occupied by the Sassanian and Roman empires, monotheistic religions had a true opportunity to create a new sense of humanity. Under Islamic civilization, the moral and creative authority shifted from the prophets and prophecy to the intellectual and intellectualism. The intellectual replaced the magicians, the priests, and the prophets as the visionaries and the experts to be listened to. It was the intellectual as scholar, scientist, philosopher, theologian, and jurist who was charged with providing the moral, legal, and scientific ground for productive and well-organized society. Some intellectuals excelled in several of the above branches of knowledge, and their influence traversed expansive geographies. Universal values and human dignity were highly praised in the Islamic traditions. The words "al-'alamīn" (universal humanity) and "al-insān" (human being) are repeated in 315 Qur'anic verses. The Qur'an states that the ultimate reason for God to send His Prophet is for the Prophet to serve to show the God's "mercy for humanity."[46]

The transcendental values that were asserted by Islam were the continuation of those already expressed in Judaic and Christian traditions. In all monotheistic traditions god is the highest value and the symbol of goodness. He is good and his will is good. What was remarkably different is the restoration of the emphasis on humanity as the goal of the divine goodness. The ethical system that was developed was informed by transcendental ethos and was expressed in universal values purporting to create a just social and political order. For this very reason Muslim intellectuals were not satisfied with the Greek ethical system and metaphysical order; at the same time, they endeavored to learn Greek's natural philosophy. The Aristotelian ethics did not find ground in Muslim society because ordinary Muslims were more comfortable applying the Qur'anic injunctions to guide their actions. But even those who were given to philosophical reasoning and abstract thinking shunned Aristotelian ethics and developed ethics rooted in transcendental values and systematized through rational reflections on the revealed text or based in intuitive contemplations and psychological analysis. The reason Aristotelian ethics lacked a persuasive moral appeal to the Islamic intellectual tradition has to do with its grounding in moral realism. Such grounding had no appeal to Islamic rationalists committed to transcendental idealism. Muslim realists, on the other hand, were mostly committed to textualist morality and grounded their ethics in the prophetic tradition. Aristotelian ethics is grounded in virtues not values. It is grounded in individual honor instead of human dignity. For the rational idealists, ethical values were innate to the human being. These were qualities of human spirit that emanate from the divine spirit, as the Qur'an defines Adam as the combination of the earthly material, clay formed in shape, and the divine spirit breathed into the completely formed human body to make the human being. These inner qualities of man were affirmed by divine revelation through injunctions and suggestive references. For Aristotle, the ultimate good that people seek is

happiness here and now, and ethical values are the virtues worthy of a person of honor who must maintain the happiness derived from peer respect and community honor. For the Muslim faithful, ethical practices are rooted in the ultimate truth and form the fundamental structure of the ultimate reality. Ethical values are transcendental and must be pursued because they are the qualities of the divine and are embraced because they lead to god who is goodness par excellence. Happiness will be achieved as the result of seeking goodness and could never be pursued on its own. While happiness might seem the ultimate goal of both Greek and monotheistic morality, the path to it is traversed along different terrains as the systems of ethics of the two traditions are disjointed.

Islamic law and the contractual foundation of moral obligations

Islam did not bring order to the vast territories it claimed by spiritual and moral commitments alone. At the heart of the social order was Islamic law, better known as sharia. Until the sixteenth century, the area that was part of the Muslim world was so vast that by the sixteenth century it almost covered much of Africa and Asia and parts of the Caucasus and Eastern Europe. "In the sixteenth century of our era," Marshall Hodgson noted,

> a visitor from Mars might well have supposed that the human world was on the verge of becoming Muslim. He would have based his judgment partly on the strategic and political advantages of the Muslims, but partly also on the vitality of their general culture.[47]

The society that was established over this vast area was held together through the simple yet powerful legal instrument of "the contract." The idea of legally binding relationships based on voluntary contracts permeated the diverse scope of human interests and activities and was the hallmark of the legal structure that legitimized a host of social, commercial, and political activities. Not only were financial relations established and protected through contracts but also social and political ones. We take it for granted today that marriage is a contractual relationship entered into voluntarily and through the consent of the two spouses. And as people enter into the contractual relationship of the institution of marriage voluntarily, they could also get out of it voluntarily as long as they fulfill their legal obligations that define the terms of their union. As we will see in the remainder of this chapter and in the next chapter, the legitimacy of political authority in Islam was based on the notion of contract, otherwise known as *bai'ah*, a term derived from a consensual exchange of rights and objects. Hodgson termed the nature of the Muslim legal order "egalitarian contractualism." "The Muslim sharia law represented the most radical of the old tendencies," he contended. "It was highly egalitarian, and therefore, perhaps, what may be called contractualistic."[48]

The Qur'an makes frequent references to the covenant god made with the faithful, as the basis for the relationship between the human and the divine that goes back to the early history of monotheism.[49] It also uses the notion of "contract" as an equivalent term to that of "covenant." The latter concept is used in the Qur'an to describe the freely accepted agreement between the faithful and the divine. Faith in itself is a covenant with god, and it entails a binding agreement in which god promises the faithful salvation and great reward, and the faithful promises fidelity to the one god and commitment to the values of goodness, justice, compassion, and care for the oppressed and the downtrodden. The term "covenant" is also used to underscore an agreement between the Muslim community and other religious and political communities. Even though contracts are agreements among humans, they are equally important because honoring contracts and promises reflects the faithful's commitment to god.[50]

Long before the Enlightenment thinkers, such as Hobbes, Locke, or Rousseau, discussed the notion of social contract between the governed and governors, the concept of contractual relationship as the foundation of the political order was part of Muslim political thought and jurisprudence. We find it expressed with remarkable clarity in the work of Abu al-Hasan al-Mawardi (972–1058), in *The Ordinances of Governorship* (*Al-Ahkam as-Sultaniyyah*). Mawardi cites the consensus among Muslim jurists as the ground for basing the highest public office on

> the contract of imamate and ummah.[51] The imam [political leader] to be elected to the office must be intellectually competent himself, capable of making just decisions on his own, even when he is surrounded by competent advisors, so as to avoid mutual injustices and the breaking of social ties, and to fulfil the exigences of justice by dealing equitably with people and by maintaining social contacts: this he organizes by means of his own intellect and not someone else's intellect.[52]

The process involved in the political contract consists of two stages. First, electors described as *alh al-hal wa al-aqd* (people who bind and loosen) meet to elect a qualified person for the office. The person who meets the conditions of imamate must first consent and agree to the terms of his responsibility without any coercion. For coercion invalidates the contract, as it does with any contractual agreement. If he agrees, then the second phase of the process begins, in which the candidate for the imamate must receive the *biy'ah*, that is, the public affirmation of their acceptance of the candidates as their leaders.[53]

The process described by Mawardi is illustrative of the way the first four Caliphs were chosen to the political office, also known as the rightly guided Caliphs. The last of them was Ali bin Abitaleb who was deposed by Muawiyah and then assassinated by a band of his followers for agreeing to the terms of the reconciliation talks that allowed his rival to wrestle the office from him

after he was elected. Beginning with the Umayyad rule, and later under the Abbasid, the decision on political succession became an internal deliberation within the ruling clan and then a decision by the Caliph himself who was permitted to designate his successor, often from his own children. Mawardi who wrote his political treatise, expressed in ideal legal terms, as what jurists are supposed to do when outlining a theory of legitimate authority under the sharia law. He outlined a nomination process that required a legitimate election as defined in the consensus of Muslim jurists. But then, he goes on to introduce certain conditions that would compromise the legitimacy of the election process, even violate the spirit of the law. For instance, he argues that Caliphs could be nominated with a quorum as small as just one individual, but that individual must be competent and possess all the credentials to serve as a member of the nomination group and enjoy broad respect in the community. The number of electors was also compromised as was made contingent on practical considerations. Not only that; even those who obtained the public office as regional governors through the use of sheer military force were deemed legitimate, provided they recognize the authority of the Caliph and implement the rules of sharia as enunciated through the consensus of the Islamic jurists. For the jurists, this was a reasonable compromise to maintain the integrity and efficacy of sharia, particularly when there was no other way to replace a corrupt governor who lost local support.

But regardless of how power is held, the imams must be obeyed and supported as long as they execute the duties of their offices. These duties include obligations to: guard the religion, execute the legal judgments and criminal code, protect the territory of Islam and engage in jihad against those who resist Islam, collect zakat taxes and use it in accordance to sharia rules, employ deputies and assistants, and delegate authority but remain vigilant about its exercise by deputies.[54] Mawardi does not explain how the Caliph may be deposed if he does not fulfill his side of the contract. He provides, nonetheless, some clear details about how the provincial governors (amirs) could be deposed. Here, Mawardi distinguishes between two cases. If the amir was appointed by the Caliph, he will be automatically deposed upon the latter's death, so the new Caliph could freely replace him. But if he was appointed by a minister, then he could carry on his duties since he did not report directly to the Caliph.[55]

The relationship between Muslims and non-Muslims was also subject to a legally binding contract, known as the contract of dhimma. The word dhimma means in Arabic a pledge, and the contract is based on a pledge made by two communities, represented by their legitimate authorities. The Muslim pledge is to protect the life, property, and freedom of religion of any member of a community that entered into such a contract with the Muslim authorities. In return, non-Muslims pledge to stay loyal to the state and pay jizya tax in lieu of being relieved from serving in the military. The tax paid by non-Muslims was equivalent to the zakat tax paid by Muslims, as the non-Muslims are not obliged to pay zakat. The freedom of religion was

extended to all confessional communities with revealed scriptures that or-
ganize their religious affairs and internal relationships. The freedom was not
limited to freedom of worship; it also included the freedom for non-Muslims
to practice their canonical law in areas of marriage, inheritance, litigation,
and transactions. As such, communities who lived among Muslims were le-
gally and administratively autonomous. They had their local authorities in
charge of their internal affairs. This unique system led some of the contem-
porary scholars of Islamic studies to view sharia law with regard to intercom-
munity relationship that involved diverse confessional communities as a form
of "international law."[56]

By international law, Majid Khadduri refers to the branch of Islamic juris-
prudence that deals with issues of peace and war with the Byzantine Empire
that maintained considerable power long after the Levant region came un-
der the rule of Muslim dynasties. "The jurist-theologians," Khadduri writes,
"developed a special branch of the shari'a, known as the siyar (based on the
same sources as the sharia) which was the Law of Nations for the Muslims."[57]
He, however, cautions his readers not to confuse the historical laws that were
grounded in the principles of sharia with modern international law, as Islamic
law did not recognize any legitimate world order outside the boundaries of
Islam, which was also called the land of Islam. Because the Byzantine Kings
were conveniently considered as usurpers of power, the formal state of affairs
with them was that of a state of war. That gave rise to a number of rules in
the corpus of sharia that defined the conduct of war as well as rules for move-
ments between the territories of Islam and the land of war, as the territories
under Byzantine rulers were identified.[58] The rules of conduct were summed
up in a speech made by the first Caliph Abu Baker (d. 634) before the first
expedition sent to the Syrian borders:

> Stop, O People, that I may give you ten rules to keep by heart. Do not
> commit treachery, nor depart from the right path. You must not muti-
> late, neither kill a child or aged man or woman. Do not destroy a palm
> tree, nor burn it with fire and do not cut any fruitful tree. You must not
> slay any of the flock or the herds or the camels, save for your subsistence.
> You are likely to pass by people who have devoted their lives to monastic
> services; leave them to that to which they devoted their lives. You are
> likely, likewise, to find people who will present to you meals of many
> kinds. You may eat; but do not forget to mention the name of Allah.[59]

The set of rules regarding dealing with war and with subjects of non-Muslim
empires, also known as *syiar*, provides protection to any visitor who receive a
guarantee of safe passage by either public officials or private Muslims. These
visitors are usually given *amān*, which is a pledge of protection on an assur-
ance of safe conduct given by the issuing party. Amān is another example of
the use of contract. Failure to honor the terms of the *amān* entails punitive
measures defined by the law on the basis of the offense.

Another example of the contractual relationship that was recognized as part of the Law of Nations is the signing of treaties. The first treaty in the history of Islam is known as Hudaybiyyah and was signed by Prophet Muhammad with Quraysh and the chief negotiator of Quraysh. The treaty became later a model of diplomatic gestures that aim at ending or avoiding hostilities. The purpose of the treaty was to avoid fighting between peaceful Muslim caravan that traveled to perform *'Umrah* (smaller pilgrimage) and a military contingency sent by Quraysh to prevent them from entering Mecca. The treaty stipulated the return of Muslims to Medina without performing *'Umrah* for the year in exchange for a promise to be allowed to do so a year later.[60] Muslims by and large were not happy with the conditions of the treaty and deemed it unreasonable, but the prophet agreed to them over his companions' objections. The treaty was crucial to prevent the shedding of blood and proved to be useful in paving the way for ending Quraysh resistance of Prophet Muhammad and Muslims.

Hudaybiyyah treaty became a model to be replicated later by Umayyad and Abbasid Caliphs to avoid war with the Byzantine, and some of these treaties were unfavorable to Muslims, entailing tribute payments to the Byzantine Emperors, as was the case with treaties ratified by Muawiyah and later by Abdul Malik during the first and second civil wars. Because a treaty is covenant, it was strictly observed and could not be breached except when the other side of the treaty fails to uphold their side of the agreement.[61] Observing the treaty faithfully was urged both by the Qur'an, as we noted earlier, and by the prophetic example and his traditions (hadiths).

Creating a political society that was based on universal values and contractual rights provided a markedly advanced social and political order that brought human interaction to a new height. The experience was not uniform across time and space, as the ability of society to maintain the conditions of equal dignity was challenging. Yet it provided an important experience of social and religious pluralism, allowing unprecedented interaction and convergence among peoples across the vast expanse of the old world, and allowed a high degree of cultural, religious, and economic exchange. We further examine aspects of religious and cultural pluralism under Islamic civilization in the next chapter, as we explore in more depth the structure of Islamic law and civil society.

Notes

1 The verses 48 to 92 of the chapter appropriately titled "the prophets" of the Qur'an review the favors God bestowed on the earlier people of faith who followed the biblical prophets from Noah to Muhammad, through Moses and Jesus, and conclude by saying: "Indeed this, your religious community, is one community, and I am your Lord, so worship Me" (Qur'an 21:92).

2 Say: "O people of the Book! come to common terms as between us and you: that we worship none but Allah; that we associate no partners with Him; that we erect not from among ourselves Lords and patrons other than Allah." If then they

turn back say: "Bear witness that we bow to the will of God (being Muslims)" (Qur'an 3:64–71).

3 See Ibn Hisham, *al-Sirah al-Nabawiyah*, vol. 1.
4 To review the full text of the Compact of Medina, please refer to Ibn Hisham, *Al-Syrah al-Nabawiyah* [The Biography of the Prophet] (Damascus, Syria: Dar al-Kunuz al-Adabiyah, n.d.), vol. 1, 501–502.
5 Ibn Hisham, *Al-Syrah al-Nabawiyah* [The Biography of the Prophet] (Damascus, Syria: Dar al-Kunuz al-Adabiyah, n.d.), vol. 1, 501.
6 Ibid.
7 Ibid.
8 G. W. F. Hegel, *Philosophy of History*, trans. John Sibree (Kitchener: Batoche Books, 2001), 375.
9 Ibid.
10 Averil Cameron, *Byzantine Christianity: A Very Brief History* (London: SPCK, 2017), 25
11 Ibid. Understanding the nature of Christ was subtle, involving two Greek concepts—"physis," which means physical nature, and "hypostasis," which means essence or substance. These led to the three major doctrines: Miaphysitism: One person, two hypostases, two physis. Dyophysitism: One person, one hypostasis, two physis. Monophysites: One person, one hypostasis, one physis. The Dyophysitism is the official doctrine of the Catholic and Orthodox Churches, while Miaphysitism is the doctrine associated with the Orient churches, though there is still dispute about the latter. The subtly of the differences make difficult for most lay Christians to comprehend the essence of the controversy. The three doctrines are part of the common Christian faith of Trinity. Churches that rejected the Trinity doctrines are often referred to as believers in Monarchianism.
12 Ibid, 27.
13 Jerome Epistle 75, to Augustine in Philip Schaff (ed.), St. Jerome: *The Principal Works of St. Jerome* (NPNF2-06), trans. M. A. Freemantle (Grand Rapids, MI: Christian Classics Ethereal Library, 1892), 332.
14 Ibid.
15 Aziz al-Azmeh and Effie Fokas (eds.), *Islam in Europe: Diversity, Identity and Influence* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 19.
16 Ibid.
17 Ibid.
18 Marshall G. S. Hodgson, *Venture of Islam: The Classical Age of Islam*, Vol. 1 (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1974), 128.
19 Ibid.
20 Ibid, 130.
21 Ibid.
22 Ibid.
23 Ibid, 84.
24 Ibid, 93.
25 Ibid, 141–145.
26 The Qur'an for instance has the following to say about what is valuable in life: He sends down from the sky, rain, and valleys flow according to their capacity, and the torrent carries a rising foam. And from that [ore] which they heat in the fire, desiring adornments and utensils, is a foam like it. Thus God presents truth and falsehood. As for the foam, it vanishes as being cast off; but as for that which benefits the people, it remains on the earth. Thus does Allah present examples (Qur'an 13:17).
27 Muhammad bin Idris al-Shafi'i, *Al-Risalah*, 2nd ed. (Cairo: Dar al-Turath, 1399/1979), 88–92.
28 See al-Shatibi, *Al-Muwafaqat*, Vol. 4, 8–9. A1-Shafi'i does not permit the abrogation of the Qur'an by the hadith, nor the hadith by the Qur'an; see Al-Risalah,

110–113. And for a discussion of the rules of naskh (abrogation) see Saleh bin 'Abd al-'Aziz al-Mansur, Usul al-Fiqh wa Ibn Taymiyah, 1400 (1980).

29 Jacob Neusner, *Judaism: The Evidence of Mishna* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 1981), 220.

30 There are four major schools of law in the Sunni branch of Islam: Hanafi, Maliki, Shafi'i, and Hanbali.

31 Sunnah is defined by Muslim jurists as the discourse and actions of Muhammad. Hadith refers to the narrations collected and authenticated by a chain of narrators that capture the Sunna. In this sense both the Sunnah and Hadith are translated as "prophetic tradition."

32 See Ibrahim bin Musa al-Shatibi, *Al-Muwafaqat fi UsuI al-Shari'ah*, vol. 4 (Cairo: Al-Maktabah a1-Tijariyah, n.d.), 6–7; Taqi al-Din bin Taymiyah, *Raf' al-Mallam 'an al-A'immah al-A'kam* (Damascus: Al-Maktab aI-Is1~mi, 1382), 49–52; and Al-Sarakhsi, 340–342.

33 "Turn your face steadily and truly to the religion which God has shaped in line to the inner nature which he pattern human being; no change in the creation of God; that is the true Religion; but most people do not understand" (Qur'an 30:30).

34 For an elaborate discussion of the particular and universal in Islamic law, see Abu Ishaq al-Shatibi, *The Reconciliation of the Fundamentals of Islamic Law*, vol. 2 (London: Garnet Publishing, 2014), 39–44.

35 See Ali Ibn Ahmad, al-Wahidi, *Asbab al-Nuzul*, trans. Mokrane Guezzou (Amman, Jordan: Royal Aal al-Bayt Institute for Islamic Thought, 2008).

36 Abu Ishaq al-Shatibi, *The Reconciliation of the Fundamentals of Islamic Law*, vol. 1 and 2. Shatibi chose the version of the hadith that uses progeny instead of dignity. Dignity is more relevant in the hadith, because it is the broader term, and in Arabic ('irdh) it also subsumed the word progeny.

37 Al Tabari, *History of Al Tabri*, vol. 4 (No Publisher, 2018), 79.

38 "Whose way is better than that of the man who has submitted to God, and does good, and who follows the creed of Abraham the upright? And God chose Abraham as friend" (Quran 4:124). See also Qur'an, 16:120, 132; 3:67–68; and 6:161.

39 The term does not connote a general path or road, but rather one that brings the traveler back to the main highway, as it shares the Arabic root of the word skewback. With this added connotation, Abraham's millah means the road back to the path of Abraham.

40 "The desert Arabs say: we have believed. Say you have not faith, but you should say: we have submitted to Islam; and belief has not yet entered into your hearts. And if you obey God and His prophet, He shall not diminish aught of your works, for God is Forgiving, Merciful" (Qur'an 49:14).

41 The story was narrated by Ibn Hisham in his *Biography of the Prophet*.

42 T. W. Arnold, *The Preaching of Islam* (London: Constable and Company, 1913), 113.

43 Ibid, 113–114.

44 Muhammad bin Ahmad al-Sarakhsi, *Sharh Kitab al-Siyar al-Kabir*, vol. 4 (Pakistan: Nasrullah Mansur, 1405 A.H.), 1530.

45 Ibid.

46 "We have sent you but as a mercy for humanity" (Qur'an 21:107).

47 Marshall G. S. Hodgson, *The Role of Islam in World History in Rethinking World History: Essays on Europe, Islam, and World History* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 79.

48 Ibid, 117.

49 For example: "O Children of Israel! Call to mind the (special) favor which I bestowed upon you, and fulfil your covenant with Me as I fulfil My Covenant with you, and fear none but Me" (Qur'an 2:40).

50 The use of contract in the Qur'an: "O you who believe, fulfill all contracts" (Qur'an 5:1). And the use of covenants—Qur'an 2:177; Qur'an 6:152. Also "Among the believers are men true to their covenant with God. Some of them have already fulfilled their vow [to the death], while other await, and have never wavered" (Qur'an 33:23).
51 Abul-Hasan Al-Mawardi, *Al-Ahkam as-Sultaniyyah* [The Laws of Islamic Governance], trans. Asadullah Yate (London: Ta-Ha Publishers, 1996), 10. The 'imamate' in the above text means the highest political office; the ummah means the Muslim community.
52 Ibid.
53 Ibid, 11–13.
54 Ibid, 28.
55 Ibid, 50.
56 Majid Khadduri and Herbert J. Liebesny (eds.), *Law in the Middle East* (Washington, DC: Middle East Institute, 1955), 348.
57 Ibid, 350.
58 Ibid.
59 Ibid, 355.
60 Ibid, 365.
61 Ibid, 366.

5 Islamic law and the spheres of freedom

The political order that emerged under premodern Islamic rule was divided into two clear spheres: the state and the civil society. The state was controlled by strong families and clans who maintained political power as long as they could suppress potential challengers and who were granted legitimacy as long as they conceded the legislative authority to juristic communities and recognized the symbolic authority of the office of the caliph. Society constituted, on the other hand, the sphere of freedom, where various confessional communities enjoyed the freedom to develop the law that governs their conduct, practice their religious traditions without state interference, and gain access to commerce, science, and bureaucracy on competitive grounds. The division was imperfect, and the greatest weakness of the political sphere lay in the difficulties people faced in holding political authorities accountable outside the confine of civil society, which was regulated by sharia rules that were enacted through the consensus of the juristic community. The lack of control over tax rates incentivized political leadership to engage in expansionist wars as these wars provided lucrative revenues. While Islamic law did not allow a war of aggression, Muslim jurists permitted jihad against unjust monarchs who refused to enter into peace treaty that would permit free movement for populations of the contracting powers.

European Orientalism that continues to be the main source of Western understanding of Islam and Muslims, albeit with a diminishing effect, drew a deceptive portrait of Islamic law, civil society, and polity. The literature on Islam often depicts Muslim rulers as despots, completely arbitrary in ruling Muslim societies and enjoying an absolute power with no one to check their authority. While it is true that rulers were not accountable in any procedural way to the populace, Muslim societies, as we illustrate below, enjoyed a legislative authority and judiciary system that were fairly independent from the office of the caliph or the sultan. The legislative function remained until the end of the Ottoman Empire in the hands of the juristic community, and was never ceded to the caliph, despite efforts by the Abbasid Caliph Harun al-Rashid to bring it under the control of the state. Members of the judiciary were trained under the supervision of community-based scholars, who were members of various schools of law and who enacted laws formulated through

juristic consensus. Muslim jurists developed the legal system, trained judges, and those who rose to the office of the chief justice were among the most competent and trusted among them. Muslim jurists have consequently the authority and tools to limit the power of the caliph and sultan, who could maneuver within the limits set by sharia, but could pass those limitations at their peril. The judicial independence of the jurists was assured by their financial independence, as they were able to always rely on the institution of the waqf (private trust) as an assured source for financing the education and salaries of their members. The waqf was a complex instrument devised to ensure its perpetual independence from interference by political or legal authorities. Waqf also ensured the independence of civil society, as most social services were built through this institution.

We delve in this chapter a bit deeper into Islamic law to understand the important role played by the Muslim jurists to ensure the independence of both the legislative process under historical sharia and the institutions of civil society that remained autonomous until the turn of nineteenth century, including civil society institutions that were part of multi-religious communities. We further explore religious pluralism under Islamic rule that is often overlooked and misunderstood by Orientalism, by examining the nature of the contract that made religious pluralism functional on the level of society, namely the *dhimma* contract which was more often than not portrayed as an instrument of oppression by those who apply the wrong framework and analogy to analyze it. We also examine the birth of the institution of science that provided the foundation for modern scientific enterprise and made scientific development possible in modern society. As I hope will become more evident, modern science as a methodology and practice was born in the Islamic civilization rather than in Greek philosophy. The Greek philosophers produced natural philosophy, but never understood or had a clue of the methods used in empirical research and scientific analysis. They had neither the mathematical tools nor the algorithmic modeling nor the detailed experimentation experience and methods to be able to produce empirical science. Greek ingenuity lay in deductive and formal thinking and remained aloof to observation, experimentation, and modeling, which stand at the heart of scientific enterprise.

The formation of independent legislation and judiciary

Throughout history, up until the formation of the modern Middle Eastern states during the age of colonialism, Islamic law governed Muslim societies across the globe, providing both the moral and legal foundations of social and political actions. Regardless of the particular dynasty that held political sway, the state and society were regulated by legal systems that were based on Islamic law and developed independently of the executive authorities. Dynasties came and gone, but the law and the legal system maintained their integrity, with little influence of whatever dynasty happened to control the

office of the caliph. Modern experience of law-making and implementation makes any talk of a legal system independent from dynastic rule sounds incoherent and contradictory, as dynastic rule by definition underscores the type of government with unchecked powers. Monarchs and kings in the premodern world have always gained political authority and exercised power through the legal system of the state with its various security apparatuses. Monarchs and rulers in premodern societies, and even today in societies under military dictatorship, have always had a freehand to decide what law to enact, as long as they kept those who supported them in keeping the political order satisfied. Many historians and philosophers of history, including influential sociologists and philosophers with large following, such as Max Weber or Karl Marx, categorized historical Muslim rulers as despots and tyrants. This misconception was pointed out by Noah Freedman in a book published a decade ago in the context of examining the increased call by Muslims for the rule of sharia. "Western writers have for centuries gone to great lengths," he stresses, "to describe the Muslim world as the home of Oriental despots who did what they would, free from the constraints supposedly imposed on Western rulers."[1]

Failing to understand the inner dynamics of historical Muslim societies and projecting from their own experiences, many modern scholars misread Islam's legal system and the scope of executive power by assuming that an unelected ruler would have to rule with absolute power, in the absence of state institutions that could act independently from his control. Rulers must be absolute, they assumed, in the absence of a counterforce to check their executive and legislative authorities. These observers were correct in assuming that rulers were not subject to any evaluation through periodic elections or through an independent political body that possesses the power of oversight; they would be able to rule at will, limited only by their own personal values and inclinations. Indeed, that was the case with Muslim rulers for the most part. But unlike the premodern Western societies where law was promulgated by the monarch, the law in Muslim societies was formulated and proclaimed by a class of intellectuals who were selected and financed by civil society institutions. The intellectuals in charge of the law-making function were sharia scholars and jurists, who were devoted to learn and expand a body of principles and rules of law independently from the holders of executive power. The body of sharia law was elaborated and refined over generations since the time of Prophet Muhammad and the early Rightly-Guided Caliphs and was binding on power holders.

Islamic jurists developed from the time of the Prophet Muhammad, and over the centuries, elaborate procedures for enacting law. The law was developed by juristic schools (*madhāhib*) that have over the years adopted specific rules and procedures for law-finding and promulgation. There are four major schools of law in Sunni Islam—the Hanafi, Maliki, Shafi'i, and Hanbali—and at least three functioning schools in the Shiite tradition—the Zaidi, Isma'ili, and the Ja'fari (Twelvers). In these traditions, any scholar who has completed

his juristic training and has been licensed by a qualified jurist could engage in law-finding and could publish rules and injunctions as part of the process of *ijtihad* (juristic speculation). *Ijtihad* could be followed by individual Muslims but would not be binding on the community until it receives the support of other jurists within the same school of law and then becomes part of the juristic consensus. The consensus is particularly required by the Sunni tradition, to which all caliphs and most governors belonged. The rules of law are binding on all Muslims, morally and legally, because they are sanctioned by the authoritative sources of Islam—the Qur'an and the Sunnah. The communities of law (*madhāhib*) consist of the self-regulating jurists who have the knowledge of the law and of those who follow them and have complete trust in both their credentials and moral characters.

Islamic law as promulgated by the jurists empowered the caliphs and the governors with the authority to appoint judges who administer the law and who control the judiciary system that adjudicates its rules. The holders of executive power are nonetheless obliged to appoint judges from the body of qualified jurists who have been licensed in accordance with procedures established by the schools of law. This ingenious formula took away from the executive the ability to appoint judges at will, because the formula also created internal dynamics that tied judges to the intricate body of jurists and aligned their interests to the institutions charged with the responsibility to guard the law against outside interference. The risk of siding with the executive against the law-making institutions of jurists was high enough to create effective balance of power between the executive and the judiciary. The Abbasids sought to control the scholarly community by introducing the office of the Chief Justice (*qādi al qudāh*), and the office persisted throughout history under different names and was finally abolished with the collapse of the Ottoman Caliphate by the turn of the twentieth century. The Ottoman chief justice, known as Shaykh al-Islam, was the head of the important judiciary branch of government and was seen as having power at par with the prime minister, otherwise known as Al-Sadr al-Azam, who was in charge of political institutions. Chief justice practically served as the voice of the institution of the sharia scholars in the sultan's court, and the expectation was that the sultan would choose a highly respected scholar from the community of scholars.

In the second century of Islam (eighth century CE) Shafi'i elevated the authority of the Sunnah to the level of the Qur'an, as the second source of sharia, and that provided additional limitations on both the rulers and their challengers, as the Sunnah provided additional pieces that made it difficult for the rulers to challenge the jurist's legal authority and made it difficult to the challengers to replace the caliph. One tradition, for instance, charges the scholars with the authority to deciding the rules of sharia: "Scholars are the heirs of the prophets." Another tradition stipulated that only the descendent of the tribe of Quraysh can lay claim to the office of the caliph, which practically reduced the contenders to that office to members of the House of

Umayyads and the House of Hashemites. Feldman succinctly summarizes the power of the legal institution developed by the scholars of Islam:

> Legal institutions like the schools do not develop in a political vacuum. For law to be practically relevant, as opposed to purely abstract or theoretical, it must have some connection to the way power is deployed by those in authority. Although Islamic law was "jurists' law" in that its content was determined by the jurist-scholars, and not the state, it was also state law in that it had a mechanism for being enforced by the state.[2]

The subtleties of the process of law-finding and adjudication and the intricacies of the institution of sharia scholars have escaped the observation of many European scholars, as they were using categories that were borne in a completely different notion of law and scholarship than those they encountered in Muslim society. Modern scholars only gradually began to appreciate these differences and provide deeper understanding of historical Muslim society that captured the cultural subtleties of Islamic society. The works of Middle Eastern experts, such as Lawrence Rose, John Esposito, Talal Asad, and Noah Feldman, shed new light on the inner workings of the Muslim society and the Islamic law. The analysis of historical Muslim experiences was greatly enhanced by the recent studies of Western scholars of Middle Eastern background, such as Fazlur Rahman, Seyyed Hossein Nasr, Ali Mazroui, Islamil Faruqi, Khaled Abu al Fadl, Abdullahi An-Na'im, and countless others who provided in the past few decades new insights into the history of Islam and the Muslim societies. Perhaps, the earliest Western scholar who gained deep insight to the spirit of Islam was Hegel, who, as we noted in Chapter 2, recognized that Islam was the first religion to effectively reconcile political action to the dictates of ethics. This reconciliation, which he called the "Mohammedan principle," made Islam "the enlightenment of the Oriental World," he contends, and "the first to contravene this barbarism and caprice. We find it developing itself later and more rapidly than Christianity; for the latter needed eight centuries to grow up into a political form."[3] What Hegel is referring to, with his usual abstract and subtle language, is the ability of Muslim society to hold its rulers to ethical judgment by subjecting their actions to ethical judgment and the rule of law and becoming thereby able to "contravene" the arbitrary and whimsical rules of powerful rulers unchecked in the pre-Islamic civilizations.

The jurists who enacted the law were not acting in isolation from other intellectuals in the local community or in the scholarly community that claimed followers throughout the four concerns of the Islamic World. There were active debates among scholars and between the scholars and the communities. These debates formed the public sphere that brought intercommunal understanding and consensus and served as a space for raising popular issues and public concerns about the quality of life in Muslim societies. The modern public sphere that grew in recent centuries in Europe and Western

democracy could be found as early as the seventh century in Muslim societies. The concept of the "public sphere" as an important sociopolitical activity in society, responsible for fomenting ideas and creating consensus necessary for sociopolitical harmony, was brought back to the fore in the writing of Habermas in the past two decades, and more recently by Rawls in his notion of overlapping consensus. Like many modern scholars whose views were shaped by the spirit of the Enlightenment, the discussions have been confined to the public sphere in the modern West. Few modern scholars have ventured to explore its beginning in earlier historical societies. Indeed, the task of uncovering any modern structures and institutions in Islamic civilization is very challenging to modern thinkers, as their views are shaped through Orientalism's essentialist depictions of the Muslim world as the model of "traditionalism" par excellence. Islam is seen at best as the "exotic other," a perception offered by early modernists, such as Montesquieu who endeavored in the eighteenth century to define rising French society by contrasting it with its Persian contemporary as the latter began to experience decline and disorder. But while the trajectory of the rise of the public sphere does not go back much earlier in the modernist mirror, Habermas showed recently more interest in exploring the role of religious reformation in opening the field for modern rationalism and critical thinking. Others, particularly those who have located the grounds for modern consciousness in the Axial Age, such as Charles Tylor and S. N. Eisenstadt, have tentatively considered Islam as an important link in the historical transformation from Axial to modern times. Yet others, like Armando Salvatore, took the time and efforts to examine Islam's contribution to the rise of premodern political sphere.

Salvatore explored in a recent study the role played by the Abrahamic traditions, and the Hellenic political thought and culture, in shaping public consciousness and the public sphere of modern society.[4] He finds Islam, and "Islamic approach," very relevant for "the construction of the symbolic-communicative link into the genealogy of the European Christian and post-Christian self-understanding that has shaped the bulk of the theoretical literature on the public sphere."[5] Salvatore identifies the grounds of the notion of "public sphere" in the Christian notion of "*respublica christiana*" and in the Muslim notion of "*maslaha 'amma*." He finds that the concept of maslahah to be quite relevant for any discussion of the public sphere, as it "relates the pursuit and adjudication of specific goods to the definition of a more general good."[6] He also takes note of the notions that contradict the modernist narrative that insists on juxtaposing the modern with all notions that could be found in the premodern traditions. We encountered such insistence in Huntington's claim that modernity and progress are the trademark of the American white culture, born in the Europe, rejecting non-European experiences as premodern and hence incapable of carrying on the values of a democratic and free society.

Salvatore notes that non-Western traditions, such as Islam, may lose their vitality and ability to renew their cultures and values and regenerate

themselves through new and more effective ideas, but that does not necessary qualify them as traditions of the past. He agrees with Alasdair MacIntyre's characterization of the idea of tradition and sees it useful in evaluating the Islamic tradition. He supportively quotes MacIntyre's views of the relevance of past traditions to addressing modern challenges. Salvatore singles out Islamic thought as a good example of a tradition that inspired modern thought and supplied it with the vitality and spirit it acquired and may still be able to do so today. He points out that the vitality of Islamic tradition and its capacity to meet modern challenges make the juxtaposition of the categories of "modernity" and "tradition" futile and perplexedly counterproductive. The advanced structure of law and law-finding and development that one encounters in the work of fourteenth-century Andalusian Islamic scholar Shatibi are as modern as the sixteenth-century DE Vitoria and the seventeenth-century Suarez, who produced a comparable work by drawing from Shatibi's advanced categorization and methodology for the harmonization of legal structures.[7] Drawing on the work of Johann Arnarson and Khalid Masud, Salvatore underscores the centrality of Islam to understand the modern age, as it provides "the last major instance of large-scale crystallization of a discursive tradition in the Euro-Mediterranean civilizational area, connecting it with the wider framework of 'axial civilizations'."[8] Indeed, Arnason sees in Islam and its intellectual and cultural heritage a significant body of evidence to deconstruct the "East-West" dichotomy.[9] The same body of evidence could, if it is examined thoroughly, realign a long tradition upheld by the advocate of a unique modernity disjoined from all traditions and could force a new characterization of Islam as "a 'Western' civilization in the wider Axial framework."[10] The inclusion of Islamic civilization, he adds, enhances the efforts to finding the horizons for testing the hypothesis of communicative action theory and its corollary notion of the public sphere.

Common good (*maslahah*) and intent of the law

The development of the notion of *maslahah* (common good) as the governing principle of law finding and as the ultimate purpose of political organization and action provides an interesting example of the vitality of the public sphere in the historical Islamic society. The notion was the culmination of centuries of debate in the public sphere about the structure of the law and the relationship between the rules of law and their overall purposes. Early Muslim jurists realized that they needed to interpret the divine text in order to expand its injunction. This meant initially that the efficient cause (or '*illa*) of the various rulings embedded in the revealed text must be identified, so as to expand the applications of the initial rulings to new cases through analogy. Analogy (qiyās) became early on the tool for subsuming new cases under the rulings specified in the Qur'an and Sunnah. However, scholars were split into two groups as to whether jurists could resort to free reasoning or should stick with the efficient cause of the original text. As we saw earlier, Shafi'i insisted that

reasoning is only valid when it follows the principle of qiyās. Gradually, how-ever, jurists began to realize that *ijtihād* as a process of free reasoning that aims at understanding the intent of the law could not be limited to analogy via the efficient cause and that the revealed text has some overriding purposes, in-cluding the five purposes of sharia we outlined earlier: the protection of life, property, dignity, religion, and reason. Since all these purposes evolve around the well-being of the individual, it took few steps to figure out that the divine law as a comprehensive discourse aims at promoting human interests.

The term "maslahah" itself cannot be found in the Qur'an, and it was coined by Muslim jurists to denote a number of Qur'anic terms, including that of good, benefit, utility, and content, and hence affirms individual and collective well-being. *Maslahah* in its general reference connotes "public interest" or "common good." In the context of sharia and law-finding, it is often associated with the notion of purposes of sharia and is considered by Muslim jurists an essential procedural element for expanding the scope of the legal system to accommodate new cases that arise with social devel-opments. As we saw earlier, the concept of maslahah was developed over several centuries, as it matured in the work of the Asharite scholars, most notably Juwayni and Ghazali. But the early formation of the concept could be found in the works of Abu Bakr al-Jassas (d. 980) and Abu al-Husayn al-Basri (d. 1044). The two scholars belong to the Mutazilite school which favored a rationalist approach to Islamic jurisprudence, as opposed to the textualists, who relied extensively on hadith of the prophet and the opin-ions of his companions. The maturation of the concept later in the work of Ghazali, who linked it directly to the five purposes of sharia, represented an important moment in the struggle of the rationalist scholars to express sharia in universal terms and to free it from the constraints of the concrete expressions of the hadith. The tension between the rationalist and textualist traditions evolved around the drive of rational idealism to develop a more inclusive legal system that could cater to the diverse needs of a universal community and the textualists who were concerned with preserving the actual community of the faithful.

The concept of maslahah, introduced by Jassas in his book *Al-Fusul fi al-usul* [Chapters in Jurisprudence], inaugurated a new chapter in the devel-opment of Islamic law as it was crucial for the systematization of the law into a hierarchical structure of universal and particular rules. The hierarchi-cal structure reached its more sophisticated elaboration in the work of Ibn Abdulsalam two centuries later.[11] Jassas first equated in his work the good with the beneficial and the bad with the harmful.[12] He further asserted that maslahah is not simply an '*illa* or efficient cause (*ratione legis*), in law-making or law-finding, but rather a *maqasid* or an intent and purpose (*ratione legis*) of the legal finding itself.[13] The difference is quite significant, for in the case of ratione legis, the law is directly derived from a particular instance and re-mained valid only as long as the instance continues to be efficient, so when the instance ceases the law ceases. In other words, the law remains concerned

with particular instances, as it remains tightly bonded to the text from which the instance was derived and would never develop to the point that it could stand on its own as a set of rules and principles founded on a rational basis. In the case of *ratione legis*, the situation is completely different and the dynamic of law-finding fundamentally changes. In practice, the difference is as significant as to say Medina residents who donate the rent of their prosperities to help the poor are exempted from property tax because the prophet allowed that (*ratione legis*) and to say all property owners who donate the rent of their properties to help the poor are exempted from property tax (*ratio legis*).

With the discovery of new approach to generalizing from a particular instance, sharia could be expressed through a body of universal rules, and it therefore became possible to derive rules from a particular instance and use them to develop a body of legal system on the basis of rational rules and principles that stand apart from the text. The divine text from which the law derives is never rendered obsolete, for it can always be brought back to the discussion should later jurists find discrepancies in its derivation or application. However, the jurists' ability to develop a legal order that is internally cohesive facilitated the rational examination of the consistency of any particular rule pronounced by the jurists with the higher purposes of law, preventing the selective application of the rules of law. From that moment on, analogy became the mechanism for extending the rule of law on the basis of the universal legal principles (ratio legis), rather than the particular efferent cause of the original rule. The scholar was able, through the instrument of maslahah, to truly exercise independent reasoning (ijtihād), beyond the limitations of analogous reasoning. The profound change of juristic reasoning was even more consequential for issues of political and moral responsibilities. The introduction of *maslahah* as principle of law further enhanced the arguments of the rational idealist in the Islamic tradition. It was a moment of maturation in the rise of transcendental idealism within the ongoing debate in the public sphere. The moment had profound implications on the moral and legal debates among Muslim scholars. The notion of sharia as a set of values and rules intended for the benefit of humanity is derived from both the language of the Qur'an and the Mutazilite belief that because God is good then his will and intentions toward human beings are necessarily concerned with promoting human goodness (salāḥ). While Jassas was the Mutazilite thinker in whose work the notion of maslahah originated, he did not develop it into a full-fledged instrument for law-finding. Developing maslahah into a general theory of sharia had to wait until the Asharite school that succeeded the Mutazilites matured in the work of Juwayni, Ghazali, Razi, and Ibn Abdulsalam.[14]

The intellectual revolution caused by Islamic rationalism reached its ultimate clarity in the works of Ibn Abdulsalam, who in *The Great Rules* identified maslahah as the primary purpose of law and argued that all edicts of sharia aim at advancing both public and private interests (*maslahah 'āma wa khāsa*) and preventing public corruption and personal aggravation (*mafsadah*)."[15] In

Ibn Abdulsalam we encounter the clearest exposition of rational idealism. The notion of good is expressed in his work in dialectical terms, rendering the main task of the jurist the reconciliation of the universal and the particular in the body of law and keeping particular rules within the general framework that promote personal and collective good and avoiding personal and collective harm. The work of the jurist is simply the systematic integration of the rules of sharia into a framework set by dichotomies that limit lawful actions within the boundaries of maslahah and mafsadah as they manifest themselves as "good and corruption, benefits and harms, utility and loss, for all interests brings goods, benefits, and rewards, and all aggravations bring corruption, harm, and loss."[16]

Ibn Abdulsalam's significant contribution is in segregating the rules of sharia that deal with religious injunctions per se from those relating to transactions and exchanges in social settings and subjecting each of them to different logic of arguments. The logic for dealing with the religious and ritualistic elements of sharia is that of pure reference to the sacred text. Ritualistic elements of the sharia are formally irrational as they are not subject to any discoverable meaning by reason, and must therefore be located in the texts of sharia, as they relate to the symbolic acts whose meanings unfold through the performance of the acts. However, transactions and exchanges are social acts and hence belong to rational consideration. Maslahah questions that relate to advancing the human interest in the world are subject to rational discovery.[17] Because the maslahah rules are rational they are capable of universal formulation and can be recognized by human beings regardless of their religious background, even by people who have not received any revelation at all. Philosophers generally agree to this fact.[18] He continues:

> Likewise, all systems of laws agree on the prohibition of harms aimed at life, the human body, property, and dignity, as they agree on seeking the good and the best, even when they disagree on some details as to how that could be achieved in relations to issues of inequality and equality.[19]

He then goes on to elaborate sharia rules in ways that bring the systematization of the body of law, by applying the rational framework he proposes to the various rules of sharia, allowing the jurist to reject particular rules that contradict the universal principles of the law. By the twelfth century, reason was declared as the instrument for identifying universal principles and systematizing them into a harmonious body of law, rather than relying on the surface and literal meaning of the text, and rational exposition has hence become the instrument of rule discovery in Islamic law.

Religious pluralism and non–Muslim autonomy

Despite the well-documented fact of religious pluralism in historical Muslim society, contemporary far-right writers have been engaged in intellectual

distortion and dishonesty, confusing the public by blurring and mixing contemporary authoritarianism in Muslim countries with historical political structures. We will return to this alarmingly expanding practice in Chapter 9 for a more elaborate examination. But let us for now briefly bring up the case of Gisele Littman, who in 2001 published under the pen name of Bat Yo'er, which means in Hebrew "the daughter of the Nile," a book titled *Islam and Dhimmitude: Where Civilizations Collide*. Littman coined the term "dhimmitude" to rhyme with the word "servitude," as she claimed that the social conditions of non-Muslims in Muslim societies are characterized by "fear and insecurity." While Littman was born in Egypt, and might have encountered the harsh reality of a military dictatorship that began in Egypt in 1952, her claims are not simply directed toward the current state of affairs in Muslim countries. Rather, her accusations and arguments provide an unsparing condemnation of Islam as a religion, asserting that Islam perpetuated intolerance against Christians and Jews throughout its history. She insisted that Islam provided no protection for non-Muslims who were humiliated and robbed of legal rights.[20] Her thesis was later embraced by members of the far-right, who amplified her work and used it as an instrument to repudiate contemporary Muslims in general, and Western Muslims in particular, fomenting anti-Muslim rhetoric similar to the one Littman accused Muslim of doing.[21]

There is no denying that Muslim history involves instances of intolerance, not only toward groups who belonged to different religious or ethnic communities but also toward Muslims who openly challenged sultans and political elites and Muslims who were critical of dominant groups. It is also clear that the level of intolerance varied over time and across the geographical space occupied by Muslims who followed the Islamic faith but varied in their commitment to the principles of justice and equal dignity. What is problematic in the above assertion is that Islam has historically promoted and encouraged intolerance toward non-Muslims and that it has never afforded protection to people of other faiths. We need therefore to examine this claim here by reviewing both the Islamic teachings and the historical records. Yet a systematic and thorough investigation of the conditions of non-Muslim under the historical rules of sharia surprisingly reveals that Islam has developed a remarkably sophisticated system for allowing non-Muslim a private space to exercise their specific beliefs and values under institutions they run and command. The first point to be established in this regard is that Muslims' experience with elected governments was short-lived and ended with the demise of the fourth caliph, who, along with his two predecessors, was assassinated while still in office. The fifth caliph belonged to the Umayyad dynasty, which abandoned the *shura* system followed by early caliphs that required broader consultation among community leaders. This prompted the jurists to connect political legitimacy of later caliphs to their willingness to recognize the autonomy of the legal system developed by the jurists themselves as the custodians of sharia. Furthermore, the political structure we encounter in Muslim history is a form of horizontal communalism, as the body politics of

the various Islamic empires consisted of autonomous communities living side by side under separate legal systems. As Marshall Hodgson put it,

> At the time of the Arab conquest, the several religious groups which were to form protected dhimmi communities, gained equality of status among themselves and protection against each other's interference; for instance, against proselytizing from one dhimmi community to another, which the Muslims discouraged. Jews found a much more favorable position than they had had under the Byzantines, at least; it was not only economic but political openness which permitted an increase in their commercial activity.[22]

This characterization of historical Muslim society is echoed by Malcom Yapp who portrays the pluralism of the Ottoman society by invoking the mosaic metaphor. Yapp reaffirms the view of the Near East as a region organized on the principle of horizontal pluralism as he describes, in *The Making of the Near East*, the Ottoman society as comprised of autonomous communities. In his words: "Near Eastern society is seen as a mosaic of autonomous corporations existing side by side and not arranged in any particular order of eminence, or at least not an order accepted throughout the society."[23] The government itself could be viewed, he argued, "as one such corporation and, like the others, [is] defined partly by inheritance and partly by function, the provision of defense and some modest administrative services."[24] The protections established by law did not mean that sentiments of the ruling elites or the populace toward different confessional communities were equal. There were always issues to be resolved, but the decentralized political structure left a great leeway for members of different communities to navigate. During the Umayyad dynasty, for instance, Arabs were more likely to be awarded governorship than Persians, but Umayyad rule did not last long, and the Abbasids changed this dynamic completely. Similarly, Nestorian Christians were apparently favored in the high culture around the ruling elites, as their monophysite faith brought them closer to Muslim elites, in comparison to the Zoroastrian aristocracy. But this was soon to change as the latter embraced Islam and turned to become among its foremost advocates and leaders.[25]

Expansive historical Islamic society became even more diversified politically, beginning with 945 CE as the Buyid dynasty captured Baghdad, the seat of the Abbasid Caliph. This was the last time the Arab held any office of great power outside of Andalusia and North Africa. The successive dynasties that came to power could only control smaller regions until the fifteenth century when the Ottoman, and shortly after that the Safavids, assumed control over large regions, replicating the division that once existed between the Byzantine and Sassanian Empires. Between the tenth and fifteenth centuries, the classical caliphate was reduced into a powerless symbol of Muslim unity, and the universal states disappeared as much of the Muslim world was ruled by small municipalities. By the close of the fifteenth century, universal

states reemerged to unify the countless municipalities and city-states that popped up after the collapse of the Abbasid Caliphate. Yet the sociopolitical order, with a flourishing trade and growing intellectual and scientific vitalities never ceased, thanks to the strength of the legal order and the absence of any major challengers. It was the introduction of the external threats that took first the form of the Crusades, and later the Mongol invasion, that renewed the drive to rebuild large and powerful empires. Hodgson argued that the political unity of Muslim cities and regions was maintained for five centuries by the sheer energy of Islamic intellectualism and its innovative spirit and the ability of Muslim leadership to draw on "Muslim idealism."[26]

One of the remarkable political innovations for ensuring religious pluralism and protecting the rights of non-Muslim populations was the "dhimmi contract." The contract was a modified instrument analogous to the Medina Pact we discussed in Chapter 4. The contract provided non-Muslims with moral and legal autonomy in their own towns and villages while receiving the legal protections Muslim themselves have. Yet many modern historians seem to be perplexed, as they review the ongoing debate between those who harshly reject the practice as an outright oppressive act against non-Muslims and those who saw it as a reasonable solution to a complex historical reality. The system critics fault it as discriminatory while those who approve of it find it protective of the rights of communities that may not want to be subjected to a centralized legal system that would affect their ability to practice their unique law. Modern sensibilities naturally favor equal treatment for all people under one system of law. The division of society into autonomous confessional communities triggers pictures of inequality and difference and the distinction between citizens into first-class and second-class citizens. Historical societies should not, however, be evaluated on the basis of modern criteria, as the modern world has developed a national political order unlike any that were known to earlier civilizations. The fair question to ask relates to our ability to judge the extent to which early social system advanced the human conditions of the time. The question we need to ask is this: Did the dhimmi system ensure the religious and cultural freedom of non-Muslims, while offering them the protection of their properties and trades?

