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6

Jihadism Is Posing a New Challenge

This chapter deals with religions in general and Islam in particular. It is not about terrorism. Terrorism is a symptom, not a cause. Terrorism is a nasty irritant, but it is not a life-threatening danger to any society unless we make it so. The cause of most of today's terrorism is jihadism, and it is this phenomenon that is worthy of a closer look. It can only be examined as a challenge to Islam, which in turn can only be understood within a broader study of religion. From the perspective of this book, the germane issue about jihadism is its rejection of democracy and the nation-state.

Religion and Democracy

For the social scientist, there is a nagging doubt about the value of generalizations in this field. Societies differ markedly from each other. They have different geographies and different histories that are the drivers of change. They often have different beliefs and values. And there are clearly no pre-ordained paths for them to follow because in a sense they each make it up as they go along. But to take this doubt to its logical conclusion is to create a devastating vacuum. To say everyone is different and every step is new is to see the world as unknowable, unpredictable, and beyond comparison. While there are often surprising events, more often than not developments are consistent and expected. Let's face it, everybody makes basic generalizations to make sense of everyday life. Further, there would be no social science scholarship without generalizations.

They are necessary components of any system of understanding society. The problem can be rephrased as the need to understand the limits of generalizations and the need to look at predictability from the perspective of likelihood rather than certainty. Armed with this context, religion can better be discussed and the issues generalized.

The relationship between democracy and religion is tricky. There clearly needs to be some sort of *modus vivendi* between democracy and religion given the significant influence each has on society. But the relationship is not simple, partly because religions cannot be said to be democratic institutions and indeed may not see democracy as in their interests. In search of an accommodation, it is necessary to unpack a few basic aspects of religion from the political or sociological perspective. The first important premise is that religious dogma is necessarily unreliable. The world has seen hundreds of mutually contradictory religions—one god or many, this prophet or that, a certain belief or another. The chance that the dogma of one of these hundreds of religions is correct while all the others are wrong is unfathomably infinitesimal. While practitioners might look to hermeneutic interpretations to justify their acceptance or otherwise of democracy, logicians cannot. The content of religious texts is therefore inherently irrelevant and is a hindrance to the understanding of the role of religion in relation to society and democracy. What texts say is irrelevant, but what people who profess belief in those texts do is very much a matter worthy of study.

The majority of people in the world profess to belong to a religion, whereas only a small percentage has the courage to adopt agnosticism or atheism. So the role of religion may well be significant. Examining the majority that profess belief in religion, many if not most do so for reasons of ascription and identity rather than blind belief in religious dogma. Accordingly, religion is one of those attributes ascribed to a person at birth, which is then often followed by religious instruction and the practice of religious ritual. And religion is a key means of identification, sometimes but not always reinforced by other identifiers such as race and language. Indeed, where there are no racial or linguistic distinctions, religion usually is the key means of identification. Ascription and identification are often linked and strengthened by external indicators of religion—dress, dietary taboos, hirsuteness, and certain idiosyncratic conduct.

Ascriptive allegiances are particularly convenient for those claiming political leadership of a community defined by ascription—religion, race, language, displacement, or other form of inheritable minority or distinctive status. There is necessarily a common enemy—the other or others. Membership is not easily dispensed with, as it is cemented by the

glue of allegiance to family. Orthodoxy invariably comes with a code of physical identification making it that much more difficult to relinquish. Ascriptive communities do not spring up easily or quickly; they usually claim distinctive creation myths and a heritage stretching back to time immemorial. Ascriptive communities can be seen as responding to certain evolutionary societal needs for security, cooperation, and connectedness. For leaders, these are captive communities. Leaders derive status, importance, and material benefits from their positions. They can tax or tithe, often select to their desires for marriage or sex, and wield influence by interpretation of texts and judging purported infractions. Leaders of ascriptive communities are unlikely to find it in their interests to submit to the vagaries of democracy.