Anver Emon examines current academic debate on dhimmi arrangements and points out that the question is quite controversial as strong views could be found for and against. He acknowledges the difficulties in judging the system from a modern vantage point and concludes that the system does not reflect the "Islamic ethos."[27] For him the dhimmi rules are "symptomatic of the messy business of ordering and regulating a diverse society."[28] So the dhimmi system would make sense only in the larger historical context in which it existed. The sympathetic views point out that the dhimmi system allowed those who accepted the dhimma contract to maintain their own faith and live in peace within the Islamic society. They also point to the fact that historical records show that Christian and Jews lived active life under Muslim rule both economically and politically and they participated fully in trade,

scholarship, and even rose to become ministers and advisors of caliphs and sultans. The freedom and private and public achievements of non-Muslims were quite evident, particularly in Andalusia.

> In principle, all Islamic polities were (and are) required by Quranic injunction not to harm the dhimmi, to tolerate the Christians and Jews living in their midst. But beyond that fundamental prescribed posture, al-Andalus was … the site of memorable and distinctive interfaith relations. Here the Jewish community rose from the ashes of an abysmal existence under the Visigoths. … Fruitful intermarriage among the various cultures and the quality of cultural relations with the dhimmi were vital aspects of Andalusian identity.[29]

Much of the criticism that is leveled against the dhimmi pact is based on speculation and on projection from the present moment to the past, so the one who is engaged in criticism does not acknowledge the difference between the centralized political order of the modern state and the decentralized communal system of the premodern Muslim life. Yet on a close examination one could see that not only did the system provide protection for the followers of other religions from imposition of Muslim values on them but also that the system gave non-Muslims the options to use the Muslim system to litigate their cases if they so choose before Muslim courts. Najwa al-Qattan illustrated in a study published in 1999 that non-Muslims were able to use the Ottoman legal system to successfully sue Muslims. The study also shows, utilizing Ottoman court records (sijil), that many non-Muslims "preferred the Shariʿa-based Ottoman courts over the tribunals of their own religious communities."[30] The study also illustrates, building on court records, that Christians and Jews were not limited to their own confessional courts but could freely use Ottoman courts, and many of them trusted the non-confessional Muslim courts, particularly in areas that involve registering inheritance, property ownership, and marriage. The study also reveals that members of confessional communities have opted in a host of cases to use "Ottoman courts instead of communal tribunals for various reasons, including the fact that they could get a fair hearing and prevail in an action, even against a Muslim party."[31]

Some of the evidence used to fault the dhimmi system involves an alleged pact imposed by the second Muslim Caliph Umar, that forced a set of conditions allegedly intended to humiliate non-Muslims. The so-called Pact of Umar is frequently used in secondary literature, produced by people like Gisele Littman and Robert Spencer, and has become a convenient instrument to discredit the history of Islam and condemn its followers. The alleged pact has been circulated in Arabic and European languages without any credible source or evidence. Many Middle East specialists, such as A. S. Tritton, reject the document as unauthentic and fabricated. The assertion that the document is fabricated does not rest simply on the lack of supporting evidence, but most importantly on the fact that it was never applied. Tritton points out that if the document was

authentic, it would have surely been applied by some Muslim rulers.[32] The fact that it was never applied, even in the most adversarial times when the Muslim communities in the Levant were under a long and vicious military campaign by the Crusaders, is enough a proof to establish its inauthenticity.

Waqf institution and the autonomy of civil society

Civil society in historical Muslim regions has been characterized by great vitality, thanks in large part to its commitment to the transcendental values of cooperation, solidarity, common good, excellence, and compassion. These values were manifested in civil institutions that enabled society to preserve its vitality away from dominant political powers, most notably the institution of waqf (public trust). Public trusts (endowments) played a large role in the growth of historical Islamic society and enabled its members to use their wealth, efforts, and skills to serve the various social strata and to provide public services, including building hospitals, providing medicine, supporting educational scholarships, spending on public facilities, fighting poverty, and other educational, economic, social, and urban services. Indeed, the Qur'an closely associates faith with action, as it makes good action the manifestation of good faith. Islam in general historically placed more emphasis on the law and its implementation and assigned to it greater practical importance than to dogma. Issues relating to dogma were often raised as political instruments to discredit established powers or to demonize the opposition and to justify otherwise unacceptable action under the law. The main emphases and concerns were however more focused on praxis rather than ideology.

The institution of waqf was grounded in Islamic law, and scholars made sure that it was well protected from the misuse by the public and the abuse of political authority. For most of them, this was a matter of utmost importance, as the autonomy of the juristic class hinged on the very institution of waqf. The institution was essential for generating resources and funding for their livelihood and the education of new generations of jurists who received stipends and other funding essential for maintaining independent juristic tradition. Scholars of the Hanafi school of law defined waqf as the retention of "the corpus from the ownership of any person and the gift of its income or usufruct either presently or in the future, to some charitable purpose."[33] The waqf was intended as an institution to perpetuate public services beyond the lifespan of the person or persons who provided the original funding. It could be refunded later, but no one would have the authority to dissolve it or use the funding for any other purpose than the one for which it was established. The waqf was administered by a trustee (mutawalli), who would be initially named by the trust's founders and whose powers are limited by the terms of the founder's will and whose rules of succession are decided by the legal instrument at the time of its initiation.[34] The trustee is charged with the responsibility of administering the waqf and providing care and protection. The beneficiaries of waqf who are entitled to the services and benefits are

clearly spelled out.[35] The incentives for setting the waqf are derived from the religious obligations and motives that can be found in many Qur'anic verses as well as in the sayings of the prophet. The Qur'an, for example, makes the act of giving an important path to forgiveness and reward, particularly when the giving relates to the things one values most.[36]

But beyond the immediate religious purpose of individual salvation, the waqf played an important social and political role, as it provided the funding for the setting up of civil society organizations outside the control of the government, whose protection is stipulated by the sacred law. It was through this institution that most scholars and students received financial support, without having to resort to state funding. Waqf was also a major source of fund for public services, and cities and municipalities depended on societal funding rather than on fiscal allocation by the caliph or the sultan. The historical Muslim communities were able to ensure the autonomy of their civil institutions through independent public trusts. The trusts provided the financial base to finance civil institutions such as schools, hospitals, irrigation and drainage channels, road pavement, and many other public services up until the twentieth century, when postcolonial Muslim states confiscated these institutions and put them under the supervision of ministerial administration. Civil institutions in the Abbasid era assumed the main responsibilities in market regulation and organizing guilds. They formed an extensive network across the vast geography, from Tangier and Seville in the West to Delhi and Samarkand in the East. Three institutions, in particular, played an important role in organizing society to meet social needs:

1   Guilds and syndicates of crafts and professions in Arab and Islamic cities such as Damascus, Cairo, Aleppo, Isfahan, and Shiraz.
2   Networks of trade relations that accompanied flourishing trade and the development of commercial centers and networks spanning wide geographical areas between East Asia and the Maghreb.
3   Networks of scholars and jurists who formed the social and cultural elite, had a great influence in directing society, and retained until the nineteenth century the legislative authority.

Guilds contributed to organizing crafts in market, nurtured a system of professional training, and exercised an important political role, as they sought to influence public regulations relevant to professions and industries. Historical records of established procedures and the rules governing the craft and the market reveal "that within these organizations a certain and specific hierarchy," starting from the aspirant, and passing through the maker "to the teacher, to the sheikh of the craft, to the sheikh of the market."[37] They also reveal that the custom of electing

the sheikh of the market was the unanimity of merchants and craftsmen, and it is assumed that he possesses the characteristics of good morals,

rationality and wisdom. And there is no change in it [market regulation] except with his knowledge and opinion, and the sheikhs of all trades were elected in his presence and are obligated with his recommendations.[38]

The development of trade unions was accompanied by an evolution in commercial and banking institutions that facilitated trade exchange between divergent business centers.

> The commercial movement flourished through import and export with the outside world, and merchants became agents and commercial centers in the various countries that they trade with, and banking and other financial institutions were established to facilitate commercial operations, and thus play an important role such as credit to merchants.[39]

Credit transactions played a large role in trade and import. "Financial institutions play the role of banks today, and among these are the homes of the 'jahabidha' (commerce brokers) who facilitated trade and also supported the state's economy in some periods."[40] The Moroccan traveler Ibn Battuta (1304–1368) gave us important insights into the organization of markets and cities in the many Muslim countries he visited during his extended journeys and revealed the remarkably sophisticated level of administration of civil society, independent of the state and the sultan's direct influence. In describing life in Isfahan, Ibn Battuta conveyed a bright picture of the organization of industries inside the city, and the reliance of civil society institutions on a similar system that uses waqf to organize social life outside the influence of state institutions. "And the people of every industry form a guild," Ibn Battuta writes, "and elect one of their members who they call 'Kalu', and the same structure exists in big city in non-commercial organizations."[41]

   The most important highlights on the role of the waqf foundation in organizing and supporting the historical Islamic communities and the diversity of social purposes that it achieved are found in the notes of Ibn Battuta; in his memoirs, published under the title *Wonders of Sights in Strangest of Territories*, he describes the diversity of endowments in Damascus as follows:

> The endowments in Damascus are not limited to their types and resources due to their abundance. They include endowments of those who are unable to perform the Hajj. Also, there are endowments for the release of prisoners. Including endowments for the wayfarers, they give them what they need to eat, dress, and provide for their return to their countries. And among them are the endowments of preparing the road and paving them, because the alleys of Damascus each have two sidewalks that the pedestrians pass through, and the riders pass between them.[42]

He also describes the diversity and peculiarity of the waqf institutions in Damascus, as he asserts that one could hardly find individual or social needs that have been left unattended for. Even the accidently broken plates by boys dispatched by their masters to deliver food throughout the city have a twinkling of help in moments of adversity:

> One day I passed some alleys of Damascus, and I saw a young boy, steering at debris of a Chinese pottery that just dropped, and they [damascenes] call plate, and it was broken. People gathered around him, and some of them said: 'collect the fragments and carry them with you to the administrator of the endowment of the pots.' So he gathered them and the man went with him, so he showed them to [the administrator], who paid him what he needed to buy similar plate ... and that endowment was a remedy for the hearts. May God reward the one who has aspired to this level of sublime benevolence to do something like this.[43]

The vitality of historical Muslim society and its institutions could be observed in the entire Nile-to-Oxus region, as the waqf foundations and their public service institutions could be found in many cities across the region. The city of Isfahan was one of the places Ibn Battuta visited in his famous journey and reported what he observed in connection with the free public services offered through waqf funding:

> My stay at Isfahan was in a lodge built in honor of Sheikh Ali bin Sahl, a pupil of Junaid, which is a venerated place that people of the region travel to for blessings. The lodge provides food for all visitors. In it [Isfahan] is built a wonderful public bath, furnished with marble and its walls are made of ceramics, and it is given as a public trust so no one has to pay to enjoy its services.[44]

Furthermore, the reader of Ibn Battuta's memoirs discovers that he was able to move through great expanses and territories from Morocco to India with little money, as he took advantage of a wide network of private educational institutions that relied on the waqf system to provide students with free housing. So Ibn Battuta was able to find shelter in these dorms whenever he went through periods of unemployment and was short on provisions, so he did not only observe the importance of waqf for services that looked to him as unusual but he evidently depended occasionally on the waqf system to survive his lifelong journeys in the Middle-Age Muslim societies.[45]

Civil society and its organization displayed remarkable vitality unmatched today except in few Western democracies. In Muslim countries, however, social and financial organizations have come under the control of centralized bureaucracies that have assumed full monopoly over every social function, leaving Muslim populations in complete paralysis, and creating the conditions for constant rebellion and anarchism.

The birth of science and its institutions

The rise of Abbasid dynasty to power in 750 CE empowered rational idealism represented by the Mutazilite movement. For over half a century, the Mutazilites took upon themselves the task of providing the theoretical repudiation of the Umayyad rule, rejecting their deterministic doctrine that justified the usurpation of power and condemning their exclusivism and reliance on Arabs alone in high public offices. In less than a decade, the Abbasid Caliph Ma'mun provided major boosting to the House of Wisdom (Dar al-Hikmah) that was set as a center for the study of philosophy and translation of major works produced in different civilization centers. Not only did he expand spending on the House of Wisdom, he also appointed an accomplished Mutazilite, Abu Ishaq al-Kindi, to lead this institution. Kindi turned the translation center into repository of all great works and hired many accomplished philosophers and translators. When Baghdad came under traditionalist rulers by the time of Caliph Mustansir, the center of learning moved eastward, as scholarship and arts found a new home in the Buyid dynasty, particularly in the Court of 'Aḍud al-Dawla (r. 949–983), "who transformed Shiraz into a center of culture and learning, famed for its grand library which won the admiration of the geographer al-Muqaddasi."[46] The Buyid rulers were leaders with great appreciation for scholarship and science and have selected to the office of first minister persons who combined political leadership and intellectual excellence, including Abu al-Fadl bin al-'Amid and Al-Sahib bin 'Abbad. Both have invited to Isfahan and the Ray province the most accomplished jurists, scientists, linguists, and literary figures. They also built huge libraries. Ibn Abbad was a committed Mutazilite, and his court become safe heaven to many rationalist scholars, such as the renowned Qadi Abdul Jabbar, who served as the chief judge of Isfahan.[47]

The towering center of leaning was by far the House of Wisdom which served as the foundation for the translation of all scientific works that could be discovered in the four corners of the vast Abbasid Empire. The rational idealism of the Mutazilite, for which both Kindi and Ma'mun were its leading advocates, was crucial for paving the way for the institutionalization of philosophical inquiries and, more importantly, for the development of the scientific tradition. The Mutazilites were the champions of the atomic theory of kalam, and al-Kindi himself was an accomplished mathematician, physicist, and chemist, and left few treaties on the subject under his name. Caliph Ma'mun's enthusiasm for philosophy and science was unmatched, and his passion for advancing rational thinking led him to commit a fatal mistake that eventually contributed to the demise of Mutazilite in Baghdad in less than a decade after he passed away. His decision to introduce a religious test (*imtihān*) was evidently intended to deny Muslim traditionalists access to the judiciary. The approach backfired, and the Mutazilites gradually lost support in Baghdad, prompting Ash'ari to come up with a creative synthesis between the Hanbalite traditionalists and the Mutazilite rationalists, ensuring thereby the survival of the rationalist tradition.

The House of Wisdom (Bait al Hikma) employed the services of many leading scholars, including Muhammad ibn Musa al-Khwarizmi (780–850), the father of algebra, Mohammed Jafar ibn Musa, Ahmad ibn Musa, al-Hasan ibn Musa, and Yaqub ibn Ishaq al-Kindi (801–873), to name just a few. The translation section was headed by a Christian scholar, Hunayn bin Ishaq (809–873), and employed the service of such illustrious philosophers and translators of science as the sabian Thabit ibn Qurra (826–901). Translations of this era were superior to earlier times. However, soon after the emphasis on translation work declined, the House of Wisdom became a place for generating new ideas and introducing the newly found scientific method. "Never before and never since, on such a scale," observed Robert Briffault, "has the spectacle been witnessed of the ruling classes throughout the length and breadth of a vast empire given over entirely to a frenzied passion for the acquirement of knowledge."[48] Muslim scholars and scientists learned Persian, Indian, and Greek philosophies, taught them in their schools and universities, and then built on them new scientific theories and methods. Mathematics, astronomy, medicine, logic, philosophy were important subjects of education in the House of Hikmah and other centers of learning. The sooner scholars in the Islamic civilization mastered the knowledge of earlier civilizations, the sooner they began to advance these fields of learning, develop new theories, make new discoveries, invented new techniques, and added new fields of learning. Interest in knowledge in general and empirical learning in particular were cultivated by the message of the Qur'an. The first verse of Qur'anic revelation was not about the nature of God or His creation. Nor was it a call to the believers to pray or have strong faith in God. It was rather about reading, learning, and knowledge. "Read in the name of your Lord who created; Created man out of a (mere) clot of congealed blood; read and your Lord is most Bountiful, he taught, through (the use of) the pen, man that which he knew not" (Qur'an: 96-1-5). Caliphs, sultans, and emirs were highly educated members of the Muslim society and placed high premium on promoting philosophy and science. Poets, novelists, logicians, grammarians, and scientists were invited regularly to the court of Muslim rulers and supported generously by them.[49]

In mathematics, Muhammad bin Musa al Khwarizmi developed algebra and algorithms, while Sind bin Ali invented spherical trigonometry and the decimal point notation. Al-Kindi invented the trigonometric functions besides the sine rule, the cryptanalysis and frequency analysis, and algebraic calculus. Omar Khayyam used algebraic geometry and solved the third-degree equation. Abu al Hasan al Qalasadi developed symbolic algebra.[50] In astronomy, Ja'far Muhammad bin Musa discovered that heavenly bodies and celestial spheres were subject to the same physical laws as the Earth[51] and began the foundational work that became later known as astrophysics and celestial mechanics. He designed the first elaborate experiments related to astronomical research. Ibn al Haytham used exacting empirical observations and experimental techniques that led to the discovery that celestial spheres

are not solid but made of less dense matter than the air.[52] Ibn al–Haytham and Mo'ayyeduddin Urdi rejected the Ptolemaic model on empirical rather than philosophical grounds and introduced the first non–Ptolemaic model. Nasir al Din al Tusi provided the first empirical observational evidence of the earth's rotation, a few centuries before Copernicus made similar claims.[53]

In physics, Ibn al–Haytham (Alhazen) introduced experimental physics and used it to develop modern optics and transform our understanding of light and vision. His work, The Book of Optics, launched a scientific revolution in optics and was the prelude for Isaac Newton's *Philosophiae Naturalis Principia Mathematica*.[54] Ibn al Haytham also discovered the concept of momentum. Abu Rayhan al-Biruni introduced the experimental scientific into mechanics, and its essential principles and concepts were developed by several Muslim scientists, which were later synthesized by Isaac Newtown in his *Laws of motion*.[55] Ibn al Haytham and Ibn Sina (Avicenna) discovered the law of inertia, which later became known as Newton's first law of motion, [56] and the concept of momentum. Abu Barakat al Baghdadi discovered the fundamental law of mathematics, the proportionality between force and acceleration, which later became known as Newton's second law of motion.[57] While Ibn Bajjah (Avempace) discovered what later became known as Newton's third law of motion, the concept of reaction.[58]

Muslim contributions to the development of medicine were even more impressive. Muslims set up the first hospitals, introduced experimental medicine, established medical schools, and introduced mathematics and measurements into medicine and pharmacology. They also made profound advancements in the field of anatomy, experimental medicine, ophthalmology, pathology, physiology, and surgery.[59] Al-Razi (Rhazes) discovered measles and small-pox, and Abu al–Qasim (Abulcasis) set modern surgery on a solid foundation by inventing numerous surgical instruments, including the surgical uses of catgut, the ligature, surgical needle, retractor, and surgical rod. These inventions were described and their use was explained in his book, *Kitab al-Tasrif.* Ibn Sina (Avicenna) helped lay the foundations for modern medicine, with *The Canon of Medicine*, which was responsible for the discovery of contagious disease, introduction of quarantine to limit their spread, introduction of experimental medicine, evidence–based medicine, and clinical trials.[60]

Western history of science somehow overlooks the transformative role of Arabic science, jumping over a millennium from the modern age to the Axial Age of the Greek, making little or no mention of the translated works that were crucial for the introduction of modern science, rather than Greek natural philosophy, to Western Europe. The astronomy and mathematics of the Greeks were foreign importations never thoroughly acclimatized in Greek culture. The Greeks systematized, generalized, and theorized, but the detailed and meticulous ways of investigation, the accumulation of positive knowledge, the minute methods of observation and empirical inquiry, were altogether alien to the experience of Greece and its temperament. Only in Hellenistic Alexandria one can observe an approach close to what we call

today science, but it still retained a great deal of the ancient spirit of wisdom and magic. What we call science today flourished in Europe as a result of a new spirit of inquiry and was shaped by new methods of investigation that emphasized observations, experiments, measurements, and the use of mathematics in ways that the Greeks never imagined. That spirit of modern science came to Europe through the translations of the scientific research developed by Arab and Muslim scientists.[61] Indeed, any historian of science would be hard-pressed today to provide scientific experimentations rooted in the Greek philosophy of nature or to produce Greek literature that resembles scientific methodology. The only methodology of knowledge the Greek ever developed was formal logic, which is completely consumed with deductive thinking. Nor was Greek mathematics suitable for conducting advanced scientific reasoning, for Greek mathematical knowledge lacked the key mathematical instruments: the ability to use the zero and algebraic equations, both were developed by Muslim mathematicians and were integrated to the study of physics. Nor did the Greek have any significant knowledge of chemistry, as it became a science with its own experimentational approach as it flourished within the Arabic scientific revolution of the ninth century and became a separate branch of science through the work of the ninth-century chemist Jabir ibn Hayyan (Geber). Paul Kraus, who wrote extensively on ibn Hayyan's contribution to the history of scientific ideas in Islam, has the following to say about the difference between Islamic and Greek work in the study of chemistry:

> The study of the Greek alchemists is not very encouraging. An even surface examination of the Greek texts shows that a very small part only was organized according to true experiments of laboratory: even the supposedly technical writings, in the state where we find them today, are unintelligible nonsense which refuses any interpretation.... It is different with Jabir's alchemy. The relatively clear description of the processes and the alchemical apparatuses, the methodical classification of the substances, mark an experimental spirit which is extremely far away from the weird and odd esotericism of the Greek texts. The theory on which Jabir supports his operations is one of clearness and of an impressive unity.[62]

Despite these impressive scientific theories and discoveries, most modern historians brush aside Islamic contributions to science, reducing the role of Muslim scientists to intermediaries who preserved Greek science and handed it over to the Occident. Henry Osborn Taylor published over a century ago a voluminous work on the history of Medieval thought, appropriately titled, *The Mediaeval Mind*, without hardly making any significant mention of Islamic contribution to science. The book came in four editions and is still available for distribution by Harvard University Press. The press website introduces the book as thus: "*The Medieval Mind* is valued everywhere for its wise and comprehensive picture of the intellectual, emotional, and

spiritual attitudes of the Middle Ages."[63] I personally do not think that this description was intended to misrepresent the history of science. Rather, this sad presentation of a partial view of the Middle Ages as comprehensive is born today out of an honest misunderstanding by contemporary generations who are unaware of the role of the Islamic civilization in the making of the modern world. We turn therefore to examine European scholarship during the Middle Ages in the next chapter. But first a brief commentary on moral agency in relation to group dynamics associated with social limitations that often challenge the moral agency within a group dynamic that confines and pressures individual attitudes and choices.

Moral agency, rational idealism, and group dynamics

I would like, before we conclude this chapter, to underscore the importance of the rational idealism we encountered in this chapter and the previous two chapters for undertaking the difficult task of upholding the values of universal equality and human dignity and the push for a more globally inclusive order that celebrates humanity and human rights. The project of expanding the circles of human dignity is particularly difficult when we consider group dynamics and the need to balance out social unity and social reform. The rational agency at the heart of the monotheistic traditions highlights the moral predicament of historically determined individual life and reveals the predicament individuals confront as they grow aware of their intimate connections to the social groups to which they historically belong. The predicament is born from the contradictions between moral agency and the multiplicity of imperfections sanctioned by dominant customs, traditions, and institutions. The challenge becomes one of finding the best path for negotiating the divide between moral ideals and social reality. The tensions are deeply felt within individual consciousness, as the inner forces that motivate action often pull the human spirit in opposing directions. The choice ranges between two positions: living honestly while running the risk of social backlash or leading a cunning life so as to make self-interest the prime factor of thinking and acting. Between these two clear choices lies a spectrum of positions and choices. On a different level, the choice might be either embracing diversity with all its uncertainties and requirements for a higher moral discipline or taking the easier route of circling the wagon and othering the strange and unfamiliar. Human imperfections are real and are most severely experienced in societies where people claim to advance the good and attend to human suffering but, in actuality, privilege self-gratification and attend to those who enable them to achieve personal glories. Even when individuals could finally achieve higher moral discipline and become convinced of the false pretense of those who drive society in the wrong direction, they have to make tough decisions and prioritize their objectives if they want to avoid compromising the integrity of the social order. Moral choices are never easy and often are subject to arduous negotiations and compromises. One is often confronted

with the choice of whether to go it alone or support collective choices that may compromise one's faith and values. Yet moments of open dissent against established traditions and ways of life are crucial as they are painful and have occasionally carried monumental implications for world history. Staying with the collectivity when its trajectory is clearly moving in the wrong direction is not without its own perils, as staying the course means choosing moving gradually to lower moral grounds.

Very few individuals dare to take that unusual stand of confronting social force with a truth that no one wants to hear. Those who dare to speak truth to power often do that at a tremendous cost for themselves and to those with whom they are in close proximity. And for that reason, these individuals are the stars and heroes of history that people usually hold them in high esteem, often long after they passed away, even when they do not share with them their identities. These are individuals whose names have a special ring so they could be recognized across cultures and throughout the globe: Abraham, Moses, Confucius, Buddha, Jesus, Muhammad, Luther, Gandhi, and a host of other remarkable personalities. These are exemplary moral agents who have often drawn the respect of numerous peoples throughout history. Along with them and walking a few steps behind stand the great reformers who echoed the transcendental meanings and values shared by all prophets and brought people back to the moral consciousness they seemed to have forgotten. These are the voices of Socrates, Cicero, St. Paul, St. Augustine, Hillel, Umar, Ghazali, Maimonides, Averroes, Rousseau, Locke, Rumi, Kant, Voltaire, Jefferson, Malcom X, King Jr., and countless others.

Around, before, and behind these heroic individuals were many more people who lived lives filled with the love for a higher moral reality that they knew in various names. They lived with love for that which transcends all limitations and imperfections but inspires the limited and imperfect to move onward and upward, despite all the challenges and tragedies of life. The surprising element of human condition is that life is to be rejoiced, especially for those who dare to grab it with all the strengths they have, in pursuit of more prosperous and uplifting reality, which they have fully embraced in their dreams and hopes even when it seemed a far-fetched goal that only renegades would dare to dream. It is through those idealists and dreamers that humanity has traversed from the Axial Age to the modern age, and it is to them that it owes its greatest debt. The rise of humanity throughout history is far from being a deterministic path, and humanity is greatly indebted to the rational idealism that stood at every juncture where society seemed to experience complete loss of morale and hope and despaired over problems with no resolution in sight in the foreseeable future. Rational idealism was not always asserted as such; it has occasionally acted out through those who upheld the ideals that uplift society at difficult junctures, as it did in the early years of Islam, when the realists gained the upper hand in pursuit of power and self-interests, or in the early modern age when the power hungry had for a while the upper hand. Islamic rationalists did so even when the realization

of the ideals of equality, freedom, and justice seemed quite distant and remote and still believed in these ideals so strongly to have the tenacity to push to a future that transcended existing obstacles and challenges. For it is through transcendental idealism, which Asharites insisted was located in the innate values that organize in human nature—and while the Kantians saw it as an innate structure necessary to maintain human rationality free from the law of causality—that humanity was able to recover itself from the tyranny of dogmatic traditions.

It is for these reasons that we need to keep our focus sharp on the elements of social and political orders that form the core of human development, both morally and socially. Our examination of the total experience may lead us to the wrong conclusions if we do not separate the bubbles and foams from the structures around which they grow and obscure our ability to see the real forces driving human history. The information we gathered so far should, I do hope, outline a picture of humanity moving gradually toward new orders with greater heights under the leadership of daring souls who were willing to challenge the status quo and real politics that perpetuated injustice in the name of justice. Undoubtedly, the picture is somewhat fussy and is, hence, open to contestations and disagreements. We talked so far of the driving force in the advancement of the human condition; namely, transcendental idealism—born in the Abrahamic tradition and manifested itself in the reformist work of the Hebrew prophets and later in the rise of rational idealism in Islamic moment of monotheism. The picture of the role of Islamic monotheism in world history, which we focused on in the previous three chapters, is far from being crystal clear in its entirety and will surely require further critique, improvement, and refinement. Yet the picture as such cannot be dismissed because it is still of crucial help to understand the great leap of history that linked the Axial Age, where Greek philosophy was marginally located, to the rise of Western modernity. The monumental task placed on the Islamic moment of the monotheistic breakthrough cannot be ignored or overlooked, as it stiches together views constructed by many historians and philosophers of history. The account offers a view that illustrates the creative synthesis undertaken by the Islamic civilization to bring unity and order to the fragmented experiences of the Axial-Age civilizations. One clear limitation of the picture we painted so far, of the evolution of human history from the Axial Age to the modern age, is that it is completely focused on the monotheistic path to the modern world, leaving out specific contributions of both the Indic and Sinic civilizations. These omissions are due to the main task of this study of identifying the monotheistic path to the modern world. Contemporary research has provided studies that focused on understanding of the Sinic and Indic contributions, and I do personally appreciate the importance of having a more comprehensive understanding of the modern world as the collective project of culturally and religiously diverse humanity. I tried to show in this work that the Sinic and Indic contributions have been channeled through the Islamic synthesis of antiquity into the modern world.

To conclude, the present chapter has discussed at some length the historical role played by Islamic monotheism with the full collaboration of peoples born into other religious traditions in shaping human consciousness and setting the social and intellectual foundations for the modern world. The next chapter will illustrate the impact of Islamic consciousness, with all its intellectual, scientific, and social ideas and institutions, on the rise of modern society in the least expected regions of the premodern world—the Occident. For centuries the Occident refused to succumb to the powerful Muslim empires that tried relentlessly to penetrate deep into the heart of Europe from the West and East. This resistance was remarkable for many reasons, not the least of which is the role the Occident was destined to play in taking over from the exhausted Islamic world and reenergizing the drive to perfect human learning, invention, and organization. The exhaustion and corruption of the Islamic civilization toward the end of the eighteenth century became quite obvious, even in its most vibrant region, the Ottoman Empire, as it increasingly showed signs of corruption and fatigue while Europe was going through a new phase of rejuvenation and excitement, as it grew ready to assume its historical role and to expend its newly founded energy in its bid to dominate the old world while building a new world in the then-recently-discovered continents of America and Oceania.

Notes

1　Noah Feldman, *The Fall and Rise of the Islamic State* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2008), 32.
2　Ibid, 38.
3　G. W. F. Hegel, *The Philosophy of History*, trans. John Sibree (Kitchener: Batoche Books, 2001), 127.
4　Armando Salvatore, *The Public Sphere, Liberal Modernity, Catholicism, Islam* (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2007), 2.
5　Ibid, 11.
6　Ibid.
7　Ibid, 16.; see also Khalid M. Masud, *Shatibi's Philosophy of Islamic* (Law, Kuala Lumpur: Islamic Book Trust, 1995).
8　Salvatore, *Public Sphere*, 17.
9　Johann Arnason, "Civilizational Patterns and Civilizing Processes." *International Sociology*, vol. 16, no. 3 (2001), 387–405.
10　Salvatore, *Public Sphere*, 17.
11　Felicitas Opwis, *Maslahah and the Purpose of the Law* (Leiden: Brill, 2010), 16. See also Marie Bernand, "Hanafi Usul al-Fiqh through a Manuscript of al-Gassass," *Journal of the American Oriental Society*, vol. 105 (1985), 623–635.
12　Opwis, *Maslahah*, 17.
13　Ibid.
14　Ibid, 31.
15　Izz al-Din bin Abdul Salam, *The Major Rules*, vol. 1 (Qatar: Ministry of Awqaf and Islamic Affairs), 14.
16　Ibid,
17　Ibid, 19.
18　Ibid, 8.

19 Ibid.
20 Bat Ye'or, *Islam and Dhimmitude: Where Civilizations Collide* (Madison, NJ: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 2001).
21 Robert Spencer, a prolific Islamophobe, who as an editor of *Jihad Watch and Stop Islamization of America* made a career out of bashing Muslims, promotes the notion of dhimmitude and uses it to demonize Islam and Muslims.
22 Marshall G. S. Hodgson, *The Venture of Islam*, vol. 1 (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1974), 306.
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24 Ibid.
25 Hodgson, *Venture of Islam*, vol. 1, 306.
26 Marshall G. S. Hodgson, *The Venture of Islam*, vol. 2 (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1997), 12
27 Anver M. Emon, *Religious Pluralism and Islamic Law: Dhimmis and Others in the Empire of Law* (Oxford University Press, 2012), 15.
28 Ibid.
29 Maria Rosa Menocal, *The Ornament of the World! How Muslim, Jews, and Christians Created a Culture of Tolerance in Medieval Spain* (Boston, MA: Little, Brown and Company, 2002), quoted in Emon, *Religious Pluralism*, 45.
30 Ibid, 54. See also Najwa al-Qattan, "Dhimmis in the Muslim Court: Legal Autonomy and Religious. Discrimination," *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, vol. 31 (1999), 429.
31 Emon, *Religious Pluralism*, 54.
32 Ibid, 81
33 Majid Khadduri and Herbert J. Liebesny (eds.), *Law in the Middle East* (Washington, DC: Middle East Institute, 1955), 203.
34 Ibid, 204.
35 Ibid.
36 "You shall not attain righteousness unless you give (freely) of that which you love; and whatever you give, of a truth God knows it well" (Qur'an 3:92).
37 Tawfiq Al-Madini, *Civil Society and the Political State in the Arab World* (1997), 316
38 Ibid.
39 Ibid.
40 Ibid, 316–317.
41 Ibn Battuta, *The Masterpiece of Sight in the Strange Things of Al-Amsar* (Beirut: Dar Al-Kutub Al-Alami, 1987–1907), 214.
42 Ibid, 122
43 Ibid.
44 Ibid, 125
45 Ibid.
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47 Ibid, 255.
48 Robert Briffault, *The Making of Humanity* (London: George Allen & Unwin House, 1919), 188.
49 Ibid.
50 M. H. Syed, *Islam and Science* (New Delhi: Anmol Publications, 2005), 71.
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53 F. Jamil Ragep, "Tusi and Copernicus: The Earth's Motion in Context," *Science in Context*, vol. 14, no. 1–2 (2001), 145–163.

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60 Shlomo Pines, "La dynamique d'Ibn Bajja," in *Mélanges Alexandre Koyré, I* (Paris, 1964), 442–468 (462, 468). cf. Abel B. Franco (October 2003). "Avempace, Projectile Motion, and Impetus Theory," *Journal of the History of Ideas*, vol. 64, no. 4, 521–546 (543).

61 Briffault, *Making of Humanity*, 190.

62 Paul Kraus, *Jabir ibn Hayyan, Contribution à l'histoire des idées scientifiques dans l'Islam. I. Le corpus des écrits jâbiriens. II. Jâbir et la science grecque* (Cairo: Institut français d'archéologie orientale, 1942–1943). In Ahmad Y. al-Hassan, trans., *History of Science and Technology in Islam*, Part 3. http://www.history-science-technology.com/Geber/Geber 3.htm (retrieved October 4, 2020).

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6 Reformation and the rise of the modern West

Modern civilization as we know it today is rightly traced to the Enlighten-
ment movement, for that was where the rationalization of reformed Chris-
tianity began. The rationalization starting point was in the values and ideas
that have formed the axiom of reformed Christianity and the rise of Prot-
estantism as the fountain of the new ethos that had to be institutionalized,
systematized, and secularized. Secularization as a process was thought ini-
tially to involve the political sphere alone, as a necessary labor to ensure the
separation of the state and the church. By the seventeenth century, Europeans
were exhausted by endless religious wars instigated by the Roman church
that was determined to keep the Protestant Reformation movement in check.
It is not clear how much of the religious reform was inspired by the Islamic
conception of religious responsibility, as Luther was clearly disturbed by the
over-ritualistic form of religiosity taught by the Roman church that was thin
on moral and spiritual teachings. Such critique of ritualized religiosity could
be found in the work of Muslim jurists such as al-Muhasibi (781–857 CE) and
al-Ghazali (1058–1111 CE). Like Islam, Protestantism rejected priesthood,
emphasized the right of all people of faith to engage the sacred text, and
expected considerable measures of equality and justice from the political sys-
tem. Yet there is no evidence for the connection between the Islamic jurists'
ideas and that of the fathers of Protestant Christianity. The ideas could also
be derived from a critical reading of the biblical text. What is evident though
is that ideas developed within the Islamic civilization were being integrated
gradually into Western European culture and thought.

We will examine in this chapter the extent to which Western Europe
has embraced cultural, intellectual, and scientific elements it encountered in
the Islamic literary, philosophical, and scientific works translated over five
centuries from the Arabic civilization in Andalusia. The Iberian Peninsula
formed, we will argue in this chapter, the Western frontiers between Islam
and Christendom that were vital for the transmission of science and technol-
ogy to the most isolated part of Europe that was completely cut off from the
East. Andalusia as a frontier region was not simply a border line but a zone of
contact where Christians interacted with one of the most advanced centers of
leaning of the Middle Age. European Christians were able to visit, trade, live,

and study in Muslim cities. They became increasingly interested in Islamic learning, philosophy, and science as they saw the impact of that learning on the quality of life in Andalusia that was unmatched in any Middle-Age European town or city. With the fall of Cordoba, the seat of the Umayyad Dynasty in Andalusia, the Cordoba's library was copied and shipped to different regions in North West Europe, particularly British Isles, the Kingdom of France, and the Roman Holy Empire. Although little research has been done to shed light on the impact of Muslim scholarship on the rise of European, significant information has been uncovered to show that modern European philosophy and science represent a substantial break with Roman and Greek learning, as ample examples reveal that modern European scholarship and science depended extensively on the work of Muslim philosophers, scientists, and literary figures to set Europe in motion into modern times. The ingenuity of Europe lay not only in bringing the sciences of mathematics, physics, chemistry, and astronomy into greater advancement and systematization but also in developing the technology that transformed the whole world, placing it on the verge of a new global age.

Christian–Muslim frontiers as zones of contact

Christian and Muslim empires were engaged for centuries in existential struggle, and the attacks and counterattacks created deep resentments particularly along the frontiers. The frontiers were not made of borderlines but of large zones that constituted "zones of contact." In the zones of contact lived diverse communities of Abrahamic faiths. These communities were at times devastated by the ongoing bloody conflicts, but they were often living a prosperous and productive life. The frontier communities interacted among themselves through different forms, including negotiation, trade, and cultural exchange. It is this state of confrontation and civilizational and cultural exchange that we need to explore and assess in this chapter. The encounters between diverse religious and ethnic communities took place throughout the Islamic civilization that developed with great vibrancy for over a millennium, and its vibrancy was especially visible along its frontiers. The idea of Christian-Muslim frontier was discussed in a recent book by Mario Apostolov. His research focused on the East–Mediterranean frontier, which was for him an area stretching from Mecca to Vienna.[1] Along these frontiers the three Abrahamic traditions cooperated and learned from each other. The Mecca-Vienna axis was, however, not the only important frontier. Equally important exchanges between Muslims and Christians took place on a second frontier along the Cordoba-Paris axis. The frontier areas served as zones of sustained interaction and exchange of products as well as of cultures and ideas.[2] The frontier was a zone in which Muslims and Christians confronted each other and where antinomies were in constant dialogue: "localism versus imperial mentality; communal conflict versus pluralism; and nationalism versus regionalism or globalization."[3]

The frontier was not considered by the rivaling powers that competed for its control to be a zone of contact but rather a border and frontline to keep the enemies at bay. The frontier was a zone of contact particularly due to the persistent communication and exchange among its residents and the recurring tensions between the mixed populations that inhabited it. However, because of the role it played historically in regulating the relationship between the competing Christian and Muslim empires, it has served as a principle of order, in the same fashion that boundaries between modern states do.[4] As boundaries are essential for regulating interactions and movements between two states, so did the frontier serve to regulate interaction and movement across empires and civilizations. The frontier as a zone of contact has long been recognized by members of the communities that inhabited it. Apostolov reports that the expression can be found in an official Bulgarian history textbook that includes a chapter titled "The Bulgarians in the Zone of Contact between Christianity and Islam."[5] Life in the frontier was greatly influenced by the collective historical memories of the various communities, who seemed to be able to remember past grievances and pains more readily than they did of happy and positive moments. These historical memoires have been used as fragments of evidence by exclusivist movements within the three Abrahamic traditions and have been effectively employed to perpetuate mistrust and foment fear and resentment.

Five moments in particular have left a lasting impact on the social, cultural, and demographic composition of the frontier—the Arab expansion in the seventh century into territories previously controlled by the Byzantine Empire in the Levant region, the brutal eradication of Islam and Judaism from the Iberian Peninsula by the Kingdom of Castile and Aragon, the counterattacks by the Crusades in the East-Mediterranean frontier, the Ottoman push throughout the Balkans and against the walls of Vienna, and finally the colonial expansion of European powers in the past two centuries into Muslim countries. Human psychology and political expediency often combine these moments to paint completely negative pictures. The change of regimes in frontier regions often leaves bitter and negative memories of control, domination, and oppression, whereas memories of positive exchanges seem to fade away with time.

While these movements across geography and history were associated with considerable amount of external force and violence, the impetus of the territorial push in one direction or the other was equally derived from political ambitions as from religion. The strategies for dealing with the external threats changed considerably over time, and the dynamics of expansion and contraction were not always the same. The Muslims' drive to conquer Persia and Byzantium was mainly political, motivated by the desire to end the imperial gridlock against the growing power of the Medina state and later by the desire to create a new order rooted in the egalitarian values of Islam. With the success of the military campaigns against the main empires of the time, the Sassanian and the Byzantine, the dynamics of conquest started to

change. The caliphate in Damascus and then in Baghdad became interested in creating a new world order ruled by Islamic centers and governed by the new norms that permitted more local autonomy and unconstrained trade. Muslim empires did not see religious, ethnical, or tribal diversity as a threat to peace and cooperation, but as a natural feature of expansive empires. The challenge, therefore, was not how to rid the territories of Islam (Dar al Islam) of non-Muslim congregations or non-Arab communities. The challenge was rather the institutionalization of difference. The solution was to recognize the legal and administrative autonomy of the various confessional communities that formed the Abode of Islam (territory of Islam). This solution allowed individuals to live in communities of shared identities, shaped by religious and ethnic similarities. They were also subject to legal, administrative, and ethical judgments made by public officials who shared the community religious affiliation and moral commitments, as each confessional community enjoyed full autonomy. This form of political organization markedly reduced social alienation, often experienced by members of minority communities who lived in societies where their cultural and religious specificities were not recognized. This explains why Jewish communities under Muslim rule had no significant instances of discrimination, stigmatization, or forced exile.

The Christian response to the expansion of Muslim empires took naturally a defensive character. To fend the religious influence into historically Christian communities, Latin Christianity treated religious diversity as a greater threat than ever before and pushed toward religious purity. With the collapse of the Roman Empire, the Roman church became the only institution capable of promoting collective life in Europe. Christianity was decisive for reuniting the diverse ethnic communities of Europe and relied initially on the temporal powers of the Franks and Visigoths, but later assumed power directly through the unchallenged authority of the office of the Pope. The Catholic Church singlehandedly promoted education and even dealt with matter of administration, dispensation of justice, and mobilization of armies for common defense as well as for expansion. In the area of religious education, the church focused primarily on educating clergymen, giving little attention to public education. The church became more focused on religious piety and discipline and geared its teaching toward the creation of saintly ruling elites. Christian priesthood became completely devoted to the promotion of the mission of the church, as rules for marriage of priests were made more stringent and the demands for celibacy were greatly elevated.[6]

Islam's rising power and gradual expansion into Christian territories and communities gave Muslims greater confidence in their ability to prevail and triumph. Islam's religious teachings that stipulated complete religious freedom for Christianity combined with Muslim self-confidence allowed Muslim societies to display unprecedented degree of tolerance toward religious and ethnic diversity. Medieval Christianity and church authorities became, on the other hand, more defensive and stringent in dealing with religious diversity. The opposition between the two worlds was driven as much by

politics as by religion. The opposition between the two was not primarily theological but political. Apart from the political and military conflicts, there were tremendous opportunities for cultural and scientific learning and exchange between the two civilizations. As we discuss below, the civilizational exchange did not only lead to improvement in skills and technologies but has also contributed to philosophical, theological, and normative convergence among the followers of the three Abrahamic traditions.

Scientific and cultural exchange on the Western frontiers

The Christian-Muslim frontiers in the Iberian Peninsula (711–1492) and southern Italy (830–1382) provided the milieu for centuries-long experimentation with religious pluralism. There is substantial evidence to show that the pluralist society continued for a while even after political power changed hands between Muslims and Christians, and Christian monarchs soon came under increased pressure from the Pope to abandon the multi-religious openness, created by Arab culture, in favor of religious homogeneity. The transition from the Muslim Kalbid Dynasty to the Christian Hohenstaufen Dynasty in southern Italy is a case in point. The Emirate of Sicily was ruled by the Kalbid Dynasty for over two centuries (830–1091).[7] The Muslim presence in Sicily and Malta continued till the late thirteenth century, and many Muslim scientists and scholars were employed by Roger II, Fredrick II, and Charles I during that period.[8] The mixed population in the frontier lived in reasonable harmony, practiced their religions in peace, intermarried, and engaged in trade. There are indications that some Christian monarchs, most notably Fredrick, were interested in maintaining the pluralist society that was created in Sicily by the Muslims, but the intense pressure from Rome led ultimately to adopting a hostile stance against the Muslim population that was eventually forced out of Sicily, Malta, and Pantelleria Island.

The church was a major force in the drive to end religious pluralism and was bent on stopping the cultural openness and exchange that were in full force throughout the Christian-Muslim frontiers. Fredrick II, who was crowned by Pope Innocent III as the Emperor of the Holy Roman Empire, came under increased pressure by Pope Gregory IX who accused him of neglecting churches, while constructing Muslim buildings, in Lucera. The churches were evidently dilapidated as many of them stopped functioning in the predominantly Muslim city of Lucera. When Fredrick did not respond to the pressure of the church, he was excommunicated in 1227 by Pope Gregory IX.[9] Pope Gregory wanted Fredrick to allow Christian missionaries into Lucera and protested the establishment of *Agarenorum Gymnasia* (Hagrites Schools), a reference to the establishment of Qur'anic schools in Lucera.[10] The Papacy at Rome was suspicious of him because of his close relations with Muslims and was not invited to the fifth Crusade. He organized in 1227 a maritime expedition to the city of Acre, which is considered the sixth Crusade. His was the only peaceful Crusade resulting in the signing of a treaty

with Sultan al-Kamil of the Ayyubid Dynasty. The treaty allowed him to enter Jerusalem, and he was given by al-Kamil the honorary title of the King of Jerusalem.[11] Neither Fredrick's crusading efforts nor his title were, however, recognized by the church. Two years after Pope Gregory IX ended his excommunication, Fredrick permitted Christian missionaries in 1232 into Lucera but continued to maintain positive relations with Muslims. Fredrick's diplomatic relationship with al-Kamil developed into deeper cooperation, and the "sultan further indulged Fredrick by sending him the mathematician Al-'Alim Qaysar, known as the Hanafi, to him."[12]

Yet it was this open culture shaped for centuries by the Muslim kingdoms in Spain that permitted the cultural exchange and intellectual borrowing across the religious divide between the Christian and Muslim communities. The military confrontations were not necessarily between Christianity and Islam but rather between two expansionist empires and intolerant Roman church that rejected then the idea of religious pluralism. There is no denying that religion often provided the moral impetus and spiritual motivation for such wars. However, the fighting was often triggered by the sense of threat and the perception that the other has a bad faith and sinister design. Occasionally, expansion was triggered by internal disturbances caused by oppressive and unjust rulers, giving the other the justification or pretense to expand into the enemy's territories. It has been argued that the "dazzling rapidity" with which Muslim armies moved through Christian territories in the Levant, North Africa, and the Iberian Peninsula was "chiefly due, not to Muslim prowess or Byzantine inefficiency, but to the assistance and friendliness of the Christian populations of Syria and Egypt, sick to death of theocratic oppression and of theology."[13] Muslims' appetite for learning and support of sciences was also welcomed by the mainly Christian Nestorian population. Mosques became not only centers of worship and devotion but also centers of learning with a school attached to every mosque.[14]

The literature describing the contributions of the Islamic civilization to European Renaissance has expanded in recent decades, and so I would not attempt to produce in this chapter a full account of the depth and breadth of the Arabic civilization's contributions to the rise of modern Europe. I intend instead to deconstruct the notion that Arabs did nothing more than passing the Greek sciences to Europe and show that science as the meticulous and systematic investigation of nature, undertaken with the use of advanced mathematics and experimentation in physics, chemistry, and biology, was a new invention of the Muslim civilization, that the Greek had no clue as how to conduct. I would like also to illustrate the role played by rational idealism, with its unique humanistic and egalitarian spirit, in shaping modern philosophy and ethics. To begin with, we should point out that the scientific method, erroneously attributed to Francis Bacon, was developed, perfected, and used by Muslim scientists long before European scientists embraced the new scientific spirit. Arab contributions to science are often downplayed as early European historians ignored Muslim contributions, rooting the modern

scientific spirit in the Greek natural philosophy. This is obviously a mischaracterization and blatant distortion of historical records. Briffault protested, around the turn of the twentieth century, what he called "the general conspiracy of silence of our histories," reminding his readers that the importance of the Arab contributions to science was not limited to "startling discoveries or revolutionary theories." Rather, "science owes a great deal more to Arab culture, it owes its existence." He goes on to argue that the Greek, Roman, and Hellenic worlds were essentially prescientific. While Greece in particular was the center of natural philosophy, it was interested more in creating theories of general nature, than in scientific investigation and experimentation.[15] It was in Muslim Spain and southern Italy, between the eleventh and sixteenth centuries, that Christian students of science, philosophy, and arts acquired and internalized the modern sciences and culture.

Roger Bacon (1220–1290), the twelfth-century philosopher, was himself a student of Muslim science and one of its apostles to Christian Europe. He reportedly encouraged his European contemporaries to learn the language and sciences of the Arabs, "declaring that knowledge of Arabic and Arabian science was for his contemporaries the only way to true knowledge."[16] His closet friend, Raymond Lully (1232–1315), studied in Cordoba in Muslim Spain and taught at Montpellier.[17] Similarly, Daniel of Morley (1140–1210) learned mathematics and astronomy in Cordoba before he returned to England to lecture at Oxford University. In the same century, Leonardo Fibonacci, a young merchant of Pisa traveled to Algeria and Spain and "became enamored of the new mathematical sciences of the Arabs, and after several new journeys issued a translation of Al-Khwarizmi's great work on algebra."[18] Gerard of Cremona (1114–1187) of north Italy spent 50 years in Toledo, during the Caliphate of Cordoba, and returned late in his life to his birthplace with over 60 translations, including the Book of Astronomy by Ibn al-Haytham (965–1040).[19] The Caliphate of Cordoba of southern Spain was the mecca of young Christian scholars throughout the twelfth and thirteenth centuries that Alvaro, the Bishop of Cordoba under the Muslim rule, declared that

> [a]ll the young Christians who distinguished themselves by their talent, know the language and literature of the Arabs, read and study passionately the Arab books, gather at great expense great libraries of these, and everywhere proclaim with a loud voice how admirable is that literature.[20]

There are many examples that we became aware of in the last century of the direct borrowing of European scientists from the body of scientific knowledge that was extensively translated to Latin, and was used without attribution by the pioneers of European science. Suffice it here to consider the first scientific discovery made in Europe was credited to Copernicus (1473–1543), concerning the movement of the earth around the sun. Recent documents retrieved from translated work from Arabic sources showed the total indebtedness of

the Copernicus discovery to Arabic astronomy. First, Victor Roberts showed in 1957 that Copernicus lunar model was identical to that produced by Ibn al-Shatir (d. 1375) over a century earlier.[21] Then E.S. Kennedy found in 1966 another document with a detailed diagram that summarizes alternative models to Ptolemaic movements of the upper planets in relation to the earth, which were developed by the fourteenth-century Muslim astronomers, including Qutb al-Din al-Shirazi and Mu'ayyad al-Din al-Urdi. George Saliba discussed in an article, published in 1987 in *Revue de Synthèse*, the above and other recent findings, including a detailed paper written in fifteenth century by several Muslim astronomers at Maragha. Saliba illustrated in his paper that "Copernicus's models are identical with those of the earlier Maragha astronomers."[22] For him "The question therefore is not whether, but when, where, and in what form he [i.e. Copernicus] learned of Maragha theory."[23]

Yet despite these significant interactions and the expositions of European scholars to Islamic science and learning, today's graduates of Western schools and universities are hardly, even remotely, aware of this common heritage of Western and Islamic civilizations. It is unclear why, over the centuries, the Islamic origin of modern philosophy and science has been gradually obscured, until it almost completely disappeared around the turn of the nineteenth century. It is true that science and philosophy are part of the human heritage, and no civilization can claim exclusive ownership of it. Still, the original philosophers and scientists responsible for important contributions to the collective heritage of the human race deserve to be remembered and credited with their inventions and contributions. Muslim philosophers attributed the origin of their philosophy to the Greek, continued to call Aristotle the first teacher, and attributed to him the ideas originated in his work. Briffault recognizes the dismissive European attitude that claimed "Arab sciences produced no surpassing genius and no transcending discovery; that it was derived from extraneous sources."[24] He objects to this blatant "misrepresentation," stressing that it

> is highly probable that but for the Arabs modern European civilization would never have risen at all; it is absolutely certain that but for them, it would not have assumed that character which has enabled it to transcend all previous phases of evolution.[25]

Evidently, the Arabs passed to Europe their own scientific theories and discoveries and not that of the Greek science. Europe did not build its scientific enterprise on Greek sciences, for the Greek simply developed a philosophy of nature but never science as an enterprise based on observation, mathematical formulations, and experimentation.

> What we call science arose in Europe as a result of a new spirit of inquiry, of new methods of investigation, of the method of experiment, observation, measurement, of the development of mathematics in a form

unknown to the Greeks. That spirit and those methods were introduced into the European world by the Arabs.[26]

But despite irrefutable evidence that Arabic sciences have already taken their modern forms, and of the heavy European borrowing (even copying) from Arabic sciences up until the seventeenth century, modern historians of science continue to dismiss the profound contributions made by Arabic and Muslim scientists to modern science. The sociologist Toby Huff provides interesting arguments in order to completely dismiss the relevance of Arabic sciences, rather than incorporate them as foundational to modern scientific revolution. In his work, *The Rise of Early Modern Science: Islam, China, and the West*, he identifies two problems with Arabic science that prevented it from developing into modern science. First, Islam's alleged anti-rational tendencies, and as a proof of that Huff cites Ghazali's critical views of Greek metaphysics as evidence. Second, the increased conversion of new populations, leading to "apparent decline and retrogression of scientific thought and practice in Arabic-Islamic civilization after the thirteenth century."[27] His arguments ignore completely established evidence that problematizes his assertions, as he selectively picks examples convenient to his thesis. Jonathan Lyons provides a thorough examination of this relentless campaign to discredit Arabic civilization and mystify its essential role in the rise of modern civilization, in his recent work, *Islam through Western Eyes*. Lyons attributes, what he calls the "strategy is to downplay or ignore outright Islamic achievements in science and philosophy,"[28] to an obsession with establishing monopoly over science, including perpetuating "mythlike events" that "have enshrined the birth and subsequent history of modern science" within Western civilization.[29]

Intellectual convergence and the seduction of rational idealism

The influence of Islamic civilization on shaping the modern West was not limited to the area of natural science and technology but was as profound on the development of modern philosophy, theology, and ethics. There are numerous examples scattered through the annals of the Renaissance, Reformation, and Enlightenment of the modern West that started to surface only recently. The impact of Islam on Christian Europe can be traced through many moments, and the convergence of ideas between the two civilizations is very striking. Thomas Aquinas, whose influence on the rise of modern philosophical thought is hardly in dispute, was an astute student of Islamic philosophy. His writings were influenced by several Muslim scholars, particularly that of Averroes and al-Farabi (872–951 CE). Robert Hammond demonstrated in his work, *The Philosophy of Alfarabi*, that while Aquinas does not cite Farabi as the source of his ideas, he borrowed heavily and sometimes literally from al-Farabi's writings. Hammond provides examples to illustrate

that not only did Aquinas paraphrase Farabi's arguments, but his writings were occasionally direct translations of Farabi's works. He shows that Aquinas's arguments paralleled those of Farabi on the proofs of divine existence, divine qualities, and psychology.

Al-Farabi insisted that human beings cannot comprehend God because of the limitations of human rationality.[30] The more humans try to comprehend the essence of God the more they would be led astray. Human imperfections prevent us of apprehending the perfect being, in the same manner human vision cannot see a perfect light. Al-Farabi, however, contended that God's essence is in his existence. Hammond compares Al-Farabi's *Gems of Wisdom* with Aquinas's *Summa Theologica* and finds total correspondence in thought and arguments, and occasionally correspondence with the way these ideas are expressed. For example, in comparing the first proof of God's existence, one can see clearly that Aquinas's argument follows closely that of Farabi, almost to the letter. Here is how Farabi presented the proof of motion:

> In this world there are things which are moved. Now, every object which is moved receives its motion from a mover. If the mover is itself moved, there must be another mover moving it, and after that still another and so on. But it is impossible to go onto infinity in the series of movers and things moved. Therefore, there must be an immovable mover, and this is God.[31]

Three centuries later, Aquinas makes the same argument, using the same terms:

> It is certain and evident to our senses that in the world some things are in motion. Now, whatever is in motion is put in motion by another … If that by which it is put in motion be itself put in motion, then this also must need be put in motion by anther, and that by another again. But this cannot go on to infinity. Therefore, it is necessary to arrive at a first mover, put in motion by no other; and this everyone understands to be God.[32]

Similar influence can be seen in the impact of Ghazali on the French philosopher and scientist Blaise Pascal (1623–1662). Ghazali, like all the followers of Islamic rationalism, insisted that a true faith is an informed faith and that doubts are the only way for a person to arrive at a situation of informed faith. Throughout his writings Ghazali expounded the notion of limited rationality and believed in the futility of reducing faith to doctrine, for doctrine is an effort to render something that is so profound and transcendental to the concrete reality of infallible humans. One aspect of the Ghazali's thought that relates to the notion of limited rationality that has left a profound impact on Pascal and other Western philosophers, such as Hume and Kant, can be found in the argument of the "betting." As we noted earlier, Ghazali wrote

The Refutation of Philosophers to demonstrate the inability of human rationality to ascertain metaphysical questions. He concluded therefore that faith is not grounded by a theoretical or intellectual foundation but in human passion and is seen through the "eye of the heart." This theory became the foundation of Pascal's argument for the "logic of the heart." Both Ghazali and Pascal agree that faith is not arrived at through deductive reasoning but through direct or "intuitive" reasoning.[33] M. Asin Palacios who traces the impact of Ghazali on Pascal assesses their arguments on the notion of "betting" and finds that Ghazali was more comprehensive while Pascal more lucid. "Pascal's Pensees does not seem to be a completed work as Ghazali's books are," he contends. "Though, the mathematical clarity of Pascal and results of his calculations of probability cannot be found in Ghazali."[34]

Ghazali's critique of Greek metaphysics was echoed in Kant's extensive critique of metaphysics. Like Ghazali he makes a clear distinction between transcendental knowledge and sensuous knowledge. In the *Refutation of Philosophers*, Ghazali identified three areas in which Muslim rationalist arguments (*kalam*) come into conflict with Greek philosophy: semantics, physics, and metaphysics (or divinity). He warned Muslim scholars against a hasty rejection of philosophical knowledge on the basis of semantic disagreement over the usage of certain terms, or on the basis of apparent disagreement between Qur'anic statements and physical knowledge. The main area of contention with Greek philosophy, he insisted, was with the rational study of Divinity (*ilahiyat*).[35] Divinity, he insisted, is made of assertions that cannot be confirmed by reason because they address matter beyond the reach of the empirical experience of people. The notion that metaphysical reality cannot be ascertained through deductive reasoning was picked up and further elaborated by anther Muslim scholar, who himself made a lasting impact on modern thought: Ibn Khaldun. Ibn Khaldun argued that the deductive reasoning expounded by the Greek philosophers was inadequate, particularly when used to verify the existence of metaphysical beings and understand their essence. This, he contended, is due to the lack of connection between thought and being at the level of simple comprehension. For in the case of metaphysical arguments, the categories the mind uses to contemplate the metaphysical are derived from the empirical reality. Therefore, using Greek logic to understand the metaphysical world is problematic, for here not only are we unable to establish the correspondence between propositions and reality, but we lack even the means for verifying the existence of metaphysical objects themselves. As he put it,

> As to the existents which lie beyond our senses, i.e. the spiritual or what is known as the science of divinity and the science of metaphysics, these are completely unknown. Nor can we have access to them or prove their existence because the derivation of the mental from the concrete beings, that have objective reality, is only possible in the case of what we can comprehend; but since we do not comprehend spiritual beings, we cannot

abstract concepts of things we do not sense; nor can we prove or establish their existence, except perhaps by introspective knowledge of our own human spirit. But even then, a great deal of ambiguity regarding the essence and properties [of the spirit] remains.[36]

The Khaldunian language anticipates the work of Kant, as the latter argues that the truth of transcendental ideas (or the reality of ostensible objects) cannot be affirmed in the absence of any formal conditions that permit us to subsume transcendental objects under concepts.[37] "The pure categories, apart from formal conditions of sensibility," he writes,

have only transcendental meaning; nevertheless they may not be employed transcendentally, such an employment being in itself impossible, inasmuch as all conditions of any employment in judgments are lacking to them, namely, the formal conditions of the subsumption of any ostensible object under these concepts.[38]

As to the truth of the formal conditions of the subsumption of sensible objects, Kant invokes the principle of necessity whereby the rules regulating the subsumption of objects (identity, difference, and non-contradiction) acquire their universality and objective validity by being borne concomitantly in the minds of rational beings in general and substantiated through general consensus. "The union of representations in the consciousness is judgment," Kant asserts.

Thinking, therefore, is the same as judging or referring representations to judgments in general. Hence judgments are either merely subjective when representations are referred to a consciousness in one subject only and united in it, or object, when they are united in consciousness in general, that is, necessarily.[39]

While Kant succeeded in grounding reasoning in empirical experience and forcefully defended the autonomy of human reason and its sufficiency for guiding human action, he clearly failed to ground ethics in practical reason. Modern scholarship continued the quest to ground value judgments in empirically defined rationality, with little success. English philosophers from Bentham to Mill tried to build ethics on economic reasoning of cost-benefit analysis, by devising utilitarian ethics, but the project reduced ethical reasoning to public policy instrumentalism. Ultimately, the dominant positivist school gradually gave up its efforts to build ethical reasoning on a purely empirical basis. The failure of empiricism and positivism to develop a purely empirical foundation of knowledge has undermined rationality and has emboldened postmodern writers and encouraged them to deny the possibility of pursuing truth. Postmodernism places rationalism on equal footing with irrationalism and equates morality and immorality. This puts modern

scholarship in serious predicament, as it has neither been able to ground ethics in empiricist epistemology nor seems to have the will to revert to a transcendentally grounded ethical system.

Enlightenment and echoes of idealism–realism tensions

Rational idealism grew gradually though the increasingly vibrant Latinization of Islamic scholarship and science, before it began to develop a more European flavor. The Dutch Republic of the United Netherlands (1581–1795) became in the sixteenth century the center of the new increasingly confident rationalist ideas that defined the European Enlightenment and reshaped Europe. Amsterdam was then the home of the French Philosopher Rene Descartes whose philosophical meditations established the modern rationalist tradition. Descartes uses the metaphor of tree to describe the structure of philosophy, which for him encompassed the entire field of human knowledge. Metaphysics formed, then, the roots of the tree and physics the trunk, from which branched out three spheres of learning: medicine, mechanics, and ethics. Descartes attempted to develop the elements of a system of ethics in his work, *Passions of the Soul*, but he did that with limited success. The task of providing a new grounding for ethical thinking was left to his most eminent student, Benedict de Spinoza. Spinoza provided in his work, *Ethics*, a carefully built system of ethics, with astonishing similarities to the one we encountered in the rational idealism of the Mutazilite and Asharite traditions. Spinoza, whose father immigrated from Andalusia to France in his youth before settling in Amsterdam, grounded his conceptualization of the social order in the sphere of ontology and ethics. He built his new ethical system on five pillars: (1) reason as the foundation of both understanding and ethics; (2) nature and natural law as the highest order for the individual and society; (3) freedom to be attained by following reason and its dictates, not human emotions and desires; (4) the desirability of replacing the state of nature with civil state, by surrendering natural rights to achieve civil order, or "mutual confidence," that protects citizens against harm caused by others and protect property; and (5) the "civil state" grounded in the "common agreement" that takes the form of an enacted law defines "good and bad" and obeyed by citizens of the state.[40]

Spinoza, a talented and recognized mathematician of his time, wrote his *Ethics* in a style borrowed from the science of mathematics, presenting his work through a series of axioms, propositions, and proofs. He contended that the only way for human beings to live a good life was to live in accordance to virtue. A virtuous life is one guided by deep concern for personal good, or pleasure, and the good of other fellow human beings. A life in pursuit of good and pleasure could be attained by following reason, for reason requires that individuals simultaneously desire good for themselves and to others. Spinoza explains this quality of reason by reference to the "knowledge of God," a knowledge he sees as innate to human nature. He further links the ethical

quality of human life to the substance humans share with the divine spirit, a concept rooted in Islamic thought and Islamic text. The metaphor of the "divine substance" is a direct Qur'anic description of the origin of human life. The Qur'an posits the creation of Adam, the first human being, as the outcome of the breathing of the divine spirit into the earthly clay molded into the human shape. Spinoza employs the same concept by replacing the notion of "spirit" with that of "substance," which at the level of metaphysical speculation means the same thing. He presents his theory of the knowledge of God as partaking in the divine substance in Part IV of *Ethics*, under proposition 36:

> Insofar as men live by the guidance of reason, they are most useful to man (Cor 1. Pr. 35, IV), and so (Pr. 19, IV) by the guidance of reason we shall necessarily endeavor to bring it about that men should live by the guidance of reason. But the good that every man who lives according to the dictates of reason, that is (Pr. 24, IV), who pursues virtue, seeks for himself is to understand (Pr. 26, IV). Therefore the good which every man who pursues virtue seeks for himself will also desire for the rest of mankind. Again, desire, insofar as it is related to mind, is the very essence of mind (Def. of Emotions 1). Now the essence of mind consists in knowledge (Pr. 11, II) which involves the knowledge of God (Pr. 47, II), without which (Pr. 15, I) It can neither be nor be conceived. So the more the essence of the mind involves knowledge of God, the greater the desire with which he who pursues virtue desires for another the good which he seeks for himself.[41]

The phrase "the knowledge of God" does not necessarily exclude knowledge borne in religious experience but refers mainly to the knowledge relevant to the idea of God, which is intrinsic to human nature, being a finite substance derived from the same "infinite" substance of God. Virtue, though being an individual quality, has a social function, as it sets the stage for founding a society based on the common good. It is important to distinguish the idea of virtue that was presented in Spinoza's philosophy from its meaning in the Greek philosophy. For while the Greeks grounded virtue in honor and self-pride, Spinoza grounded virtue in the monotheistic worldview of human nature and its connection with the divine substance, or spirit. This understanding of ethics as an innate quality of the human beings, constituted of certain qualities or values that characterize the human spirit and which are in turn derived from the divine spirit, was first articulated by Islamic rationalism that understood the transcendent as a moral being characterized by beautiful names, spelled out in the Qur'anic revelation.[42] Spinoza stresses the need for establishing a civil state based on common agreement to protect the "natural rights" that people hold in common in the "state of nature." This need is borne out of two factors. First, people in the state of nature have to pursue virtuous life in accordance with their individual judgments, increasing thereby the possibility of conflict. Second, human action is always

led by virtue and reason, as human emotions are much stronger than reason. Actions based on emotions pull people in opposite directions and make mutual help, which they all need for their common good, impossible.[43] For all practical purposes, Spinoza declares that reason, and reason alone, is sufficient guide for the modern person, in both the scientific search for truth and moral judgment. As we will argue below, this hopeful vision would prove to be much more challenging than it seemed at the moment of the European Enlightenment.

It was through Spinoza, who appeared in the late Middle Age saturated with his father's Andalusian "background," that the idealist–realist tension emerges in European thought. We find his ideas bifurcate to the idealism we encounter in Rousseau, Kant, and Hegel; the positivism of Leibniz, Hume, and Comte; and the materialism of Marx, Benjamin, and Adorno.[44] Spinoza's ideas were later on picked and expanded by both the English school that adopted an empiricist approach to understanding reality through the work of David Hume, Jeremy Bentham, and James Mill, and the Continental school that embraced a rationalist approach through the writings of Gottfried Leibniz, Immanuel Kant, and Georg Hegel.[45] However, what all of these Enlightenment philosophers shared in common was their commitment to the rational tradition, combined with an increased sense of secular and liberal ethos that shifted the focus from metaphysics to individual dignity and natural rights. The three modern traditions, idealism, positivism, and materialism, were all committed to individual freedom and critical rationalism. They all formed the emancipatory project to free the European society from the ancient regime that held it back for ages and kept it under the yoke of the arbitrary will of the powerful. They all contributed, each in its own way, to the rise of modern society with all the possibilities it offers to free individuals with heightened personal capacities to contribute to the collective good. But beyond individual and social emancipation, they pushed modern humanity in all possible directions, as the clarity of life's meaning and individual's purpose gradually faded away.

The European Enlightenment represented a moment of meaning and unity of purpose, even though the notion of God as a caring and spiritual being was maintained only by the rational idealist project. Positivism and materialism emerged during the Enlightenment to reduce the concept of God to its pre-monotheistic conceptions embraced by the Greek religion and philosophy. God became either the first mover who created the universe and then left it to its own mechanism and fate or the eternal matter that is at the same time a self-ordered nature. Only in Kant's rational idealism we could encounter God as a central element of moral subjectivity; God as the hope of the moral individual. While Kant was clearly aware that his philosophy has abandoned God as an objective reality, retaining his presence vaguely in the transcendental human subjectivism, he continued to believe that the concept will survive in the popular culture and through the intellectual work of the clergy. Kant never envisaged for a moment that

the subjectivation of the belief in God would lead to the demise of religion or morality the way it has. Like all rational idealists who preceded him, he maintained a deep faith in human rationality and moral agency. He also strongly believed that the Enlightenment moment he was experiencing was part of a greater historical transformation of humanity and would lead to further emancipation and rational maturation of future generations. Kant's deep faith in humanity and its future is evident in his answer to the question "What is Enlightenment?" He posed the question in the form of an essay he published in 1784 CE, in which he problematized the position of his gener- ation in the trajectory of the Enlightenment: "If it is now asked whether we at present live in an enlightened age, the answer is: No, but we do live in an age of enlightenment."[46] The enlightened age was still a hope to be realized in the future, but it was for him as real as his innate and personal faith in God and the hope for life to come, when one's ethical life would realize its ultimate reward.

The emancipation of humans from dogmatic religion and affirmation of the inherent natural capacity of human beings to act rationally and morally were the essence of the European Enlightenment. "I have portrayed matters of religion as the focal point of enlightenment, i.e. of man's emergence from his self-incurred immaturity," he writes.

> This is firstly because our rulers have no interest in assuming the role of guardians over their subjects so far as the arts and sciences are concerned, and secondly, because religious immaturity is the most pernicious and dishonorable variety of all.[47]

The emancipation of society that began, following the Protestant Refor- mation supported by powerful rulers to regain control despite centuries of sustained violence against the Protestant heretics, led him to conclude that the religious emancipation was both irrevocable and irreversible. The future can only be brighter and would inevitably lead to a true "enlightened age." Kant distinguished between public and private freedom; the former should be unabashedly free and must be exercised within both governmental and civil institutions. That is, public obligations contracted via the social contract that binds all citizens through public law, and private contracts stemming from joining civil bodies, such as a church, must be all observed. Individual freedom must be restrained by individual obligations, so that societal insti- tutions could function properly as individuals pursue diverse purposes. Kant did not see any contradictions between individual freedom and institutional discipline, as the individual members of both political and religious institu- tions, having been emancipated, will contribute to the rational development of politics and religion in the direction of the enlightened age toward which humanity is moving. He rejects as impossible the development of authoritar- ian powers out of a social contract through which people would not agree to be ruled by arbitrary power. Neither is it possible in civil institutions, not

even a church, as long as the clergyman are "given a free hand as a scholar to comment publicly, i.e. in his writings, on the inadequacies of current institutions."[48]

Kant's faith in humanity, its rational and moral capacities as intrinsic human qualities, guiding history into ever-more enlightened age, yet unable to objectively affirm the absolutely rational and moral divine, forced another German idealist inspired by Kantian philosophy to seek transcendental objectivism by abandoning the Greek philosophy of the noumena (metaphysics) and introducing a new philosophy of the phenomena (phenomenology). Hegel read world history as the evolution and gradual emancipation of the individual and society, that began in the East and moved consistently to the West. It is ironic that in Hegel the Western moment of emancipation described by Kant forecloses the horizons of history and results in historical determinism. The Hegelian concept of world history misappropriates freedom and reduces rationality and morality into a philosophy of realism. "What is rational is real and what is real is rational," declares Hegel.[49] Hegel is often located within the tradition of German idealism, as he has fully embraced the Kantian philosophy and worked throughout his life to make it the "science" of phenomenology. But he has simultaneously undermined human freedom and turned ethics into a strategic act in the service of historical determinism. His philosophy belongs to rational idealism only insofar as he was committed to the "Idea" as the real force behind human history. But doing so he turned philosophy into a form of rational theology, where "Reason" rules the world in predetermined ways and where the "Absolute Idea" is determined to realize itself through human rationality. For sure, a monotheist who believes in divine wisdom and in the presence of God in history would be seduced by Hegelianism. But his philosophy would only inspire the realists in traditional monotheism, those who are obsessed with religion as a set of rules and who associate society with positive order and the exercise of power. The idea of transcendence is preserved in Hegel but mainly in its realist form rather than the idealist form. His is a sort of transcendental realism that suffocates the ethical impetus of the idealists and forces them to rebel against what appears to them as rational dogmatism. Nowhere else was this dogmatism more apparent than in the declaration of the "end of history" in the Germanic state. This arbitrary closing of human horizons and the claim of the arrival of the "Absolut Idea" can only be understood as a new form of pantheism, in which the "idea" can easily be substituted for "nature," as Marx did with extreme ease. The Hegelian phenomenology, with its rich concept of consciousness, survived, but only after it was purged from its pantheist and deterministic flavors in the various strands of existentialism.

Secularism and the loss of the transcendental roots

The Protestant Reformation embraced the notion of secular state as the separation of political and religious authorities, but it took a step further in

ensuring that the two are completely independent at the institutional level. The impetus for the separation of religious and political authorities and divorcing the church from the state may be found in the desire to undermine the political domination of the Catholic Church of Medieval Europe. The call for secularization of political authority came loud and clear from the leaders of the Protestant movement. Martin Luther authored an essay titled "Secular Authority: To What Extent It Should Be Obeyed" (1523), in which he argued that the secular authority of the state derives from God and that it should be obeyed in all matters relating to law. Citing passages from the scripture (Roman XIII and I Peter II), he urged fellow Christians to submit to political authority and to offer no resistance to secular powers as long as they command the obedience of secular law. The only time a Christian is justified in resisting secular authority is when the command relates to matter of faith and belief. Secular authority ends with matter relating to freedom of conscience and any attempt by secular powers to force people into accepting doctrine can and should be resisted because such enforcement represents "spiritual tyranny."[50]

In the same spirit, John Calvin distinguished in his work, *Institutes of the Christian Religion* (1536), between secular and religious authorities and called for the separation of the church and the state.[51] Calvin argued that obedience to Christ, the "King of kings," and to the Church should be done only in matters relating to spirituality and religion. When it comes to issues of political life and organization, the civil government must be obeyed to ensure "discipline" and prevent disorder.[52] Calvin outlines the duties of the rulers and the subjects, stressing that Christian princes must show deference to religion and encourage piety, ensure justice, and advance peace and security. Subjects must obey the prince, even when he rules unjustly in matter of politics. However, when the prince is involved in "transgression against God," then the Christian subjects have a duty to resist him.[53] Luther's and Calvin's ideas in support of secular authority and government greatly undermined the authority of the church over secular rulers but did not immediately reduce the influence of religion on cultural practices and social institutions. The more thorough secularization of Western culture, which was described extensively by Max Weber as part of the "rationalization" of the West, had to wait until the turn of the nineteenth century. Secularization of Western society was intellectually inspired by the Enlightenment scholars and by the political authorities of the secular nation-states.

The rationalization of European cultures took the interesting path of secularization, a path that could hardly be anticipated by early Enlightenment scholars, most of whom exhibited deep commitment to religion. Rational positivists and materialists played a significant role, and the French revolutionaries of the eighteenth century, who harbored profound distain to church power and clergy influence, took the lead to roll back the influence of religion in society. The doctrine that was designed for doing that is the famous French laïcité, and the doctrinaires were a new breed of intellectuals better

known as the ideologues, who emerged in post-revolutionary France under the leadership of Count Antoine Destutt de Tracy. The term "ideology" was coined by de Tracy himself and provided an alternative to religious doctrines and a powerful tool in the struggle against priestly authority.[54] Ideology was initially perceived as a "science of ideas, and was conceived as a secular foundation to replace religion in providing the ethical justification for public policy."[55] The French secularization project provides the best example of what Charles Taylor calls secularism as "subtraction story." As we will see in the next chapter, this hardcore secularization was embraced by modernization theory and was pushed in the 1960s and 1970s by scholars like Huntington as the only path to modernity.

By the time Nietzsche wrote *The Gay Science*, God disappeared from European public life and from the private lives of intellectual elites of France and Germany, that he saw fit to speak of the "death of God," albeit with a startling and alarming tone. Interestingly, only Nietzsche dared to say it out loud, using the parable of the madman. Nietzsche announced the disappearance of God from public life in his literary style to deconstruct the spirit of his secular age. The drama unfolds as the madman laments the demise of the divine and articulates the meaning and the magnitude of this earth-shaking event. He rushes one morning to the marketplace with a lantern lit in his hand, shouting "I seek God! I seek God!" The pubic around him received his pursuit of the divine with laughter, as they inquire whether God was hiding or lost his way. The madman at this point jumps into their midst and give them a little sermon. "'Whither is God?' he cried: 'I will tell you. We have killed him—you and I. All of us are his murderers." At this point the madman pose a series of penetrating questions about the meaning and consequence of an act with immense impact.

> But how did we do that? How could we drink up the sea? Who gave us the sponge to wipe away the entire horizon? What were we doing when we unchained this earth from its sun? Whither is it moving now? Whither are we moving? Backward, sideward, forward, in all directions? Is there still any up and down? Are we not straying as though on infinite nothing?[56]

In a very Nietzschean way, the questions are left unanswered to elicit individual and private answers.

Nietzsche saw with perfect clarity, around the end of the nineteenth century, what Weber identified as the disenchantment of the world, and anticipated, in his unfailing deconstructionist and cynical approach, the postmodernist critique of modern rationalism as a project that lost both its foundation and direction. Weber expounded earlier, in sociological terms, the loss of meaning expressed above in the stylistic presentation favored by Nietzsche, describing the set of events leading to the utter negation of the supernatural as an inevitable outcome of the process of "intellectualization." The process of intellectual rationalization, Weber tells us, led to the rise of the modern

intellectual, as he acquired a new capacity of explaining reality by means of "calculation." Modern intellectuals, unlike the premodern savages who believe in "mysterious incalculable forces," are distinguished by their ability to "calculate" everything.[57] Religion is no more needed to give meaning to the world, since Europe has now a new and more superior tool to use in its search for the truth. What is sticking about Weber's explanation of the disenchantment of the world is not simply the arrogance he displays toward those who believe that life is full of mysteries that no science, not even religion, could explain or calculate. Rather it is his claim that the intellectual rationalization ended all mysteries that is really disturbing.

The only way to make sense of this and other general statements involving religion and the sacred is to understand them not as statements of fact but as political positions that aim at freeing the public space from religious authority. Weber feels the urge to contrast science with religion because of the religious heritage of Latin Christianity and the scope of intellectual and political power assumed by the European priestly class. Weber offers, in his essay "Science as a Vocation," the final solution for what he presents as science-religion solution: the eviction of religious and revelation-inspired claims from the public space into the loneliness of private life. This separation is not a matter of choice or debate but rather a matter of fate. "The fate of our times," he proclaims,

> is characterized by rationalization and intellectualization and, above all, by the "disenchantment of the world." Precisely the ultimate and most sublime values have receded from public life either into the transcendental realm of mystic life or into the brotherliness of direct and personal human relations.[58]

The fate of the modern man is to take full responsibility of the new reality by choosing either the side of science or that of religion. No middle ground, no compromise, could be entertained.

> To the person who cannot bear the fate of the times like a man, one must say: may he rather return silently, without the usual publicity build-up of renegades, but simply and plainly. The arms of the old churches are opened widely and compassionately for him. After all, they do not make it hard for him.[59]

Weber's final solution is not only harsh and one-sided but dogmatic and radical, unwilling to cede any ground to public religious discourse outside of the "old churches." The dogmatic positivism conveyed by Weber must be recognized for what it is: an exploitation of the success of science to impose positivist ideology on society and its higher-learning institutions.[60] The dogmatism of positivist thought is evident in the confusion between science and truth, as if these are one and the same thing. The facts of science are no substitute for humanity's eternal pursuit of truth and meaning. Positivism as an exercise

in philosophy and meaning has not even tried to ground its principles in science, for science as a vocation whose aim is to study physics has no capacity to answer the most important questions relating to the purpose and meaning of human life. Positivist principles are mere assumptions born in the intuition, and to elevate them to the level of truth is preposterous, for the priests of science do not have anything to offer other than intuition. Science itself has been institutionalized, fragmented, and atomized and has lost its ability to contemplate human existence as a whole. The delusions and naivete of the claim promoted by positivism and materialism that science is the alternative to meaning and truth and that the search for truth can be reduced to the study of physics might have had a great lure in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries but became as absurd as reducing the world of freedom that gives dignity to humanity to the world of necessity that characterizes the study of nature.

The suffocating positivist mind which could be found in its naked expression in the public discourse of the French republic, and the French ideologues, could be seen today in militant secularism, in the French response to violent Islamism rejected by most Muslims with the allegation of the "Islamization" of Europe. It could equally, and perhaps more alarmingly, be observed in the European, and to a lesser extent American, governments' support for Arab dictators, charged with the task of using the most brutal force to effect secular change in Muslim societies. Instead, the brutal dictators keep generating outbursts of violent fundamentalism while eliminating all forms of free expression and public debate. We will return to examine the impact of secularism in its most dogmatic and militant form in the Middle Eastern and Arab societies, as we concern ourselves in the remainder of the chapter with regaining more insight into the phenomenon of secularism, which is often associated with the Westphalia peace. As an important landmark in the formation of the modern international order, Westphalia agreements did not set Europe on a secular-state path leading to neutral governments with regard to religion, but rather "established the principle of *cuius regio eius religio* ('who rules, his religion')."[61] The secular state was established outside Europe, in the settlements built by the truly religious Europeans who took religious ethics deep into their souls and built much more engaging societies in the new colonies of America and Oceana. These were the early settlements that were destined to grow into the United States and to return to Europe twice during two consecutive world wars in the twentieth century to save it from the dogmatic doctrines and ideologies that were nurtured into a fully secularized European society.

The drive to rescue the religious grounds of political ideals

The process of secularization hit a wall of bricks in the second half of the twentieth century. Many factors contributed to a new reexamination of what Weber and other modernist scholars thought to be irreversible process.

The overconfidence in the ability of secularist society to ground its world-view and morality on the presumably solid foundation of scientific truth, discoverable by the study of physics, had to be revisited in the light of two world wars, as it became fraught with challenges of providing grounds for its rational claims. The "discovery" of the illusionary hopes claimed by positivism occupied the debate after WWII, led by the Frankfurt School, as new questions about the proper grounding of moral rationalism were raised. There were also additional questions about the capacity of the proletariat to achieve an earthly paradise promised by Marx, as the constant deterioration of the quality of life in Marxist societies became obvious. Horkheimer and Adorno provided the critical framework to evaluate modern thought in post-Marxist and post-positivist world, but a deeper critique was initiated in the birthplace of modern positivism through the work of Michel Foucault and Jacques Derrida. Most recently, Jürgen Habermas attempted a creative synthesis of the three main traditions that spun out of the Enlightenment, in a new framework he discussed in his voluminous work, *The Communicative Action*. Habermas' writings have been received with great enthusiasm, as they opened new horizons for uniting an increasingly diversified global society. We will return to discuss his ideas in details later, but for now I would like to shed light on two thrusts that have driven his intellectual work. The first thrust relates to what has become known as the Weberian paradox. The paradox stems out from two trends in modernist thought, which directly emanate from intellectual and social rationalization: the loss of meaning and the loss of freedom. It is paradoxical that the civilization that prizes freedom is threatened by the loss of freedom as a result of the sustained efforts to organize its sphere of freedom. But according to Weber, the loss of freedom is inevitable as the rationalization of the legal and bureaucratic systems increases regulations and heightens state control, thereby turning social conditions to what Weber termed the "iron cage."[62] Similarly, with increased specialization in the field of science, the ever-growing technicality of the scientific field increasing the meaning of individual action, and the individual action becoming more purposive, the overall meaning of life is decreased. These disturbing processes are at the heart of disenchantment of the world, which Weber saw as the price to pay for becoming modern, so that the increase of control on the natural world result in the decrease of individual freedom. But is this inevitable and a fait accompli as Weber would like us to believe?

Habermas has introduced a possible reversal of the positivist-realist trap that set humanity on course to the "iron cage," that is much more superior to the "instrumental rationality" alternative proposed by Adorno and Horkheimer, namely "the linguistification of the sacred." The idea appears in the second volume of *Communicative Action*, in the context of examining the efforts made by Durkheim and Mead to advance the work started by Kant to develop a rationally defensible principle that can combine both the formal and substantive

conditions of rational action, that is, a principle that is both universal and inclusive. The process aims at incorporating values and norms honored by religious communities and can be summarized in its essential formulation in two steps. First, the norms protected by sacred text, or the collective consciousness formed under sacred norms, are expressed discursively in textual form. This would satisfy the condition of rational subjectivity, as the discursive statements are articulated so as to reflect the collective consciousness. Second, the resulting discourse has to be formalized in universal terms so that it must be valid beyond the particular domain of a specific community. So the integration of religious groups can be achieved by incorporating their own values and legal requirements into the formalized state to which they belong, thereby cementing their attachment to the collectivity and avoiding the type of alienation imposed on them through the imposition of secular doctrines.

The process proposed by Habermas has the potential to maintain a sense of the secular, as the shared public space, without disenchanting those who define the meaning of their lives through reference to the sacred.

> Against the background of this conversion of the state over to a secular basis of legitimation, the development of the contract from a ritual formalism into the most important instrument of bourgeois private law suggests the idea of a "linguistification" of a basic religious consensus that has been set communicatively aflow.[63]

Most importantly, the "linguistification of the sacred" is an element of the communicative action framework, which necessitates proceeding through a dialogue that aims at recognizing the interests of various social groups in legislation and decision-making; that goes beyond the generalization, usually found in utilitarian ethics of "the most good to the most people"; that grew within European positivism and reengaged universalization based on rational consent suggested earlier by Kant.

> From a generalizing compromise among fundamentally particular interests we do not get an interest outfitted with the authority of a general interest, that is, with the claim to be recognized by everyone involved as a shared interest. Thus, the utilitarian is unable to explain that moment of uncoerced, well-considered, rationally motivated consent that valid norms demand of everyone involved. Kant explains the validity of moral norms by reference to the meaning of the universality of laws of practical reason. He presents the categorical imperative as a maxim by which each individual can test whether a given or recommended norm deserves general assent, that is, counts as a law.[64]

The formulation we encounter in the communicative action framework brings us closer to engaging Muslim communities intellectually and

normatively, and, given the way Islamic law was shaped in the work of Islamic rational idealism, in the Mutazilite works, and later in the Asharite works, such approach changes the current dynamic and creates a new opportunity for broader consensus, which is very essential for the balance needed to enter the global age. While the approach may appear more suited to worldviews constituted through discursive formation, it is potentially inclusive of all worldviews that can be articulated rationally. This approach, it has been suggested, could in many ways lead to a process of resacralization of the society in the direction of the sacred linguistic worldviews, including the protestant ethic at the heart of unfettered capitalism.[65] This could be true only if the discourse in confined to interlocutors who subscribe to a protestant capitalist worldview, but in a global society of multiple orientations such a scenario is extremely unlikely but would nonetheless empower those voices that speak to the interests and concerns of the wider community.

The assumption of resacralization is misplaced because it fails to appreciate the profound progress in the differentiation of religious consciousness into public and private, a differentiation that was noted first, as we saw earlier, in the Islamic civilization in the work of Islamic rationalists before it was undertaken by modern civilization through the process of secularization. The resacralization might be needed today to reconnect public life to the values that are already embedded in the institutions of democracy and pluralism. Restoring the ethical foundation of the rational public discourse should generate more inclusive consensus over the organization of the public space. The idea seems to attract more intellectuals, who are concerned over the erosion of moral integrity in secular space, to join the debate about the formation of inclusive public space in a globalizing world. Charles Taylor has made important contributions to the subject in several publications, including in his book, *A Secular Age*. He contends that secularity is often defined by contrasting it with religion and its symbolic discursive expression in the public space. According to this sense of secularity, the fewer references to God in public life the more the society is secularized.[66] This is one meaning of secularity in which the relationship between the secular and the religious is one of subtraction in a zero-sum game, whereby the increase of secularization leads to the decrease of religion. This meaning suggests that religion is in decline and the belief in God is increasingly in retreat. This is particularly the case in post-Christian societies, which moved away from the premodern religious societies, where belief in God was axiomatic and unchallenged and the world was divided into believers and nonbelievers. In the second sense, religion is an option, and the sense of religion is neither greatly increasing nor seriously decreasing, as is the case of contemporary Muslim societies like Jordan of Morocco. The third and final sense is that religion is a possibility for the individual to experience, but religious practices cannot be easily maintained, as religious beliefs are constantly challenged. This is a situation where religion is losing in the public debate and seems less convincing to an

increasing proportion of the public.[67] Taylor summarizes the three senses of secularity as thus:

> But all three modes of secularity make reference to "religion": as that which is retreating in public space (1), or as a type of belief and practice which is or is not in regression (2), and as a certain kind of belief or commitment whose conditions in this age are being examined (3).[68]

Taylor rejects the assumption that the retreat of religion is caused by the advance of science. As we saw above, this was the assumption favored by Weber. Instead of focusing on religious beliefs themselves to understand causes of the apparent regression of religion, Taylor proposes to shift our focus to the conditions of religiosity and to the religious experience itself. At this level it is intuitively evident that the conditions of religion relate to the inner sense of meaning and the emotional states that correspond to what provides meaning to our live or what Taylor refers to as a sense of "fullness." He identifies the fullness with a set of inner conditions, including peace, wholeness, integrity, joy, and fulfillment. It is in those states of consciousness that a person may experience the presence of God, in the manner Bede Griffiths described in his autobiography. In this account, Taylor seems to reduce religion to the subjective personal experience of the religious person. His justification seems to rest on the assertion that religion ultimately is realized in the search for God, which is ultimately an individual search that culminates in the spiritual experience of the presence of God. On the other hand, the unbeliever, Taylor argues, experiences meaning in the pursuit of rationality, looking to find fullness within, in the subjective rational experience itself, in the manner Kant experienced fulfillment in the "awesome power" that lies inside us but which "we mistakenly locate outside."[69]

Taylor's exploration of the meaning of religion seems to dismiss as "naïve" the collective assertion of religion as a community of the faithful, of the type one encounters in the monotheistic traditions, preferring instead a purely spiritual form similar to the mystical path that one may find in the Yoga strand of Hinduism or the Sufi type that sprang within Islam. Taylor evidently believes that to save secularism, modern intellectualism must redefine religion. In *The Secular Age*, Taylor recognizes the importance of spirituality but does not seem to value the need to engage community-based religions, such as Islam or Christianity, and seems to regard them as part of the premodern world. He further regards the belief in the transcendent as more suitable to premodern:

> The main feature of this new context is that it puts an end to the naïve acknowledgment of the transcendent, or of goals or claims which go beyond human flourishing. But this is quite unlike religious turnovers in the past, where one naïve horizon ends up replacing another, or the two fuse syncretistically—as with, say, the conversion of Asia Minor from

Christianity to Islam in the wake of the Turkish conquest. Naïveté is now unavailable to anyone, believer or unbeliever alike.[70]

Taylor's distinction between the three senses of secularization would have been more useful, had he tried to provide a solution that does not split individual choices between the categories of immanence and transcendence. This kind of presentation does not grasp the richness of religion and religious experience. For many followers of the monotheistic traditions the sacred is both transcendent and immanent. Furthermore, while faith is a subjective experience, religion itself aims at creating communities of the faithful. Taylor, evidently, is not comfortable with the communal aspects of religion, as he shows great apprehension with regard to the citizens' religious identification. It seems that this thought in particular pushed him to the conclusion that subjective spirituality is the only "mature" form of religiosity, suitable for the modern person who is moving gradually but steadily to a secular age. What is clearly missing in his account is not only the consideration of the value of religious expression as a tradition that keeps certain ideals and values alive and central to the identity of the faithful, allowing them to struggle together, and with people of other faiths who share with them those ideals. He also undervalues transcendence as a rich field of human consciousness that motivates people to aspire to a state of consciousness and being that transcends the immediacy of individual spiritual concerns. The importance of experiencing spirituality in a community setting is overlooked and lost. The account of religiosity as subjective individual experience ignores completely an important social function of religion, that is, to create and sustain intersubjective solidarity to not only perpetuate collectively shared values and beliefs but also, more importantly, mobilize people to fight to eradicate political excesses and unseat authoritarian regimes.

Taylor's apprehension of religious expression as social identity notwithstanding, he sees the need to reevaluate secularism, particularly in the context of an increased diversification of religiosity in Western society with the arrival of new religious expressions, including Hinduism, Buddhism, and Islam. He advocates equal access to the public sphere of various religious and nonreligious worldviews. This is the essence of the secular state that is best expressed in "the French Revolutionary trinity: liberty, equality, fraternity."[71] In the context of Western society where the arrival of new religious traditions have unnerved the historically dominant Christianity, Taylor stresses on the need to reject a privileged status assigned to any religious conviction, while keeping all issues of contentions under consideration for public debate, including issues of political identity as well as the "exact regime of rights and privileges":

There must be equality between people of different faiths or basic belief; no religious outlook or (religious or areligious) Weltanschauung can enjoy a privileged status, let alone be adopted as the official view of

the state … all spiritual families must be heard, included in the ongoing process of determining what the society is about (its political identity), and how it is going to realize these goals (the exact regime of rights and privileges). We need to alter the way in which we proceed when the range of religions or basic philosophies expands: e.g., contemporary Europe or America with the arrival of substantive communities of Muslims.[72]

What is important is that diverse religious and secular worldviews engage one another within a framework of public ethics and values, including the principles of human rights, equality, the rule of law, and democracy.[73] These political principles are globally shared by different peoples for different reasons and are grounded in different ethical systems. The diverse justifications of public values are essential for a free society. What matters is that the political principles form the framework of public consensus and govern public discourse and debate and that public argument and position are given due importance in rational exchange and justified by universal rational arguments and not by particular religious positions in any formal governmental setting, such as a parliamentarian debate.[74] Taylor agrees with Rawls' requirement that the state does not adopt any comprehensive doctrine, whether its religious or secular, and stresses that the "state can be neither Christian nor Muslim nor Jewish, but, by the same token, it should also be neither Marxist, nor Kantian, nor utilitarian."[75]

Notes

1 Mario Apostolov, *The Muslim-Christian Frontier* (New York: Routledge, 2003), 2
2 Ibid.
3 Ibid.
4 Ibid, 6.
5 Ibid, 12.
6 Hans Kung, *Catholic Church: Short History* (New York: Random House, 2003), 65–66.
7 Denis Mack Smith, *A History of Sicily: Medieval Sicily 800–1713* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1968).
8 Taylor, *Muslims in Medieval Italy: The Colony at Lucera* (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2005), 45–78.
9 Ibid, 55.
10 Ibid, 54. Hagrites is a biblical term referring to Arab tribes, being the children of Hager. Also spelled Hagarites and Hagarenes in the King James.
11 Taylor, *Muslims in Medieval Italy*, 54.
12 Ibid, 75.
13 Robert Briffault, *The Making of Humanity*)London: George Allen & Unwin House, 1919), 185.
14 Ibid, 188.
15 Ibid, 191.
16 Ibid, 201.
17 Ibid, 199.
18 Ibid.

19 Ibid. See also Edward Grant, *A Source Book in Medieval Science* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1974), 35–38.
20 Briffault, *Making of Humanity*, 198.
21 G. Saliba, "Maragha in Islamic Astronomy," *Revue de Synthèse*, vol. IV, no. 3–4 (1987), 372.
22 Ibid.
23 Ibid, 371.
24 Briffault, *Making of Humanity*, 190.
25 Ibid.
26 Ibid, 191.
27 Toby Huff, *The Rise of Early Modern Science: Islam, China, and the West* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 47.
28 Jonathan Lyons, *Islam through Western Eyes* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2014), 173.
29 Ibid, 170.
30 Paul Sigmund, Part 1, book 1, 3.
31 Ibid, 39.
32 Ibid.
33 Hamid Naseem *Rafiabadi, Emerging from Darkness: Ghazzali's Impact on the Western Philosophers* (New Delhi: Sarup & Sons, 2002), 323–327.
34 Quoted in Ibid, 327.
35 see Ibn Hisham, *Tahafut al-Falasifa* (Cairo, Egypt: Dar al-Macarif, n.d.), 65–67.
36 Ibn Khaldun, *Al-Muqaddimah* (Damascus, Syria: Dar al-Fikr, n.d.), 430.
37 See Immanuel Kant*, Critique of Pure Reason,* trans. Norman Kemp Smith (New York: Marten's Press), 180–187.
38 Ibid, 265.
39 Immanuel Kant, *Prolegomena to Any Future Metaphysics* (New York: Macmillan, 1988), 52.
40 Benedict de Spinoza, *Spinoza Complete Work*, trans. Samuel Shirley (Hackett Publishing Company, Indianapolis, 2002).
41 Ibid, 340.
42 This point was discussed in more details in Chapter 4, in the section titled: "Transcendental Ethics Rooted in the Abrahamic faith."
43 Ibid.
44 Idit Dobbs-Weinstein, *Spinoza's Critique of Religion and Its Heirs: Marx, Benjamin, Adorno* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2016).
45 For an account on Spinoza's liberal impact, see Steven Smith, *Liberalism and the Question of Jewish Identity* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1998), and for his impact on modern materialism, see Antonio Negri, *The Savage Anomaly: The Power of Spinoza's Metaphysics and Politics* (Oxford: University of Minnesota Press, 1999).
46 Immanuel Kant, *An Answer to the Question: "What is Enlightenment?"* (Konigsberg in Prussia, September 30, 1784), 3.
47 Ibid, 4.
48 Ibid, 3.
49 G. W. F. Hegel, *Philosophy of Right*, trans. S. W. Dyde (Kitchener: Batoche Books, 2001), 18.
50 Martin Luther, "Secular Authority: To What Extent It Should Be Obeyed," in *Great Political Thinkers*, ed. William Ebenstein (Fort Worth, TX: Holt, Rinehart, and Winston, 1990), 309–318.
51 Jean Calvin, Institutes of the Christian Religion (1536), in *Great Political Thinkers*, ed. William Ebenstein (Fort Worth, TX: Holt, Rinehart, and Winston, 1990), 321–330.
52 Ibid, 324–325.

53　Ibid.
54　Craig Calhoun et al. (eds.), *Rethinking Secularism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 7–15.
55　Ibid, 7.
56　Friedrich Wilhelm Nietzsche, *The Gay Science* (New York: Random House, 1974).
57　H. H. Gerth and C. Wright Mills (eds. and trans.), *From Max Weber Essays in Sociology* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1947), 139.
58　Ibid, 155.
59　Ibid.
60　Max Horkheimer, *Eclipse of Reason* (Oxford University Press, 1947), 61–65.
61　Craig Calhoun et al. (eds.), *Rethinking Secularism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 15.
62　Jürgen Habermas, *The Communicative Action: Reason and the Rationalization of Society* (vol. 1), trans. Thomas McCarthy (Boston, MA: Beacon Press, 1984), xxii.
63　Jürgen Habermas, *The Theory of Communicative Action* (vol. 2), 82.
64　Ibid, 93.
65　Paul C. Mocombe, "The Sociology of Phenomenological Structuralism," *Journal of Advances in Education and Philosophy,* Dubai, UAE, February 4, 2021. DOI: 10.36348/jaep.2021.v05i02.001
66　Charles Taylor, *A Secular Age* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2007), 15.
67　Ibid, 14–17.
68　Ibid, 15.
69　Ibid, 21–22.
70　Ibid, 34.
71　Charles Taylor, "Why We Need a Radical Redefinition of Secularism," in *The Power of Religion in the Public Sphere*, ed. Eduardo Mendieta and Jonathan VanAntwerpen (New York: Columbia University Press, 2011), 34.
72　Ibid, 34–35.
73　Ibid, 37.
74　Ibid, 50.
75　Ibid.

7 The colonial remaking of Muslim societies

Ever since Muslim societies came under the control of European powers in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, they remained in their orbit even after fighting hard to gain independence. The capacity of colonial powers to maintain control even without having to use military force is a testament for the sophistication of modern imperialism that has been developed to perfection. It is also a testimony to the degree of decline experienced by Muslim societies and cultures since the Islamic civilization peaked in the fifteenth century. Two instruments have been effectively used by former colonial powers to achieve indirect control over Muslim societies, particularly over the Middle East: fostering military institutions and exploiting internal ethnic, religious, and sectarian diversities. The military institutions predate the independent states in the Middle East. They were all created in their modern form by European powers and continue to receive training from the West. Middle Eastern military institutions are charged with internal security, and many of the security organizations are led by current or former military officers. Their constant interaction with Western power centers allowed them to develop working relationships with their counterparts in Western military and security agencies and made them more appreciative of the advanced organization skills and power of the former masters, which at the same time rendered them more vulnerable to manipulation, particularly when personal ambitions of military officers coincide with the geopolitical interests of European and American powers.

The other instrument of control is the internal political and social dynamics of Middle Eastern countries. The great ethnic and religious diversity has raised the potential for friction and internal conflict in the absence of strong and effective state and civil institutions. Social diversity that enriched the traditional Middle East society has become now a convenient instrument of world powers for perpetuating their control by privileging segments of the population in exchange for political and military favors. The sectarian division in Iraq into Sunni and Shiite, coupled with the nationalist division of Arabs and Kurds, has been effectively used to align social grouping in ways that perpetuate divisions and benefit political elites. In Syria, Hafiz Assad has effectively used the Alawite underclass to perpetuate his rule and to create a "hereditary republic." In Saudi Arabia, the Saud family used its tribal allies

in East Arabia to conquer the Arabian Peninsula and to keep its population in check. Yemen has been similarly controlled by the Zaydis, Jordan by the tribal allies of the Hashemites, and so on. The problem is not only that political elites are in control, but also that this control takes the form of internal colonial rule, whereby the current political regimes in Arab countries use the colonial model of divide and rule. Of course, the internal struggle should not be completely blamed on outside powers, and evidently the internal forces and an authoritarian political culture should be faulted as well. The reality though is that imperial powers are not sitting on the sideline and allowing Middle Eastern societies to work out their differences and develop the skills they need to compromise and negotiate. As we see in this chapter, imperial powers constantly manage the internal affairs of the region, and they are always ready to intervene whenever their local proxies fail in keeping the required political formations that maximize outside geopolitical interests. The military interventions in Lebanon in the 1970s and in Syria and Afghanistan most recently are good examples of what happens when the local agents of world powers fail in their efforts to manage the chaos perpetuated by ill-conceived foreign policies. This is of course a risky and costly game and, as we see in the Iranian[1] and, currently, Syrian cases, it could always backfire, creating an unhealthy global environment. The rise of global terrorism is a case in point. While we address terrorism in more depth in subsequent chapters, this chapter provides a glimpse into the inner working of the Middle East, under the influence of outside interests that contribute to the radicalization of the region.

Yet, despite the outside support for a system of tyranny and repression, the Middle East is developing its own dynamics, and it is far from succumbing to outside designs. The Arab Spring provides us with an example of the struggle for democratic rule. The struggle is led by diverse social forces with different political agendas, from the far right to the far left, and with some powerful reactionary forces. Current dynamics of the Arab state system is counterproductive as it drives the sociopolitical change in the opposite direction of what is intended, as we see clearly in the case of violent extremist groups like ISIS. At the heart of Western resistance to change in the Middle East is the fear of the "return of Islam" and the tendency to lump all social movements inspired by the Islamic faith together. I argue that the obsession of local actors in affirming their Islamic identity should be viewed in relation to the effort to push a European sense of secularism down the throat of the Middle Eastern people. The confusion between secularism as separation of religious and political authority and secularism as a Eurocentric social experience is at fault. While the former is a legitimate and necessary tool for developing a true democracy, the latter is a blunt case of imperialism disguised as modernization.

Colonialism and protracted reforms

Muslim empires were already in shambles when rejuvenated Europe was probing into North Africa, India, and Southeast Asia. European colonialism

began as commercial ventures in South and Southeast Asia undertaken by three trade companies promoting the interests of three countries: the Portuguese, the Dutch, and the British. While late into the competition, the British East India Company surpassed its competitors, thanks to the excellent relationships it initially cultivated in the Indian subcontinent with local rulers. In few decades, the company combined its commercial interests with political ambitions, and, utilizing a private army at its disposal, was able to defeat the Mughal dynasty and the Nawab rulers of Bengal and Bihar, to become the de facto power in India, by mid-eighteenth century.[2] Between 1757 and 1858, the company enacted laws and appointed administrators and local governors, as it ran a private army that claimed over 260,000 soldiers, twice the size of the British army. The company was finally dissolved by the British Crown in 1858, following the Indian Rebellion of 1857 which led to great loss of life and property.[3] By the first half of the twentieth century, most of Africa and Asia was under the colonial rule of European powers, most notably that of Britain and France. Every Muslim territory, with the exception of Turkey and Iran, came under either the British or French direct colonial rule. By 1945, the two colonial powers began to withdraw from their colonies, partly because the urgency of rebuilding their own devastated countries as a result of WWII, and partly because of the increased resistance by the colonized populations.

The European colonial intrusion into Muslim spaces was so vast and profound that it penetrated deep into the Muslim consciousness, reshaping and redefining the Muslim self-image and pushing many Muslims to reevaluate and recalibrate their place in the new modern order shaped for the first time in their collective memories by someone other than themselves. The process of reassessment was done a bit too late in the European intrusion into fragmented Muslim societies that have long lost their intellectual and scientific zeal. The transformation of Muslim societies and experiences during the colonial period and its continuation in the postcolonial Muslim societies were total and thorough, affecting all key areas of their life and society—education, culture, economy, and politics. The rise of Western Europe in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries was felt by Muslim societies from the Balkans through Jakarta and Malaga in Southeast Asia, and from Nigeria in West Africa through Samarkand in Central Asia. But it was in India that the first internal debate among Muslim intellectuals, regarding the nature of European expansion and the best way to deal with it, took place. The debate engaged two intellectuals that left a lasting impact on contemporary Islamic thought and political action, Jamal al-Din al-Afghani (1838–1879), an Afghan-Iranian scholar, and Sayyid Ahmed Khan (1817–1889), a leading Indian reformer.

Afghani, schooled in Shi'i Islam, was among the first to sound the alarm about the pending colonization of the Middle East by European colonial powers. His main fears were the intellectual and political weaknesses of Muslim societies and the failure of Muslim scholars to develop their ideas to meet

the challenge of Western modernity. He spent his productive life between India, Egypt, and Paris, before he retired in Istanbul where he spent the last few years of his life. Afghani, like all Shiite scholars, was well trained in Islamic philosophy and was alarmed that the modernization programs adopted by the Ottoman Sultans in Istanbul and the Khedive rulers in Cairo were insufficient for the rejuvenation of Muslim societies. He was particularly critical about Ottoman obsession with reforming the military and training engineers and specialists to counter the advanced military machinery of European states, while neglecting social and cultural reforms. "The Ottoman government and the Khedives of Egypt have been," he lamented, "opening schools for the teaching of the new sciences for a period of 60 years, and they are yet to receive any benefit from those sciences."[4] Afghani recognized that specialized technical training was not sufficient to produce the needed reforms. Equally important was the development of a new philosophical approach that nurtured critical thinking so as to help address the social ills plaguing the then-stagnant Muslim society and bring about a more just society. "If a community did not have a philosophy," he pointed out, "and all the individuals of the community were learned in the sciences with particular subjects, those sciences could not last in that community for a century."[5] Afghani was trained in Islamic rationalism that was rooted in the Mutazilite idealism. Rational idealism was embraced by the Sunni majority after it was reconciled with the Sunni beliefs by the Asharites intellectuals. Islamic rationalism disappeared from the Sunni Islam and was kept alive by the Shiite scholars.[6] Afghani used his philosophical knowledge and analytical skills to critique European imperialism and to locate it within the broader philosophical traditions of materialism and naturalism.[7]

It was within the framework of opposing British imperialism, driven by materialist vision and impulse, that Afghani expressed dismay with Sayyad Ahmad Khan, and his perception that Khan was advancing the interests of an imperialist power in India. In an article, published during his second visit to India in 1880 after he was forced out from Egypt by Khedive Tawfiq in 1879 for his criticism of his government's policies, Afghani cautioned of a pending British takeover of Egypt. Three years after Afghani warned of an impending project advanced by British to colonialize the Middle East, Britain occupied Egypt in 1882. Afghani attacked Sayyid Ahmad Khan's reform project and disapproved his effort to steer Indian Muslims away from the confrontation with the British occupation. Afghani was not critical of Khan's efforts to reform Islamic education and the political and social organizations of Indian Muslims, as he himself shared with the latter his rationalism and reformist ideas. He mainly objected to Khan's call for cooperation with the British as a necessary step for reforming the Muslim society.[8]

Khan moved gradually from his early traditionalist positions, adopting a rational critique rooted in both Islamic rationalism and modern rationalism. That put him at odds with the advocates of traditionalism who were attached to the textualist narratives of Islam, such as Emad al-Ali and Hajj

Ali Bakhsh Khan, who stood against any educational reform. For Khan, the reform of education was imperative for rejuvenating Muslim societies and motivating them to defend themselves against outside intrusions. After the 1857 failed rebellion that practically ended the Muslim rule in India, Khan became convinced that old politics was not acceptable and had to be replaced by new forward thinking. The collision between the two Muslim reformers reflects the difficulty of coming up with an effective alternative to stay ahead of the ongoing restructuring of Muslim societies from India to Egypt, where Afghani tried to counter the British penetration of Muslim societies, relying mainly on its far advanced military strength and much superior strategic and organizational capacities.

The collision was also between two visions and approaches to addressing the decline of Muslim society and power—nationalism versus pan-Islamism. While Afghani was hopeful that Muslim unity could be restored to prevent a complete collapse of Islamic culture and way of life, Khan became convinced that the best approach was to encourage the political engagement of Muslims in Indian politics by participating in the Viceroy's legislative council set up by the British Crown in 1861. The establishment of a new legislature provided Khan with an opportunity to further advance his reform agenda, as political partic-ipation would require a new, modern education and awareness. After 1861, Khan became a leading advocate of nationalism, taking every opportunity to advance his vision of national power for the Indian Muslim community. When he was invited in 1872 by the Muslim Literary Society to deliver a lecture in Calcutta on the question of patriotism, he focused on outlining his views of nationalism, emphasizing the role it played in advancing collective well-being.[9] He became later convinced, after studying British democracy, of the need for cultural homogeneity for its success, thereby pushing for the type of national democracy that led later into the separation of Pakistan from India.[10]

Afghani spent five years in Egypt and succeeded in revitalizing Islamic ra-tionalism in collaboration with Muhammad Abdu, a graduate of the famous Azhar University and the foremost rational reformer of Islamic thought in modern times. Both became concerned about the lack of sense of responsibil-ity among Muslim scholars and its impact on the decline in Islamic knowl-edge and education. Abdu went on the offensive against the juristic–scholarly community to which he himself belonged, accusing them of promoting fa-talism in the place of individual responsibility.[11] Afghani's diagnosis of the nature of the problem was grounded in a deep appreciation of the importance of knowledge and science to overcome the deteriorating conditions of the Muslim community (the ummah) and the urgency of political unity to con-front military invasions of territories under Muslim control. Yet what was missing from the analysis was the extent to which Muslim culture had de-parted from its founding principles of science, justice, and moral responsibil-ity. The Mughal Empire lost power, but this was not only due to the military prowess of the British East India company; it was mostly due to inner fighting among Muslim rulers and the corruption and abuse of the peasantry by the

ruling class.[12] As we noted earlier, the East India Company was able to raise an army of 260,000 from the Indian population to crush the Mughal Empire. On the Western front, the Ottoman Empire was in a slightly better position than the Mughal, but it had already lost great deal of its early moral and legal disciplines, and its rulers had lost the interests in science and critical thinking that characterized the Caliphs and Sultans during Abbasid rule. Ottoman sultans showed interest in arts and law but not in science. The Ottoman Empire that lasted for six centuries produced no scientists, philosophers, chemists, or physicists of note. Rather, it produced a taste for poetry, music, and dance as part of the Sufi tradition it inherited from the late Abbasid society, and a highly disciplined military force and elaborate legal system. The Ottomans were powerful and disciplined warriors and produced one of the most efficient and bizarre military force in human history—the Janissaries.

By the eighteenth century, the Ottoman Empire was in decline, while its European rivals were on the way to build the most expansive education system in world history, with its new emphasis on individual responsibility and social participation. By the eighteenth century, science became highly prized, and Europe was ready to take over the world by storm. Ironically, the undoing of the Ottoman Empire was the result of its efforts to undertake an ambitious project of political and legal reforms during the nineteenth century—called the Tanzimat program—which started under Sultan Mahmud II (reign 1808– 1839(and accelerated under Sultan Abdulmejid I (reign 1839–1861). The plan involved three key reforms: (1) setting a representative system consisting of two chambers—the Chamber of Deputies and the Chamber of Notables, (2) centralizing legislative and executive power, and (3) creating a modern Ottoman citizenship. In 1869, the new government enacted the Ottoman Nationality Law, guaranteeing the equality of all Ottoman citizens, irrespective of religious or ethnic affiliation. Ironically, the new measures faced great opposition, mainly from non-Muslim populations who feared that such new measures would no longer protect their cultural and religious traditions unlike earlier times; that the establishment of a centralized system was destined to privilege the Turkish language, culture, and religious traditions; and the system would certainly undermine the autonomy of confessional communities recognized under the Ottoman Millet system. The broad opposition by non-Turkish populations empowered Sultan Abdul Hamid II, who ascended the throne on August 31, 1876, and soon after severe acrimony developed between Sultan and his Prime Minister Midhat Pasha. Two years later, Sultan Abdul Hamid II suspended the constitution on February 13, 1878, and sent his former prime minister to prison far away in western Arabia.

Nationalism and the modern autocratic state

The ambitious reform was the brainchild of a reform movement led by intellectuals and politicians exposed to liberal European thought, known as the Young Ottomans. The Young Ottomans were inspired by European nationalism and

the nation-state system established in the Treaty of Westphalia (1648). The system was uniquely European, as it was designed to end the religious wars that devastated Europe and to recognize the sovereignty of the state and its independence from the papal authority. Up until the nineteenth century, Europe rarely had political divisions predicated on national identity. People's resistance and acquiescence to political orders had always been predicated on loyalty to local leaders who could inspire them to support or oppose one dynastic rule or another. The nation-state system was not initially predicated on the racial or ethnic cohesiveness of the populations but on the sovereignty of the secular authority and its independence from religious authority. The nationalist ideology was founded in the works of eighteenth-century Prussian philosophers, particularly those of Herder and Fichte. Prussian nationalists found in the new ideology a powerful tool to unite the German people and justify Prussia's expansion at the expense of the Austro-Hungarian Empire.[13] At the turn of the nineteenth century, the Austro-Hungarian Empire was the largest state in Europe, its rule extending over vast territories in Central and Eastern Europe. This empire was composed of many different nations and peoples who spoke German as their native language and represented a significant portion of the empire's subjects. The empire itself was ruled by the House of Hapsburg, a German dynasty dating back to the twelfth century, and was the main rival to the Prussian monarchy. It was also the major obstacle hindering the ambitious Prussia state bent on expanding beyond its borders.

The nationalist ideology advanced by Prussian political philosophers was almost completely alien to the majority of Europeans living around the turn of the nineteenth century. Of course, these people were aware of their ethnic and linguistic differences, but only a tiny minority of them would go so far as to equate ethnic and linguistic differences with political divisions. "A nation, to the French revolutionaries," meant a number of individuals who have signified their will as to the manner of their government. A nation, according to the nationalist theory, becomes a natural division of the human race, endowed by God with its own character, which its citizens must, as a duty, preserve as pure and inviolable. Since God has separated the nations, they should not be amalgamated. "Every nationality," proclaims Schleiermacher, "is destined through its peculiar organization and its place in the world to represent a certain side of the divine image."[14] Despite the great hope that Westphalia Treaty would end all wars, two world wars came to pass, forcing many Europeans to question the nationalist ideology. Europe was eventually saved from its own self-destruction by three nations who never embraced the nationalist fever, the United States, Britain, and the Soviet Union. Turkish nationalism was born along German nationalism and the latter's intellectual influence predated WWI. Soon the Ottoman military was drawn into the business of building democracy, and a series of coup d'états led eventually to the imposition of military rule under the disguise of Republican government, with the single-minded drive to force Turkish nationalism on the Ottoman Empire.

Arab nationalism emerged in response to Turkish nationalism with the aim to develop an Arab state and to gain independence from the Ottoman Empire. Turkish nationalists responded by using the military to impose nationalist policies that aimed at the Turkification of the Arab populations. The defeat of the Ottomans in WWI emboldened Arab revolutionaries to create an independent Arab commonwealth, and in 1919 an army composed of Arab warriors supported by British forces entered Damascus. Three days later, Emir Faisal, the son of Sharif Hussain, was declared the King of Syria, thereby ending the Turkish rule of Arab lands. Arab independence was encouraged by the Allies, especially England, which were in a state of war with the Ottoman Empire. Under the banner of self-determination, the Allies pledged to support the aspirations of all nations struggling for independence.[15] A year later, Britain and France, armed with a mandate issued by the newly formed League of Nations, took over the newly independent Ottoman territories, redrawn the political map of the region, and set up a new homeland for the world Jewry in Palestine. A new system of nation-states was created in an area in which religious, linguistic, and ethnic groups lived for millennia under a communal system that culminated in the Ottoman Millet system. The Arab nation-state system stood on its head from day one. While Europeans were able to shape their reality through new sets of ideas, Arabs had to bring their ideas to fit their new reality and justify the new political order that did not fit the Levant reality. Arab nationalism and other nationalist ideologies were introduced to provide a new foundation for political unity among culturally, religiously, and linguistically diverse groups, in order to replace the semi-autonomous system run by the Ottomans. Arab and Turkish brands of nationalism left the Kurdish population in the cold, as the Kurds were now scattered among the three nationalist countries. Even worse, under the conditions of modern politics, Greece and Turkey engaged in a form of ethnic cleansing disguised as repatriation. Turkish nationalists went as far as to force Armenians out of their Turkish cities and villages, leading to untold suffering.[16]

Secular Europe encouraged Arab governments to privatize religion, but was also comfortable politicizing religious affiliations in secular Arab states. This took the form of "minority protection" rules that required the state to treat non-Muslims as protected minorities. The patterns started even prior to the dissolution of the Ottoman Empire, as various European nations extended protection over Christian communities under the Ottomans, requiring that the Ottomans do not enact any law that affects minorities without getting first clearance from the Catholic and Orthodox papacies. This trend continued with French claiming protection over Lebanese Christians. France even carved Lebanon out of Syria to ensure that Lebanese Christians formed the majority and created a sectarian government with the Lebanese constitution giving the presidency and the military leadership to Christians. Britain tried to do the same with the Egyptian Christians, or the Coptic community, but the Copts resisted the British plan. Indeed, the Egyptian Coptic community was angered by the British proposal that they should be designated as

"national minority." In 1919, both Copts and Muslims revolted against the British colonial presence in Egypt, after the British high commissioner forced Saad Zaghloul and members of the Wafd Party into exile, demanding independence and an end to colonial rule. "Joining the Muslims, the Copts rejected the British offer as an unacceptable intervention in the internal affairs of Egypt, and further demanded annulment of the British prerogative to protect Egypt's resident foreign nationals (Greeks, Armenians, and Italians)."[17] The pride of the Coptic community of being Egyptian first was highlighted in an interview Saba Mahmood conducted with Samer Soliman, an Egyptian activist and scholar, who objected to the presentation of Egyptian Copts as a religious minority in Egypt:

> You know the Copts have a long and prominent history in the making of modern Egypt. When people say that we had a revolution in 1952, I say no, that was the result of the revolution in 1919. Copts were leading figures in this revolution. It is not like the Maronites in Lebanon. They colluded with French colonialism. Copts did not collude with British colonialism because we have always thought of ourselves as Egyptians first. Maronites think of themselves as Europeans, not Lebanese. In fact, when the Russian Czar tried to extend his protection to the Copts as a faction of the Orthodox Church, like the Catholics were extending to the Maronites, the Copts refused! This has to do with the fact that our history as a nation goes much farther back.[18]

The transformation of Europe into secular societies did not erase old religious prejudices, nor did it dissolve Europe's deep Christian identity. Wilfred Blunt, the British poet and writer, was clear in as early as 1882 of the European design for the Ottoman Caliphate as he anticipated in his book, *The Future of Islam*—namely, the coming European invasion of the Muslim land. As an astute political observer and frequent traveler in Europe and the Muslim land, Blunt had a deep understanding of the history of the Christian–Muslim rivalry and keen awareness of the lingering onslaught on Muslim countries in North Africa and the Middle East. In his book, which was published four years after the Council of Berlin and one year before France occupied Tunisia, Blunt was certain of the French move into Tunisia, and he anticipated that the Italians will soon make their move into Libya and the Spaniards will move into Morocco. He believed that occupying the Ottoman territories by the "Crusading States of Europe" was inevitable and imminent. Because of the strong presence of the Ottomans in Libya, he rightly anticipated that Italy will await the fall of the Ottomans before they made their move.[19] Blunt believed that the looming attacks against the Ottoman Caliphate and the Arab states in North Africa would be fully supported by the European public and that "the national conscience," especially of France, Spain, Italy, or Austria, would not repudiate an aggression, however unprovoked, upon any of the "Independent Mussulman states of the Mediterranean."[20] Blunt blamed the

aggressive policies of Europe toward Muslims to a long-held prejudice by the European public against Islam that persisted despite the liberalization of European society and its increased openness to religious diversity. "In spite of all the changes which have affected religious thought in Catholic Europe, and of the modern doctrine of tolerance in matters of opinion," he wrote,

> none of the nations by which Islam is immediately confronted to the north and west have really changed anything of their policy towards her, since the days when they first resolved on the recovery of "Christian lands lost to the infidel."[21]

Clearly, not everybody in Europe was willing to start a new page in the relations with the Muslim world, based on a secular and inclusive political system and the new liberal ideals that inspired Europeans to fight autocracy and imposition.

Blunt notices, however, an important difference between the old and new crusading spirits of Europe. While the old spirit was motivated by religious zeal, the new one was more driven by advancing the civilization of the West and restoring Europe's "political control in the whole of the provinces once forming the Roman Empire."[22] Interestingly, he saw the new crusading spirit becoming more evident in continental Europe, particularly among the French, Italian, and Spaniards, than in England. England's position, he insisted, "is absolutely distinct from that of any of them, and her interests find no parallel among Christian nations, except perhaps the Dutch."[23] The distinction in the position of England, he pointed out, is evident in the admission of "a vast body of Mohammedans into her social community, and contracted engagements from which she can hardly recede towards others among them…."[24] England's distinct attitude toward Islam and Muslims was bound, Blunt anticipated, to put her at odds with continental Europe and deepen her predicament. "As Christians," blunt observed, "Englishmen may regret this; but as practical men, they would surely be wise to recognize the fact, and to accept the duties entails."[25] Blunt seems to have mixed feelings about what he saw as an inevitable recapture of territories that the Roman Empire lost to the Islamic civilization and saw at least one positive development in the wake of the imminent collapse of the Ottomans. Blunt anticipated that the collapse of the Ottoman Empire and the "Christianization" of the Muslim land throughout the Ottoman regions, most notably Constantinople, will free Islam from its temporal concerns and for Muslims to pay more attention to spiritual matters and thus regain its essential character as a religious and spiritual force and not simply as a temporal one.[26]

Over the next 80 years that followed, Wilfred Blunt's predictions of the European expansion into the Middle East and North Africa were proven true as shown in the efforts of the European powers to rebuild the Arab and Muslim societies and cultures in the image of modern Europe. Although Christian missionaries who came with the European armies had a lot of hope

to spread Christianity in Muslim societies, the secular leadership was more interested in introducing modern European institutions and practices, including secular culture and national politics. To do that, colonial powers introduced new curricula of civic education, reduced religious content, established new secular law borrowed from European code, and so on. Muslim modernizers, such as Mustafa Kemal of Turkey, even went further and forced Latin alphabet, chastised religious authorities, and forced non-Turkish minorities to speak the Turkish language only, and threatened those who resort to speaking native languages with long-term imprisonment.

Despite the intensive campaign led by secularist and nationalist leaders in Muslim societies that lasted for almost a century, neither secularism nor nationalism took hold in Muslim cultures. The reasons for resisting these two important features of modernization are numerous and complex, including the misapplication and misuse of the principles of secularism and nationalism. Yet the most important reasons can be found in the markedly different historical experience Muslim society had in institutionalizing religion and law. While Christianity developed early on a church with a fairly centralized authority, which soon took the form of a hierarchical ecclesiastical structure, Islam never had a central religious authority. Even those who possessed a semblance of religious authority could not lay claim to any special status in relation to the divine. Their authority was not derived from any sacred status but from their scholarship. Religious leaders in Islam are considered scholars, or learned members, of the Muslim community. The only exception was given to the members of the family of the Prophet by their followers, who become known as the party of the Prophet's family (Shiite). With the disappearance of the twelfth grandson of the Prophet, the twelfth Imam, religious authority was once again reduced to the same status claimed by Sunni religious scholars.

The reliance on coercion to effect social change is counterproductive, and overcoming centuries of conflict and mistrust requires more creative solutions. It requires more fundamental engagement in dialogues that aim at generating a common understanding of the relevance of Islam to the public-private dichotomy and the development of channels for such interaction away from political collaborations with authoritarian regimes. The goal should not be one of forcing one religious interpretation or another but to arrive at the rules of participation of all ideological groups in public space, regardless of whether the groups are secular or religious. The goal should also be one of ensuring that the critical interaction is fair and civilized. After all, the three monotheistic traditions that have been caught for long in power struggle have almost identical ethical positions, and their main differences are purely metaphysical in nature. Richard Bulliet calls Christianity and Islam sibling religions and identifies Islam's rejection of hierarchical ecclesiastical structure as the key feature that distinguishes the two religions.[27] He refers to modern civilization as an Islamo–Christian civilization because it is rooted in both the Christian and Muslim traditions. Bulliet argues that formalized ecclesiastical

structures in Christianity single-handedly explain the stable relationship that was developed between religion and politics in Christian societies and its absence in Islam.[28] Not only did the formalized and hierarchical church prevent religious rivalry among Christians,[29] it also ensured the development of an "ideology of peaceful (and sometime not so peaceful) separation" between the religion and the state.[30] In the absence of centralized religious organization in Islam, the role of mediating differences among religious groups was assumed by the religious authority, and the state became the center of interreligious dynamics. This role of providing a structure for the competing religious communities was assumed by "the caliphate and then a plethora of successor states, each with its judges, jurisconsults, and market inspectors as prescribed by the shari'a."[31]

   The crucial role played by the rise of centralized church in setting Christianity and Islam in markedly different social and political dynamics cannot be disputed. What can be questioned is the claim that the presence of church hierarchy played a positive role in separating religious authority from political authority. It is a matter of historical record that the Catholic church did get involved in political agitation, mobilization, and control of European society between the tenth and thirteenth centuries. Protestantism, which rejected hierarchical church, articulated vigorously the complete separation of the spiritual and political authority, as it emerged to play a vital role in the rise of modern secular state. It can also be argued that the absence of a centralized religious authority tremendously reduces the ability of political authorities to manipulate religion through inducement or coercion. Undoubtedly, the lack of centralized authority in Islam has led to fragmentation and rivalry among various religious groups, but at the same time, the very same lack of central authority gave Islam tremendous flexibility and vigor, allowing it, as Bulliet himself observed, to expand greatly even when the Muslim Empires were shrinking. During the centuries of political decline of Muslim powers, Islam experienced a new "proselytizing surge." Despite the fact that the period from 1500 to 1900 CE was a period of Western expansion and imperialism, Islam was more successful than Christianity in gaining more converts. During this period, both Islam and Christianity gained considerable following in new regions and populations. However, while one of every two Muslims today hail from regions that joined the Islamic faith in the last five centuries, only one of five of today's Christian originate from regions that became Christian during the same period.[32] What was interesting about Muslim expansion in the last 500 years was that it was done by ordinary Muslims and not by missionaries as was the case with Christian expansion. For a long time, knowledge of Islam was historically commonplace among Muslims, unlike Christianity which limited access to religious knowledge to clergy.[33] Equally interesting is the fact that Islam was not introduced by Muslims to pagan and animist communities, as proselytization was, in the Middle Age, disproportionately the work of Christian missionaries devoted to bringing the population of Northern Europe and Britain into monotheism. Later during

the colonial age, the missionaries made great success in Africa and Southeast Asia among pagan animist tribes. In contract, Islam spread mainly in religious communities that came in daily contact with it, such as Christians in the Levant, North Africa, and the Balkans, as well as the Zoroastrians in Persia, the Buddhists in Central and East Asia, and the Hindus in India and Southeast Asia. If Islam and Christianity were judged from a religious, rather than a political perspective, then the two religions played complementary roles in bringing the majority of people living today into the fold of monotheism. From that vantage point they look more as partners rather than adversaries. Add to this that the two religions differ in very subtle ways, and have over centuries of exchange and learning converged into parallel sets of doctrines, with the only exception being their depiction of the divine nature of Jesus.

The continuous doctrinal and ethical convergence between Christianity and Islam has not ended rivalry and antagonism, as tensions continued to characterize their interaction down to the twentieth century. The historical antagonisms between Islam and Christianity has often been translated into clashes between Islam and the West. It is important that we understand the antagonism for what it truly is—a rivalry between sibling societies with twined relationship deeply rooted in history. "Their confrontation today arises not from essential differences," asserts Bulliet, "but from a long and willful determination to deny their kinship."[34] From the prism of the unceasing convergence, the hostile encounters that continue to flare between Islam and the West are not instances of the "clash of civilizations" alleged by Samuel Huntington, but an internal rivalry between two branches of a single civilization, who have more in common to share and celebrate than differences to fear and fight. More importantly, Western culture and society are locked intricately in a historical movement and gradual convergence that makes it impossible for any self-critical reflection and assessment of Western past and future without considering the forces that bind it tightly to Islamic civilizational experience. "The past and future of the West cannot be fully comprehended," Bulliet observes, "without appreciation of the twined relationship it has had with Islam over some fourteen centuries. The same is true for the Islamic world."[35]

Post-reformation Christianity and Judaism share a great deal with Islam, yet powerful voices and interests in all three communities instrumentally use religious identities as grounds to provoke suspicion and animosity among the three Abrahamic traditions. In the last 100 years since the colonial invasion of the Greater Middle East, little has been done to end historical animosity and transform relations. This has not only created great miseries in Muslim countries but has also increased the economic burdens on Western democracies. A central question for the puzzle lies in the old question about evaluating political structures and relations: Who benefits? Who benefits from the continuation of animosity? If Blunt is correct that the European public would welcome European aggression against unprovoked action by Muslims, then is this approval born out of greed or fear? And what would it take to make

the relationship across the Mediterranean mutually beneficial? What would it take to engage the other in dialogue and in interaction based on mutuality, instead of invoking historical stereotypes and collective guilt? Is making enemies essential for social grouping, or can we come to a point where we undertake, as societies, morally courageous and rationally based stances in dealing with matters the pertain to competition among groups and societies?

Modernization through national secularism

European publics were not prepared to give up what seemed a historic opportunity of immense proportion for the ideal of engaging the old enemy in just practices, for the Ottomans themselves were not historically unguilty of using military means to penetrate European empires. Some Europeans must have felt that they were fighting for universal peace as they struggled to bring down old tyrannical regimes. Colonialism was sold as the "white man's burden" to civilize and modernize a premodern world. Indeed, the democratic structure based on popular sovereignty and assent appeared much more refined than the autocratic regime of the Ottoman. More importantly, Europe that had superior science, education, and organization was in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries still economically poorer than its colonies. Colonialism played an important role in stimulating the European national economies, through the instrument of trade conducted under the political terms of European colonial powers and made respectable by the use of superior military firepower. It is true that the newly established European democracies introduced parliamentarian system in all their colonies, but this was a central element to bring about an international order grounded in the system of nation-states and cooked under pressure and in haste to only create the semblance of democracy; an electoral system that has the same parliamentarian structure, but with no democratic substance.

   The vanguards of such transformation were young and highly ambitious nationalists, who were well versed in European education and culture, so much so that they often looked with colonialist eyes at their citizenry and were willing to use the most coercive and brutal force to create modern nations in societies that had little clue as to what their leaders were contemplating. The first fallout of the modern ideology of nationalism took place as Ottomans had already lost control of the state to Young-Turks nationalism, after the coup of 1912. The nationalists took the Ottoman Empire to WWI on the side of the German nationalists, and when they lost the war to the Western Allies they decided to create a more homogeneous national population. When the Greek nationalists who invaded western Anatolia to claim the Turkish-speaking Christian regions during WWI failed and their withdrawal required a settlement, they came to an agreement with their Turkish counterparts to "repatriate" 1.3 million Christian Turks and half-a-million Muslim Greeks. The irony was that the Christian Turks were considered Greek, even though they were culturally and linguistically Turks, and the

same for the Muslims of Greece who were for all practical purposes Greek but were pushed out of their homes in the name of nationalism. The situation was so outrageous that Carl Brown felt the need to describe what took place in politically correct terms, but with a grain of irony: "The resulting step in the direction of deChristianizing Anatolia and deIslamizing Greece left each side free (if that is the proper word) to pursue its nation-state aims in different political worlds."[36] The victims of modern nationalism were innocent civilians caught in the middle of the tectonic movements of continents and civilizations colliding against each other, with the full force and intensity of a moment that encapsulated an epoch-long struggle.

The question concerning the space that was vacated by the vanished Ottoman Empire akin to the one raised by Huntington in his last intellectual attempt to understand the nature of current sociopolitical changes include: Who are we? Except that the question that was raised earlier was followed with a host of interrelated questions: What is the content of nationalism in the Middle East? What do we do with ethnic, national, and religious diversity? Does nationalism require that the entire Arab world is brought under one political order? And how do we move from cultural identities defined throughout history in religious terms to one that speaks European languages? Is the category "Islamic nationalism" an acceptable category, and could it be used on par with "Jewish nationalism"? Indeed, some of those questions that were raised a century ago are still being debated today in Middle Eastern societies. It has been suggested that Islamism represents a form of reaffirmation of the historically constitutive self by Arab and Muslim cultures and might be a local response to the forces of globalization.[37] While nationalism led to the unification of Germany, Arab nationalism has divided Arab countries into smaller political units that could only be sustained by their relationships with the modern West, through constant flow of trade, political advice, educational support, and occasionally military interventions to save them from their Arab and Muslim neighbors or to serve as mediators to help in internal conflicts. In many ways, the modern forms of political organization and the terms of trade seem a step back from the old ways of doing things. Muslim collective memories point to times when they could roam around the entire space from India to Morocco, in search for education, employment, or trade, without being stopped by checkpoints that demand a visa that cannot be easily obtained. Such a space has shrunk to national boundaries of states that can hardly create enough work opportunities for local populations, while national leaders engage in political rivalry and conflicts and use populations and trade movements as political weapons to suffocate each other's populations.

The name of the new game is "nation building" and the introduction of various strategies designed by research institutions and specialized departments of international relations and area studies whose job is to figure out how to transform Muslim cultures and societies to bring them out of the darkness of traditions to the light of modern liberal democracy, which, as Fukuyama told us (see Chapter 1), forms the end of history and the moment

in which the "last man" becomes visible. Modernization theorists, including Walt Rostow, Daniel Lerner, Carl Carr, and Peter Berger, have advocated for decades for supporting autocratic regimes as a necessary evil for bringing about good societies in the Middle East. Half a century later, the Middle East is still governed by military dictators with rising poverty and rampant corruption that have turned the region into a tough place to live in, forcing many Middle Easterners to contemplate a life in the West, where modernity could be experienced away from the manipulation of its local agents. Here we have an interesting case of the modern free world backing dictators in the name of liberating the hearts and minds of people from the limitations of the Islamic tradition. The past two decades have presented us with a picture of the Middle East as the epicenter of the resistance of modernization and globalization. This resistance appears in the form of Islamism that turned quickly violent in the 1970s and produced by the turn of the twenty-first century a Hollywood-like drama that symbolically targeted the World Trade Center that once stood high in Lower Manhattan, New York. These horrific attacks against civilian targets was evidently undertaken by European-educated Muslim extremists who had little respect for the Islamic notion of fair and just war taught by traditional Islam that prohibited in the strongest terms the targeting of civilians. In the midst of the grand entanglement of the "modern" and "traditional," it is not clear for the moderately informed observers whether the backlash is against modernity that stands for individual rights, democratic accountability, and freedom of speech and conscience, or whether it is simply a backlash against the excesses of autocratic regimes supported by modern liberals.

The attacks on the World Trade Center was by any standards genocidal and was broadly condemned by Muslim leaders and rejected worldwide by every country, including Muslims. But as soon as the dust settled, neoconservative ideologues in control of decision-making in the Department of Defense and the White House during the Bush administration sprung to action, urging punitive attacks against Afghanistan and Iraq, and advocating the recreation of a New Middle East. The "war on terror" was inaugurated by George Bush Jr. and his Sectary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld. Six months later President Bush stood triumphant on the deck of USS Abraham Lincoln aircraft carrier to declare "mission accomplished." What was accomplished is the death of hundreds of thousands in Afghanistan and Iraq, and the beginning of a new round of fighting in Afghanistan, and the devastation of the Iraqi society and economy from which Iraq has not recovered almost two decades after the toppling of Saddam Hussain regime. My concern here is not to point out U.S. foreign policy mistakes, for this is a matter I and others have addressed elsewhere. The concern is rather the mindset that insists on defining modernization in a rigid and unilinear direction. If any modern people could have deep sense of modernity and its values, Muslims should be among those who can be ranked high on the scale, as the ground for modernity was set within their historical experience. Granted that the voices that articulate modern views

rooted in the Islamic experiences are not often heard, as they are frequently overcome by the noise generated by angry young Muslims who wear their religious identity on their sleeve as they commit heinous acts forbidden by the faith and the tradition they claim to defend. No doubt Muslim extremists use modern interpretations and justifications for their crimes by recalling verses of the Qur'an, but the use of Islamic sources as soundbites to sugarcoat self-serving ideologies has nothing to do with Islam as it is accepted by the vast majority of Muslims.

The facts are numerous and have accumulated over the last century that Western powers are intent on restructuring Muslim societies, not to ensure that they manifest the values of human rights, democracy, pluralism, and open society, but rather to create the Middle East that is responsive to the wisdom of Western politicians who know better how the world should be arranged. To borrow Brown's "old game, dangerous rules" expression, Western powers are playing the old game of control and manipulation to advance strategic interests, but they are using dangerous rules that have far-reaching consequences not only on the well-being of people in the Middle East but eventually on the well-being of people everywhere, as the cost of repression of a significant proportion of humanity would become enormous. What we need to be aware of here is the inner tensions and struggles among the leading traditions within the modern West as well. Western democracies are experiencing internal ideological conflicts among liberalism, realism, neoliberalism, socialism, nationalism, and fundamentalism, as each of these worldviews competes to influence foreign policy, with little input from the majority of the citizens who are naturally uninterested in international politics and have to figure out what is going on through the soundbites of national media. The most articulate commentators on international news are often individuals with strong commitments to narrow ideologies and religious views. These commentators can always rely on historical presentations of the Muslims as the Other to perpetuate old myths and stereotypes. This situation though began to change in the past two decades, as more Westerners, including Western Muslims, began to join the debate, expose the myth, and make their voices heard.

Military guardians of the new secular order

While there is plenty of blame leveled against Western capitals, the West should not be held solely responsible for the bleak state of affairs Muslims and Arabs found themselves engulfed in. Some of the disorder experienced in Muslim societies is self-inflicted and results from the failure of contemporary Muslim societies to raise the right questions about the disorder they have created and to face the truth. Many of the challenges Muslim communities face today partly stem from the political culture they inherited from living in self-regulating communities, which was the hallmark of the Ottoman political system. The modern states can function only with the full participation of

citizens, something that is yet to happen as the majority of the Arab populations have not fully embraced the public values necessary for creating democratic order and have not fully accepted their moral responsibility for the state of affairs they find themselves in. The lack of interest in public and collective life brings the postcolonial state under the control of the military institutions set up by the colonial powers and which by their very nature not amicable to democratic deliberation and rule. The problem is further complicated by the tendency of a system run by soldiers trained to follow hierarchical order rather than debate, to shut out all public debates necessary to generate a common understanding and a new consensus among diverse political actors. By closing the political space to any discussion and organization outside the control of the government, the new national state has effectively closed the possibility for the emergence of social movements. The current level of society's ability is barely adequate to engage in public action and debate necessary for nurturing shared commitments to the universal values of justice, compassion, dignity, power sharing, and equality. What complicates things particularly is that the secular space, declared by modern governments as neutral, is indeed occupied with imported ideologies that neither speaks the language of the people nor addresses the real issues confronting the collective consciousness of Middle Eastern societies. What complicates things even more is that the external pressures that have been brought to bear on Muslim countries favor the imposition of Western secularism.

The postcolonial state in the Middle East follows closely in the footsteps of colonial powers. European colonial powers never doubted the superiority of their cultures and viewed with utter disdain the natives under their control, regarding them as unworthy of being engaged in formulating public policies in any shape or form. They developed unmistaken paternalistic attitudes toward the common person, which has been documented in the annals of colonial history. The examples are plenty, and suffice it here to point to a few, including relevant remarks made even as late in as the 1950s, by then the French governor general of Madagascar, Marcel Olivier. "[W]hen worthy of its name," Olivier asserted referring to the project of colonialization, it "establishes between the colonising country and the colonised peoples a relationship which can only be compared to that of mutual obligations and reciprocal services we find in a family between parent and children."[38] The "family" metaphor used by Olivier is deceiving, as it hides the nature of the violence imposed by the colonial powers to discipline their colonized "children." The discipline was, in one form or another, excessive and violent, as has been documented by Richard Price in an article, appropriately titled "The Psychology of Colonial Violence."[39] This condescending attitude and the desire to impose violent "discipline" were borrowed by military rulers of the postcolonial Arab states, who regularly used excessive force to stop peaceful rallies and even inflicted unspeakable torture to extract information from protesters taken into custody and to frighten the opposition. Violations of human dignity and essential rights of peaceful dissidents were ignored

by the leaders of Western democracies, despite the fact that it went on for decades, as rulers of Syria, Egypt, Tunisia, and Algeria were allowed, and sometimes encouraged, to subvert democratic rule and free speech in the name of fighting religious fanatics and extremists.[40] The despicable behavior of military dictators and autocratic rulers was either condoned or lightly rebuked by the leaders of Western democracy, but the support always continued unabated. President Donald Trump bragged in public about his efforts to shelter the "Saudi Arabia's Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman from congressional scrutiny after the brutal assassination of the Washington Post journalist Jamal Khashoggi."[41]

Military dictators backed by Western powers have, since the independence from colonial rule, run a smock-and-mirrors type of elections, with interference by regime forces in every step of the election process. Egypt, for example, came under military dictatorship after decades of establishing a parliamentarian system back in 1919. Nasser took over in 1952 and set up a suffocating military dictatorship in which a special security apparatus, known as the Mukhabarat, controlled every element of the state and civil society. Four decades later, Mubarak was still using the same tactics to stay in power. He reigned for three decades unopposed and continued to get elected by ridiculous percentages, ranging between 90% to an incredible 99.99%. Under pressure from the Bush administration, he finally permitted Ayman Nour, a member of the Egyptian parliament, to run against him in 2005. This unprecedented challenge brought international attention, and the elections were followed closely by Western media and human rights groups. Mubarak still won with a slightly smaller majority of just 88% of the electoral vote, but this time the regime tactics were exposed to the whole world. Human Rights Watch provided a troubling report, describing "plainclothes security agents beat demonstrators, and riot police allowed—and sometimes encouraged—mobs of Mubarak supporters to beat and sexually assault protestors and journalists."[42]Joe Stork, deputy Middle East director of Human Rights Watch, objected to the egregious situation charging that "[t]he police and ruling-party assaults on pro-reform advocates yesterday shows just how hollow the Mubarak government's rhetoric of reform really is."[43] Nour, who dared to challenge the dictator, was later charged by the Egyptian security apparatus with committing "forgery" for receiving 12% of the total vote. He received a five-year sentence, arguably for exposing the rigged elections conducted under Mubarak regime that would otherwise pass unnoticed.

Egypt has been under military rule ever since Nasser led the coup of 1952 against the government of King Faruq and replaced a constitutional monarchy with a republican government ruled with an iron fist. He was elected as president in 1956 and immediately advanced a number of popular policies, including the land reform act that restored land ownership to farmer and the nationalization of the Suez Canal. He also initiated a number of modernization and industrialization programs. His success came at the expense of stifling political life and creating a police state. Military rule became

entrenched, and Egyptian politics and the parliamentarian system have never recovered ever since. During the Sadat rule, the state moved from socialism to neoliberalism, but the country continued to be ruled under one-party system with limited opposition groups that had hardly any impact on policy formation and decision-making. Mubarak, himself a military ex-officer, ruled at will, legitimizing certain parties and "political practices, such as vigorous antiterror laws and violent repression of opponents of Mubarak's regime, while disallowing others, such as full political participation by parties designated by that regime as religious."[44] The Bush administration was not pleased with the prosecution of Nour, and National Security Adviser Condoleezza Rice made the American views known to Mubarak during her visit in 2005. The Bush administration

> further hardened this position after Rice's visit. After Egypt's 2005 parliamentary elections, in which the Muslim Brotherhood (MB) gained one-fifth of the seats in parliament, U.S. pressure on the Mubarak regime decreased and then ceased entirely after Hamas's victory in 2006. Washington remained silent as the Mubarak regime arrested hundreds of MB members and transferred dozens to military courts.[45]

The tendencies by Western leaders to side with Arab opposition leaders who stay clear from any acknowledgment of Islam is quite puzzling and often interpreted by Muslim intellectuals as a sign of hostility to Islam. This evident bias often speaks more to the European experience with religion than to Islam per se.

For over a century, developmentalism has been the favored practice of political elites in Muslim society, who took over the political leadership from the colonial masters and continued to receive support from former colonial powers. Developmentalism meant that the ruling elite may use authoritarian political structures and policies, in paternalistic manners fashioned after the colonial model, as we described earlier. The approach seemed more efficient as it eliminated negotiations among opposing social forces about the direction of public policy and hence accelerated the pace of reform. It was for these reasons Muslim masses were willing to put up with the autocratic approach of the ruling elites and thus provided the political legitimacy autocratic leaders needed to stay in power. Early in this dangerous game, developmentalism paid off as early dictators presided over a population with big deficits in education and knowledge of modern tools. Corruption in early- and mid-twentieth century was still limited in scope to few individuals at the top of the political hierarchy. The early rapid development was made at the expense of developing social responsibilities and political skills badly needed in diverse populations who were experiencing a completely different political and social order. The autocracy created gradually a modernist class composed of military officers, technocrats, and bureaucrats who collaborated and tightly controlled the state to advance their collective interests at the expense of the

larger population. With the collapse of the Soviets, the socialist system they supported also collapsed by late 1980s, but that did not affect the supposedly socialist leaders, as they produced their own business class through the privatization of public properties, encouraging rentier economy that helped those in charge to get rich, while impoverishing their population. Through their claims to secularism, Arab elites were able to gain a freehand to fight their critics, who were motivated by the moral responsibility to oppose corruption. Many in the opposition were motivated by the Islamic faith and used Islamic values and doctrines to mobilize others to stand with them in their fight against corruption. The ruling class, aware of the secular leaning of their Western supporters, used secularism as a tool, or disguise, to fight their religiously motivated critics in the name of "liberalism" and "progress." Adopting a modern façade, they claimed that their critics were working against secular values of freedom, democracy, and equality. The number of the political activists who showed interest in appealing to religion to gain popular support was limited, and the population was not behind them. The number of Muslim Brotherhood members of parliament in Syria and Egypt before the military coups in Egypt and Syria was small. Nor were communist groups able to garner any significant power, as communism never found a strong foothold in any Arab or Muslim country, primarily because of its reputation of promoting atheism and fighting religious traditions. The panic reaction by British and American foreign-policy makers that led them to supporting military dictatorship was an overkill that set the whole region on an authoritarian course that continues to this day, with no clear plan in sight to restore democracy in the region.

The rise of religious consciousness in the 1980s and 1990s strengthened Islamic movements throughout Muslim countries. The struggle intensified between the opposition, made of both socialist, liberal, and Islamists, and the autocratic elites who stifled public debate in the name of safeguarding modernism and secularism. The ruling class moved on to co-opt some of the opposition leaders, mainly with liberal and socialist leaning, and then duped those who joined hands with the Islamists as reactionaries. The "secular" elites made it illegal for anyone classified as "Islamist" from participating in elections or public office. Those who insisted on using their public voice were arrested and jailed again in the name of protecting the secular system from religious imposition. The boundaries between religious and secular parties were arbitrary and superficial, relying on slogans and appearances while lacking any objective criteria. The Al-Wasat Party during the Mubarak regime is a case in point. The party was founded by Abou Elela Mady and led by a council of 24 members that included 2 Christian Copts and 3 women. According to the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, Al-Wasat's goal then was to seek "to interpret Islamic sharia principles in a manner consistent with the values of a liberal democratic system. Although al-Wasat advocates a political system that is firmly anchored in Islamic law, it also views sharia principles as flexible and wholly compatible with the principles

of pluralism and equal citizenship rights."[46] Party leaders applied three times for a permit to run in national elections, as required by law, in 1996, 1998, and 2004, and were rejected by a panel appointed by President Mubarak. It was not recognized as political party until 2011, after the Mubarak regime was toppled by the Egyptian uprising of 2010. Basically, the rejection of the Wasat party by Mubarak government rested on the claims that some of its founders are themselves religious, even though the party was secular, devoted to advancing the public interests with no bias toward any religion and with a multireligious leadership. This evidently is a clear case of autocratic leadership that has no interests in the democratization of the political system or competing with an independent opposition capable of holding it to account.

Arab secularism and the imperative of inclusive debate

A key question in the context of contemporary Muslim societies relates to the nature of the secular: Is secularism a framework for pluralism? Is it a set of principles whose aim is to ensure that public space is not dominated by any particular religion or ideology? Or is it a new worldview with its own metaphysical and ethical underpinnings that were developed as a modern alternative to religion? The essential meaning of "the secular" in the liberal tradition involves freeing the public space from the control of established religions; for example, the post-Reformation Europe and the separation of the church from the state. The American Constitution articulated this meaning of a secular state in its clearest expression in the first amendment, stipulating that "Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof."[47] Secularism as the separation of the state and the church did not mean that citizens with a religious leaning and identity cannot participate freely in the public or political spheres. Throughout the history of the United States, the separation between the church and the state has been vigorously debated and upheld, but that did not prevent ministers and pastors from running for, and occupying, public office. It rather meant that elected officials cannot appeal to religious doctrines to impose their faith on the public but had to articulate their political propositions in a political language and support them by a rational discourse that aims at the collective good. This rational discourse involves an appeal to shared values and universal human rights and should advance public interests and the common good without ignoring the special needs of the various segments of society. The particular good and interests do have place in the public debate, but they should be rationally justified and presented in a way that does not harm, or undermine, the interest of the general public encompassing diverse groups of population.

   The problem arises when secularism is used as an ideology that reflects the "beliefs" of a particular group in society. Secularism becomes problematic and a misnomer when it is transformed into a substantive doctrine to be used to evaluate the eligibility of religious communities to be part of the national

debate. We highlighted this problematic use of the notion of secularism in the previous chapter when discussing Charles Taylor's work, *The Secular Age*. Talal Asad addressed the problem of using secularism as a doctrine:

> Secularism is not simply an intellectual answer to a question about en-during social peace and toleration. It is an enactment by which a political medium (representation of citizenship) redefines and transcends particu-lar and differentiating practices of the self that are articulated through class, gender, and religion. In contrast, the process of mediation enacted in "premodern" societies includes ways in which the state mediates local identities without aiming at transcendence.[48]

Asad's critique of secularism focuses on its substantive elements that exceed the demands for "social peace and tolerance," by substituting the original meaning of the secular state, as an instrument for mediating collective inter-ests and needs, for an evolving doctrine that encapsulates the accumulated values, interests, and beliefs of a dominant social group. Secularism resembles from this vantage point a type of universalism in which the universal that must be applied to the collectivity, or to humanity, represents the particular values of the dominant group. In such a situation, we are faced with an in-stance of the generalization of a particular experience without any attempts to generate a common understanding through an open and inclusive debate and dialogue and away from any efforts to generate inclusive discourse. The solution for the current tendency to rationally generalize from a particular social and religious experience is, therefore, rational discourse similar to the one proposed by Leonard Binder, whose views we addressed in the context of our discussions on Taylor's exposition of a more inclusive secular order:

> 1. Liberal government is the product of a continuous process of rational discourse. 2. Rational discourse is possible even among those who do not share the same culture nor the same consciousness. 3·Rational discourse can produce mutual understanding and cultural consensus, as well as agreement on particulars. 4·Consensus permits stable political arrange-ments, and is the rational basis of the choice of coherent political strat-egies. 5·Rational strategic choice is the basis of improving the human condition through collective action. 6. Political liberalism, in this sense, is indivisible. It will either prevail worldwide, or it will have to be de-fended by nondiscursive action.[49]

The rational discursive approach to collective decision-making stands in contrast with the Kantian demand for reciprocity. Reciprocity, as an eth-ical value of duty rooted in the monotheistic principle of equal dignity, works only in a society that embraces a higher moral code, in the absence of which reciprocity degenerates into the principle of revenge. The challenge of Arab, and generally Muslim, societies today is to find the inclusive public

space that would allow citizens to speak freely and to listen attentively to each other regardless of the moral authority of the different groups of the multilateral debate. This is not only a necessary step on the road to real democratic society, but more so for a society that upholds the principle of human dignity.

The secularism project that aims at presenting secularism as a field of substantive ideas and practices is part of the predicament of secularism presented as the essence of the modern, because this means that secularism takes the form of a culture with hidden transcendental claims. A culture that insists on its absolute universalism is wrong factually and oppressive politically and as such violates the essence of the modern, defined as emancipatory project whose aim is to free both reasoning and politics. While it is necessary to ensure that the people who are brought into the public space are committed to certain universal values, such as respecting the rights of the others to speak their minds freely without fear of being subjected to punitive measures for doing that, the value of free speech should not be reduced to specific cultural expressions. While the values of justice, equality, and freedom are central to any political society that recognizes the dignity of its members, no one has the right to insist that people engage in public debate should uphold the meaning acquired in a particular cultural setting. The confusion between the liberal values that underpin American democracy and their expression in a particular culture is evident in Huntington's complaints that non-European cultures are endangering American democracy. He clearly sees Islam through the stereotypical lens produced by Orientalism and satirized by popular media. Huntington's assumptions of the incongruence of democratic values with the religious values of populations that do not share the Western European heritage are both essentialist and prejudiced in dealing with members of minority cultural groups, including Muslims. Cross-national surveys carried out from 2000 to 2008 demonstrate that the "overwhelming majorities of the populations of both the Arab-speaking Islamic countries and the other Islamic countries rated a democratic system as either 'very good' or 'good'."[50] There was no significant difference between Muslim and non-Muslim societies on questions related to democracy and political rights. There was, however, significant difference on questions relating to gender relations and sexual liberalization. "The values separating the two cultures," as Ronald F. Inglehart put it, "have more to do with eros than demos. As younger generations in the West have gradually become more liberal on these issues, Islamic societies have remained the most traditional ones in the world."[51] The survey showed, for instance, that 45% of the Muslim respondents thought that men make better political leaders than women and the university education is more important for men than women, in contrast to 18% in Western countries. The difference was even greater when it comes to questions concerning equal access to jobs when jobs are scarce, with 70% of Western respondents supported equal access, while only 21% did so from Arab societies. The difference was also noticeable with Confucian societies as only 30% supported

equal access when jobs are scares. The survey also showed that Muslim socie-
ties were also "much less tolerant of homosexuality, abortion, and divorce."[52]

What is important to note here is that differences with regard to gender
equality and sexual liberalization are subject to a complex set of culturally
specific values and issues that cannot be reduced into universal criteria for
judging democratic and human rights commitments. The relevant questions
here involve the extent to which society is working toward ensuring free
access to the market and the public space. Issues concerning gender roles and
proclivities, and priorities within the family, continue to be reasonable ques-
tions for debate even in societies where feminist movements have achieved
great success in advancing women's rights. Such important questions require
free space where competing positions are debated openly under real con-
ditions of freedom of expression and association and not through external
imposition. Restricting democratic avenues to promote gender rights is the
wrong approach and is often counterproductive as they tend to create negative
dynamics that disrupts and delays actual development. Discussions rooted in
substantive rationality across historically constituted cultural boundaries are
meaningless and prone to misunderstanding and to the exchange of accusa-
tions and are often the route favored by those who want to deepen the divide
and justify aggressive strategic actions. For meaning is not borne by the use
of simple terms that are translated from different cultural zones. Words must
be understood in the context they are spoken. The term "secular state," for
example, means a state that protects individual freedom in Western democ-
racies, but in Muslim societies it means a state ruled by dictators bent on
imposing their ideologies on the larger population in the absence of any free
debates or discussions, in the manner of Ataturk, Assad, or Mubarak.

Globalization and Islamic democracy

The Arab Spring, already declared by some as a failed attempt at democracy,
have shown us two things: First, that Arab societies are eager to do away
with "stable" dictatorships and embrace a democratic order and even pay the
highest price for achieving it. Second, that Arab authoritarian regimes are
well adept to suppress any popular objection to their inhuman governance
and can rely on the outside world to keep their population in check. The
Obama administration, despite an outward expression of disdain for brutal
dictatorship and support for democracy and freedom, has collaborated with
the Iranian anti-liberal regime and the Russian oligarchy to keep Syria under
the control of a murderous dictator, willing to kill over half a million of his
people to prevent political reforms. Arguably, Obama and his aides were not
fans of Assad and would have preferred if he had stepped down to make room
for perhaps to a less ruthless general in his army, yet he and John Kerry found
it acceptable to overlook the Syrian tragedy to negotiate a slightly favorable
treaty with the Iranians. For sure, Muslim extremist groups with outrageous
religious doctrines became part of the scene, but their involvement is directly

linked to the fundamentalist groups who have been collaborating with the Assad and Iranian regimes to drive the Americans out of Iraq. No doubt Islamism in its extremist forms, encountered after the 2002 invasion of Iraq, and in the aftermath of the Arab Spring, is dangerous and destructive, but it has only been a product and a tool of the brutal military and fundamentalist regimes in the Arab world. Arab dictators are ably supported by the 'liberal' powers of the West in the name of creating and sustaining a secular, liberal, and democratic form of government. The dictatorial regimes' iron-fist approach to dealing with society is responsible for both manufacturing jihadist groups in their prisons, and using them effectively to maintain political control and to frustrate any attempt at reform in the name of fighting terrorism. This is exactly what the Syrian dictator did when he released violent Islamists on the eve of the Arab Spring to wreak havoc in the country and to make room for the human rights activists who loudly demanded democratic rule.[53]

The Arab Spring illustrates another point that was missed in the frenzy of accusations and counteraccusations often thrown across the West-East divide. Syrians in particular have become very versed in the nature of the globalizing order around them and are quite aware of the various regions where the global order flourishes and the significance of those regions in the larger story of globalization. After appealing to the United Nations, Western democracies, and neighboring states for support in their struggle to reclaim their society and government, and finding that the world has made up its mind to keep the dictator and do away with the people, they rushed across the borders of many European states, aiming to find a new home in Western Europe. If they could not turn Syria, Iraq, or Egypt into democracies, they must seek democratic life in Germany, Sweden, Britain, Canada, or the United States. They knew enough about human rights and where to experience them, despite marked differences in cultures, religions, and languages. It is hard to argue today that human rights are purely a Western invention, for they are felt and understood by all humans, and they are definitely part of contemporary Muslim values. Contemporary Muslims could easily identify equality and justice in the actions of early Muslims, but they would be hard-pressed to derive them from their intellectual tradition.

Historically, Islamic rationalists had a clear sense of human rights, even though it is not articulated in the same terms used in modern discourse. Katerina Dalacoura recently observed that the "religion of Islam is not inherently illiberal and that it can be reconciled, at an abstract level of ideas, with the principles of human rights."[54] This observation relocates the discussion about the significance of the Islamic reform project from the secular-religious duality to the political values that underline the reform. Is the purpose of human rights to liberate the individual and society or to dominate them and manipulate their social conditions? Can one discern in the body of the Islamic text a clear conception of individual rights that resembles our modern notion of human rights? For if we really care about protecting the dignity of the individual through a regime of human rights, it does not matter whether these

rights are grounded in a secular or religious framework. Dalacoura recognizes that "the individual does have a central place in the Islamic worldview, as in the other monotheistic religions, and this can provide a foundation for the concept of human rights."[55] While the concept was not articulated in modern terms, Islam showed that it is capable of developing and transforming over time, contrary to the efforts by Orientalism scholars to show it in an essentialist light.[56] Dalacoura is unsure whether Muslims have been able to articulate a human rights tradition, grounded in Islamic values, but she nonetheless expressed confidence in the capacity of Islam to do so as a matter of course.

Yet Islamic thoughts and movements have already progressed ahead of the best wishes and hopes of those who recognize the capacity inherent in Islamic traditions, as the successful struggle against authoritarianism in the 1980s and 1990s, led by the Indonesian Islamic reformers, culminated in a modern democratic state. The peaceful and bloodless revolutions of 1998 transformed Indonesian politics into a vibrant democratic order, based on the principles of equal participation and civic rights of citizens. While liberal democracy served as a model for democratic change, Indonesian Islamic reformers developed their ideas of democracy grounded in Islamic values by expanding the historically evolving Islamic discourse in which many contemporary interpretations were engaged.

> Identified variously by different scholars as "Islamic neo-modernism", "civil Islam", "cultural Islam", "liberal Islam" or "progressive Islam", this new Islamic thinking consistently claims that "the modern ideals of equality, freedom, and democracy are not uniquely Western values, but modern necessities compatible with, and even required by, Muslim ideals". This stream of Islamic thinking has spontaneously developed in both "traditionalist" circle and "modernist" camp.[57]

Many challenges still lie ahead for the Islamic liberal tradition of Indonesia, including the recurring backlash from traditionalists who resist the widely accepted Islamic transformation rooted in the Islamic rationalism. But the Indonesian reform movement has shown its ability to view Islamic normative sources from a modern vantage point and to undertake a fresh interpretation of the universal values of Islam. What is also important is to engage multiple traditions and perspectives to produce a creative synthesis that embodies the universal and transcends its particular interpretation across geography and history.

The diverse list of Indonesian Islamic movements and groups cited above, with the diversity of their Islamic arguments and perspectives, do not include the multitude of social and political movements in Indonesia that embrace Islamic values but do not wave the Islamic flag. From a general Western perspective, they are all subsumed under the category of Islamism. The category is so broad that it is in any actual discussion useless in conveying any

sense other than that they all maintain some proximity to the religion of Islam or, to be more precise, they all take Islam as their normative frame of reference. Yet this description piles together every Islamic social, religious, or political groups that think Islam is important for contemplating moral action, though they may stand at the opposite end in terms of what values and conclusions they derive from the Islamic source. Critics of Islam subsume under the category of Islamism a host of movements, including Islamic liberals, conservatives, traditionalists, rationalists, mystics, and extremists. This use of Islamism in this manner is the equivalent of using secularism to group liberals, progressives, communists, and fascists. The point is that Islamists are diverse groups who differ among themselves on many issues in ways that set them far apart from each other and would make some of them stand closer to secular ideas than to those who share with them the "Islamism" label. While the use of "Islamism" as a category would make some sense in academic work when the real and nuanced differences within the field are kept intact, the use of this category in media and political speech is distortive and manipulative and can only create misunderstanding and confusion. The unqualified use of "Islamism" turns the concept into a political and ideological weapon to paint everyone that takes pride in Islam with the excesses of the few.

The picture of the modern assertiveness of Islam as a normative source and the ground for the values of equality, freedom, justice, compassion, and human dignity in general is a complex one and cannot be reduced to pure comparison of "the secular" as juxtaposed to "the religious." Islam is a religion claimed by people across the globe and the source of meaning to one-fifth of humanity. At the heart of the meaning derived from Islamic symbols and texts is a rational zone that takes the shape of rational discourse with a long historical lineage of countless participants. The Islamic discourse has been broadened by modern interpretations that stem from sources outside its historical zone and has increasingly brought in liberal, conservative, socialist, and even progressive ideas. The discourse, fluid and amenable, has provided contemporary Muslim intellectuals an excellent platform to engage in rational discussion that aims at reconciling modern reality with moral and meaningful life. Islamic rationalism provided—early on during the time of Ahmad Khan, Afghani, and Abduh—the moral and intellectual impetus for reform but was later overwhelmed with the rise of Islamic populism that substituted aesthetic inspiration for rational discourse and privileged political activism over intellectualization.

A new chapter of the historical journey of Islam began outside the area where Islam historically manifested itself in the past four decades, as Europe and North America became home of the Islamic faith. Waves of Muslim immigrants, driven out from their ancestral home by the corruption and authoritarianism brought about by the postcolonial states, have made Europe and North America their new homes. This brings a new phase of the reconciliation between Islam and modernity and provides an important thread in the globalization process. The full meaning and the consequences of this

move on the relationship of Islam and the West are not fully clear. What is clear though is that Muslims have made good adjustments in a new world that does not seem to be comfortable with a community deeply committed to its religious identity and seem to be even amused with the way Muslims could readily express their faith in public space. The new experimentation with a Western Islam is still in its initial stages, but it could bring the kind of interaction that would transform both the understanding of religion and secularism and the way the two interact in the post-modern and pre-global world. We focus in the next chapter on the initial steps in the journey of Islam in the West and the significance of the journey for globalization.

Notes

 1 The US intervention in Iran in the fifties that toppled the democratically elected government of Mosaddegh eventually brought about the Iranian semi-theocratic state after the revolution. Similarly, the military coups supported by the United States, beginning with the one undertaken by Za'm in the fifties, culminated in the Assad regime "responsible for current atrocities in Syria.

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 3 Heather Streets and Martial Races, *The Military, Race and Masculinity in British Imperial Culture, 1857–1914* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2004), 39.

 4 Jamal al-Din al-Afghani, "Lectures of Teaching and Learning," in *An Islamic Response to Imperialism Political and Religious Writings of Sayyid Jamal ad-Din al-Afghani*, ed. Nikki R. Keddie (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1968), 17.

 5 Ibid.

 6 Nikki R. Keddie, *An Islamic Response to Imperialism Political and Religious Writings of Sayyid Jamal ad-Din al-Afghani*, ed. Nikki R. Keddie (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1968), 37–38.

 7 Ibid, 50.

 8 Ibid, 67. See also Aziz Ahmad, "Sayyid Aḥmad Khān, Jamāl al-dīn al-Afghānī and Muslim India," *Studia Islamica*, no. 13 (1960), 55.

 9 Hafeez Malik, "Sir Sayyid Ahmad Khan's Role in the Development of Muslim Nationalism in Indo-Pakistan Subcontinent," *Islamic Studies*, vol. 5, no. 4 (1966), 387.

10 Ibid, 389

11 Muhammad Abdu, *Al-Islam wa al-Nasraniyyah ma'a al-Ilm wa al-Madaniyyah* (Cairo: Dar al-Manar, 1367 AH), 150.

12 Irfan Habib, "Potentialities of Capitalistic Development in the Economy of Mughal India," *Journal of Economic History*, vol. 29, no. 1(March 1969), 32–78.

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15 Ibid, 134.

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17 Saba Mahmood, "Religious Freedom, the Minority Question, and Geopolitics in the Middle East," *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, vol. 54, no. 2 (2012), 418–446.

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19 Wilfred Blunt, *The Future of Islam* (Brian Westland, 2020), 154, 169.
20 Ibid, 154.
21 Ibid.
22 Ibid.
23 Ibid, 169.
24 Ibid.
25 Ibid.
26 Ibid, 161–169.
27 Richard Bulliet, *The Case for Islamo-Christian Civilization* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2006), 27.
28 Ibid, 62.
29 Ibid, 27.
30 Ibid, 62.
31 Ibid, 139.
32 Ibid, 41.
33 Ibid, 29.
34 Ibid, vii.
35 Ibid, 45.
36 Brown, *International Politics*, 86.
37 Anoushiravan Ehteshami, *Globalization and Geopolitics in the Middle East: Old Games, New Rules* (London: Routledge, 2007), 3.
38 Ibid.
39 Richard N. Price, "The Psychology of Colonial Violence," in *Violence, Colonialism and Empire in the Modern World*, eds. Philip Dwyer and Amanda Nettelbeck (New York: Palgrave McMillan, 2018).
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8 Islam and the liberal tradition

The return of Islam to Europe after it was purged out happened quietly, peacefully, and uneventfully. Europe this time around was a different place, and Muslims were a different people. Europe was a completely different continent, full of energy and creativity, and growing in confidence and charm. The continent had already survived two world wars and was able to rejuvenate itself against all odds. A continent that purged itself of nationalist prejudice that almost wiped it out and embraced fully democratic rule, human rights, and humanity in general. The Muslims who began to show up on the European shores were not invaders but rather refugees from broken Muslim societies that lost much of their historical memories and old habits but still aware of better times when Muslims led in science, technology, art, and commerce. As the twentieth century drew to a close, more waves of Muslims moved westward in search of better life in the West, as they run away from Middle Eastern countries where opportunities for growth and for a life of dignity were dwindling. The majority of the Muslim immigrants to Europe were unskilled workers while those who found new home in North America were students who traveled the distance in pursuit of higher education but then decided to stay back in the place where they grew up intellectually and professionally. The lure of the West was enormous, and the dread of life in the East was on the rise.

Not all Western Muslims were migrants from the East, however. Muslim populations remained in large numbers in the Balkans and other parts of Eastern Europe, and an increasing number of European Muslims were Christian or Jewish converts to Islam, who found in Islam an idealist and spiritual refuge from an increasingly positivist and materialist European culture. Many Christian and Jewish Europeans found themselves at home and in familiar terrains in the Islamic faith: same prophetic history; same biblical stories; same moral values; same hopes of existential future; and same but more direct and intimate relationship with the one living and loving God. Many of the new converts were ordinary Europeans who stumbled into the Islamic faith by accident, as a result of meeting Muslims proud of their monotheistic faith at a time when having faith was seen as unfitting for the highly educated and the achievers. Religion and faith became enigma in

the twentieth-century Europe. Others were highly achieving individuals, including diplomats, scientists, scholars, artists, and even leading atheists. The long list includes names such as Leopold Weiss (Muhammad Asad), Murad Hoffman, Roger Garaudy, Maurice Bucaille, Sinead O'Connor, and Cat Stevens (Yusuf Islam).

In the United States, Islam became the religion of a growing African American movement led by Elijah Muhammad that produced legendary figures in the Civil Rights Movement in the 1960s that transformed the American society, including those of Malcom X and Muhammad Ali. The United States was more welcoming to Muslim immigrants as they have a higher percentage of achievers than the larger population and found themselves at home in a society that has a clear religious leaning and spoke a religious language that has a familiar tone. Little did they know that in less than few decades, the general environment surrounding them will become more toxic not because the American people became less tolerant but because Muslims began to assume a public role and speak against unfair foreign policy practices, including the fate of the Palestinians under Israeli occupation. Muslim Americans became particularly vocal about the right-wing Israeli government of Benjamin Netanyahu's disavowal of Oslo Peace Agreement and its drive to deny Palestinians a homeland by populating the West Bank with illegal settlements. All of the sudden hell broke loose, and neoconservative activists and organizations sprang to silence Muslim organizations. The campaign to deny Western Muslims equal place in liberal democracy is multifaceted and fought at the sociopolitical and intellectual levels. We will devote this chapter to the intellectual debate involving the issue of Islam and secularism and the question of compatibility of Islamic beliefs and values with a liberal democratic order, leaving the sociopolitical dimension to the next chapter.

The distortions of the meaning and significance of the presence of Islam in Western society are rather subtle and very sophisticated and undertaken by intellectuals who have their own reasons to problematize a European brand of Islam and, on fewer occasions, dramatize it. These efforts often reflect genuine concerns, connected with real issues and problems, but often evaluated from a very narrow scope that fails to connect many of the dots that bring out the full picture. Take, for example, the claim that "Europe is committing suicide," which is posited as the first sentence of a recent book written by Douglas Murray, a British neoconservative activist and writer. In his book, dramatically titled *The Strange Death of Europe: Immigration, Identity, Islam*, Murray decries the waves of immigrants, mainly Muslims, flooding British cities and towns, and turning London into a city of immigrants, where only 44.9% of its "residents now identified themselves as 'white British'."[1] He is alarmed by the marked increase in the immigrant population, particularly with the increase of the percentage of Muslim immigrants, who have been overcrowding certain localities, reducing "white Britons" into a minority. These newcomers from strange lands and cultures are literally out of place, as Murray eloquently describes to us how unfit they are in the new place:

"Streets in the cold and rainy northern towns of Europe filled with people dressed for the foothills of Pakistan or the sandstorms of Arabia."[2] So what is strange about the Muslim immigrants is not simply that they are born in a foreign land, but the fact that the land from where they hailed falls completely outside the European continent. Murray is aware that the people of Europe have changed over the centuries, so that the English, French, and Greek cultures are no longer identical with the ones that occupied the same spaces over a millennium ago. Still, he tells us that "they are recognisably Greek, English and French and all are European. In these and other identities we recognise a degree of cultural succession: a tradition that remains with certain qualities (positive as well as negative), customs and behaviours."[3] Murray recognizes that he cannot reduce the "familiar" to fashions and appearances and, therefore, seems to agonize over the feeling of strangeness he has toward those who look different. This agony is best illustrated in the following paragraph as he searches for that which describes the intrinsic element of Europeanness:

> While generally agreeing that it is possible for an individual to absorb a particular culture (given the right degree of enthusiasm both from the individual and the culture) whatever their skin colour, we know that we Europeans cannot become whatever we like. We cannot become Indian or Chinese, for instance. And yet we are expected to believe that anyone in the world can move to Europe and become European. If being "European" is not about race – as we hope it is not – then it is even more imperative that it is about "values." This is what makes the question "What are European values?" so important. Yet this is another debate about which we are wholly confused.[4]

Murray somehow thought that the best way to deny racial motives for rejecting non-white immigrants is to shift the blame to non-European cultures. The reason why certain people are European is because they are "forced' to be so; because "we know that we Europeans cannot become whatever we want." Granted that we all understand the state of bewilderment when people enter into an unfamiliar space and come in direct contact with new cultures, languages, or customs. But people's reactions are not always the same. Some would welcome the new experience and find in it the possibilities of expanding one's experience and horizons, while others feel uncomfortable and out of place. However, what is interesting in the above quote, and Murray's arguments in general, is his inability to discuss the epoch-shacking event he casually calls "the strange death of Europe" within its proper historical horizons: world history. Although he seems to define the European culture on the basis of "European values" and not "the color of the skin," his immediate and spontaneous reactions toward "the stranger" privilege genealogy and race more than ethics and values. Otherwise, why would anyone rule out the possibility of a European becoming a Chinese or an Indian if they moved to China or India, learned the local language of these societies, fell in love with

a Chinese or Indian, and established a family. For sure, a British who does that would be fully absorbed in those cultures and societies in one generation or two. Being absorbed in non-Western societies does not necessarily mean that a British national would have to lose their religion or values. Christianity is today part of both the Indian and Chinese cultures, so is Islam and Judaism. Large numbers of Europeans have been integrated into Muslim cultures throughout history. What is of interest to us in this study is Murray's inability to appreciate the extent to which world cultures and religions, and particularly Islam, have contributed to the rise of European modernity. European values are not exclusively European, not only because Europe internalized many values and beliefs that could not be traced back to Europe proper but also because Europe has been working for centuries to recreate the world in its own image. This is why the above paragraph is loaded with many layers of meaning that need to be unpacked, and such an effort would require broader historical and cultural horizons that would naturally take us beyond European history and culture.

There are relevant questions that we must ask, which Murray completely overlooks, concerning the steady increase in migration to Europe. Why are Muslims coming to Europe in droves, particularly in the past decade or two? And why would Murray never engage the new Muslim immigrants who are the object of his study with meaningful conversations to find out why they have come to Europe? Why does he not engage in his book even European Muslims with deep genealogical roots in the continent and listen to what they have to say about his anxieties? Should we presume that he is not aware of the turmoil that plagues the Middle East and African societies or the role Europe plays in shaping a region that produces consecutive waves of immigrants? Or is he indeed aware of the plight of Middle Easterners and Africans under tyrannical regimes supported by European governments, but then as an unapologetic neoconservative, he thinks imperialism is a necessary and inevitable evil for a better Europe? Perhaps he never contemplated that imperialism has serious consequences for everyone caught in its brutal and brutalizing dynamics. Many of the immigrants who made the unusual and uneasy journey away from their first homes were indeed forced out by autocratic and corrupt regimes that stifle economic growth and use iron-fist policies to silence opposition and crack down on any citizen who dares to criticize their corrupt rule. No doubt these communities have a responsibility to put their own house in order, but European and American interventions are making it exceedingly difficult by their constant intrusions in the name of the national interests of the invading powers. The role of the policies advocated by neoconservatives on non-Western communities must therefore be part of the debate to address the rising waves of immigrants to Europe and North America. The most recent waves of immigrants came from Syria, where the Assad regime has so far killed over half a million by the most conservative estimates and drove over 7 million out of their homes, mainly to neighboring countries. Many Syrians crossed the Aegean Sea to Greece on makeshift

and inflatable boats, and then walked thousands of miles, with their little children, to reach Western Europe. Close to half a million took refuge in Germany, while others continued to Scandinavia and Britain. These new waves of immigrants unnerved the Britons, and the British government chose to break out of the European Union rather than taking in its fair share of refugees. Britain's disagreement with the immigration policies of its European partners was a main factor in the Brexit.[5]

Murray is neither a disinterested observer nor a causal commentator on European politics, but rather a political activist and an avowed neoconservative who places the current transformation of Europe at the feet of the European left, who he blames for facilitating the "death of Europe." He singles out Angela Merkel for his criticism, rebuking her for her open invitation to Syrian refugees displaced by the war-torn Syria to move to Germany, after France and other European nations refused to grant them asylum. Although Merkel's principled stance should be celebrated as an excellent example of both European and Christian values, Murray who early in his book mourns the decline of Christianity in Britain chose instead to express sympathy with Thilo Sarrazin, a xenophobic critic of Merkel's multiculturalism. Sarrazin was forced to resign his public office after attacking German Muslims in a book he published in 2010 under an equally alarmist title, *Germany Abolishes Itself.* Concocting out of thin air a picture of Germany with a Muslim population of 35 million by the end of the century, he goes on the offensive stating "I don't want the country of my grandchildren and great grandchildren to be largely Muslim, or that Turkish or Arabic will be spoken in large areas, that women will wear headscarves and the daily rhythm is set by the call of the muezzin. If I want to experience that, I can just take a vacation in the Orient."[6] He did not stop there though, as he revealed an equally condescending and rigid attitude toward the German Jews, during an interview in 2010 with *Welt am Sonntag*, in which he claimed that "all Jews share a certain gene like all Basques share a certain gene that distinguishes these from other people."[7]

The stereotypical arguments and condescending attitudes we encounter in the positions taken by Murray and Sarrazin are not isolated but are central to growing movements of global proportions that portray Muslims and their religion as the source of the troubles and advocate for policies and actions that have adversely affected the lives of millions of Muslims across the globe. The level of Islamophobia in the United States and Europe is noticeably high, and it is so because this Islam-focused xenophobia is the agenda of several social movements who take anti-Muslim stance for different reasons. Bigotry and racism are part of the motif of such large-scale mobilization against Western Muslims, but Islam is also being used as a proxy for attacks on liberalism, multiculturalism, and open society. At the same time, Muslims' efforts to address some of the criticism fall far short of what is needed. Part of the challenge is the tendency to generalize from small samples of actions and reactions. There are many stories of cooperation and mutual help across the Islam-West divide that goes unreported and unnoticed. Yet the real problem

does not always lie at the fringe. Pope Francis flew to the Island of Lampe-dusa in southern Italy in 2013 and met with a large number of Syrian refugees fleeing a bloody conflict at home. He knew very well that the solution of the refugees' miseries lies far away from Syria, as he condemned the "world indifference" toward the plight of the Syrians and called for a "reawakening of consciences."

Authoritarianism and migration

Murray's efforts to fault liberalism for its failure to keep the stream of refugees out of Europe are both ironic and irresponsible and reveal the extent to which neoconservatives are willing to destroy the life and culture of non-Western people in the name of nation building; however, when interventions go wrong, they turn around and place the blame at the feet of the left. The liberal left is faulted for attending to the wounds of those who have become the vic-tims of failed nation-building projects, even when they were the party who opposed Middle Eastern wars and cautioned against its dire consequences. Nationalists and neoconservatives are quick to place the blame squarely on the shoulders of liberal and progressive activists, and their critique is increas-ingly becoming total and unsparing. The decline in cultural values and civic virtues is the fault of liberalism in all its shapes and forms, so the argument goes. There is hardly any distinction between classical liberalism and neolib-eralism or between political liberalism and social liberalism. Social liberalism is viewed by conservatives as an out-of-bound ideology bent on destroying all traditional institutions, most importantly the family and free enterprise. The progressives who advance social justice and gender equality are seen by their opponents as advancing pure socialism, while those who promote less economic regulations and insist on self-regulation through professionally identified best practices and stakeholders' accountability are now condemned as irresponsible internationalists and self-serving capitalists. Complicating the debate is the fact that democratic institutions have become less responsive to popular demands, and no mediating institutions or movements are able to bridge the growing gap. Adding to the confusion is a growing sense of loss of control felt by ordinary Westerners who are convinced that the West is doomed unless it maintains social hierarchy and ethnically defined cultures.

The conservative critique of liberalism is as unsparing in America as in Europe, a new development that stands in striking contrast with the image portrayed 65 years ago by Louis Hartz who complained in his famous work, *The Liberal Tradition in America* (1955), of the absence of conservativism in America. Hartz asserted then that conservative and liberal Americans share the tradition of classical liberalism, making any penetration by socialism and other political ideologies futile. There were hardly then any serious chal-lenges to Hartz' thesis, but today things have changed quite a bit. In 2018, Yale University Press published *Why Liberalism Failed?* by Patrick Deneen who unreservedly declared the end of liberalism. For Deneen, liberalism has

failed precisely "because it was true to itself. It has failed because it has succeeded."[8] So liberalism from this standpoint was set up for failure because of the built-in contradictions it has since its moment of inception, as its problems grew out from its own philosophy. The demise of the "old white working class and the lashing out of debt-burdened youth" are only symptoms of the problem.[9] The problem can be located, Deneen proclaims, in the contradiction between liberalism's promise of limiting the power of the government and liberating the individual from arbitrary political control, and the current reality liberal societies confront: a political power and an economic system out of the control of ordinary citizens.[10] At the heart of the rising anxiety is the trajectory of the sociopolitical dynamics that have become increasingly visible in the past three decades. The unceasing push toward economic integration and the development of global governance institutions with the power to set standards worldwide and demand more homogenization, as part of the process of globalization, seem increasingly inevitable.

Deneen is convinced that the new vision of a global order is driven by the education system itself, as liberal-minded professors and students push toward a more egalitarian world while setting the conditions for inequality. The contradiction between the promise and the emerging reality is quite obvious, he insists, turning the goal into a utopic illusion and liberalism into an ideology out of touch with society. Deneen puts the matter in the following piercing terms:

> Students are taught by most of their humanities and social science professors that the only remaining political matter at hand is to equalize respect and dignity accorded to all people, even as those institutions are mills for sifting the economically viable from those who will be mocked for their backward views on trade, immigration, nationhood, and religious beliefs. The near unanimity of political views represented on college campuses is echoed by the omnipresent belief that an education must be economically practical, culminating in a high-paying job in a city populated by like-minded college graduates who will continue to reinforce their keen outrage over inequality while enjoying its bounteous fruits.[11]

The emerging economy requires highly specialized technical skills, putting a large proportion of the population, including "old white working class" population, at disadvantage. Deneen's critique of liberalism, which echoes conservative critique in general, leading to declaration of its failure, is threefold:

1   It has persistently undermined "classical and Christian effort to foster virtue, which was rejected as both paternalistic and ineffectual, prone to abuse and unreliability."[12]
2   It continues to push governance away from the individual and community, placing important decisions at the national/federal and global levels.[13]

3   It increasingly relies on administrative state to impose the liberal order, developed away from the effective participation of ordinary citizens and hence exhibiting antidemocratic tendencies.[14]

What is interesting about the position taken by Deneen is that while he seems to stand on the conservative side of the political division, his condemnation is uncontained by the liberal–conservative or the Democrat–Republican dualism but is directed to both. Indeed, he evidently does agree that liberalism is the American political tradition once pointed out by Hartz and as such both liberals and conservatives are doomed to failure:

> Both "classical" and "progressive" liberalism ground the advance of liberalism in individual liberation from the limitations of place, tradition, culture, and any unchosen relationship. Both traditions—for all their differences over means—can be counted as liberal because of this fundamental commitment to liberation of the individual and to the use of natural science, aided by the state, as a primary means for achieving practical liberation from nature's limitations.[15]

The conclusion is shockingly fatalistic, and even borders on nihilism. Deneen identifies four postliberal possibilities; two possibilities, communism or fascism, have already been tried and he therefore deems their return unlikely, while the other two he contemplates as plausible alternatives: "populist nationalist authoritarianism" and "military autocracy."[16] Yet what is of interest to our discussion is the complete absence of appreciation of the most important and relevant dimension of liberalism that is at the root of the current predicament of Western society, namely neoliberalism that lies at the heart of his critique. Equally important is the lack of political awareness of the working of liberalism outside the West since the turn of the nineteenth century. "Imposing the liberal order by fiat" has been the hallmark of European and American interventions in the Middle East that aims at producing liberalism by using autocratic regimes to transform the Middle Eastern society. Indeed, the process seems to have intensified lately in the wake of the Arab Spring and the fear of the broadening influence of Islamic movements.

Islamic movements have been rejected by liberalism as both undemocratic and incapable of engaging in true democratic order. The prevalent arguments among political commentators and decision-makers who want to see liberal democracy prevail in the Middle East is that democratic elections are embraced by Islamists as an only one-time exercise to bring them to power. Democracy would then be abandoned and replaced by authoritarian rule that would take the form of theocracy. This was exactly the argument when the Salvation Front won the Algerian general elections in 1992. American and French commentators raised the specter of "one man, one vote, one time" to justify their support for the Algerian military that cancelled the elections to prevent a freely elected Islamist coalition from assuming power.[17] The coalition was made of many groups with varying commitments to freedom, as

some were considered to hold "moderate" Islamic views, while others were less tolerant of individual freedom. The efforts to suppress Islamist movements in Algeria and other parts of the Middle East increased in popularity, as it became clear in the first parliamentary elections in Egypt when Islamists were allowed to run for office. Over 22% of the seats were won then by Islamists, in controlled elections in which the United States pressured Mubarak to permit more open elections to gauge the Islamist strength. American and European leaders continued however to downplay the popularity of the Islamist movements in Muslim countries. American and European leaders contemplated a policy of engagement with moderate Islamists, in the first decade of the twenty-first century, but the experimentation never took off. Western reluctance to engage the Islamists, even those who openly support a democratic order, is rooted in deep suspicions that even moderate Islamists have an instrumentalist approach to democracy. Yet the problem may not fall squarely in the lap of the Islamists, as the evidence also points to issues of self-perception of the advocates of liberal democracy. The problem is highlighted in Michelle Space's study of the strategies used by Americans and Europeans to engage Islamists groups. The study problematizes the coupling of liberalism and democracy and echoes aspects of Deneen's critique of American liberalism.

Critical voices of the nation-building project in the Middle East have pointed out certain aspects of that engagement that many people in the region suspected long time ago. They largely agree that the European Union is an internal actor in the Middle East and has been "caught in different webs of power struggles that continuously shape and deform its policies and [engagement] programmes."[18] This is the new perspective with which the nature of European involvement in the Middle East is reframed. The question from this perspective is "no longer one of whether the EU is doing enough to promote democracy, but whether it is acting in line with a democratic ethos or not."[19] The question that whether Europe's engagement with the region is contributing to the democratization process itself became a question of whether enough is being done to create a public space for questioning and debating social and political challenges—a space indeed vital for any real democratization. Public debate and political participation are not, and should not be, limited to parliamentarian elections, but should also include other forms of engagements, such as "consultative forums," "citizens' juries," "townhall meetings," and other forms of open debate involving the citizens. The recently proposed forms of involvements and debates are crucial for developing a democratic environment, particularly if they are linked with local and municipal governance.

When liberalism undermines democracy

Examining recent reports by European agencies involved in the promotion of democracy in Egypt, such as European Instrument for Democracy and Human Rights (EIDHR), reveals a disturbing trend and shows that strategies

employed by European governments tend to justify, and at least ignore, the antidemocratic actions of the autocratic Egyptian regime. Rather than using human rights and local democratic governance as a means to effect change, European governments opted to provide support to civil society organizations. Even here, the model for encouraging public participation was done half-heartedly and as a public relations effort, as the method of its implementation was twisted and steered away from its original goals. To begin with, promoting civil society organizations was introduced as part of the Association Agreement signed between the Egyptian government and the EU in 2004. The agreement was intended to link improved trade relations with democratic steps and programs that advance the democratic process in Egypt. The agreement was needed by both European government and Egypt, as public pressure on EU members to demand greater liberalization of Egyptian politics was mounting. The Association Agreement was operationalized in 2007 through a joint action plan under the name of European Neighborhood Policy (ENP). The promotion of democracy was articulated "as a set of arrangements that will foster public participation in the reform process, the objectives of which are defined in advance as 'catching up with globalization'."[20] After spending years negotiating and planning, the EU democracy promotion project boiled down to providing financial support to NGOs that were involved in marginal work that made no contribution whatsoever to improving social and political conditions for democratic practices. Nor did the EU democracy promotion project help Egyptian civil society to assume a more constructive role in enhancing human rights and free debate. One example of the programs sponsored by EU focused on "combating the culture of police officers' impunity in a context marked with four decades of entrenched authoritarianism."[21] The program consisted of training sessions conducted by El-Nadim for the rehabilitation of victims of violence. The project involved contestations of torture practices not revealed by its proper name, including

> challenging of official reports about deaths in detention centres, the public defaming of police officers accused of practicing torture, and using institutions like the office of the Prosecutor General to contest governmental reports on the status of prisons and detention centres.[22]

In light of this meager approach to democracy promotion, one is tempted to take a cynical view of the exercise as an effort to appease the critics of trade relations with the antidemocratic regime of Mubarak. Yet the fiasco of promoting democracy would be better explained by the priority European officials gave to the liberal component of the democratic process. At the heart of this meager policy outcome is a deep conviction, enforced by the limited historical horizons of the Enlightenment, that not only liberal values but European liberalism itself—that is, the way liberal values manifest themselves

in European liberal society and culture—is the standard of any democratic order. Liberalism has increasingly taken to modern European culture—with its disdain for traditional religiosity and faith in transcendence—as the universal truth of modernization. No avenue is allowed for different paths to modernity, particularly as the modern West continues to be the embodiment of science, technology, and progress. The overconfidence of liberalism as the embodiment of modern secularism makes it unable and unwilling to engage political movements whose mode of thinking is pre-secularist, which automatically translates in the secular liberal mind as premodern. This association of modernism with European culture has biased Western advocates of liberalism against even Islamic movements and parties committed to democracy and human rights, and strangely brought them closer to autocratic Arab "secularists," as their lifestyle and discourse become the standards for separating the liberals from the authoritarians. Autocratic Arab elites, who use their "modern" and "secular" image to gain the trust and support of Western democrats, are very adept at providing a persuasive aura of secular modernism and use their modernist discourse to hide their autocracy and oppression and present their brutality as a necessary "toughness" employed for the secularization of Arab societies. Arab tyrants have succeeded in advancing their favorite narrative that all Islamic reformists are prone to terrorism, and so suppressing them is a necessary evil to fight terrorism. The narrative has been internalized by generations of Western policymakers, many of whom know little about the history of the struggle for democracy in the Arab world. Adding to the confusion is that the category "Islamist" contains different strands of movements from the most extremist and intolerant to many Muslim democrats who see the need to ground democracy in Islamic rationalism.

There is therefore an urgent need to replace the European cultural model with a value-based model of democracy by making commitment to pluralism and human rights the cornerstone for sorting out real from fraudulent claims of democracy. This new criterion is already part of the European Commission mandate, but somehow it has not been operationalized in the way it was intended when it comes to Muslim society. The Commission is tasked specifically to promote "activities relating to the EU guidelines on human rights issues and strengthening of civil society."[23] Fulfilling this role would require a shift from focusing on the procedural elements of democracy to paying attention to the process of governance as the relationship that channels the interactions among citizens and provides safe zone for free debates that define social priority. Democratic governance must grow around the protection of fundamental human rights. The tension between liberalism and democracy is observable today in Western society, and the attitude of "we know what is best for you" has creeped into Western governance, as neoliberals who now run both the economy and government seem dismissive of ideas that challenge their particular view of democracy and globalization. Pace identifies in

her study the prejudicial tendency that makes European observers overlook democratic processes at work in the Middle East and support "particular conception of democracy."[24]

There is another form of blind spot that leads some contemporary Western liberal democrats to confuse conflict at the early stage of the formation of democracy with polarization and breakdown in sociopolitical structures. The Islam-secularism polarity in Muslim societies is very healthy for developing a viable democratic order, provided that outside observers stay calm and allow the democratic process to work out differences and engage in compromises. The Tunisian, Moroccan, and Turkish experimentations in democracy are good examples. The democratic process is still rough, but democratic governance in those countries provides a better and more democratic alternative to secular authoritarianism that continues to generate failed states. Turkey has experienced setbacks lately in the area of human rights, but these were the results of external interferences aimed at overthrowing an elected government in a fashion not dissimilar to the coup that ended Egypt's flirtation with an elected form of government. The political dynamics under Mohamed Morsi of Egypt was for sure worrisome, particularly in the domination of political institutions by Islamists. But democracies are better at balancing out forces and generating positive dynamics than authoritarian rule. Waiting until the opposition is completely radicalized has always ended in the emergence of rogue states, ruled by elites that are not easy to reorient to democratic rule. Arab and Muslim dictators who lead corrupt governments in the name of secularism do not encourage an already skeptical population to embrace secular politics. Instead, they strengthen those who stand against the arbitrary rule of unaccountable generals, regardless of the type of ideology they have.

The advocates of secularism in Europe repeat the same mistakes of Middle Eastern rulers when they try to shame immigrant communities into accepting their wholesale rejection of Islamic practices as backward and hence unworthy of European citizens. While raising issues about the statements and actions harmful to social peace is important and necessary, rejection of Islam is often based on generalizations, misinterpretations, and unfounded assumptions and is not helpful because it completely ignores the larger context in which the immigrant community is left unprotected, as for example in relation to "institutional racism" that generates rebellious attitudes among Muslim youth. This point has been brought to the fore by Maajid Nawaz, a British Muslim who sought the warmth of peer group by joining Hizb ut-Tahrir after experiencing what was later condemned as institutional racism from the police department of his community. Nawaz's reference to "institutional racism," acknowledged by the Macpherson Report in 1999 that described metropolitan London police practices as such in the context of examining the conditions that led to his radicalization.[25] Nawaz's account of his radicalization was provided in a book he coauthored with Sam Harris and was published in 2017 under the title *Islam and the Future of Tolerance*. Nawaz

explained his state of mind, when he decided at the tender age of 17 to join the Islamist group. Interestingly, he located the process that led to his decision in a global context:

> when we in the West failed to intervene in the Bosnian genocide, some Muslims became radicalized; when we did intervene in Afghanistan and Iraq, more Muslims became radicalized; when we failed to intervene in Syria, many more Muslims became radicalized.[26]

Harris, who is Nawaz's interlocutor in the book, provides a concentric-circles imagery of the diversity of Muslim community, in which he places the Islamic State, al-Qaeda, al-Shabab, Boko Haram at the center, then all kind of Islamists in the larger circle, and finally what Harris calls "so-called moderate Muslims" in the largest circle.[27] Nawaz unhesitatingly agrees with the sketch drawn by Harris and provides a precise definition of the first two categories, "jihadism" and "Islamism," leaving the "moderate Muslims" with no particular definition. By Islamism he subsumes all individuals and groups who have "the desire to impose any given interpretation of Islam on society," and by jihadism he means those who believe in the "use of force to spread Islamism."[28]

The book that documents the dialogue between Harris and Nawaz examines an important issue, captured by its title, *Islam and the Future of Tolerance.* The interlocutors are public intellectuals who are active in this particular debate across the North Atlantic and come from completely different backgrounds, which makes the book more interesting. Harris is born into a Jewish family but evidently has deep doubts in all religions, while Nawaz is a Muslim who comes from an immigrant family and who came of age in the years of Islamophobia and violent extremism. Both are trying to pin down the structure and causes of what appears to be an intractable conflict. Yet the debate remained too narrow to make broader sense of whether the future promises greater tolerance or intolerance. Nawaz tries in several parts of the book to broaden the context of the debate, but he had to return to questions that focused on European Muslim immigrants. Harris's obvious lack of appreciation of the complexity of modern Muslim society did not help in setting the dialogue in the right direction. The concentric-circles sketch that we just talked about is a good example to illustrate this point. The sketch is so misleading to the general readers as to leave them with the impression that jihadist groups are at the center of contemporary Muslim experience. To understand the distortive effect of this schematic presentation of Islam to a general audience, made by two public intellectuals who spend their daily life speaking to curious audiences and who write to the general readers about the reality of contemporary Islam, one needs only to imagine someone trying to portray to Muslim audience the political expression of Christianity by placing the Ku Klux Klan at the center of society and the Christian right at the larger circle and "moderate" Christians at the largest

circle. Similarly, Nawaz's definitions are not that helpful, although he tries elsewhere to push back against the reductionist attempts by Harris to portray Islam and Muslims. His use of Islamism, for instance, is problematic as the definition denotes a specific strand of this broader category. Only a small segment of Islamists call for the imposition of their interpretations of sharia on society. These strands consist of politically exclusivist movements and regimes, such Hizb al-Tahrir and various fundamentalist groups. The term Islamist is repeatedly used by Western intellectuals to refer, in addition to the above groups, to political movements that appeal to Islamic values and concepts to mobilize Muslims against authoritarian governments and to support political parties that call for pluralist and democratic governance. Yet, despite the limiting and distortive schematic of the concentric circles, Nawaz makes sure to dispel the confusion between Islamism and traditional Islam. "Islam is a traditional religion like any other," Nawaz stresses, "replete with sects, denominations, and variant readings. But Islamism is the desire to impose any of those readings on society. It is commonly expressed as the desire to enforce a version of shari'ah as law."[29]

The secular as the framework for pluralism

Although the structure and the direction of the arguments remain overtly restrictive as Harris contemplates the possibility of toleration and the future of Islam, Nawaz manages to bring serval insights that highlight the source of intolerance as being manifested in several radical movements that speak in the name of Islam. While some Islamist groups reject democracy and advocate an archaic form of government that once prevailed under the dynastic rule, Islamic reformers have appealed to the shura[30] principle which calls for grounding political legitimacy on the community consent and have therefore embraced democratic governance. Nawaz challenges Harris's generalizations about Muslim beliefs and practices, affirming the prevalence of "a strong reform strand within US Muslim discourse, and it may be that most American Muslims support it."[31] He also acknowledged the development of strong democratic and liberal voices among Islamist movements in the Arab world, citing al-Nahda as an example for an Islam-inspired movement that has adopted a more mature approach to post–Islamist politics.[32] Nawaz is fully aware of damage that can be done when secular approach is divorced from commitment to democracy, and like many who want to see democracy prevail in Muslim societies, he is disturbed by British secularists' call to sidestep democracy in order to impose the type of secularism that is peculiarly European. He is disturbed by liberals, whom he mockingly calls "fellow-travelers," who are bent on bringing the colonial divide–and–rule approach to British politics. "secular people may still reject a human rights discourse to a degree—a state of affairs that I would not be satisfied with," he exclaims. He then goes on to express his hope "that people will arrive not just at secularism, but also at democratic and human rights values."[33]

As a European Muslim, Nawaz is deeply challenged by the situation he finds himself in, as he and many young European Muslims have to fight on many fronts to overcome misunderstanding of Islam and Muslims and counter the campaigns of misinformation sponsored by different European groups, particularly far-right groups who seem intent on generating fear to provoke a backlash against Muslim immigrants. On the one hand, he feels the need to counter the narrative of British Muslim extremists who have become the mouthpiece of violent extremists in the Middle East, while he has to respond to white nationalists' attacks against Muslims. The latter present Muslims as uniform community with essentialized characteristics, never changing over time. He equally dreads the heavy burden of having to repeatedly distinguish his attitudes and beliefs from the fanatical expressions by overseas Muslims who lash out against the secularism they associated with the behavior of the autocratic regimes in the Middle Eastern societies. As a European Muslim who sees the importance of protecting the secular structure of government, he feels helpless when the dynamics in the Middle East seems to conspire against the drive to secular order:

> What you have raised is a real challenge. If I argue that the solution to Islamism and Muslim fundamentalism lies in encouraging pluralism, which leads to secularism, which leads to liberalism, then how do we de-stigmatize secularism when it has been so abused by Arab Ba'thist dictators? The stigma is so bad that there is not even an accurate word for secularism in Urdu. The word used is *la deeniyat*, which is derived from an Arabic term which means: "anti-religion." I've often suggested introducing *'almaaniyyah* into Urdu, which is a more neutral Arabic equivalent for the word secularism. The situation has deteriorated even more since the Arab Uprisings because democracy led to Islamists gaining a majority in Egypt, and this led to another secular Arab coup taking matters back to square one.[34]

Undoubtedly, Arab secularists have given secularism a bad name in the Arab world, but this has not ended the struggle to resuscitate a form of secular tradition in which the Islamically grounded values of justice, equality, diversity, and religious freedom are interwoven to approximate a post-Islamist and post-secular space.

Nawaz is not alone in facing the predicament of being Muslim in Europe, as Muslim presence in Europe is seen as problematic by many Europeans who, for centuries, regarded Islam as the perfect "other." Europeans who are fazed by encountering Islam close to home come from all walks of life, as they include politicians like Sarrazin who would rather send Muslims to their exotic places outside Europe, where people could travel to see them as tourists as he cannot fathom encountering them in his neighborhood. They include journalists like the editors of Danish newspaper Jyllands-Posten who strongly believes everything is a fair game in a democracy and that insulting

the badgered Danish Muslim minority and trashing their religious symbols is how one can celebrate free speech. They occasionally include religious authorities, like the late Pope Benedict XVI, whose speech at the University of Regensburg has provoked a wide range of reactions and broad debate about the responsibility of the head of the Catholic church. Those controversies elicited intellectual debate about issues of pluralism, tolerance, free speech, and globalization. The scholarly debates on these and similar issues were often framed in terms of the question of pluralism and the right to free speech, as they raised concerns about the presence of Islam in Europe and the ability of European Muslims to fit in a secular society. The discussions soon galvanized around questions as to how to transform the beliefs of European Muslims and later escalated to discussions about how to transform Islam and whether the Qur'an is an appropriate text for the modern age.[35] Although these experiences remain at the margin and are not indicative of the European society in general, they raise serious concerns in the absence of sufficient exposure to the experience of mainstream Western Muslims. The recent presence of Islam in the West is yet to be seen as an opportunity to overcome the rising tensions and contradictions between Muslim and Western understanding of one another. In a globalizing world that seems in a dire need to transcend historically founded antagonism, Western Muslims could play a vital and productive role in bridging the divide and enriching both Muslim and Western self-perception and understanding.

Migration from Muslim societies to the West is not new, as Muslim immigrants began to show up in Europe, and particularly the Americas, as early as the turn of the twentieth century. Early Muslim immigrants blended in very easily, as they arrived prior the rise of Islamic consciousness in the second half of the twentieth century. Muslim migration escalated in the past three decades around the time Muslim secularists provoked a backlash from Muslims who felt that their religious identity is being challenged by Western liberal and socialist ideologies. While immigrants were already familiar with secularism, and were hoping to find respite in their new homes, a disenchanted Europe that has already announced the "death of god" was caught by surprise by the European Muslims' affirmation of their deep attachment to the God of Abraham that every secularist hardliner thought belonged to the premodern Europe. Adding to the confusion was the diversity of the views expressed by the new immigrants and the militancy of some of the loudest voices that openly condemned European secularism and called for the implementation of Islamic law in Europe. Muslim radicals, who were the recipients of Wahhabi Salafism's literalist interpretations of Islam, verbally attacked British society as racist and imperialist and were placed under the spotlight by British media. Anjem Choudary, a British born and educated Muslim of Indian origin, publicly attacked every political value that was sacred to modern Europe, including secularism, democracy, tolerance, and human rights. Responding with a reconciliatory statement that he made in February 2008, the Archbishop of Canterbury, Rowan Williams, acknowledged in this statement the sensitivity

of the public to the religious traditions of British Muslims by pointing out that "as a matter of fact certain provisions of sharia are already recognised in our society and under our law."[36] Rather than engaging in constructive debate that recognizes individuals and groups who genuinely reach out to Muslims, Choudary responded provocatively and aggressively insisting that sharia "has to be adopted wholesale" and insinuating that "it will come either by embracing Islam because it is the fastest growing religion in the country, or by an Islamic country conquering Britain or by elements embracing Islam and imposing it."[37] It was against this kind of rhetoric and bravado that Nawaz and other British Muslims set out to counter Muslim extremism. Choudary's insinuations, while remaining within the realm of legal free speech, added to the public confusion, and provided the far-right the material they need to "prove" that Islam is a threat to social peace and is contrary to the spirit of open societies. There was definitely a need for Muslim voices to counter this extremism and present the values and beliefs embraced by main stream Muslim communities.

The migration of Muslims who took their religion seriously added to the urgency to reexamine European secularism that began to gain currency as secularization penetrated deep into the social and religious zones that were once considered the private spaces where religion maintained some autonomy. The debate over the secular–religious boundaries gradually developed between the notion of the "secular" as a political principle to promote pluralism and the notion of "secularism" as a social ideology. Secularism is no more the principle of separation of the state and the church, as initially intended, but rather a political doctrine that "enforces a specific worldview, which can be considered a form of political authority in its own right."[38] The analysis of statements and actions by state authorities, particularly in France, revealed the true nature of modern secularism as the new religion with a distinctive set of doctrines used to make concrete judgments about appropriate beliefs and religious practices, with the secular elites claiming the authority to reinforce judgments loaded with moral and metaphysical claims. Muslim intellectuals' religious experiences were shaped by a discursive tradition that remained alive, even after it has lost a great deal of its early vigor. Intellectuals like Talal Asad, Mehdi Hasan, and Tariq Ramadan in Europe, or Abdullahi An-Na'im, Reza Aslan, Azizah al-Hibri, and Khaled Abou El Fadel in the United States, have problematized the notion of secularism as a purely political doctrine. The debate over what constitutes secularism has broadened in the past two decades to include other European and American intellectuals, including eminent philosophers such as Charles Taylor, John Rawls, and Jürgen Habermas. The radical voices, on the other hand, presented by those who are critical of Islam and Muslims show that a

> fundamental gap exists between "secular" Europeans and "religious" Muslims, and the depiction of Muslims as "defective" Europeans, with Muslims portrayed as less rational, less capable of separating knowledge

from belief and religion from politics, and less capable of valuing democracy, freedom of expression and gender equality.[39]

The French went even farther in the name of secularism to ban the wearing of scarf in schools and to push toward the integration of Muslim religious institutions into the French republic through the formation of religious boards, with little success.

There is today a robust debate about the need to redefine the "secular" and "secularism." Muslim intellectuals are not opposed to the secular nature of the state, as they appreciate its necessity for maintaining spheres of freedom in society and are already aware of its presence in the premodern Islamic society in the dynamics of voluntary communities of law (madhab) and the autonomous confessional communities (millet or dhimmi contracts). The "secular" was envisaged as a principle of tolerance that is necessary for maintaining religious and political pluralism, and it hence requires consensus based in rational discourse. Perhaps, it is in this understanding of the secular that Islamic and Western epistemes can engage in meaningful dialogue. Secularism as an ideology constructed by political elites and imposed on society without public discussion and consent is antidemocratic and should not be allowed to stand and take roots in intellectual discourse because its legitimation would culminate in the imposition of state-constructed doctrines on society and the rise of totalitarianism legitimatized by the majoritarian form of democracy.

The response of the French state to the Muslim affirmation of their religious practices was disingenuous and haphazard, lacking the seriousness of rational solutions that are true to the spirit of the liberal democratic tradition at the foundation of the modern French society. The response was to treat the religious edicts as an expression of "Islam in France" rather than a religious practice of French Muslims. It is true that some of the recent Muslim immigrants are not aware of French history that arouses that type of fear and anxiety among the French public. Many of the Muslim youth developed a rebellious attitude toward that state, as their families were marginalized and lacked good education and job opportunities. Combine this with the experience of racism and racial superiority expressed by public officials and police practices, and you have the ingredients for fueling the next disaster. The first clear outburst of youth anger took place in 2005 French riots that lasted for three weeks in the suburbs of Paris and in several French cities. A paper, authored by three French intellectuals in 2008, and was later published in 2009, identified the root of the problem in the following terms:

> [T]he urban riots of November 2005 paradoxically reveal on the one hand the success of the French republican model when it comes to teaching shared values and history, but on the other hand the failure of both the State, which has failed to translate into public policies the values it officially preaches, and the politico-administrative elites who are always keen to stress the benefits of "republican" principles while delivering little when it comes to opening up access to key positions of power.[40]

Muslim youth were not in this case rejecting the French values, but were only expressing their resentment over their state of marginalization. This willful neglect of an "alien" population is most vivid in France, but it could also be found in many European states. There is close proximation between the way events unfolded in France and notion of "political hysteria" introduced by the Hungarian historian Terry István Bibo. Bibo argues that when a community faced with issues that challenge its self-understanding it creates a "fictional problem" and endows it with meaning and symbols at the core of its sense of being and then restores its self-confidence by attempting to solve the fictional problem.[41] The political hysteria appears in France in the response of the state institutions to what is conceived as a failure to integrate French Muslims into French secularism. Rather than dealing with the "problem" through a rational approach grounded in the French values of free choice and moral autonomy, it created the fiction that the scarf is a symbol of women's oppression by male Muslims and proceeded to solve the problem as one of liberating Muslim women rather than imposing on them a lifestyle not of their choosing. The political hysteria here is the public act that for all practical purposes leads to denying the moral agency to women. This fiction is not difficult to refute when one finds that among the most powerful Muslim voices in the West today have been those of Muslim women asserting their religious values and providing excellent examples of leadership in protecting the liberal values of democracy, equality, and human rights. One could hardly describe Congresswomen Ilhan Omar, the progressive member of Congress, as oppressed. Omar, who wears a scarf, is an assertive political leader who is not shy to take bold positions as she fights for equality and human dignity on behalf of working-class Americans. The U.S. Congress had to change its standing rules to accommodate Omar's religious practice, as she was elected by her constituents in Minnesota to be their House representative. Nor can one call Ibtihaj Muhammad an oppressed Muslim woman, while she rose to represent the United States in the 2016 Olympic as member of the American fencing team. She helped her team win the Olympic brown medal wearing her scarf during competitions. There are of course plenty of cases of oppression within the Muslim communities across the world. But it is important to point out that the problems often stem from the conditions of poverty, the lack of proper education, and cultural traditions that have been misused from within. Islam and Islamic values have been a source of inspiration more often than not, and Muslim women in particular find in the sacred text a powerful resource to fight against cultural limitations.[42]

Political agendas and fearmongering

No one has contributed more to deepening the divide between the Muslim and Western communities than Bernard Lewis, who has frequently used his authority as public intellectual to advance a narrow political agenda. He is the darling of neoconservative intellectuals who are out to persuade the Western society that Islam and Western Muslims have one purpose in life,

namely to undermine Western achievements and facilitate Muslim invasion of Western society. And nobody has been more successful in fanning the fear against European and American Muslims than he did, because of the skills he cultivated as the last important figure in the classical European tradition of Orientalism. Unlike many who have been shouting in recent year "Muslims are at the gates," he is dispassionate and capable of presenting his ideas in seemingly balanced fashion. The balance though is not between various interpretations, or debates about certain facts, but rather a balance between facts and fictions and between what may count as reasonable interpretations and what is outrageous exaggerations. In an article he published in *The Atlantic* in 1990, titled "The Roots of Muslim Rage," he concocted the metaphor of "God is the head of the Islamic state" out of the figments of his imagination, asserting that Muslims believe that "God is in principle the sovereign, the supreme head of the Islamic state—and the Prophet and, after the Prophet, the caliphs are his vicegerents—then God as sovereign commands the army."[43] He then went on to explain the roots of the Muslim rage by citing the historical wars between Islam and Christendom, in which Muslims won some and lost some. The current rage however stems, he argues, from the fact that the "Muslim has suffered successive stages of defeat." From losing the competition to dominate the world, to losing control over national sovereignty, and finally losing the "mastery in his own house, from emancipated women and rebellious children." "The Muslim" that Lewis imagines is an ossified character incapable of developing over time, as he is fixated on fighting an eternal war with the Christian West, and feeling a constant pain ever since he received the final stroke from Western people who "emancipated women and rebellious children," in Muslim societies. The Muslim is so essentialized in this century-old story Lewis uses to explain the "roots of Muslim rage." He is so caught up in his fable that he could not even contemplate that the Muslim he is describing today might be the very emancipated child who rebelled against his father with European help, given the fact that this emancipation is supposedly a century old. This should be a sufficient time for the rebellious child to have grown and assumed leadership, then brought up a generation or two under the conditions of emancipation. The time must have come, even if you accept Lewis's story, that the angry father and husband has passed away and the rebellious children have grown up and are now in charge of their societies. The story is so unreal and shallow, and has many cracks and holes in it, but Lewis has told it perhaps too many times that he now believes it and does not have any more the urge to reexamine it.

Could there be any other factor that might explain the roots of the Muslim rage? Could Western imperialism be the root cause that may help explain the rage? Lewis considers this possibility only to dismiss it as an instance of Muslims' *unrealistic* expectations and as a sign of their refusal to play the game of imperialism. "Some Western powers, and in a sense Western civilization as a whole, have certainly been guilty of imperialism," Lewis conceded.[44] But

then he dismisses imperialism as a legitimate ground for justifying grievance, for this has always been the case with those who possessed power—Arab, Mongols, and Ottomans did it, and so why to stop it now? So what we have here is a clear case of "a clash of civilizations," between the Muslim civilization, eager to impose its religion as a superior form of religiosity, and Western civilization, represented by the United States. The rage Lewis presupposes comes from the naiveté of the followers of the Islamic civilization who accorded Christians and Jews a "degree of practical as well as theoretical tolerance rarely paralleled in the Christian world until the West adopted a measure of secularism in the late-seventeenth and eighteenth centuries" but now reject Western civilization because it stands for secularism. The Muslims have themselves to blame, because "Islam was never prepared, either in theory or in practice, to accord full equality to those who held other beliefs and practiced other forms of worship." Never mind that the comparison is faulty, as it suggests that Muslims do not appreciate Western democracy and are not themselves interested in adopting effective democratic rule where all citizens are treated equally. Lewis's narrative evidently suggests that there is no moral equivalency between historical Islamic and modern Western tolerance. Yet this depiction is at odds with his acknowledgment of the moral and political autonomy the Ottoman afforded to Christian and Jewish communities that were part of their empire. Not only did non-Muslim communities enjoyed the freedom of religion, but he also points out in the same article that Christians and Jews "had separate organizations and ran their own affairs. They collected their own taxes and enforced their own laws."[45] The religious accommodation of non-Muslims was quite prioritized under the Ottoman rule that a question of placing a ban on alcohol in mixed gatherings raised a serious concern before the Ottoman judiciary as to "how to prevent the drinking of wine by Muslim guests at Christian and Jewish weddings. The simple and obvious solution—to impose the ban on alcohol on everyone—was apparently not considered."[46]

Bernard Lewis's writings in relation to Muslim society and history are both ahistorical and marked by sweeping generalizations and obvious contradictions, and his three main lines of thinking about the Middle East and foreign policy have been wholeheartedly embraced by neoconservatives: (1) Muslims hate the West because of their Islamic faith, (2) imperialism is necessary and inevitable, and (3) the tensions with Islam is the prelude to clash of civilizations. Being an academic who writes to inform the public and to provide a "balanced" understanding of an important region, he has gained great trust among a large section of politicians and political pundits. Aside from few public intellectuals like Edward Said, he had a relatively easy sailing in Western capitals, as he could always rely on the fact that most Westerners see no moral, intellectual, or historical connection with the mysterious and exotic Islamic culture. If anything, the most frightening metaphor, "the enemies are at the gate," is associated in the collective memories of Europeans with the Ottoman Empire's two attempts to penetrate Europe as its armies stood at

the gates of Vienna. When he told the German newspaper Die Welt in 2004 that projections of current population growth show that "Europe will have a Moslem majority by the end of the twenty-first century at the latest" and that "Europe will be part of the Arab west—the Maghreb,"[47] he made quite an impact on Europeans. And when a year later the French youth of Arab and African background rioted in protest of racist police practices, "the British Spectator portrayed a giant crescent looming over a map of western Europe, under the headline "Eurabian Nightmare.""[48] Lewis of course was grounding his arguments on the fact that the low European birthrates made Europe dependent on migrations to ensure that its economies and living standards do not suffer similar decline. But the integration of Arab and African migrants into Europe since the end of WWII did not change the European demography to an alarming level that requires putting everyone in a panic mode and raising the specter of "Eurabia." After all European Muslims constitute less than 4.9% after half a century of high migrations.

Lewis's insinuation that Europe is soon to be overwhelmed by Muslims, or that Arabs are bound to remain in the state of paralysis for the next century, were music to the ears of members of the far-right and ultranationalists, who found in the talk of "Eurabia" an excellent moment to rebuke a "Godless" Europe for opening the door to Muslims and to condemn the liberals for taking the Enlightenment route to modernity. George Weigel, for instance, chastised Europeans for being tolerant and nonjudgmental, reminding them that these moral values are not sufficient without the help of the Christian faith which they need to sustain the population growth and stem out Muslim migration. He was not simply speaking to Europeans but sending a warning shot across the Atlantic to his religious base.[49] Weigel was not the first conservative thinker to use Islam to take Europe back to its Christian faith, as if faith is the result of a competition with the religious other. Another leading French intellectual, Hilaire Belloc, expressed the same idea with harsher words. Not only did he regret the European rational tradition rooted in the Enlightenment, he also regretted that the Crusaders did not take over Damascus after they wiped out Muslims from Jerusalem. "The story must not be neglected by any modern," he proclaims in 1937, "who may think in error that the East has finally fallen before the West, that Islam is now enslaved—to our political and economic power at any rate if not to our philosophy."[50] He then goes on to state: "Islam essentially survives, and Islam would not have survived had the Crusade made good its hold upon the essential point of Damascus."[51] Other conservatives used Islam to denounce the liberals and the left, as did G. K. Chesterton in his novel *The Flying Inn* or has more recently been done by Douglas Murray in his work, *The Strange Death of Europe*. It is quite interesting that Chesterton was worried, as early as the turn of the twentieth century, that England's secular elites might "delude themselves into seeing Islam as progressive: they see it as intellectual and rational rather than ritualistic, and (appealing to their own prohibitionist creed) it is militantly anti-alcohol."[52] Chesterton made sure that his novel concludes with

Britain's succumbing to Islam and the banning of alcohol under the rule of Islamic law. He, like many who willfully use Islam to push their own agendas, believed strongly in the power of fear.

Undoubtedly, the introduction of Islam into Western cultures has stirred a powerful debate that could potentially liberate Western society of its fear, as it could also help Muslim societies to come into good terms with the West. The violence that defined the Islam-West relations need not be perpetuated. The debate does not even take place between Muslims and non-Muslims, but it is part of larger debates that involve individuals and groups who take multiple positions on issues of individual rights, privileges, racism, governance, social justice, democracy, secularism, and globalization. These are important issues not only about the future of Western democracy but also about the world that continues to shrink, forcing various cultures and religions to face each other in an increasingly smaller moral, intellectual, and political spaces. What is at stake in the debate is the exercise of power in the new brave world in which decisions taken in Washington, London, Moscow, and Beijing have far-reaching consequences worldwide. What is troubling though about some of the questions raised is the lack of imagination and intellectual depth in the way they are framed. The coldness and cruelty of Bello's expression of the problem, for example, is more than shocking. Granted that the Muslim world has many issues that deserve attention, but a critical analysis of the way some Muslims understand and live their faith is necessary as much as their actions are of consequence to their society and the world at large. Yet the way by which Bello addresses Muslim issues is troubling. He is obviously aware of the dire conditions in Muslim societies as he does not shy away from expressing them in the most egregious terms as he acknowledges "that the East has finally fallen before the West, that Islam is now enslaved to our political and economic power at any rate if not to our philosophy." Bello knew very well that as he complained to his audience about the mischiefs of Islam, most Muslim societies were under the colonial rule of European powers. He did not see this as an opportunity to transcend the past, as many Muslim leaders and intellectuals have opened up to Western democracies and were busy transforming their societies by embracing the democratic form of government and by introducing modern sciences and philosophies to their schools and universities. Yet neither Bello nor Chesterton seemed to have a good understanding of Islam or Muslim societies and history. The latter is dead wrong in his assumption that Islam outlawed alcohol purely by resorting to law enforcement. The low consumption of alcohol in Muslim societies was religiously inspired, and the ban on its sale was limited to areas with Muslim majority. But there were always spaces where people could buy and consume alcohol if they chose to, as Islamic law respected the choice of communities where alcohol was not prohibited, such as Christian villages and neighborhoods. We saw earlier how Ottoman courts rejected government suggestions of extending prohibition of alcohol into Christian and Jewish spaces to prevent Muslims from gaining access to it. We also saw in Chapter 3 how

Shaybani, the renowned Hanafi judge of the eighth century, refused to honor the demands by Muslim zealots that their Christian neighbors be banned from producing alcohol or raising pigs, placing the rights of non-Muslims ahead of Muslim sensibilities.

Neoconservatism and the specter of American imperialism

No political group has in the past four decades promoted American imperialism and fanned the flames of clash of civilizations like the neoconservative pundits and actors did. There are very few American political leaders and elected officials who espouse neoconservatism, as the hardcore values of this political ideology are at odds with core American values. Promoting imperialism and bashing people for their religious beliefs are not natural to a society that has defined itself in religious idealism and in opposition to European imperialism and was founded by religious migrants who came to the new world in order to escape religious persecution and intolerance of the old world. After all, the United States was founded by settlers whose political unity was forged in the struggle against British imperialism. There were stretches of times when both conservatives and liberals could make the case for "good" imperialism, in eighteenth-century Europe. Despite their ideological differences, both Edmund Burke and James Mill agreed that imperialism was a noble enterprise forged to promote the best interests of both the colonized and colonizers. Such self-delusion has become nonsensical after the American revolution, so that every American leader has to justify any imperial adventure by provoking liberalism and liberal values. Neoconservatives could downplay the evil of imperialism when talking to social elites with realist language, but they always made sure to sugarcoat their imperialist adventures with allusions to national interests, human rights, and the best interests of the conquered populations. Yet the fact that a political movement such as the neoconservatives could be judged as un-American when stripped down to its basic tenets but could still flourish in the highest echelons of power is a testament to its sophistication and cunningness. Neoconservatives skillfully built on the narrative advanced by Bernard Lewis, as they started to promote their militaristic vision during the Reagan administration and then perfected their narrative during G. W. Bush administration, as he drew closer to the White House. The rise of militant Islamic groups served them well, as they enhanced Lewis's interpretations of Islamic history and doctrines that gave them more ammunition to upgrade the verbal attacks against Muslims. The militant Muslims whose understanding was shaped in the Saudi social and cultural environment, which was hostile to any religious forms that do not fit with its cultural traditions, provided the "proof" they needed to showcase their plan for remaking of the Middle East and for producing what Condoleezza Rice called "The New Middle East." The framework upon which neoconservatism stood was complete: the doctrine of good imperialism that

benefitted both the conquered and the conqueror, the Islamic world await-
ing transformation, and the return of the Muslim warriors threatening with
a new round of invasions to control Western countries and the world and,
therefore, the urgent need to preempt this dreadful scenario.

The moment for implementing the plan came in an opportune moment,
as the terrorists attacked the United States on September 9, 2011. The neo-
conservatives now have the ears of George Bush, who was reluctant to agree
to their plan for the invasion of Iraq prior to 9/11. Lacking popular support,
they could now depend on the support of "prominent Christian evangelicals
like Gary Bauer, Jerry Falwell, Ralph Reed, and Pat Robertson, as well as
Dick Armey and Tom DeLay, former majority leaders in the House of Rep-
resentatives."[53] The neoconservatives could now rely on the backing of the
evangelical leaders, with whom they shared the commitment to support Is-
rael, and they well knew that the latter "believe Israel's rebirth is part of Bib-
lical prophecy, support its expansionist agenda, and think pressuring Israel is
contrary to God's will."[54] The combination of these two groups formed what
two leading political scientists at Harvard's Kennedy School, John J. Mear-
sheimer and Stephen M. Walt, called the Israel Lobby. Mearsheimer and Walt
startled their academic community and the Washington establishment with
their unprecedented critical review of the impact of the "Israel Lobby on US
Foreign Policy." The critical paper was published as part of Kennedy School
of Government's Faculty Research Working Paper Series in 2006 after the
invasion of Iraq was already turning very messy. The invasion reshaped the
Middle East in the opposite direction of its intended goals, as Iraq was reduced
to a failed state, creating a power vacuum that could only be filled by Iran and
violent extremist forces. Yet despite the detailed critique of the Israel lobby,
a great opportunity was missed to have a public debate on a question of vital
interest for global peace, which received a powerful testimony in the paper's
claims. The paper highlighted many examples of the Israel Lobby's influence,
showing how well-placed members of the neoconservatives in the govern-
ment, media, and key think-tanks that cooperated to produce the promised
success that turned into a fiasco. To intimidate professors not willing to toe
the line, Martin Kramer and Daniel Pipes, two passionately pro-Israel neo-
conservatives, "established a website (Campus Watch) that posted dossiers on
suspect academics and encouraged students to report comments or events that
might be considered hostile to Israel."[55] Secretary of Defense Collins Powell
came under intense pressure from neoconservative pundits, namely Robert
Kagan and William Kristol, to ensure his cooperation. Both neoconserv-
ative pundits censured Powell and claimed that he "virtually obliterated the
distinction between terrorists and those fighting terrorists."[56] Bush himself
came under pressure from evangelical leaders in Congress, including Tom
DeLay, Dick Armey, and Trent Lott, who stressed the need to support Is-
rael. Mearsheimer and Walt rejected as false claim that the work of the Israel
Lobby reflects the support of the American Jewish community, citing a Pew
research report that revealed that close to 60% of American Jews were against

the Iraq war.[57] Bernard Lewis jumped in to offer both his knowledge of the region and his creative imagination and predictive power to persuade any reluctant decision-maker, as he visited the president and vice president, along with two other neoconservatives who have direct access to both—Scooter Libby and Paul Wolfowitz—to "urge them to undertake a preventive war to topple Saddam."[58] The rest is history, as Iraq war adventure and the painful reality it fostered is for all of us to see. The neoconservative dream to change the Middle East region to a pro-American democratic area has become a nightmare that will haunt both the region and all those who aided in pursuing a faulty dream grounded in deception and the lust for power.

Meanwhile, the neoconservative adventure moves far away from the Middle East, as it carries on in the United States and Europe. In the name of liberating the Jews and fighting anti-Semitism, pro-Israel organizations advance anti-Muslim propaganda based on innuendo and generalization, confusing the American public about their fellow American Muslims. Omid Safi, a progressive Muslim and an American professor of Asian and Middle Eastern Studies at Duke University, shares his personal experience with the neoconservative attacks on American Muslims in a new book titled *Muslims and Jews in America*.[59] The attack took the form of a hateful propaganda that arrived in his mail box in the form of a free DVD titled "Obsession: Radical Islam's War against the West," and distributed in September 2008 as part of the *New York Times'* Sunday edition.[60] The DVD featured well-known anti-Muslim voices in the United States, such as Caroline Glick, a member of the Israel On Campus Coalition, and Daniel Pipes, the director of the pro-Israel Middle East Forum and the founder of the Campus Watch program. The propaganda DVD was based on generalizations, half-truths, and insinuations, including the claim that the violence that takes place "in Iraq, Palestine, Chechnya, and Iran present a global Muslim conspiracy against Israel and 'The West'" and that "Radical Islam is intricately linked to destroying the state of Israel."[61] Among the key experts paraded as an eyewitness to the subversive nature of Islam and of those who are faithful to the Islamic tradition is Walid Shoebat, whose expertise stemmed from his claims of being a repentant Islamic terrorist, who under instruction from Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) bombed an Israeli bank. His claims were dismissed by the CNN investigative report and the *Jerusalem Post*.[62] Among the claims made by Shoebat was that "Obama is a Muslim.… The Arabic speaking communities in America, however, do indeed support Osama bin Laden and Hamas.… Islam is not the religion of God—Islam is the devil."[63] In responding to question about the solution to the Palestinian-Israeli conflict, he provided a preposterous solution: "Tear down the Dome of the Rock, and re-establish Solomon's Temple on the Temple Mount."[64] What is disturbing in the presence of someone like Shoebat in such hateful propaganda is not only the level of hate that he spews but also the fabrication of stories with the intention to harm. The DVD was produced by the Clarion Fund, an organization headed by Raphael Shore, a member of a Jewish Israeli missionary group called Aish HaTorah.[65] When

the Clarion Fund failed to find distributors for its hatful DVD, as no distributor was willing to publicize a hate-filled propaganda, it turned to the Endowment for Middle East Truth (EMET), which through its close connections with the powerful Republican Policy Committee, facilitated the distribution of the DVD through *The New York Times*.[66]

Muslim migrants came to the West escaping poverty and oppression, as the postcolonial Muslim governments established tyrannical rule under the guise of republicanism. They came to stand on their feet but found themselves marching in support of the human rights of their fellow Muslims suffering under the colonial rule and oppressive regimes throughout the Muslim-majority countries, drawn either by their Islamic values or by their identity. In the West they found the freedom they lost under forced secularization strategies and rediscovered their voices and their true ideals and values. Palestinian rights become their rallying cry, and their courageous voices and familiar narratives awakened the transcendental values of young Jews who gradually became the voice of Palestinian sufferings under occupation, including American Jews who grew up in a country that never persecuted them but rather reinforced the transcendental idealism that has been deeply ingrained in them. Equality of people is a self-evident truth for many young Americans; they feel it deep in their heart and see it affirmed in the founding documents of their country. The American founding values of "life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness" are deeply rooted in the transcendental idealism of Jews, Christians, and Muslims and well-grounded in the monotheistic metanarrative they all learned as they read the same stories about the prophetic struggles and sacrifices to assert human dignity and equality. The Manifesto of If-Not-Now, a leading Jewish organization fighting for Palestinian rights, makes this point clear:

> Just as Moses was commanded to return to Egypt and fight for the liberation of his people, we too feel called to take responsibility for the future of our community. We know the liberation of our Jewish community is bound up in the liberation of all people, particularly those in Israel and Palestine.[67]

Such powerful voices that rose in defense of shared human dignity began to counter the pro-occupation propaganda machinery that still sees the world through the lens of nineteenth-century Europe and in the fever of national exclusivism that mistakenly aligned its security policies with national power and not with human rights and international cooperation.

Notes

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29 Ibid, 18.

30 Shura is an Arabic term that means consultation and is a term used in Qur'an as an important quality of the faithful.

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9 Globalization and its discontents

Globalization is a long process of convergence among different cultures and societies, not only in the areas of trade and technology but also in the areas of politics and cultural expectations. Globalization as a modernization process is rooted in the Enlightenment, but as a purposive rational process it is rooted in intellectualism and the growth of moral autonomy and enhanced scientific capacity that predate the modern West. Global trade, cultural pluralism, and institutionalized science are not new experiences in world history; what is new is the degree of systematization and institutionalization of the transcendental ideals that characterized human civilization for the last millennium. This progress went through several moments of convergence and divergence, and the world once again faces a moment of uncertainty as both the forces of cooperation and clash are at work since the turn of the twenty-first century. There are powerful sociopolitical forces at work who have serious doubts about the capacity of diverse peoples to cooperate beyond immediate religious affiliations or national identities. As we saw over the previous eight chapters, religion and national identities are powerful factors in shaping human society, but more powerful are social movements that transcend the limits of geography and history. In this chapter we begin by examining the inner transformations of the liberal tradition in the United States under the influence of post–WWII political realism that has contributed to transforming classical liberalism that was once the hallmark of the American political culture to neorealism and neoliberalism. We then examine the two major responses to market globalism and assess their issues and purposes, focusing particularly on three movements: neo-fundamentalism, ethnic nationalism, and liberal progressivism.

Managing history and manipulating modernization

Globalization is a historical process that aims at achieving worldwide cooperation among societies of diverse cultures and religions. This cooperation is becoming increasingly necessary for interdependent humanity. The only way to ensure that an interconnected global society remains an ordered place is to make sure that people have positive attitudes toward such an eventuality

and that they recognize the elements of global governance as reasonably fair and beneficial. The challenge for the political liberal order lies in its ability to both advance shared interests of those who engage in it and maintain respect of the religious and cultural choices of those who come under its influence. As we saw in previous chapters, liberalism has been guilty of anti-liberal and anti-democratic practices both outside and within Western society. Most recently the discontent with liberalism grew in Western society for reasons that relate to both the ideological and practical aspects of liberalism. Understanding those aspects that have produced an ever-increasing discontent is the purpose of this chapter. We focus on exploring the sources and dynamics of the growing discontent, which initially took the form of an Islamically self-referenced violent extremism, but has since assumed other forms, including the rise of white nationalism in Western societies and the increased opposition to neoliberal market globalization by several global justice movements. This anti-liberalism discontent has generated a lively and promising debate that aims at reorienting liberal economic thinking to precisely address its tendencies to create social hierarchy and political imposition. We will return to discuss various ideas that aim at the institutionalization of a more inclusive pluralist order that can accommodate religious and ideological diversity in the next chapter, but for now we examine the roots of global discontent and its sociopolitical forces.

One may argue that the increased failing of liberalism lies in the human folly and the imperfect nature of human society. This argument is not without merit, as corruption and degradation have always been an intrinsic part of social organization, making sociopolitical reform and renewal an ever-present demand. Yet we can still point out some of the flaws that are either causing or accelerating the level of discontent, most notably the long-held conviction that political leaders of advanced societies can engineer and build societies and nations by imposing a liberal order from without. The idea that nations can be effectively managed from the outside and that liberal societies can be developed by supporting dictators is at the core of the current challenge. People can be inspired to be free, but they can never be forced to be free. Freedom is a spontaneous act that stems from human nature and conditions, and the natural reaction of people is to reject and rebel against any external imposition or to succumb to it and to lose confidence in their personal worth and abilities. Both of these reactions are contrary to developing liberal experiences and societies. Societies are living entities that are so complex and intricate to be managed in accordance with a blueprint put together by outsiders no matter how smart and well-intending they may be. No nation or confederation of nations can be managed by outsiders, particularly if these outsiders have no faith in the capacity of the managed people to rise to the challenge. If the past has taught us anything it should be that a sustained effort to manage other nations through imposition and manipulation will corrupt the political leaders in charge of such manipulation, and they will soon use the same repressive and manipulative strategy at home

against their own liberal societies. This point has come time and again in earlier chapters, but we turn in this chapter to further examine the impact of the "managing history" approach on the liberal West. The argument, of course, is not that we must helplessly watch things unfold around us without any action or plan on our part. Neither does it mean that those who have institutionalized knowledge and power should not intervene to help others to develop their societies and realize a higher political and social order. That would be neither rational nor moral, but rather a cynical self-centeredness. However, in order to intervene in support of a social order characterized as "liberal" and "democratic," we could only engage and support social groups in pursuit of the underlying values that allow a liberally democratic society to flourish. The argument is rather that we have to realize that a good society that nurtures rational, ethical, and humane order is in a state of becoming and that such process must be generated from within. The argument is that liberal and democratic values require significant time for their realization and that the democratic processes rely mainly on the inner tensions of society. To support the social outcome of the rational pursuits of liberty, equality, and democracy, we must nurture those values and support those who practice them. And if those values that are supported by nonreligious activists in one society and religious activists in another then we should support those activists who uphold liberal and democratic values regardless of their religious and metaphysical orientation.

The West has for long time, but more intensely in the past century, tried to shape Muslim societies in general, and Middle Eastern societies in particular, not by promoting a set of political values that guarantee democracy and protect human rights but by superimposing the European modernization experience on developing societies along the lines proposed by modernization theory, even if that meant empowering dictators to do the job. The century-long efforts to manage the Middle East has created the most oppressive, undemocratic, and inhumane political conditions anywhere in the world. As we noted in Chapter 1, the first coup in the Middle East that took place in 1957 in Syria was orchestrated by the U.S. Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) to bring down the first democratically elected government in the Near East. Six years later, the United Kingdom's MI16 in collaboration with the CIA toppled another Middle Eastern government in 1953, again a government that was also freely elected. This time the coup d'état took place in Iran, and the target was the duly elected Prime Minister Mohammad Mosaddegh, who was a popular leader and strong believer in secular democratic governance. The coup details became known through documents that were declassified in 2013, and the CIA acknowledged its role in the coup as part of its "foreign policy initiative."[1] Mosaddegh was a progressive Iranian leader who led a secular democratic government that was committed to land reform in the then primarily agrarian society. His government initiated social security system, increased tax on the upper class, and undertaken the nationalization of the Iranian oil industry. This industry was built

in 1913 by the Anglo-Persian Oil Company (APOC), a British company we know it today as the British Petroleum (BP). These interventions were done in the imperial spirit of Europe and in pursuit of the national interests of the two North Atlantic nations without regard to the interests and the future of the Iranian people. Even more disturbing, the U.S. government brought Mohammad Reza Shah to power after the coup, and he governed as an absolute monarch until he was deposed by the Iranian revolution, that empowered Iranian clerical class rather than the Iranian people. Although Western liberal democracy always justified its foreign policy in reference to liberal values and goals, the approach was grounded in political realism that justified the most unethical practices in the name of realpolitik. American realists have convinced themselves and the public at large of the legitimacy of their anti-liberal foreign policy by using sophisticated theories that rejected liberal and democratic values as irrelevant to foreign policy and international relations.

   Regardless of ideology, theory, and intentions, the reality of the Middle East is increasingly shaped by contradictory aims and goals that have led to the deterioration of the sociopolitical conditions of the region, thereby arresting the declared efforts of pursuing liberal democracy. Secularism and liberalism have become synonymous with imposition and corruption at the popular level of Middle Eastern society, as every authoritarian and tyrannical regime in the region is associated with these labels and supported by world powers. Secularism is no more associated in the popular imaginary with liberty, equality, and human rights but is often equated with the police states that rule Arab society and the aloof and disengaging political elites and with political and administrative corruption. Even modernization theory proponents, who evidently were very much interested in the modernization of Arab and Middle Eastern societies, justified supporting Arab Junta and autocrats, thereby favoring order over democratization in the name of creating an Arab culture that is a carbon copy of that of the West. This, however, changed with the advent of neoconservative politics, with new emphasis on nation-building and social engineering. With the rise of terrorism committed by violent extremists who hijacked Islam and used it to justify violence against their adversaries. By the turn of the twenty-first century, it became very obvious that the policy of keeping Middle Easterners in check by empowering autocrats had imposed a terrible cost not only for Muslim societies but the entire globe. This realization was interestingly announced by George W. Bush in his remarks at the 20th Anniversary of the National Endowment for Democracy in 2002, few months after the invasion of Iraq.

   Sixty years of Western nations excusing and accommodating the lack of freedom in the Middle East did nothing to make us safe—because in the long run, stability cannot be purchased at the expense of liberty. As long as the Middle East remains a place where freedom does not flourish, it will remain a place of stagnation, resentment, and violence ready

for export. And with the spread of weapons that can bring catastrophic harm to our country and to our friends, it would be reckless to accept the status quo.[2]

He went on to emphasize the need to support the new strategy with the "same persistence, energy, and idealism we have shown before." Yet, a decade later, the Obama administration decided to end its support of the first democratically elected government of Mohamed Morsi, and the Egyptian military that has been trained and financed by the United States moved quickly to abort the new experimentation in democracy. Undoubtedly, the election did not bring liberal democrats to power, as Islamists dominated the parliament. Yet hardly a year lapsed before the Obama administration run out of patience and gave up on advancing democracy in Egypt. There was plenty of room to maneuver and apply pressures to allow the system to balance itself out. For while the Islamists maintained control over the parliament and the presidency, the state was still under the control of the military. The military government, despite promises of holding new free and fair elections, invoked more tyrannical rules and clamped down hard on freedom of speech, rolling back the little achievements made during Mubarak regime who controlled the state up until the Arab Spring. The return of military rule under a new military strongman underscores the moral hazard of managing the world by a committee, and it will be as harmful and counterproductive over time as were the efforts of the Soviet to run the Soviet Empire by politburo.

Global jihadism and its tyrannical roots

Radical Islamic groups emerged in the past four decades as a force to be reckoned with on a global scale. The early manifestations of jihadist movements took place in military-style attacks that took the life of Anwar Sadat who signed the first peace treaty with Israel in 1979. The assassination operation was run by a young military officer who was member of a radical group that later came to be known as the Islamic Group (al-Gama'a al-Islamiyya), a shadowy organization that drew membership from radical civilian and military Islamists. The Islamic Group was an off-shoot of another radical group known as the Egyptian Islamic Jihad (EIJ), which was formed by Ayman Zawahiri, the Egyptian medical doctor who was radicalized during his imprisonment under Nasser regime.[3] Jamal Abdul Nasser, who ruled Egypt with iron fist from 1952 to 1970, dissolved all political parties and reigned in the Muslim Brotherhood (MB) that opposed his dictatorial rule. Zawahiri was rounded up during a crackdown on the MB following a failed attempt to assassinate Nasser. The MB was implicated in the assassination, and thousands of MB members, many of whom were in their early 20s, were sent to prison. Influenced by the ideas of Said Qutb, who was himself imprisoned and later executed, radicalized MB members split with the mother organization upon

their release from prison and quickly adopted a radical strategy that called for the complete rejection of all social groups associated with what they depicted as corrupt secularism and with the political structure that sustained it.[4] The Muslim Group that led the assassination was established in the early 1970s by Shukri Mustafa, an MB veteran who served several years in prison during Nasser's regime.[5] The group was responsible for the kidnaping and murder of Shaikh Husayn al-Dhahabi, then Egypt's Minister of *Awqaf* (religious affairs). The group's leadership as well as 400 of its members were arrested after a bloody confrontation with government forces. On March 19, 1979, Shukri Mustafa, along with other members, was executed.[6] The best insight into the extremist ideology was articulated by Muhammad Abd al-Salam Faraj (1954–1982), the chief ideologue of the Egyptian Islamic Jihad, in a pamphlet titled *The Neglected Duty* (*al-Faridah al-Gha'ibah*). In this pamphlet, Faraj dismissed missionary work *(da'wa)* as an ineffective means for the transformation of the current Egyptian society into one governed by Islam and insisted that armed struggle should be the paramount method for this transformation:

> Some say that the right road to establishing an [Islamic] state is (nonviolent) preaching *(da'wa)* only, and the creation of a broad base. This does not bring about the foundation of an [Islamic] state. Those who make such argument use it as a basis for withdrawal from jihad. The truth is that an (Islamic) state can only be founded by a believing minority... Those who follow the straight path that is in accordance with the command of God and the example of the Apostle of God—may God's peace be upon him—are always the minority.[7]

Zawahiri left the EIJ in 1981 and moved to Afghanistan to join the Mujahidin Service Office that was established by Abdullah Azzam and became acquainted with Osama Bin Laden. Both founded the al-Qaeda, the notorious jihadi group that was supported then by the United States and Saudi Arabia. After two decades of collaboration with the U.S. and Saudi officials in a successful bid to dislodge the Soviet Union from Afghanistan and after spending few years in Sudan plotting against the Mubarak regime, Bin Laden and Zawahiri declared jihad against the West in 1998.[8] Shortly afterward, Osama bin Laden issued a fatwa that was published in the London-based Arabic newspaper *al-Quds al-Arabi* on February 23, 1998. The message of the fatwa was ominous and menacing as it provided a justification for killing civilians with no evident provocation or culpability.

> The ruling to kill the Americans and their allies—civilians and military—is an individual duty for every Muslim who can do it in any country where it is possible to do it, in order to liberate al-Aqsa Mosque and the holy mosques from their grip, and in order for their armies to move out of all the lands of Islam, defeated and unable to threaten any Muslim. This is in accordance with the words of almighty God, "And

fights the pagans all together as they fight you all together," and "Fight them until there is no more oppression [or tumult] and there prevails justice and faith in God."[9]

Bin Laden's statement that explicitly called for targeting civilians and justified their killing is unprecedented in the history of Islamic theology and ethics. For traditionally, jurists understood that the term "pagan" in the Qur'an was made in relation to the Bedouin Arab pagans at the time of the Prophet who never honored any treaty they entered into or a promise they made with the Muslims. He of course was not a jurist and has no exposure to the scholarly works that a jurist must have. This model of dealing with perceived or real enemies is the hallmark of al-Qaeda and its affiliates. The new model would be extended later by al-Qaeda in Mesopotamia to all adversaries— Christian, Muslim, or otherwise—creating one of the most vicious religious organization worldwide. The same model was used in Algeria by the GIA extremists in the 1980s, though no formal fatwa was announced, but many suspected that militant Islamic organizations that split up from al-Qaeda have acquired a license to kill civilians by their own extremist religious leaders.

In August 1998, in the same year the fatwa was issued, al-Qaeda carried out the bombing attacks on August 7 at the U.S. embassies in Nairobi, Kenya, and Dar es Salaam, Tanzania, killing more than 200 people and injuring more than 5,000 others. Three years later, terrorists struck the Twin Towers in New York and the Pentagon in Washington, DC. Nineteen young Arabs committed the largest, most startling and horrific terrorist attacks, prompting the largest coordinated and expansive campaign against Bin Laden's brain-child brand of terrorism. This did not stop terrorism operations by Islamic extremists against civilians. On December 22, 2001, passengers on American Airlines Flight 63 from Paris to Miami foiled a terrorist attempt to detonate explosives packed into the shoes of Richard Reid, a British national. A year later, terrorist bombings took place in a tourist district in Bali, Indonesia, on October 12, 2002, and in Mombasa, Kenya, on November 28. Al-Qaeda claimed responsibility for Mombasa attacks while the Associated Press reported on October 13, 2003 that the attackers confessed of receiving support from al-Qaeda to cover the cost of the operation. On March 11, 2004, al-Qaeda affiliates carried another devastating attack on train in Madrid, Spain, that claimed the lives of 191 passengers.[10]

Al-Qaeda attacks did not exclusively target Westerners. A series of terrorist operations were carried out in 2003, targeting civilians in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia (May 12 and November 8), Casablanca (May 16), and Istanbul (November 20). These attacks killed 136 civilians and injured close to 1,000. The Mesopotamia branch of al-Qaeda established by Abu Musab al-Zarqawi, which became known later as the Islamic State in Iraq, started an open offensive on the Shiite community, claiming the lives of tens of thousands in random car bombs and suicide operations that did not even spare children, women, and elderly. Terrorist attacks have declined in Western countries

after years of intensive campaign at a great financial cost, but terrorism and the call for revenge have not. Al-Qaeda and its ideology have gathered more power in the past two decades in many countries, including Pakistan, Nigeria, Yemen, Lebanon, Iraq, Syria, and Jordan. The cost of maintaining international security is staggering. Between 2002 and 2020, the war on terrorism cost the United States alone around two-and-a-half trillion ($2,407 billion), and the U.S. national debt more than quadrupled since 9/11. Still, violent extremist individuals and groups increased over the same period and the threat of terrorism has not been eliminated. At the core of the failure to effectively combat terrorism is a flawed strategy that relied excessively on the use of military force, while neglecting to deal with the root causes behind the spike in terrorism in the past three decades.

The root causes of terrorism are several and complex, but the most serious of them relates to the increase in repression and violence of autocratic regimes in the Middle East. These corrupt regimes that could only survive by the support of Western democracies manipulate and suppress their populations in the name of promoting secular liberalism. The paradox becomes evident and striking as soon as we realize that the anti-democratic and anti-liberal conditions that continue to breed extremist ideologies are perpetuated by the greatest liberal democracies of Europe and the United States, which unashamedly support Arab and Muslim authoritarian regimes. The failure of Western intelligentsia and policymakers to recognize this liberal paradox is tragic, because it overlooks the very strategic actions at work in undermining the liberal democratic order. As a result, Western powers have not developed any comprehensive strategy but continue to treat terrorism primarily as a security issue, even though there is a general awareness that terrorism originates within marginalized, oppressed, and alienated communities. Take for instance Philippe Errera of the French Foreign Ministry, who identifies three categories, or "circles," of individuals and groups who pose threat to Europe: (1) Al-Qaeda and its affiliates; (2) Islamist groups involved in nationalist struggle in Kashmir, Chechnya, or Lebanon; and (3) "freelance jihadists." Errera claims that the last group is the biggest and most dangerous. The "freelance jihadists" can be either, according to Errera, Islamist terrorist groups or individuals, based anywhere in the world, including various Western societies, who may or may not be inspired by Bin Laden and may have no direct connection with the al-Qaeda network. While no one knows for sure how many "freelance jihadists" are here in Europe, Errera argues that they have become radicalized in a relatively short span of time and then act without orders and explicit training.[11] Robert S. Leiken, director of the Immigration and National Security Program at the Nixon Center, offers a different categorization by dividing terrorists into "insiders," made of alienated citizens, second- or third-generation immigrants, "who were born and bred under European liberalism," and aliens, who "gained refuge in liberal Europe from crackdowns against Islamists in the Middle East."[12] Because both the "insiders" and the "outsiders" belong to the growing Muslim community

in Europe, Leiken, who represents the more conservative voices in Western political spectrum, did not miss the chance to blame this mess on multiculturalism. "Multiculturalism was once the hallmark of Europe's cultural liberalism," Leiken exclaims, "which the British columnist John O'Sullivan defined as 'free[dom] from irksome traditional moral customs and cultural restraints.' But when multiculturalism is perceived to coddle terrorism, liberalism parts company."[13] The above descriptions are shrouded in mystery, and little is done to expose the source of this sense of alienation or the connection of terrorism to the autocratic rule in Arab societies.

What makes the "management" of the Middle East more interesting for the distant observer, and more tragic to the people who happened to be at the receiving end of U.S. foreign policy, is that the approach to the region, its future, and its long-term ramifications are far from being clear or consistent. American and European leaders are for sure worried about Israel and its citizens. They are also worried about minority rights. But they do not seem to appreciate the increased interconnectedness of the world and the impact of what is being done today on subsequent developments in Arab societies and their long-term ramifications. Here is what the author of *The Islamic Paradox*, Reuel Gerecht, observes:

> One may legitimately wonder whether either Democrats or Republicans, too, really want to push human rights and democracy in the region. Understanding the nexus between 9/11 and tyranny is one thing, constantly cajoling and arm-twisting Middle Eastern dictators and kings to liberalize another. The menace of al Qaeda has substantially deepened the liaison relationships between the Intelligence Agency and the security and intelligence services in the Muslim world, especially with those of Egypt, Saudi Arabia, and Pakistan, the three states whose domestic politics, religious organizations, and foreign policies were critical to the development of bin Laden's holy-warrior terrorism.[14]

The above passage refers of course to the collaboration between the United States and the three Middle Eastern countries in managing the aftermath of the Soviet withdrawal from Afghanistan and the power struggle that ensued among tribes and ethnicities for the control of the government. The solution was to enlist members of Taliban as soldiers in the fight to subdue the rivaling Mujahideen. Taliban, a word used in reference to students, were the young Afghans who grew up in refugee camps in Pakistan and were educated in literalist Salafi doctrines by Saudi religious teachers. The Salafi approach is anti-rationalist, originally developed to fight religious "innovations," and is not particularly tolerant toward the follower of other religions, even toward Muslims who follow different interpretations of the Islamic scriptures, or those who are indifferent to their religious obligations. The Taliban indeed helped solve the inner fighting among Afghan factions but created more serious complications, as they struggled to impose their narrow and literalist

interpretations of Islam on society. The "truths" they were taught by their Wahhabi teachers were derived from a literalist and ahistorical understanding of the Islamic religious tradition.[15]

   The liberal paradox we outlined above is rooted in the transformation of international relations thinking and theories that took place in the post–WWII era. While American political thinking is rooted in classical liberalism, American foreign policy elites were schooled in political realism, as they have internalized the imperial European approach to international politics and its imperialist impulse. Heavyweight foreign policy strategists, such as Brzezinski or Kissinger, are not bothered by autocrats and tyrants of the Middle East and not even by Bin Laden. Brzezinski refused to connect the dots that link tyranny and terror and saw "bin Laden and al Qaeda as isolated in time, products of the Soviet-Afghan war, not an evolving decades-old movement of Sunni militancy that has become ever more lethal and anti-Western under the Middle East's post–World War II dictatorships."[16] He nonetheless saw the connection between the rise of Islamic militancy and the failure of the U.S. government to end the Palestinian suffering. Kissinger is similarly cautious against the fast development of democracy in Middle Eastern countries like Iraq, even though he was fine with its invasion by North Atlantic armies, for he had his doubt that "a secular middle class [which] can emerge strong enough to insist on full representative democracy."[17] This is a case of the cynical realist's dismissal of the possibility of democracy and human rights emerging quickly in the Middle East, despite the fact that the region experienced democratic rule as early as 1919 in Egypt and 1949 in Syria and Lebanon; there were clearer voices sounding the alarm on staying the course of supporting authoritarian regimes, such as that of Daniel Benjamin, the director for counterterrorism in the National Security Council, during the Clinton administration. He insisted in *The Age of Sacred Terror* that democratization is key to fighting terrorism in the Middle East.[18]

Violent outbursts of the far right and Islamist extremism

Violent outbursts fermented by jihadist and extremist groups have two common denominators: They have been undertaken by individuals who have (1) internalized simplistic and exclusivist religious interpretations of Islam or (2) have experienced political oppression and marginalization under tyrannical regimes that do not allow free debates to challenge misguided ideas and beliefs. Much of the exclusivist interpretations of Islam grew in Saudi religious institutions that have advanced literalist Salafism shaped by the tribal experience of East Arabia. The Saudi Salafism was developed in a tribal social environment, informed by the reformist ideas of Muhammad Bin Abd al-Wahab (1703–1792), whose teachings were intended to remove deviations from original principles of the faith. His teachings survived in the preaching of his family Āl al-Shaikh (House of Shaikh) that entered into partnership with the Saud family (House of Saud) that ruled East Arabia from the eighteenth

century until the Arab revolution that brought down the Ottoman Empire in 1919. The House of Saud expanded their rule to the entire Arabian Peninsula in 1924, with the acquiescence of the British government under Stanley Baldwin, who wanted to end the power of the Hashemite Kingdom in Western Arabia as the old allies became an obstacle for the colonial design for the region.[19] The House of Saud used their newly founded wealth in the 1970s to expand their brand of Islamic religious doctrines worldwide, investing heavily in religious training. Estimates of Saudi investment in madrassa and support of their preachers run around $10 billion.[20] The Saudi government invested heavily in the Afghan Jihad against the Soviets, with the encouragement and collaboration of the United States, and later in the development of Taliban and al-Qaeda in order to regain control over Afghan factions. "Even after the government ended its financial support of Qaeda that was controlled by Ben Laden, the Qaeda in Iraq continued to raise millions of dollars annually from Saudi sources."[21]

The invasion of Iraq gave great boost to jihadist groups, as Iraq was turned into a failed state by the end of 2002. As the U.S. and European forces expanded their operation against the al-Qaeda forces as they mutated into the Islamic State in Iraq and later in Iraq and Syria (ISIS), al-Qaeda began to expand its operations first to Asia and Africa, before they moved to Europe and United States. Al-Qaeda and ISIS found pockets of support in Western countries, mainly among marginalized European Muslims and to lesser extent among American Muslims who became involved in terrorism against their adopted countries. Soon terrorism became the preferred tool among extremist groups who wanted to influence the Western strategic positioning in the Middle East. Jihadist groups mushroomed ever since the 2002 invasion of Iraq, as their number skyrocketed to over 150 groups affiliated with ISIS and al-Qaeda, according to a list updated regularly by the United Nations Security Council.[22] The majority of terrorist attacks took place in Muslim countries, as 75% of all terrorist deaths reported in 2015 occurred in Afghanistan, Iraq, Nigeria, Pakistan, and Syria. Four of the five countries have been part of the "war on terror" campaign initiated by the Bush administration in 2002.[23] The most publicized terrorism attacks undertaken by Muslim violent extremists, however, took place in Western countries, including the 9/11 attacks on New York and Washington, DC, that were followed by meticulously orchestrated terrorist operations in London, New York, Madrid, and Germany.

Violence in the name of religious or national heritage is not an exclusive brand of Islamist extremists, as it has been rampant for a while in Western society. While one may argue that it was reawakened by Islamist extremism, it for sure predates the rise of jihadism and violence in the name of Islam in the 1980s. Attacks by far-right extremists far exceed in numbers those committed by Islamist extremists. Between 2012 and 2016, far-right extremists committed 130 violent incidents in the United States, United Kingdom, Germany, France, and Australia. Fewer violent incidents (84 attacks) were

committed by Islamist extremists in the same countries.[24] Yet none of the right-wing attacks were classified as terrorist by both law enforcement and media organizations. Anders Breivik, a far-right extremist who committed one of the most heinous terrorist attacks by shooting 77 civilians in 2011 was never identified as terrorist, and media outlets referred to him as "killer" and "murderer."[25] The list of terrorist incidents involving far-right extremists is quite long and includes such cases as the "Munich shooting of July 2016, the Quebec City mosque shooting of January 2017, the Portland train stabbing of May 2017, vehicle attacks in Finsbury Park in June 2017 and in Charlottesville in august 2017 were all far-right-inspired incidents."[26] Far-right terrorists have gone so far as to target elected officials who were supporting the rights of members of ethnic and religious minorities in their districts. Thomas Mair, a far-right extremist, shot Helen Jo Cox in 2016, a member of the British Parliament. Cox was actively pursuing a European solution that would not take Bashar Assad off the hook, even though the Syrian dictator was responsible for the death of over half-a-million Syrians. She cosponsored a legislation calling for the creation of civilian safe havens in Syria, arguing for finding an "ethical solution to the conflict" and advocating combatting Assad's "indiscriminate barrel bombs."[27] She understood better than most of her parliamentarian colleagues the connection between terrorism and tyranny, as she rejected a single-minded focus on terrorism that plays in favor of keeping the very system that invigorates terrorism in place. She articulated her views in an article published in the *Huffington Post* in which she insisted that "I have long argued that ISIS and Assad are not separate problems to be chosen between, but are action and reaction, cause and symptom, chicken and egg, impossible to untangle no matter how much we might like to."[28] She went on to caution against reversing the priority of sound political reasoning. "The thing I am most concerned about and which in my view will most change the conflict dynamic is the protection of civilians," Cox stressed, "particularly from Assad's indiscriminate barrel bombs. This is relegated to second order status in the strategy, underdeveloped and unthought out. It is a fatal flaw in the strategy."[29]

It is still a mystery as to why Thomas Mair assassinated Cox, as he remained silent throughout his trial, uttering one sentence in response to a question during his trial to identify himself: "death to traitors, freedom for Britain." When Kester Aspden, an investigative journalist, communicated with Mair in an attempt to find out the reasons for this senseless murder, the prison censor blocked Mair's response letter, citing the need for "the protection of the reputation of others" as the ground for the censorship.[30] So we may not know much about the reasons other than placing Mair's violent act in the context of silencing a brave politician who cared more about the people than geostrategic calculations. Assad for the far-right is a useful dictator who is willing to kill his own people, and he is from the vantage point of those who thrive on hatred and bigotry a useful idiot who should be supported and protected. Mair's extremist views stem from a sense of racial

superiority and disdain for non-white immigrants. While he never developed the capacity to articulate his views, he took it upon himself to enforce views of the leaders of the ethnic nationalist movement and to act on his hatred against citizens who do not share with him his race and worldview. Mair is simply a foot soldier in the far-right movement and has been at the receiving end of ideas promoted by seasoned ideologues and articulated with eloquence and vigor; ideologues like Robert Spencer and Pamela Geller in the United States, and Geert Wilders and Andrew Anglin do the heavy lifting to keep the movement going. Spencer and Geller portray Western Muslims in general, and American Muslims in particular, as a fifth column who want to subvert American democracy. The far-right strategy has been to engage in religious and racial wars of words, in the hope that these verbal wars may develop to shooting wars between Islam and the West. Spencer has, for example, taken it upon himself to prove that the Qur'an is behind the surge in global terrorism and compares the sacred book of Islam to Hitler's *Mein Kampf.* Anglin has taken an even more preposterous stance against European Muslims and immigrants in general. He founded in 2013 a neo-Nazi website to recycle racist propaganda called Der Stürmer, which he named after the Nazi's leading newspaper. His goal is to turn the clock back to a time when Europe was a white continent and to do that he seems to be willing to declare war on non-white Europeans. He went as far as to warn white Europeans to choose between two scenarios: "the restoration of the European man" or "his complete annihilation and replacement with non-white savages predominantly driven by Islam."[31]

An important strategy used by the far right is to blur the lines between Islamist extremists and Western Muslims who observe their religious traditions, and Muslims in general, charging that the extremists are the "good" Muslims who follow the Islamic faith, while law-abiding Muslims who contribute to the betterment of society are the "bad" Muslims, and that when they choose to follow their faith and become good Muslims, they will resemble the extremists. These absurd arguments, though false and built on prejudice, has found listening ears in the times of fear and uncertainty. In making such cynical arguments, far-right agitators hope to capitalize on the public ignorance of Islam and on the prejudice generated by news that only bring Islam when it reports violence and terrorism. The voices of ignorance and hate are still marginal in Western societies, but have been moving gradually to the center, capitalizing on faulty strategies in dealing with the Middle East. Zachary Shore, in a book titled *Breeding Bin Ladens*, stresses the need for new American and European strategies to reverse the radicalization trajectory so as to prevent them from becoming "incubation ground for breeding Bin Ladens."[32] Shore sets out to understand anti-Americanism, as he acknowledges the presence of Muslim fanatics who harbor irrational hatred toward America. He however contends that Islamist extremists are small in number in proportion to most Muslims who do not have similar feelings.[33] Interviews he conducted among European Muslims reveal a state of ambivalence

toward America shared by a "second circle" of Muslims who do not harbor ideological hatred but seem to be torn between what they see as imperialist strategical approach embraced by the United States and European countries in dealing with the Middle East and their admiration of the free and open society of the liberal–democratic West. He estimates that up to 40% of German Muslims believe that "Zionism, the European Union, and the United States threaten Islam."[34] Many European Muslims, Shore argues, are critical of certain aspects of Western culture, particularly what they perceive as the "lack of social justice, consumerism, sexualization of women, and putatively hypocritical foreign policies."[35]

Shore recognizes that the Muslims he investigated have a sophisticated approach to assessing the complex relationships they have with the societies they live in, and many of them are able to "hold their conflicting opinions of the United States in a precarious balance," but they continue to be challenged by the dynamic situation they find themselves in. Western Muslims are confronted with a combination of three factors at work: the violence and extremism that shape the views of their countrymen, the efforts of far-right groups to marginalize them through inflammatory publications and anti–Muslim legislations, and by being constantly bombarded with the news of beleaguered Muslims in India, China, and Palestine.[36] These tensions are particularly hard on first and second generations of Muslims growing in the West, for they know that in order to maintain their self–respect and exercise their civic duties they must speak out against political excesses and respond to false representations of their religion. While they have been able to express their values in the United States freely, they face greater challenges in Europe, where social prejudice against Islam is more pronounced and where Muslims are marginalized and face mounting pressures. This is particularly difficult in countries like Germany where up until recently a citizenship was preserved only to people of German ancestry and was not easily given on the evidence of birth. The political activism and participation in the multiparty system by German–born Muslims began to impact the system and resulted in a legislation, in 2000, that eased restrictive naturalization requirements, for German–born who lived and worked continuously in Germany.

In attempting to predict the future impact on the growth of European and American Muslim populations, Shore points to the future of welfare system in Europe, interethnic relations, and the Muslims' impact on Western foreign policy toward the Middle East and the Israeli–Palestinian conflict. Interestingly though, he sees the impact as negative, resulting in the rise of poverty as a consequence of privatization of public services, the rise of ethnocentrism, and ethnic and religious tensions, and that it would lead to greater divergence between American and European positions toward Israel.[37] These speculative conclusions, played out as extrapolations from current conditions, can be easily replaced with a more confident view of the future if one only deliberates on the deeper values that have always been at the core of Islam. Such negativity and pessimism have been at play in the minds of many, partly because of

misrepresentation of Islamic values and beliefs, presenting them as intolerant and domineering. It can be argued that European Muslims provide a greater hope for smoother navigation of globalization, as the world is moving slowly but steadily into a multipolar global order, as Huntington predicts. Europe is gradually entering into global conditions that require a better sense of recognition of positive dimensions in non-European cultures and a higher capacity of adjustment. While European political and scientific achievements should rightly be a source of pride for many Europeans, they speak to the work values and moral commitments of the West rather than racial superiority and hierarchical view of humanity that are at the heart of the internal tensions and divisions experienced recently among segments of European society.

The assumptions that led to the pessimistic picture drawn by Shore are based on a misunderstanding of Islamic values and a misreading of the political dynamics in the Middle East. Although Shore seems to have the right intensions in illustrating why integration of Muslim in Europe is important, and what could happen if these necessary efforts to achieve this goal were never undertaken, his arguments underestimate the capacity of immigrants to make positive improvements under more equitable conditions. His arguments ignore, for example, the fact that, like Judaism and Christianity, Islam is rooted in the monotheistic tradition, and that it played historically a crucial role in grounding monotheistic values in a rational tradition. His arguments are completely oblivious to the power of a faith that emphasizes agency and equal dignity to uplift the conditions of the migrant community when it is given the opportunity to prove itself.

Rather than depending on welfare, given the opportunities Western Muslims would contribute to institutional welfare grounded in civil society rather than the state. Similarly, the assumption of rising ethnic and religious tensions because of the growing presence of European Muslims is based on the extrapolation from the extremist outbursts on both the Islamist and far-right extremists. The far-right and Islamist extremism represents the fringe elements of Christian and Muslim Europeans and are both symptoms of wrong-headed political and economic priorities set by neoliberal politics as well as wrong-headed foreign policies in the Middle East. The majority of Muslims are supportive of a political solution to the Israeli–Palestinian conflict on the basis of recognition of Palestinian rights and equal human rights and dignity for both Jews and Palestinians. This is the main contention today between those who support a political system in Israel that is truly reflective of the liberal values of equality, freedom, and justice and those who advocate an exclusivist and hierarchical social order in which Palestinians are reduced to an underclass. A lively debate on these issues is of great benefits for everyone involved in this conflict. An open, rational, and fare system is the only amicable solution to the conflict that has literally drained out the United States financially and morally.

In concluding his book, *Breeding Bin Ladens*, Shore urged against succumbing to the old imperial dictum "the only language they understand is force,"

which is frequently invoked in dealing with Muslim protests against solutions imposed by Western powers that ignore the human rights and dignities of indigenous populations. In responding to William Bennet's "the strong horse" intended to rebuke the demands for looking into root causes of terrorism, Shore makes an opposite plea:

> The United States has demonstrated overwhelming force in Iraq, proving itself the strong horse. Yet many Iraqis sided with the weak horse, attacking U.S. soldiers on a daily basis. The Israelis have tried strong-horse tactics for decades, yet Palestinian resistance continued unabated, ending in the Israeli pull-out from southern Lebanon and later from Gaza. Bennett is wrong that people will pick the strong horse every time. He may be correct that poverty is not a sufficient root cause of terrorism, at least as far as Al Qaeda's leadership is concerned. But to ignore root causes is as foolhardy as to suggest that America is attacked because of what it does right.[38]

William Bennett, former secretary of education under Ronald Reagan, and the author of *The Book of Virtues* (1993), became the voice of virtue among conservatives, and his book became a bestseller for 88 weeks. In rejecting any discussion of root causes, he adopted an absolutist moralism that only judges individual actions through the criteria of "right and wrong and good and evil."[39] What is astonishing about his moral position is that it is anchored in instrumentalist rather than purposive rationality. That is, it is a tool to justify a community and defend it against its critics, rather than a system of values one needs to evaluate practical actions. His rejection of examining the root causes of terrorism is predicated on the assertion that the value of an action has nothing to do with its impact on the economic or psychological well-being of those at the receiving end of a particular action or policy. "Bad actions, wrong actions, even evil actions," he contends, "have nothing to do with economics, poverty, wealth, or any other artificial construct any more than good actions do."[40] From Bennett's vantage point, right and wrong are rooted in the virtues of the actor and not in how their act affects other human beings. If someone is virtuous then they do not need to care how others view their behavior and what are the consequences of their actions. This type of aristocratic virtues masquerading as morality belong to ancient Greece, in which the virtuous aristocrats have no issues in reducing two-third of Athenian population into slavery and still feel that they act according to the dictates of an ethical life. It is the type of morality that justifies the use of force to keep other human beings in their place, not on the ground of equal dignity of all but on the basis of inequality of power. Indeed, Bennett goes on to counsel the use of the language of force favored by the imperialist mindset by suggesting that "[y]ou show people a strong horse, and you show them a weak horse, and they will pick the strong horse every time—if they can still pick at all."[41] This is not an argument for morality but rather for show-off

and brutality. The brutality of this form of virtuous life could not be hidden by a metaphor borrowed from the world of gambling to which Bennett was addicted even after the publication of his *Book of Virtue*.[42]

Identity politics and protest movements

Advancing a political order predicated on the ethics of virtue is no joke, for this approach to morality, and to politics grounded in moral judgment, is what is at stake today. The ability of Western democracies to develop a powerful political order that surpassed all forms of political systems is grounded in the belief that all human beings share equal dignity. The principle of equal dignity was born in the monotheistic traditions rooted in the Abrahamic faith and was given its rational grounding in the writings of rational idealism that grew within Islamic civilization as we saw in Chapters 4 and 5. Failing to see the evolution of modern morality and to equivocate its historical roots can lead highly educated and achieving thinkers like Bennett to attempt to ground their ethical thinking in Greek philosophy alone, paying little respect to human dignity and the demand for equality. While we should reject terrorism in all its shapes and forms, we have the obligation to examine the political and social conditions that drive young people to choose suicidal ideologies to justify their existence. Insisting on the self-righteousness of one's action, while ignoring its negative impact on the life of others, is a recipe for disaster, not only because it is rationally absurd and historically wrong but also because it ignores the significance of equal dignity. Equal dignity lies today at the core of the demand for respect for group identity and the identity politics that threatens the stability and progress of Western society. Identity politics has risen to the surface in the second decade of the twenty-first century, in surprising and unpredictable ways, with the election of Donald Trump to the highest office in the United States and with Britain's fateful exit of the European Union. The implications of these developments are serious, as both represent diametric turns away from open society and international cooperation. Trump's election brought far-right politics to the center of American power and Brexit undermined the EU, the most impressive political development in the second half of the twentieth century. The rise of ethnic nationalism is not new in European politics, but to see it surging in the multicultural United States and the multinational Russian Federation is a wakeup call and serious blowback to liberal democracy. It is also worrying as it comes at a time when international cooperation has made remarkable advancements.

   Fukuyama offers psychological insights into the question of identity politics, attributing its rise to a built-up resentment by marginalized individuals and groups. The fact that it manifests itself now among individuals and movements that claim to represent majority ethnic groups, and not only minority groups, makes it more peculiar. One may suspect that national populist parties in Europe do exploit this resentment to advance their political fortune, but the size of their following and their arguments cannot be ignored.

Among the European leaders who seem to articulate the national populist concern is Victor Orban, the Hungarian Premier who advocates an "illiberal" form of democracy. Orban has been a critic of EU policies on issues of migration, human rights, culture, and national sovereignty. His views are close to those held by Trump and Putin, particularly in his disdain for globalization, international law, and international organizations, as he sees the greatest struggle worldwide between "the transnational elite—referred to as 'global'—and patriotic national elites."[43] This is the clearest summation of national populism that surged across Western democracies in the last five years. It is a protest against the direction of world history and a blame on liberal democracy. It is simply the struggle between nationalism and globalism. But before delving deeper to make sense of the grounds for such a turn of events, we need to make sense of the origin of identity politics in the very notion of identity founded on human dignity that was always at the heart of European Enlightenment.

Fukuyama struggles to analyze the significance of identity, searching for its intellectual roots, and finding it in the Platonic psychology and Lutheran inner faith. The concept derives from the conscious self, that is, from the individual's struggle to organize life around the principle of authentic self. The individual's awareness of the need to follow one's own values and inner demands and the conflict of such values and beliefs with the outer world. Luther's example is helpful as it highlights the tension effected by his monotheistic ethos which very much resembles Abraham's defiant stance and his utter rejection for idolatry. Fukuyama found a memorable moment in a more familiar history, which provides an equally powerful example of a historic breakout with the Roman Christian tradition. The story of Luther has some of the drama one could find in the story of Abraham, which makes it a powerful choice. Yet this is unfortunate choice, given the context in which the argument is made, since national populism emerged as a social force invigorated with ethnic solidarity to oppose a more inclusive political order. National populism rejects the universal arguments advanced by rational idealism to treat with dignity a diverse humanity, as idealism aspires to develop a fairer and more inclusive modern world.

Fukuyama rejects the economic interpretation of human nature rooted in the English philosophical tradition and articulated by neoliberal economists through the theory of rational choice. The assumption of the rational choice theory is that people as calculating rational beings strive to maximize their utility. He rightly asserts that utility can explain economic action but cannot explain a host of other actions, including the choice soldiers make to give up the very "vehicle" they need to have access to any sort of utility, by sacrificing their lives so that their countrymen would live in safety and liberty. There must be other things than the principle of "utility maximization" that drive individual action. Fukuyama finds in the Platonic psychology a system of ideas that could better explain human behavior, the notions of personal worth (*thymos*), the quest for glory (*megalothymia*), and the drive for equal

dignity (*isothymia*). For the Greeks, *thymos* represented the emotional aspect of the human soul that causes people to react angrily when others discount their contributions and ignore their sense of self-worth. It is the emotional state of human beings that gives them their pride and the part of the soul that is provoked when the individual dignity is breached by the actions of fellow human beings. Personal worth involves at one level material interests but cannot be reduced to economic transaction. Personal worth, or pride, can be experienced also in the political realm, and it is "the seat of today's identity politics."[44] The notion of personal worth (thymos) is associated in the democratic culture with the sense of equal dignity (*isothymia*) shared by all members of the political order, but, for the Greeks, it privileged the sense of pride associated with idea of glory (*megalothymia*), which is associated with the heroic acts of members of the aristocracy and the virtues they exhibited and, most importantly, courage and discipline. "Predemocratic societies," Fukuyama notes, "rested on a foundation of social hierarchy, so this belief in the inherent superiority of a certain class of people was fundamental to the maintenance of social order."[45] Evidently, it was in this notion of self-worth that European nationalism located individual dignity as a member of a nation or ethnicity that was superior in certain qualities to other nations and ethnicities. And it was the same attitude that we encounter in the statements and positions of liberal democrats, like James Mill, who justified European colonialism and the imposition of its cultural priorities on their colonies.

Although Fukuyama associates the great notion of isothymia with "equal dignity," he is aware that Greek ethics cannot easily fit modern ethics, as equal dignity did not have a universal application, in the manner it is used in modern society. He suggests that the notion of the inner self as the seat of authentic faith is the foundation of dignity and identifies the concept with Luther, "the first Western thinker to articulate and valorize the inner self over the external social being."[46] Luther's sense of identity remained, however, in the premodern world, as he did not recognize the full dignity of those who did not share with him his faith. To him the inner self that does not recognize God as the source of truth is not authentic. Yet his distinction between the inner self and the outer world allowed subsequent thinkers, such as Rousseau, who rejected the idea of the original sin, to affirm the original goodness of people in the state of nature. Unlike Hobbes who presented the state of nature as one of brutality and aggression, Rousseau identified it as possessing inherent qualities such as equality, cooperation, and peaceful coexistence, which were later corrupted by hierarchy and inequality. From Fukuyama's perspective, the idea of "state of nature" used by the Enlightenment thinkers was a proxy for the original state of human phycology and should be understood as "a metaphor for human nature; that is, the most basic characteristics of human beings that exist independently of one's particular society or culture."[47] This leads Fukuyama, following the argument of Charles Taylor, to assert that in Rousseau we find "the modern idea of identity." Rousseau's secularization of the inner self, and the priority he gives it over social convention, is thus a

critical steppingstone to the modern idea of identity, Fukuyama proclaims. Here again we can see the direct jump from the Greek idea of identity to the Reformation and then to the Enlightenment with the modern becomes evident in Rousseau's toleration of difference, which is the hallmark of modern form of identity. What is hidden from the Western view of the world is that the distinction between the inner self and outer self was first elaborated in the work of Harith al-Muhasibi in the eighth century and later in the work of Ghazali in the tenth century. Similarly, Luther's realization of his individual identity is nothing but the monotheistic ideals of rational agency and moral responsibility identified first in the Abrahamic faith, and rationalized later in Islamic rational idealism, before it was reaffirmed in the action of Luther. As we saw in Chapter 4, the recognition of non-Muslim identity as fully deserving of recognition began in the constitution of Medina and remained valid under sharia law until the late nineteenth century. Liberal democracy has taken moral autonomy and political institutionalization forward with the development of popular consent, separation of powers, and accountability of political leaders. These clear improvements worked very well in highly homogenous societies but seem to encounter new challenges in multi-cultural and multi-religious societies. The advance of neoliberal globalization and the weakening of state sovereignty have led to the rise of transnational social movements. The new political dynamics could potentially address distortions in power structures within the nation-state, produced by transnational economic interests of the ruling economic class. Identity politics is only one dimension of the struggle to regain national control over international commerce and the exportation of local jobs to emerging economies. However, for national efforts to succeed, they require addressing the changing structure of production, information, and regulation mechanisms that have practically moved from national to global institutions. Identity politics is indeed a symptom of a greater problem that involves global imbalances in wealth and power that continue to produce excess, manipulation, and corruption.

These new developments pose real challenges and require fresh thinking as to how the politics of identity can be overcome in ways that the fundamental liberal and democratic values can accommodate the realities of globalizing society. The debate has already taken a global dimension, thanks to protest movements that highlight growing injustices and contradictions in the dominant neoliberal order. We need to turn now to understand some of the grievances advanced by these movements and how they relate to the globalizing trends under late modernity (or postmodernity) conditions.

Anti-globalization and global protest movements

The politics of identity is a symptom of greater struggle for equal dignity and social justice precisely because economic and geopolitical interests are cloaked in cultural and religious façades. The neoliberal globalization is not simply an economic endeavor concerned with efficient production and

competitive prices; it is equally concerned with developing a consumer culture worldwide and national hierarchical networks of likeminded individuals across the globe. Neoliberal institutions are at work in coopting and training the new generations of entrepreneurs in Middle East countries and linking them to autocratic regimes that support the neoliberal policies. Neoliberal globalization has produced two different types of protest movements: anti-globalism movements, represented by national populism and the far right, and global protest movement whose aim is to balance out, or complement, capital globalization with global justice. Yet regardless of the position taken with regard to globalization, the three major social forces are working outside the nation-state framework. There is currently a great level of fluidity and uncertainty in the direction of the current struggle, given the fact that the highly organized and more efficient of the three forces derives its control from a global economic system that stands on the shaky ground of staggering corporate and government debts. The above characterization of the main division of social movements in relation to globalization allows us to transcend identity politics and help us in characterizing the type of politics generated by the above conflicts for what it really is—"politics of unity" and "politics of division"—or as Bice Maiguashca suggests—"politics of solidarity" and "politics of difference."[48] The politics of difference that manifested itself most recently in national populist movements is a remnant of the political realism that grew out of classical nationalism and therefore aims at manipulating "difference" to achieve supremacy, as it sees diversity and identity differences as a threat to the interests of the dominant identity and, in this case, the white identity. The politics of unity recognizes diversity of identities as a natural development brought about by Europe's willingness to expand culturally, economically, and politically into diverse humanity. The pushback against demands of equal dignity among all forms of social identity must therefore be viewed as an attempt to claim privilege and refuse to play by the same rules. As such, the politics of difference is a zero-sum game that sees the increase in the participation of groups of different identities as a loss for the privileges claimed by the dominant identity, and therefore it is willing to risk dividing society by adopting an ideology based on the Self-Other identifications and tensions. In a way, national populism is calling the citizens of liberal democracy to give up the liberal ideals of freedom, equality, and justice for a national identity defined in ethnic and religious terms.

Dividing the citizens of the liberal democratic state in ways that contradict its founding principle of equality of citizens is bad on its own, but when it is combined with economic and political actions grounded in the liberal order, such as those justified by neoliberal elites who advance policies that impoverish and destabilize African, Latin American, and Middle Eastern countries, it is bound to create a divisive and unsustainable local and global politics. The neonationalist networks that sprang in the heart of Europe are partly driven by a type of mobilization that aims at creating an "internal other" of Western citizens in an attempt to silence critical voices of anti-liberal and

anti-democratic policies implemented by neoliberal elites, in partnership with neoconservative activists who are willing to risk undermining liberal democracies in order to perpetuate autocratic regimes around the world that advance their narrow interests.[49] The national populist movement seems to respond to a new, and recurring, narrative that seeks to affirm the identity of a dominant social group in Western societies by othering the cultural and religious identities that characterize minority groups. The othering is central for creating a hierarchy of truth, in which it would be possible to deny those whose identity is expressed through a set of values and qualities that are deemed different from those of the dominant identity. By turning the struggle for a just and inclusive political order into struggle between ethnic and religious identities, the dominant holders of power can escape ethical and political scrutiny as they can identify themselves with one identity and use it to counter the demands of others. This is exactly the tactic preferred by political realists of "divide and rule," though this time it is turned inwardly, and it is in many ways analogous to the sectarian politics that plagued the premodern Europe and currently plagues Middle Eastern societies. In Lebanon, identity politics establish by the French colonial power in the first half of the twentieth century has degenerated lately into a state of misery and chaos, under which the most corrupt political leaders are assured of the support of their sectarian constituencies. The Lebanese state has practically collapsed as public services such as security, banking, electricity, and garbage collection are now in disarray, and despite the existence of a fairly liberal culture and democratic system, political leaders could not be held accountable, as they could always rely on the solidarity of those who share with them their sectarian identities.

Identity politics has indeed created a peculiar situation in which the populace in liberal democracy is divided around ethnic and religious identities instead of uniting to address the reasons behind rising economic inequality and figuring out how to deal with the domination of state institutions by special interests at odds with common good and public well-being. Above all, identity politics came down to the rising voices in Western democracies against excesses committed by neoliberal institutions like IMF and World Bank single-mindedly focused on advancing corporate interests or by neoconservatives and international realists obsessed with power and advancing geopolitical interests of Western powers at the expense of the dignity and well-being of the nations of the Global South. These actions have a direct impact on the well-being of nations of the Global North in a world that is becoming increasingly interconnected. ATTAC is one of those movements that emerged in the Global North in late 1990s in Paris to address injustice and excess inflected on the Global South. The movement built in less than a decade hundreds of offices throughout Europe and rejects the accusation leveled against it that it harbors anti-globalization agenda, insisting that it is an internationalist movement "in solidarity with the peoples of the South and committed to a better life for everyone."[50] ATTAC is critical of neoliberal policies favored by Western governments and has opposed WTO-sponsored

General Agreement on Trade and Services (GATS), which stipulates privatization of public services. These services, which include education, health care, and infrastructure development, are vital for the countries of the Global South, and privatization made them inaccessible to the large segments of the people of the Global South. These services are not privatized in most countries of the Global North, specifically because such services require public spending to be fairly provided to those who need them most.

National populists, on the other hand, are not happy with neoliberal globalization but are oblivious to the impact of neoliberal policies on the Global South. They do not see the connection between rising immigration from the Global South countries or the outburst of extremism in their midst and across the globe and the manipulation of the Global South by their own governments. The main issue is about the shift of economic power beyond their Western boarders and how to keep immigrants from moving in and disrupting European culture. Although they are concerned about the impact of globalization on their economic well-being, their major concern is with religious expressions and practices of first and second generations of immigrants. They raise questions as to "whether all religions support key aspects of modern life in the West, such as equality and respect for women and LGBT communities. There is absolutely no doubt that some national populists veer into racism and xenophobia, especially towards Muslims."[51] Roger Eatwell and Matthew Goodwin present a more sympathetic review of this transnational movement in their recent book they coauthored under the title *National Populism*, as they acknowledge the anti-Muslim character of the movement and the impact of xenophobic stances of some of its public figures, such as Geert Wilders, the Member of the Netherlands Parliament, who infamously alleges that Europe is being "Islamified."[52] They disagree with the commonly held view by liberal progressives who see the movement as the "last howl of rage," as they point to the close relationship that developed between European nationalists such as the Dutch Wilder and the French Le Pen with members of the Republican Party and the Trump administration.[53] They point out to what they term "the educational divide" as the main factor that split the national populists from the larger population.[54] National populists played a crucial role in the election of Donald Trump in 2016, and they voted for Brexit shortly after. These two events shocked European and American politics and raised concerns as to whether the surge of nationalism could lead to the return of fascism to Europe.

The fact that national populism is a transnational movement that unites politicians and activists across the Atlantic and Eurasia regions, and brings into ideological proximity Trump and Putin, underscores the extent of polarization of Western politics. The close personal and political relationship of the two leaders, whose countries were at odds over the Russian invasion of the Ukraine and the annexation of Crimea, became evident shortly after Trump took office. The press conference held by the two leaders after their first summit in Helsinki, Finland, on July 16, 2018, revealed a level of

friendship and affinity that set the U.S. president at odds with his intelligence team. Trump responded to a question as to whether he believed the finding of the U.S. intelligence that Russia interfered in the elections that brought him to office he had the following to say:

> My people came to me—Dan Coats came to me and some others—they said they think it's Russia. I have President Putin; he just said it's not Russia. I will say this: I don't see any reason why it would be, but I really do want to see the server. So I have great confidence in my intelligence people, but I will tell you that President Putin was extremely strong and powerful in his denial today.[55]

While defending and lavishly praising autocratic leaders, such as Russia's Putin and Hungary's Orban, Trump has repeatedly rebuked liberal leaders, including Germany's Merkel and Canada's Theodor. The liberal-nationalist divide reveals disagreements on a host of issues, and it is quite contentious around issues of immigration from Muslim countries and support for Middle Eastern dictators. So when a nationalist populist like Viktor Orban decided to assign the blame to the wave of immigrants from the Middle East, and Syria in particular, he did not point finger to the Syrian regime under Assad or to Putin whose forces attacked cities indiscriminately, but to "liberal politicians within the EU, along with the billionaire Hungarian-Jewish financier George Soros," who he claimed, "are engaged in a plot to flood Hungary and 'Christian' Europe with Muslim immigrants and refugees, which they see as part [sic]."[56]

Undoubtedly, the politics of identity we discussed in this and previous chapters is complex and multidimensional, but at the center of the tension is the Muslim identity. There is a strong resistance to allowing European Muslims to express and live their identity. The resistance is articulated in the language of difference. Muslims are different, and their difference is so pronounced that it constitutes the other that can never be included in the self. The othering of Muslims is linked with their Islamic beliefs and values so as to make those values stand in complete opposition to the dominant modern values. Muslims are violent, or potentially violent, because their holy book condones violence; because the prophet of Islam was not content to preach the monotheistic values but chose to fight for the realization of these values; because Muslims historically spread their faith through wars; because they suppress their women and force them to wear hijab; because they use violence to resist well-intended military invasions whose aim is to free them all; because they do not believe in the separation of the church and the state; and the complaints go on. This picture has been portrayed through news soundbites by commentators who have limited exposure to Islamic history and society; by novelists who know Islam and Muslims though fanciful flashes or essentialist views of the Orient; by the conditions of underprivileged and marginalized Muslim immigrants in the suburbs of Paris; and by reports of

violent attacks by ISIS and al-Qaeda fighters. The imagery that Islam gener-ates is for sure representative of certain segments of the Muslim reality, but it nonetheless provides a false representation, because it is badly caricatured and constructed through selective snapshots and bits and pieces of information. The distortion is greatly increased when the presentations are highly scripted to advance political agendas by powerful actors and strong political networks so as to mislead the public by claiming that what has been presented gives an accurate depiction of the full reality of Islam and Muslims. Such presentations of Muslim identity ignore the diversity of Muslim experience across time and space, as it fails to grasp the fact that all identities are contingent upon, and therefore susceptible to, modification and reconstruction as they interact with their different social environments. The missing question in all of that is: what kind of political environment military powers are creating in Muslim and Middle Eastern societies? And can we alter the relationship between the Global North and the Global South so as to create new environments more conducive to an evolving global order? Exploring the contingent nature of identity, and the significance of the introduction of Islam into the West in generating more just and inclusive global order, is central to discussing the future of globalization in the next and final chapter.

Notes

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3 Monte Palmer and Princess Palmer, *At the Heart of Terror: Islam, Jihadists, and America's War on Terrorism* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 207), 87–88. See also Ismael and Ismael, "Government and Politics," 14.
4 Ismael and Ismael, "Government and Politics," 109–110, and Saad Eddin Ibra-him, "Islamic Militancy as a Social Movement: The Case of Two Groups in Egypt," in *Islamic Resurgence in the Arab World*, ed. Ali E. Hillal Dessouki (New York: Praeger Publishers, 1982), 117–137.
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6 Asaf Hussain, *Islamic Movements in Egypt, Pakistan and Iran* (London: Mansell Publishing Limited, 1983), 14.
7 Quoted in Johannes J. G. Jansen, *The Neglected Duty: The Creed of Sadat's As-sassins and Islamic Resurgence in the Middle East* (New York: Macmillan Pub Co, 1986), 184.
8 Youssef H. Aboul-Enein, *Ayman Al-Zawahiri: The Ideologue of Modern Islamic Mil-itancy.* The Counterproliferation Paper No. 21 (Alabama: Air University, Max-well Air Force Base, 2004). See Quintan Wiktorowicz, "The Global Threat: Transnational Salafis and Jihad," *Middle East Policy*, vol. VIII, no. 4 (December 2001), 21.
9 Osama bin Laden, Fatwa published in Arabic in *Al-Quds al-Arabi* newspaper, London, February 23, 1998.
10 For a more detailed examination of the Al Qaeda's ideology and loose structure see Wiktorowicz, "The New Global Threat," 21.

11 Oldrich Bures, "Perceptions of the Terrorist Threat among EU Member States," *Central European Journal of International and Security Studies*, vol. 4, no. 1 (2010), 60; see also Phillippe Errera, "Three Circles of Threat," *Survival*, vol. 47, no. 12 (2005), 71–88.

12 Ibid, 61.

13 Ibid.

14 Reuel Marc Gerecht, *The Islamic Paradox Shiite Clerics, Sunni Fundamentalists, and the Coming of Arab Democracy* (Washington, DC: American Enterprise Institute Press, 2004), 6–7.

15 Timothy Mitchell gives us a glimpse of the relationship between Taliban and U.S. leaders as he describes their interactions: On February 3, 1997, a delegation of the Taliban government of Afghanistan visited Washington, DC. Ten days earlier Taliban forces had won control of the countryside around Kabul, and with the south and east of the country already in their hands they were now preparing to conquer the north. In Washington the Taliban delegation met with State Department officials and discussed the plans of the California oil company Unocal to build a pipeline from Central Asia through Afghanistan. A senior U.S. diplomat explained his government's thinking: "The Taliban will probably develop like the Saudis did. There will be Aramco, pipelines, an emir, no parliament and lots of Sharia law. We can live with that." See "McJihad: Islam in the U.S. Global Order," *Social Text*, vol. 20, no. 4 (2002), 1–18. Project MUSE muse.jhu.edu/article/38471.

16 Ibid, 7.

17 Ibid, 8.

18 Daniel Benjamin and Steven Simon, *The Age of Sacred Terror* (New York: Random House, 2003), 415.

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36 Ibid, 8–9.

37 Ibid, 56–61.

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43 Francis Fukuyama, *Identity: The Demand for Dignity and the Politics of Resentment* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2018), 17.

44 Ibid, 24.

45 Ibid, 26.

46 Ibid, 30.

47 Ibid, 22.

48 Bice Maiguashca, "Globalisation and the Politics of Identity," in *Critical Theories, IR and the Anti-Globalisation Movement: The Politics of Global Resistance*, eds. Catherine Eschle and Bice Maiguashca (New York: Routledge, 2005), 117.

49 Ibid, 120.

50 Vicki Birchfield and Annette Freyberg-Inan, "Organic Intellectuals and Counter-Hegemonic Politics in the Age of Globalization: The Case of ATTAC," in *Critical Theories, IR and the Anti-Globalisation Movement: The Politics of Global Resistance*, eds. Catherine Eschle and Bice Maiguashca (New York: Routledge, 2005), 166.

51 Roger Eatwell and Matthew Goodwin, *National Populism: The Revolt against Liberal Democracy* (London: Penguin Random House, 2018), 9.

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53 Ibid, 11.

54 Ibid, 39.

55 Remarks by President Trump and President Putin of the Russian Federation in Joint Press Conference. Helsinki, Finland, on July 16, 2018. https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefings-statements/remarks-president-trump-president-putin-russian-federation-joint-press-conference/?utm_source=link (accessed September 4, 2020).

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10 The future of globalization

Predicting the future is a risky business, shrouded with speculations and uncertainties, yet we humans always yearn to anticipate and get a glimpse of what is in store for us. We have become accustomed to check the weather every morning before we leave our homes knowing quite well that the information we gather about the weather conditions of the day does not always correspond with our real experience. And when reality and prediction do not meet, we often ignore the errors made by meteorologists because we well know how difficult it is to figure out the weather patterns with 100% accuracy. Gaining a glimpse into the future is so important to us that even a probable knowledge of the future is worth the effort. Our desire to know what could happen in the near and distant future is central to many scientific and intellectual activities. We have set up organizations and disciplines to help predict hurricanes, earthquakes, volcano irruptions, pandemics, election results, economic recessions, and so on. While many of the predictions made about the future do not materialize, we still find it important to gauge what is likely to happen next. Predicting the future of society is subject, on one level, to the same rules that we use to predict natural events as it involves, first, identifying patterns of behavior and change and then extrapolating into the future in the directions of these patterns. Predicting the future of human interactions has, however, unique and peculiar complications because such interactions and patterns are grounded in human subjectivity rather than in objective reality. The future of individuals and societies is borne in the hopes and fears, aspirations and anxieties, and the ethics and follies of human beings themselves. It is borne out of the ideas, values, and convictions that guide people's actions and interactions and in the manifestations of these ideas and values in predominant and emerging movements. That is why the battle for the future is fought over winning the hearts and minds of people, before winning the struggle in the tangible world. That is not to say that people could decide the future as they wish, for as we tried to illustrate, world history is grounded in certain recurring patterns and formations that are borne out of deep human tendencies. History has a specific flow that determines the most likely outcome of social choices, and it always matters to know the kind of values and ideas at the foundation of social choices. We know for instance that cooperation, mutual respect, and justice

strengthen society, while bickering, arrogance, and exploitation weaken social bonds. We know that when leaders of great nations are allowed by their populace to abuse foreign nations, it will be just a matter of time before these leaders turn their ill wills internally and then abuse their own people. We also know that social movements that cater to the greater good are bound to attract the support of the larger segments of the society. We know that investing in science and education and valuing hard work and creativity propel society forward and that deceiving the public and indulging in wasteful spending slow social progress. In short, our current exercise in this chapter is not one of prediction or fortune telling, but rather one of exploring possibilities and searching for viable solutions to challenges that stand in the way of a more inclusive and forward-looking future for humanity.

We argued in previous chapters that globalization as a historical process of global convergence has evolved over almost three millennia. Globalization occurred over time and in stages as ancient civilizations rose and fell, with each reaching its zenith at a moment of greater intellectual and geographical expansion. The Egyptian, Chinese, Indian, Ancient Hebrew, Persian, Roman, and the Byzantine civilizations followed similar patterns of rise, expansion, and decline. Islamic civilization expanded its influence for over a millennium to areas covered by all the previous civilizations, uniting learning, commerce, technology, and the arts of all living civilizations and reaching a global moment before it fell and came entirely under the influence of Western civilization. Western civilization reached geographical areas far beyond that of the Islamic civilization, bringing the entire globe under its influence at one level or another. The global convergence under modern civilization has gone far more than ever before, as convergence is evident in the globalization of economic, educational, technological, and cultural exchanges among diverse nations and societies, as well as in the increased support of democratic governance and the assertion of the supremacy of human rights. We are currently moving hesitantly between two moments in world history: the modern and the global. We are evidently in the late stage of the modern age, so late that we already began to stare at it in the back mirror of time as we continue to traverse a peculiar stage of human history we call "postmodern," for the lack of a better word. We seem to be stuck in this uncertain moment, as we cannot go back to the modern, against the hopes of many who have already become alienated and nostalgic, because no one can go back without falling into the abyss of fantasy. Nor do we seem to be ready to move to the global age, as important questions must first be sorted out, paramount among which is the question: do we have the courage to reconcile our actual life to the ideals we claim as our own? Are we willing to live in a world where peoples and nations are truly treated with equal dignity, regardless of their religion, culture, race, or nationality? Are we willing to commit to the same binding public and international laws and provide everyone equal access to public and global spaces, regardless of any irrelevant differences? And if the answers to those

questions are in the affirmative, what are the basic ideas and conditions that we need to set and advance? Addressing these questions is the main objective of this final chapter.

Global cooperation and zero-sum games

Convergence among nations and the gravitation toward liberal democracy have persisted over the decades, but accountability of the ruling elites to popular scrutiny is far from perfect and varies greatly from one democratic system to another. The level of equal access to public debate and democratic decision-making ranges from significantly high in Western societies to completely absent in the Middle East. As we saw in previous chapters, the democratic process that started in Syria and Egypt ahead of many other independent countries of the world experienced serious setbacks as the result of the cold war, and later because of world powers' unwavering support to military dictators, provided in return for the latter's willingness to protect the economic and geopolitical interests of Western democracies at the expense of local populations. Delays in the development of democratic regimes in Arab countries are directly linked with successive American administrations, on both sides of the political divide, who pursued anti-democratic and anti-liberal policies under the internal pressure of the religious right and neorealists who are driven by either the selective and speculative interpretations of biblical prophecies or by imperialist ambitions in the name of national glory. These disruptive actions, extraneous to the trajectory of globalization, have been completely ignored by the advocates of the clash-of-civilizations scenario or partially acknowledged by the proponents of the liberal–democratic convergence. The counter-democratic tendencies in the Middle East also relate to the complexity of the globalization process and the turbulences created by internal contradictions in leading liberal democratic nations. Fukuyama has acknowledged the genuine desire on the part of Syrians to end dictatorship and bring in democratic reforms, along with other Arab societies that erupted in popular protests against the archaic regimes supported by world powers. Yet Fukuyama ran quickly over the geopolitical interests that steered the conflict away from its initial thrust to achieve political reform in the direction of democratic rule, eventually blaming the victims and attributing the failure for dislodging the tyrant squarely on "the lack of clear sense of national identity."[1] Iranian and Russian interventions to save the tyrant did not count; the full collaboration between the United States and Russia through the mediation of the Israeli prime minister and the manipulation of the opposition's response to the Assad militias attacks did not matter. Here is how Fukuyama summed up how the Syrians' struggle for democracy was frustrated:

> Syria is an extreme example of what happens when a country lacks a clear sense of national identity. The proximate cause of the war were peaceful protests that broke out in 2011 against the regime of Bashar

al-Assad, which were triggered by the Arab Spring. Rather than stepping down, Assad met his opponents with fierce repression. The latter then responded with violence themselves, and the conflict began to attract the attention of outside groups, with foreign fighters streaming in to join ISIS. The civil war was further deepened by support from Turkey, Saudi Arabia, Iran, Russia, and the United States.[2]

The above description only serves to mystify the realpolitik at work in the Middle East that seems bent for a variety of geopolitical reasons on keeping Syria under successive dictators who create the very environment that breeds extremism and suppress democratic forces in the region. Both the Obama and Trump administrations struck a deal with Putin government, allowing it to have a freehand to crack down on the militia that opposed the Assad regime, leaving the militia aligned with Iran and the Assad regime free to drive millions of Syrians to exile. Over 1 million of them moved to Europe, and most of them took shelter in Germany after most Europeans refused to take them in. The refugee situation led eventually to Brexit and the strengthening of nationalist populist movements in Europe.

The setbacks in world politics have not so far undermined the growing global convergence, despite serious pushbacks by nationalist and far-right groups. The divergence in the Middle East is caused by sociopolitical forces bent on preventing convergence between the South and North as they deem it contrary to their hierarchical values and interests. The disruption in the Middle East only proves that the patterns of global convergence are complex because global expansion and contraction we explored in Chapter 2 are the result of the alignment and realignment of values and interests and the intellectual influence of reform movements. Globalization as the accumulation of human knowledge and experience has persisted regardless of any specific cultural and civilizational convergence or divergence and regardless of intellectual leadership of the time. We are now approaching a period in modern civilization whereby we will either transform into a new level of collaboration and collective action capable of energizing the diverse cultures and religions that comprise the postmodern society or see the breakdown of the institutions that kept the world together. The breakdown would not necessarily end global convergence but would delay it until a new ideational and institutional formation suitable for global unity emerged. The fact that we find ourselves in a new realm of ideas and global tensions is an important indicator that we stand at the crossroads with weighty and consequential decisions to make that would define the future of humanity for the next century and beyond. We are clearly in a state that is neither modern nor global and therefore still defined by its transitional "post" labels as post-modern, post-liberal, post-structural, and post-secular.

A striking point in the transition to more globally inclusive sociopolitical institutions is psychological, defined by the ethnocentric outlook grounded in political realism. It is precisely the Eurocentrism that grew

during Europe's centuries of isolation under Roman Christian exclusivism. The disenchantment of modern European societies has practically done away with Roman Christianity but still kept portions of the Eurocentrism that was nurtured during Medieval times. Europe's disenchantment with Roman Christianity was inevitable given the contradictions between the rational ethos of modernity and the dogmatism of the Roman Christianity, but the same movement away from the sacred need not necessarily apply to every cultural and religious experience. The Catholic Church itself has disavowed in the twentieth century much of the dogmas of Roman Christianity and has committed itself to more reciprocal and mutually respectful relationships with other religions. Rationalization as disenchantment with all aspects of transcendence has undermined the ethical foundation of society, particularly on the level of popular culture, and appears in its most exaggerated forms as a replacement of transcendental ethics and purposive spiritual fulfilment with imminent utilitarianism and naturalistic ecstatic escapism. The replacement is not grounded in rational justification but emanates from privileging Hellenistic Gnosticism over monotheistic transcendence. The replacement appears to have practical justifications, rooted in the tensions between the religious and the secular in European experience, and the failure of post-Reformation religious authorities to embrace a more pluralistic approach to religious and intellectual diversity. The failure of monotheistic religions to recognize those who do not share their metaphysics is a more reasonable explanation of such disenchantment than a claim that a naturalist or deist worldview is more rationally justifiable than a theist one. Such a conflict between the secular and religious domains did not emerge historically in the Muslim society or in the American society since its formation in the seventh century through the 1950s. To the contrary, American society maintained a healthy balance between the secular and religious spheres of life and was able to steer European politics away from its destructive nationalism, leading to the unification of Europe in the early 1990s. Similarly, the rational and ethical developments of Islamic cultures were inspired by transcendental idealism. Islam's pluralist ideals rooted in Islamic revelation were also crucial for the emergence of the pluralist society that recognized the moral and legal autonomy of multireligious communities. The institution of science evolved from the activities of the rational-idealist movement led by the Mutazilite intellectuals, as we illustrated in Chapter 6.

By ignoring the broader historical horizons of globalization and refusing to ground Western modernity in previous cycles of globalization, liberalism has never entertained the possibility of non-Western modernization, ruling out different paths to modernity. Exploring alternative possibilities of modernization may provide an alternative model of development at a time when modern society seems to gravitate toward a more stratified social order on both the national and international levels. For a perfect rational order is by definition a limiting order that gradually reduces spaces

of freedom within society and would end up in an "iron cage" structure if things are taken to the extreme. Human beings are not purely rational but have in them a substantial reservoir of spiritual, emotional, and creative energy that triggers and nurtures spontaneity and freedom. The more society is rigorously ordered by a myriad of regulations the more it reduces the capacity of people with diverse goals to experience self-realization and the greater the possibilities for them to experience alienation. With economic disparity and the reduction in the time available for people for self-actualization, rationalization sets the ground for greater discontent and possibly the breakup of the socially constructed order. The only way to avoid ending up in the "iron cage" anticipated by Weber is by allowing multiple spheres of rationalization or, to be more precise, multiple modernization paths.

For all their differences, Huntington and Fukuyama share a worldview that fails to see the need for cultural renewal for the continued civilizational development and growth. They both seem to understate the importance of ethical commitments to core human values, such as justice and equal dignity, for maintaining the energy necessary for broad social cooperation at the heart of historical globalization. They both seem to privilege scientific and technological foundations of advanced social organization, as they downplay the role of cultural alignment with rational values at the foundation of every global civilization. Cultures advance and decline along with the vigor of the moral tradition that aligned social interests of the larger population. Huntington's account of the relative decline of Western culture implies that he rejects the linear and unidirectional view of historical change and is willing to embrace a somehow cyclical view of world history whereby civilizations are subject to rise and fall, progress and decline, similar to the one advocated by Spengler and Toynbee. Fukuyama, on the other hand, fully embraces a conception of world history advocated by Hegel, thereby rejecting the possibility of regress to socially inferior conditions. Civilizational decline presupposes, he insists, the implausible event of global cataclysm that takes away mankind's memory.[3]

The above bold assertion reveals a complete equation in the mind of Fukuyama between the concept of culture and civilization, that is, between the moral vision and worldview that drive a cultural group to embrace science, and the social structure that unites a growing number of communities to cooperate in translating their shared moral vision and technological discoveries into a world civilization. The above statement evidently confuses cultural progress with technological progress. Recorded history, as Spengler and Toynbee recognized, provides strong evidence that natural science and technology continued to grow over human history as various cultures that contributed to such development have undergone stages of progress and decline. The distinction between culture as a moral system and civilization as the total sum of all institutions—including social, political, economic, and scientific institutions—is essential for understanding the steady flow of history and the

rise and fall of past civilizations. Spengler sees a causal relationship between cultures and civilizations whereby the latter are the destiny of the former. As he put it,

> Civilizations are the most external and artificial states of which a species of developed humanity is capable. They are a conclusion, the thing-become succeeding the thing-becoming, death following life, rigidity following expansion, intellectual age and the stone-built, petrifying world-city following mother-earth and the spiritual childhood of Doric and Gothic. They are the end, irrevocable, yet by inward necessity reached again and again.[4]

This movement of expansion and contraction is not arbitrary; nor is it purely organic. It is the result of a great moral and spiritual energy guided by a rational and creative vision. A civilization comes to life when the combination of spirituality and reason, of ethics and science, is combined in a group of people. The "combination," it is important to stress, does not come out of a magical moment but emerges from a long and protracted process. Toynbee locates the combination in the moral energy established by religion and the creative version of cultural elites.[5] Yet the end as envisaged by Toynbee is not fate but a consequence and conclusion and need not confront the modern civilization, provided that the "divine spark of creative power is still alive in us, and, if we have the grace to kindle it into flame, then the stars in their course cannot defeat our efforts to obtain the goal of human endeavor."[6]

The future need not be the war of all against all that one encounters at the inception of human societies in the pre-Axial age or perhaps the one envisioned by Huntington. The future need not be defined through a zero-sum game but could quite possibly be much brighter if it was founded on win–win imagination and logic. And this is not a utopian assumption but repeatedly tried logic. The zero-sum logic almost wiped Europe out during the 30-year religious war in the Middle Age and in the two world wars of the twentieth century. It was the rational choice of opting for cooperation instead of war that allowed Europe to progress. Most importantly, it was the rational idealism as manifested in the American liberalism rather than the cynical and pessimistic European realism. It was the Marshal plan implemented by the American idealism after WWII rather than the reparations extracted after WWI by European realism. What is required for a brighter future for humanity as a whole is exactly the opposite of what Huntington prescribed: to embrace cooperation and give up domination. The two accounts by Spengler and Toynbee that depict the life of a civilization as one of rise, maturation, and demise, upon which Huntington built his model of clash of civilizations, refer to civilization at any particular moment in history in singular not plural terms. According to these accounts, civilizations succeed each other and never coexist, perhaps except in state of transitioning from one to the other. But Huntington provides the schematic blueprint for Western expansion and

domination by positing a fictitious conflict between Western powers and imaginative civilizations that do not exist. What we currently have are modern societies whose lifeworld constitutes an amalgamation of traditional and modern cultures and whose elites and radicals are molded in modern forms and discourse. The fact that non-Western societies in Africa, Asia, and South America have duplicated Western education systems, governing structures, military regiments, economic systems, and modern entertainments makes any talk about other civilizations unreal. A more realistic description of human diversity is to talk of a world made of a plurality of religions and cultures. This diversity is open to both conflict and cooperation, and each of these possibilities rests on a particular type of leadership and vision. Rather than counseling for a strategy that generates cooperation between the West and the "rest," Huntington eventually opted for a strategy of fortification and domination.[7] We can understand Huntington's regrets and fears only when we realize that it is a regret for the decrease of the West's ability to dominate the rest of the world and the fear of a reversal of fortune as the rising non-Western powers might move to dominate the West. The latter scenario is not only far removed from current reality but could also be avoided if the United States worked toward improving global governance in the direction of increasing civil society involvement in global decision-making, thereby strengthening true liberal democracy in the Middle East and Latin America.

Religious pluralism and democratic public order

The religious and cultural diversity of the world does not automatically translate to cultural and religious wars, and a more insightful and analytical approach to understand the nature of the religious and cultural forces at work would paint a markedly different possibility for the global future. The secular state was initially set in order to create a safe space where religions, particularly the Protestant and Catholic communities, could coexist in a religiously plural society. The challenge today is whether we can expand this experience to include other world religions, including Islam. The question may be thus stated: Why are Muslims challenged as they aspire to join European religious pluralism? Olivier Roy identifies two arguments that have been made by the critics of Islam: "the first is theological and says that the separation between religion and politics is foreign to Islam; the second is cultural and posits that Islam is more than a religion: it is a culture."[8] Oliver, however, disagrees with these characterizations as misleading as both do not reflect real processes currently underway in Muslim societies. He points out that leading contemporary Muslim scholars reject the equivocation of Islamic religious traditions with Muslim cultures and have labored consistently to separate Islam from culture. "This is the position of new theologians such as Arkun, Soruch, Kadivar, Abou Fadl, and Abu Zayd. Sharia is presented as the matrix of a meaning that the traditional ulema later fossilized into rigid law (fiqh)."[9] Religion is not culture; it is only the inner structure upon which various

cultures construct their peculiar geohistorical edifice. Cultures translate the values and convictions that form the core of religious experience into a set of relations, customs, and institutions. Most people though know religion only as a set of cultural edifices and grow uncomfortable when they see the religion they profess manifests itself in a different set of cultural and institutional forms. We have already demonstrated in Chapter 4 that the exercise of power in early Islam was contractual and subject to limitations expressed in universal values of common good (maslahah) and of the just exercise of authority. This is why it takes someone who is well trained and experienced to separate the outer cultural and historical experience from the inner values and convictions that gave life to them, as Oliver and Feldman did in their analysis of the nature of the exercise of power in historical Islam. Oliver echoes the structure of power articulated by Feldman. "Power is contractual," he argued, "not because of the will of the people but because it is contingent: the sultan or the emir takes power by force and keeps it by a more or less explicit contract with the ulema."[10] This point was discussed in detail in Chapter 5, as we examined the pluralist system that emerged under Islam which provided moral and legal autonomy for confessional communities.

Much of the religious violence that we have experienced in recent years can be partly blamed on the ill-conceived ideas that all the expressions of the Islamic faith must be tamed through state coercion. Such efforts have always backfired either by weakening the state and strengthening the religious movement or by transforming religious expressions into violent responses. The endeavors to manipulate Islam and managing the process of secularization in the Middle East have produced a fundamentalist interpretation of Islam decoupled from its social context and led to the emergence of globalized forms of Islam that have attracted significant following throughout the world. Young people alienated by modern society found a version of religious expression detached from all national and cultural articulations of religious experience. The level of manipulation and the "excessive management" of religion in the Middle East is overwhelming. First, the only place in the Middle East where Islamic learning was boosted in the past century are the Saudi Arabian seminaries, while all prominent institutions of traditional Islamic learning in Egypt, Syria, and Tunisia have been downsized and defunded. Saudi Arabia seminaries have taught the most literalist version of Islam with a special disliking to religious pluralism and diversity. Up until the mid-twentieth century, Saudi Arabia was a Bedouin society, with meager exposure to diversity and relied completely on the uniformity of customs and norms for maintaining its unity. Bedouin culture is in many ways analogous to the redneck culture of heartland United States that fears and distrusts the unfamiliar and which have lately produced all types of militia groups ready to fight against what they perceive as external threats to their culture. For decades, religious scholars in control of Saudi religious education have declared that anyone who does not follow the Wahhabi's Salafi interpretation of Islam was either infidel (kafir) or heretic (mubtadi'). This worldview mimics

the extreme views of radical evangelicals who bombed abortion clinics and is very alien to the traditional teachings of Islam that emphasized religious pluralism and held judgment on the fate of those who have different faiths and religious backgrounds. The United States went further in skewing cultural balance in the body of Islam by providing military training and support for radical Muslim groups with narrow understanding of the history and intellectual foundation of the Islamic faith in Afghanistan, as supporting them deemed expedient to frustrate Soviet expansionism into Afghanistan and later to wrestle power from the Afghan mujahideen factions. To make matters worse, the United States and its Western allies turned Saudi Arabia into a launching pad for its operations against both Saddam Hussain's Baathist regime and the Islamic Republic of Iran, paving the ground for the emergence of global jihadist movement. This process formed the ground for what Olivier Roy terms "globalized" Islamic fundamentalism, headed by young radicals who, as he puts it, are "perfectly 'Westernized'."[11] Oliver understands the Westernization of Islamic fundamentalism as a process that turned Islam from a culturally based religion into a globalized missionary and evangelizing movement.

> But the problem is that today's religious revival—whether under fundamentalist or spiritualistic forms—develops by decoupling itself from any cultural reference. It thrives on the loss of cultural identity: the young radicals are indeed perfectly "Westernized." Among the born-again and the converts (numerous young women who want to wear the veil belong to these categories), Islam is seen not as a cultural relic but as a religion that is universal and global and reaches beyond specific cultures, just like evangelicalism or Pentecostalism.[12]

The complex process that produced religious revivalism in its fundamentalist form in Muslim societies was addressed further by Oliver in a subsequent work, appropriately titled *Holy Ignorance*, in which he faults the very process of secularization for producing the most fundamentalist versions of world religions. This counterintuitive reading of secularization is interesting, as it shows that secularization is not destined to bring about a secular world order, but more fundamentalist religious movements. Fundamentalist movements, whether Islamic or Christian, are global movements, playing the same globalization game but with different goals in mind. Secularization as a global force, Oliver stresses, focuses on marginalizing religions to promote consumerism and, using an understanding of power rooted in neorealism, has created new de-territorialized religious movements detached form their cultures, as they "compete with secularization on its own ground: the political sphere (nation, state, citizen, constitution, legal system)."[13] It is true that fundamentalist movements have had limited success in directly influencing decision-making on the institutional level of global governance but have for sure made a powerful impact at the societal level. The decline of the influence and

capacity of traditional religions has undermined their ability to respond to distortions in the meaning and history of religious thought particularly in Muslim societies but at varying degrees in the West as well. Secularization processes have also frozen the capacity of the institutions of religious learning to engage in theological reform and adaptation of modern society.

> We are witnessing a shift of the traditional forms of religious practice— Catholicism, Hanafi Islam, classic Protestant denominations such as Anglicanism and Methodism—towards more fundamentalist and charismatic forms of religiosity (evangelicalism, Pentecostalism, Salafism, Tablighi Jamaat, neo-Sufism, Lubavich). But these movements are relatively recent. Salafism derives from Wahhabism which was founded at the end of the eighteenth century. The Hasidim and Haredim were born in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. The various evangelical movements belong to the tradition of Protestant "awakenings" which began during the eighteenth century, while Pentecostalism dates from the early twentieth century."[14]

Paradoxically, as religious movements became autonomous from their cultural pinning they shifted their focus from purely ritualistic and doctrinal aspects of traditional religions to an emphasis on issues of religious freedom, political equality, and human rights, albeit with various degrees of centralized concerns and interests.[15] The concerns over the impact of modernist political forms on the thinking of Islamist groups is echoed by Fukuyama, who asserts in his *Identity* that both "nationalism and Islamism are rooted in modernization,"[16] This could be seen in the fact that violent reactions to perceived objectification of the Muslim people by Western powers is carried out not by immigrant Muslims but by their West-borne and West-educated children. Fukuyama attributes the violence to the failure of European societies to integrate the children of immigrants "into their new European surroundings: rates of youth unemployment, particularly for Muslims, are upward of 30%, and in many European countries a link is still perceived between ethnicity and membership in the dominant cultural community."[17] While immigrant Muslims hinged their feeling of self-worth on their ability to establish a new life in Europe away from the chaotic and turbulent life in the Middle East, the first generation of European Muslims could neither relate to their old cultures nor feel a sense of belonging to their place of birth. This deep alienation created an identity crisis, and their need for recognition led them to embrace Islamic fundamentalist ideologies that have already achieved global presence and influence and complete autonomy from local cultures. The new tendency on the part of some Muslims whose answers to their confusion about their inability to get national recognition has been in seeking membership in a larger, and imaginary global community of the "ummah." Never mind that the "ummah" is a theoretical notion that has no actual political reality; the politicization of Islam generated a countermovement among nationalist

European groups with clear yearning to European nationalism and to a less culturally diverse Europe. National populism is on the rise in Europe and the United States, fanned by far-right and neoconservative rhetoric. The Middle East, which has quietly contributed to the proliferation of identities in the West, is also trapped in identity crises and struggles of its own, as efforts to cultivate national identities have been frustrated by the geopolitical lens of neoliberalism bent on manipulating the nationalist-Islamist divide to maximize external interests and frustrate any attempt to generate more stable political or economic unification. All of the sudden, the nationalism–globalism tensions are being transformed into the struggle of identities that threatens to tribalize liberal societies. Identity politics in Muslim societies generated by increased fragmentation and unscrupulous politics feeds into Western identity politics, creating a vicious circle that threatens all notions of civility and political enlightenment.

The creative cycle of stability and disruption

Despite the defective and contradictory approach that insists on imposing comprehensive liberalism on global society, the political debate continues to be fixated on the trajectories of convergence and conflict politics. In discussing the expansion of liberal democracy beyond Western society, Fukuyama observes the instability and reversibility of such an expansion. Several countries in Latin America (e.g., Colombia), Asia (the Philippines), or even Europe (e.g., post-World War I Germany) experienced democracy for a short period before they capitulated yet another time to an authoritarian form of government. He though never asks why such a fallback happened and never suspects that the relapse has been triggered from the outside. In reviewing both Tocqueville's and Nietzsche's arguments on the connections between peoples and states, he points out to the importance of cultural values of a particular society and the need for the congruence between people's ethos and state structures and processes. He summarizes the relationship between peoples and states in the following terms: "The success and the stability of liberal democracy therefore never depends simply on the mechanical application of a certain set of universal principles and laws, but requires a degree of conformity between peoples and states."[18] The statement could hardly be disputed by anyone who knows anything about how people relate to their political state. Still the question is what to do if those who have mastered the liberal language are unwilling to ask the difficult questions? To ask for example why the U.S. government decided to support coups whose aims were to undermine liberal democracy in Syria in 1949, Egypt in 1952, and Iran in 1954?

Similarly, we need to become aware of the obstacles to democracy and understand the impact of the cultural orientation of a people on the possibilities of the realization of democratic rule that holds dictators and tyrants accountable. Again, let us review the four obstacles identified by Fukuyama, which summarize the collective wisdom on the subject: (1) the fragmentation

of society into antagonistic ethnic communities and the fear that democracy would lead to the domination of the largest ethnic community; (2) the presence of religious traditions that espouse totalitarian views of life, such as Orthodox Judaism and fundamentalist Islam; (3) the existence of highly "unequal social structure, and all the habits of mind that arise from it"; and (4) the degree to which a nation is capable of developing an autonomous civil society.[19] In short, the development and preservation of liberal democracy require the presence of cultural and religious traditions that promote the very values necessary for its growth and survival, such as freedom, equality, and respect for diversity. Fukuyama, who took his cues from Hegel and cited him frequently throughout his works, suddenly concludes that Islam is incapable of sustaining political democracy, in complete opposition to the views articulated by Hegel who saw in Islam a great equalizer. Such sharp disagreement with the Hegelian conception of Islam and history deserves an explanation of the grounds of his conclusion. Hegel recognizes that Islam and reformed Christianity were instrumental in establishing the principle of universal human equality, which led later to the rise of liberal democracy. He also believed that Islam succeeded to subject the secular order to moral evaluation long before Christianity learned to do so. However, while Fukuyama credits Islam of having similar commitment to the principle of universal human equality, he contends that while Christianity and Islam may be able to adapt to democracy, they do not fully promote the conditions necessary for the development and survival of liberal democracy.[20] This conclusion is only true with regards to certain cultural manifestations of Christianity and Islam, such as Roman Christianity or Wahhabi–Salafi Islam. Fukuyama's conclusion, which echoes a broader liberal bias, confuses culture and religion and reflects the failure of modern education to connect the Enlightenment with the Reformation, and both with Islamic rationalism, and all together with the transcendental values at the foundation of modern experience. What makes Fukuyama's conclusion troubling is his discounting, even dismissal, of the role played by reformed Christianity in furnishing the moral foundation of American democracy. The founding fathers of the greatest democracy of our times were deeply religious Christians, even though they did not try to bring their religious convictions to public debates in keeping with the requirements of public rational discourse in a diverse society. The writings of the founders of the United States, such as Benjamin Franklin or Thomas Jefferson, reveal the depth of their religious commitments in their political thinking and decision-making. The same is equally true with regards to many Muslim intellectuals and political leaders who know that they have to speak in the language of universal humanity, out of care and respect for human diversity, a position expected from them by their very religious convictions. Fukuyama's inability to connect the dots does not stem from a lack of exposure to the history of the modern West. For as we saw earlier, he went back as early as the Protestant Reformation in trying to ground modern consciousness, but then confined himself to examining Martin Luther's conception of the authentic

self. But his examination of the emergence of the authentic self adds nothing to the debate as to how religions contribute to social stability and continuity or how secular values relate to the monotheistic values at the foundation of the modern West.

Still Fukuyama remains true to his classical liberal commitment as he rejects the subversive role played by political realism in making Western foreign policy less conducive to world peace and global cooperation. In a chapter appropriately titled "The Unreality of 'Realism'," in his *End of History*, he attacks the central assumption of political realism that the international order has an "abidingly anarchic character." Realism develops a complex and sophisticated theory that affirms the anarchic nature of the international order, rejects any attempt to establish a morally based international political order, and anchors the state–of–nature–like order in human nature. Fukuyama succinctly summarizes the political and moral dilemmas created by realism:

> Realism is a theory that maintains that insecurity, aggression, and war are permanent possibilities in the international state system, and that this condition is a *human* condition, that is, a condition that cannot be altered by the appearance of specific forms and types of human societies because it is ultimately rooted in an unchanging human nature.[21]

Undoubtedly, Fukuyama faults realism for justifying an aggressive foreign policy, but what is doubtful and mystifying is the lack of interest in exposing its connection to liberal ideology. Neoliberalism has completely embraced the basic assumptions of realism, most notably its obsession with power and domination, yet there is not a single mention of it in his work. The whole discussion focuses on liberalism in its classical form, reflecting a serious failure to acknowledge, let alone critique, the fact that neoliberalism is now the new face of liberalism. Notwithstanding that Fukuyama engages in selective reading and discussion when referencing Muslim and other communities of the South who continue to struggle under the conditions imposed on them by powerful groups in the North, he recognizes the need to replace the imperialist politics with one anchored in international law and human rights. The world already has a semblance of order with the creation of the United Nations, the integration of world economies, and the spread of the traditions of international humanitarian law and universal human rights. The widening acceptance of international law and human rights and the spread of liberal democratic ideas across the globe provide new grounds for questioning the very political realism widely embraced by liberal democratic states. All these advancements are currently being threatened by the realpolitik impulse that runs deep in neoliberalism, as the earlier achievements of classical liberalism are being reversed by neoliberal excesses with a deafening silence on the part of liberal scholars and leaders. Despite social fragmentation, rising economic inequalities, and crushing debts, liberal leaders by and large are unnerved by the deterioration in the quality of life and the failure of neoliberalism to remedy this dire situation.

Overcoming current distortions in the notions of liberalism and the secular state requires a new public debate about dominant structures and processes and the place of religion in public communication. There is an urgent need to restore the level of tolerance necessary for social cooperation within political society and address the sources of antagonism among religious communities. One important source of antagonism among the three Abrahamic traditions of Judaism, Christianity, and Islam lies, as John Nicks noted, in the "discursive structure" that creates the dynamic between the particular and the universal. While the three Abrahamic traditions affirm their faith in the transcendent who they all share as the source of their sacred revelation, the discursive structure they all embrace makes the universal divine enjoy a particular place in their individual scriptures. This paradox of the particularized universal is akin to conception of God that emerged in the three monotheistic traditions and has been appropriately termed "scriptural universalism."[22] Scriptural universalism has been a point of contention throughout history and can be overcome in the political society by first identifying the universal norms of the monotheistic traditions and then articulating them through a language that facilitates communicatively achieved consensus. Understanding the significance of articulating religious notions and norms in a universal language is key to overcoming political conflicts. This also makes Jurgen Habermas' suggestion for communicatively based consensus more relevant than a solution that relies on the development of a metaphysical point of agreement, such as the one proposed by John Hick.[23] Hick's approach is undoubtedly needed and helpful for dismantling the theological barriers created by religious speculation, and would highlight the common elements in the Abrahamic traditions, and possibly among world religions, but may not be sufficient to realign the morality embedded in religious traditions with the institutions of global governance. The communicative action framework articulated by Habermas is more relevant to all monotheistic traditions anchored in the meanings that are rationally available in the revealed text and may provide a better starting point for global pluralism. Habermas' theory of communicative action fits naturally into the monotheistic traditions as they all grew out of an intellectual discourse that evolved around the sacred text, as well as the interpretative texts accumulated over generations. The thrust of Habermas' efforts to articulate a tolerant pluralist political order grounded in communicative action is succinctly recapped by Robert Erlewine:

> Habermas, operating in a very different tradition and philosophical idiom from Hick, works to rehabilitate the notion of rationality for contemporary thought after the attacks leveled at it by postmodernism. By grounding rationality in language—communicative rationality and linguistic competence—Habermas argues against notions of incommensurable worldviews and language games in endless conflict. Rather, he seeks to provide a social theory in which disputes can be worked out

through rational discussion, through the reaching of non-coerced con-
sensuses, and where a decentering of the self takes place so that it can take
into account the Other's point of view.[24]

Overcoming interreligious antagonism cannot be achieved at the level of re-
ligious dialogue from within the circles of religious authorities' debate, given
the level of competition among the guardians of a purely religious discourse
in demarcating the boundaries that delineate these religions. Setting the
peace must be left to intellectual dialogues and to the rational identification
of the common denominators that unite the monotheistic traditions. Such
a sensitive and difficult task is better left to the work of rationalist-idealist
intellectuals in these traditions, as pluralism has already been articulated by
philosophers and scholars like al-Kindi and Averroes in Islamic rational ide-
alism, as well as Kant, Locke, and Hegel, whose pluralist outlook was shaped
and inspired by realigning Christian worldview with the intellectualism that
was inspired by rational idealism.

Dialogical grounding of global pluralism

The future of globalization, as a system that encourages the cooperation of
diverse cultures and societies, lies in creating inclusive pluralism capable of
honoring peoples regardless of their ethnic or religious specificities. For that
to happen, we need to advance a more inclusive decision-making system
that takes into account human diversity. That requires revising the notions
of public rationality and reason and the way we approach consensus-building
that goes beyond cultural consensus. There is a need to mitigate the modern
notions of the reasonable and sensible. This reformulation is particularly
needed, given the fact that for over two centuries now, modern intellectual-
ism has been under the illusion that reason and rational thought are capable
on their own of bringing meaning and happiness to society. Throughout this
period, rationalism was posited as the ground for all that is good and just,
advancing the view that all we need in order to establish a good society was
to think rationally and systematically. Initially, and under the sway of posi-
tivism, metanarratives, particularly those attached to religious text, were met
with skepticism and deemed unnecessary and suspicious.[25] Any knowledge
claimed prior to the Enlightenment was also considered ancient and unre-
liable and, hence, incapable of adding anything to our understanding of the
meaning of social order and social organization.[26] The postmodern critique
has shaken such certainty as it revealed the arbitrariness and subjectivity
of what has been declared as systematically rational and that the modern
rational constructs do not stand on a firm foundation.[27] These assertions
resulted in serious missteps and skewed social structures and policies, which
initially took place in the countries of the South before they moved in the
past two decades to the North. Rampant abuses committed in the name
of rationality, including economic exploitation and political manipulation,

have convinced an increasing number of thinkers and activists that rational secularism and the Enlightenment narrative are inadequate to address the moral and political crises in a globalizing order. Within Western liberalism, the task of rethinking the public sphere was taken up by neo-Kantianism, led today by John Rawls and Jurgen Habermas, who emerged in the past three decades to address the increased fragmentation of late-modern (or postmodern) consciousness and politics under the influence of the post-Kantian realism and materialism. This new development represents an effort whose aim is to bring idealism to mitigate the impact of realism, positivism, and materialism. The two influential thinkers have advanced proposals to address late-modern moral and political crises that are not purely neo-Kantian, but move slightly away from the Kantian notion of the sovereign individual by incorporating a Hegelian emphasis that maintains "that reason cannot be realized monologically, and in order to be actual, must be mediated by social activity."[28]

The affinity between Rawls' and Habermas' thoughts on a more inclusive democratic structure is evident in calling for a post-secular understanding of the limits of reason and in advancing arguments for a more inclusive pluralism, capable of accommodating religiously anchored reasons for public action. They have also endeavored to think through a democratic model that accommodates diverse religious values and inputs without compromising the Kantian post-metaphysical rationalism. Such an approach also accommodates the Islamic discursive tradition, embraced by Islamic reformists who are keen to articulate a new political order that affirms liberal and democratic values and procedures. While the project advanced by the neo-Kantian thinkers was not intended to restore the normative foundation of the transcendental values of modern thought inherited from the monotheistic traditions, the approach might indirectly ground modern rationalism in the broader monotheistic normative expectations that could frame public reason that acts out of a normative foundational framework. Both thinkers have been occupied for decades in developing political thought away from the positivistic and neorealistic trajectory. Rawls opted to develop a theory of justice that steers away from consequentialist ethical systems favored by modern positivism, while Habermas maintained the ethical impulse of the Frankfurt School, as revealed in the *Dialectic of the Enlightenment*, the last work written by its leading intellectuals, Horkheimer and Adorno. Habermas developed a communicative action theory that privileges the ethos embodied in the sociocultural foundation of modern politics, whose ethics is grounded in the values of monotheistic traditions. Yet they managed to do that by preserving the rational foundation of the public debate by insisting on the "reasonableness" of the conditions of the debate. Reason is, however, presented as formal rationality, comprising procedures that reject any grounding in substantive rationality of particular cultural and religious groups, for such rationality is always tentative. Put differently, Habermas and Rawls steered away from foundationalism precisely because such an effort can drift toward authoritarian political

structures and therefore is contrary to the need to enhance democratic order by opening it up to a pluralistic society that entertains diverse frameworks of meaning and normality.

Despite their shared interests in building political legitimacy on the notions of reason and consensus, they differ significantly in how the two notions, central to their arguments, are interconnected. Rawls asserts that political consensus can be achieved by allowing its interlocutors to engage freely in open debate. And for that to happen "political" liberalism must be distinguished and separated from "comprehensive" liberalism. This does also require that a distinction is made between "the rational" and "the reasonable." The distinction between political and comprehensive liberalism is necessary for allowing social groups to negotiate the rules that govern the public sphere so that private interests or values are not imposed on all social actors, while allowing comprehensive liberalism to flourish in private spheres without dominating the entire society. Habermas, on the other hand, does not separate the rational and the reasonable, as he sees the need to arrive at political consensus through normative consensus that forms the foundation of the democratic constitutional state.[29] Even though Habermas's account aims at generating normative consensus, the norms themselves are not built into the constitutional framework but emerge out of the ongoing exchange by individuals who bring diverse views of definitive substantive rationalism. Given the fact that the normative consensus is limited to the public sphere, his proposal is in line with that of Rawls. The insistence of the two thinkers to steer away from advancing any substantive political consensus have made them open to the charge of "empty formalism." The accusation, however, overlooks that the substantive elements of rationality would be furnished by the political debate and exchange and that formal rational element is intended to safeguard the democratic process by ensuring that the substantive elements are tightly connected to practical rationality that guards against unethical and subversive claims that could potentially distort political outcomes.

Rawls developed in his latest book, *Political Liberalism*, the ideas of "overlapping consensus" and "public reason" to provide "the framework of the free institutions of a constitutional democratic regime."[30] The new formulation is capable of accommodating religious diversity beyond what is currently practiced in Western society. The society that requires a new formulation of the conditions for political pluralism "is characterized not simply by a pluralism of comprehensive religious, philosophical, and moral doctrines but by a pluralism of incompatible yet reasonable comprehensive doctrines."[31] Rawls is using the term "comprehensive" here to denote a set of norms that govern both the private and public spheres. Such a concept could be encountered in the premodern West when Christianity was dominated by the Papal state and monarchies that pledge allegiance to it and, under secularism, which Rawls describes in *Political Liberalism* as comprehensive liberalism. The first formulation of pluralism in the West followed the fragmentation of the religious unity of Middle-Age Europe. Rawls contends that early liberal thinkers,

such as Kant and Hume, built the conception of reasonable pluralism on a "pluralism of comprehensive doctrines, including religious and non-religious doctrines" that defined their age. They also viewed the advent of political pluralism as a positive development and "as the natural outcome of the activities of human reason under enduring free institutions."[32]

The principle of pluralism is essential for accommodating diverse religious, philosophical, and moral doctrines, but it would only work in well-ordered societies whose citizens affirm a shared conception of justice. For such affirmation to take place, citizens must agree that "reasonable but opposing comprehensive doctrines belong to an overlapping consensus: that is, they generally endorse that conception of justice as giving the content of their political judgments on basic institutions."[33] For the overlapping consensus to work, people should act on a form of justice that is seen as reasonable, but not necessarily rational. The distinction between the reasonable and the rational used by Rawls is intended to distinguish between acting on the basis of rights and acting on the basis of ethical values that form the basis of substantive rationality of a particular religious or rational moral system. Acting out of reasonable evaluation of a particular act or maxim constitutes political liberalism, whereas acting on the basis of rational evaluation belongs to comprehensive liberalism, articulated in a particular philosophy or religion. As Rawls puts it, "Political liberalism is based on political justice defined by rights, while comprehensive liberalism is defined by universal values adopted based on one's worldview."[34] Reasonable pluralism is intended therefore to maintain a condition of liberty whereby citizens are willing to abide by a set of political rights established through an overlapping consensus, even though political liberalism does not accommodate the full range of their comprehensive set of values. People will be able to act in public in accordance with their system of values as long as that act is done under conditions of liberty as defined by public reason, even though others might find that objectionable when viewed from their comprehensive sense of morality.[35] The overlapping consensus achieved socially allows for the creation of constitutional consensus that provides the political infrastructure for democratic electoral procedures whose aim is to mediate the political demands of a pluralist society. The constitutional consensus as such is required to achieve agreement on the rule of the political game and hence has a formal and structural significance in comparison with the overlapping consensus which is substantive and value oriented.

Habermas' communicative action theory provides additional conceptualization for developing overlapping consensus, which I term here "dialogical consensus" because it is articulated and advanced through multilateral dialogues among social actors who articulate the full range of values and interests of modern society. He recognizes, through the work of Durkheim and Mead, that the communicative action central to social integration was historically developed by replacing the "religious symbols" of premodern society. This process in which the symbolic was replaced by the rational is termed by Durkheim as "the linguistification of the sacred." The consensus borne out

discursively through rational debates in accordance with democratic rules is superior because it allows the citizens to accept laws and rules that are intelligible and subject to reflection and improvement. The linguistification of sacred symbols and meaning made it possible for authority of the sacred to be expressed by rational exchanges and attached to secular authority guided by a political text that has been debated and accepted by the society. The process of consensus-building proposed by Habermas provides us with an updated version of the discursive consensus generated by Muslim jurists around the tenth century. The linguistification of the sacred is surprisingly very analogous to the work undertaken by the rational idealists of Islam, as it resembles the rational system developed first by al-Jassas and al-Ghazali, and later refined by Ibn Abdul Salam and Al-Shatibi, whom we discussed in Chapter 5. This new formulation is bound to generate more inclusive debate across the cultural and religious divide in years to come and could be a launching pad for a more inclusive globalization process.

In the midst of the noise of extreme voices on the right and the left, a quite but persistent work is done by intellectuals and practitioners on both sides of the divide to develop the conditions for a more inclusive global order. The focus on dialogical consensus and global pluralism is healthy and represents serious work in the direction of the evolution of world history, toward more globally inclusive conditions. The work is still in its early stages, and there is a need for greater collaboration at the level of intellectual exchange and social–political cooperation.

The road ahead

The analysis of globalization has repeatedly pointed, throughout this book, to a historical trend that persisted over the past three millennia and hence is more likely to persist into the future. All indications point to an ever-increasing acknowledgment of the principles of equal dignity of all peoples and of shared humanity. The interdependence of societies across the globe has never been as important and real as it is today, with the advancement of technology and the realization that the globe is less of a disjointed geographies separated by mountains and oceans and more of a spaceship traveling over immense time and space, carrying billions of people whose fate is joined together and who have equal responsibility of maintaining the course of global progress and keeping the limited provisions available for this and future generations under control. After countless centuries of certainty in the boundless resources of planet earth, we are confronted today for the first time with the realization that even the air we breathe and the water we drink are precious commodities with limited quantities that require a global cooperation to protect and manage.

The question we confront today is not whether globalization is here to stay but rather what kind of a global age that awaits humanity? Will the diverse global society commit to the principles of equality, freedom, social

justice, convergence, cooperation, knowledge, and consensual relationships? Or will humanity succumb to the old habits of hierarchy, control, imposition, abuse, violent clashes, and blissful ignorance? The answers to these questions are shrouded in uncertainty as global convergence hits new obstacles rooted in the human follies of arrogance and greed, hidden behind carefully crafted language that justifies subjugation of other people in the name of natural selection that necessitates social hierarchy and the order of rank at the root of extreme inequality and oppression. The overall world history should be nonetheless a source of encouragement and optimism. The future is, as always has been, open to possibilities grounded in the choices people make, the values they uphold, the ideas they embrace, and, most importantly, the type of leadership that emerges in any particular moment of human history. These have always been the important factors in the march of cultures and societies in one direction or the other and the illusion of a directional historical movement from the East to the West or from the South to the North that some philosophers of history may fancy or prophesize is born out of a truncated views of history. The European continent was home to an advanced civilization that connected it to the entire Mediterranean basin in the first century under Pax Romana only to be reduced to disjointed cantons under feudalism with little possibilities for trade and learning in the eighth century. China was a great civilization in the fifth century before it underwent gradual degradation, leading to illiteracy and poverty in seventeenth and nineteenth centuries. China today is experiencing a new dawn of science and education, with the potential to overtake the United States as the global economic power, while the latter continues to fight quixotic wars in the Middle East that had depleted its resources and corrupted its government. The Islamic civilization grew and prospered for a millennium from the seventh to the seventeenth centuries, but the descendants of the people who lived under it are now living in dire conditions. While the accumulation of knowledge and technology has progressed throughout history, the quality of life in expansive geographies has experienced long periods of boom and bust, at great cost to countless peoples and generations. Again, the question is: can we finally put an end to the state of affairs in which one part of humanity prospers at the expense of others? Technically, this is not only possible today but even desirable for the well-being of everyone who lives on our ever-shrinking planet. But this will not happen automatically, as the global dynamic is still controlled by stratified social hierarchies, which have become increasingly cut-off and isolated from the larger populations and seem to be willing to sacrifice the long-term interests of humanity for short-term benefits to those who have an unsaturated appetite for power and wealth.

The future remains open to various possibilities as we stand today at an important juncture that deserves deep and careful thought about the best course of action to be taken. Will those who have the power to chart a better course for all people succumb to doubt, fear, and greed and hence choose to

put their faith in power and enjoy the comfort of the moment? Or will they place their faith in humanity and the potential that lies in human cooperation for a better future for all? Will the world witness the emergence of imaginative, creative, and enlightened leadership, or will we see the continuation of the reliance on power, force, and control by dominant elites, who in their moment of intoxication with power, would get lost in the illusion of using technological advancement to control the globalizing society? None of us can rationally answer those questions with full certainty, but if we were to consult the deepest voices at the core of our shared humanity, I believe we would be willing to bet on the principles of equity and cooperation and would place our faith in human idealism.

The uncertainties and anxieties we found ourselves in as we complete the second decade of the twenty-first century is blamed on religious differences between Islam and Christianity, the two sister religions that are so similar today that the only remarkable difference between them lies in the millennia-long debate about the abstract conceptualization of the nature of Christ, as well as in the ceremonial and ritualistic aspects of religion. Such disagreements can hardly be a foundation for collective hatred and distrust. The wars that are fought in the name of the struggle of "good against evil" ultimately rest on misconceptions and assumptions promoted by elites driven by ambition and particular interests and who are evidently willing to sacrifice the dignity and well-being of humanity for realizing the particular interests they represent and fulfilling their false sense of religious and ethnic supremacy. This is the obvious explanation for privileging doctrinal components of religions borne out of speculations and junctures, while shunning the values and moral demands at the core of any religious teachings. These conflicts and clashes among religions are perpetuated by factions within these religions who ground their faith in power, legalism, and ideological constructs whose aim is to justify the aggrandizement of power and defend the benefactors of religious and cultural wars. These are the groups we subsumed in this study under the categories of extremism and doctrinal realism. These realists, surprisingly, have been willing to undertake limited cooperation to keep the flame of religious, sectarian, and national conflicts going. How else could we explain the cooperation between Western realists and Arab autocrats despite the fact that the latter are the main proponents of anti-liberalism? And what explains the cooperation between the Iranian clerics under Khomeini and the conservatives under Ronald Reagan in the 1980s for providing arms to the right-wing Sandinista front in Nicaragua? While those who work for deepening the divide among nations and religions collaborate to perpetuate the mistrust, those who carry the rational ideals shared by nations and religions are in complete paralysis, drifting silently with the currents that continue to brew up the perfect storm that threatens the future of humanity. The world today is in dire need to hear from those who care deeply about the ideals of equality, freedom, justice, human rights, and cooperation. Academic and intellectual honesty is needed today more than ever before for rational idealism

to emerge across religious and national divides to speak the language of peace and cooperation and to pave the way toward a global age that could bring humanity closer to the ideals that carried world cultures from the Axial Age to the postmodern moment on the strength of deep faith in the unity of the universal order and the unity of humanity.

Notes

1 Francis Fukuyama, *Identity: The Demand for Dignity and the Politics of Resentment* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2018), 104.
2 Ibid.
3 Ibid, 127.
4 Oswald Spengler, *The Decline of the West*, trans. Francis Atkinson, vol. 2 (New York: Alfred A. Knopf), 31.
5 Arnold Toynbee, *A Study of Civilization: Abridgement by D.C. Somervell* (New York: Oxford University Press, 946), 214
6 Ibid, 254.
7 Samuel P. Huntington, *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1996), 308–312.
8 Olivier Roy, *Secularism Confronts Islam*, trans. George Holoch Jr. (New York: Colombia University Press, 2007), 9.
9 Ibid, 45.
10 Ibid, 55.
11 Ibid, xi.
12 Ibid.
13 Olivier Roy, *Holy Ignorance When Religion and Culture Part Ways*, trans. Ros Schwartz (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013), 2.
14 Ibid, 4.
15 Ibid, 9.
16 Fukuyama, *Identity*, 61.
17 Ibid, 62.
18 Francis Fukuyama, *The End of History and the Last Man* (New York: Avon Books, 1992), 213.
19 Ibid, 215–218.
20 Ibid, 216–217.
21 Ibid, 254.
22 Robert Erlewine, *Monotheism and Tolerance Recovering a Religion of Reason* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2010), 8.
23 See, for example, John Hick, *God Has Many Names* (Philadelphia, PA: Westminster John Knox Press, 1980), and *God and the Universe of Faiths* (Oxford: One world Publications Ltd., 1973).
24 Ibid, 21–22.
25 Todd Hedrick, *Rawls and Habermas Reason, Pluralism, and the Claims of Political Philosophy* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2010), 1.
26 This is the essence of Descartes's new epistemology as he expounded in the *Meditations on the First Philosophy*, discarding premodern knowledge unless it can be founded on purely rational argumentations.
27 Michel Foucault, in *Discipline and Punishment and the Order of Things*, problematizes modern rationality, and so does the work of Jacques Derrida.
28 Ibid, 3.
29 Ibid, 8–12.
30 John Rawls, *Political Liberalism* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2005), 12.

31 Ibid.
32 Ibid, 18.
33 Ibid, 70.
34 Ibid, 102.
35 Ibid, 118–119.

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