Those with a blind belief in dogma or an unquestioning belief in and no identification beyond their own ascriptive communities will find it difficult to deal with the culture of democracy. Many people, however, are able to break free of their ascriptive allegiances, and modern urban environments have facilitated this form of liberation. But this is not a situation that can be rendered in clear black and white. There are many shades of gray. There are many way stations between uncompromising belief and quietist tolerant belief in a particular religion; and between total adherence to the sanctity of traditional community beliefs and accepting its place as one of many faiths within a multicultural society. It is in this gray area that democracy can find a place, and it is in the black-and-white world of absolute certainty that democracy is starved of the oxygen of deliberation and contestation that it needs to survive.

One important tactic that was developed to allow for the *modus vivendi* between democracy and religion is the accidental invention of secularism, constitutionally enshrined by the Founding Fathers. America was settled by victims of religious intolerance. Its first settlers were deeply religious communities that had not been allowed to practice their faith freely in their lands of origin. Their religions were invariably minority religions at odds with mighty state religions. Many religions, claiming absolute truth, have little choice but to be evangelical on the grounds that not to be so would be uncaring of the unbelievers. And it is more than likely that if any of the early minority religions of North America were able to transform itself into a hegemonic state religion, it would have done so. But it was tough enough maintaining orthodoxy within one's own community and plainly impossible to force that orthodoxy onto outsiders scattered in the American vastness. Accordingly, the religious communities of this new world took the

pragmatic view that each should be allowed to practice its own religion and that no single religion should dominate the others. This brilliant realist acceptance of the situation in the new world in which they had settled was eventually given expression in the First Amendment to the US Constitution, which famously articulated the key proposition of secularism when it stated:

Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; or abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press; or the right of the people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the Government for a redress of grievances.

Far from being a protestation of atheism, as is mistakenly believed or mischievously misinterpreted in parts of the world, secularism is a means of defending religious practice by safeguarding it from the state or from other religions. Secularism is not antithetical to the practice of religion but allows it to fit within the practice of democracy. For this reason it has been adopted in one form or another in countries around the world. The dividing line between church and state is not always without various historical inconsistencies. For example, Britain's constitutional monarch is the head of a state religion, which means, according to the official monarchical website:

In the United Kingdom, The Queen's title includes the words "Defender of the Faith." This means Her Majesty has a specific role in both the Church of England and the Church of Scotland. As established Churches, they are recognized by law as the official Churches of England and Scotland, respectively. In both England and Scotland, the established Churches are subject to the regulation of law.¹

But the website goes on to say that "the principle of religious toleration is fully recognized both for those of other creeds and for those without any religious beliefs."

Another apparent anomaly is the fact that one of Germany's principal political parties is the Christian Democrat Union (CDU). The post-World War II establishment of the CDU needs to be seen in its historical context. One reason for the rise of Adolf Hitler was the division of political party support among Christians between Catholics and Protestants, thus weakening what should have been a strong Christian voice against Hitler. The establishment of the CDU was intended to bring all Christian voices together in one political party that would henceforth act as a bulwark against extremism.² Thus, while its adherents may be motivated by

Christian ideals, the CDU does not privilege any one church and, indeed, is dedicated to secularism and modernity.

Turning to another great democracy, India, one also finds a major political party, the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), the current incumbent, apparently based on a religion, Hinduism. Although Hinduism is clearly the majority religion in India, there are also many millions of adherents to other religions, including Islam, Buddhism, and Christianity. For example, there are as many Muslims in India as in Pakistan. So is this party practicing ascriptive politics based on a crude majoritarian calculus? Not according to its platform, which claims that "Hindutva [BJP's underlying philosophy] is a nationalist, and not a religious or theocratic, concept" and which quotes a Mahatma Gandhi saying, "There is in Hinduism enough room for Jesus as there is for Muhammad, Zoroaster and Moses." Of course, this does not guarantee that some adherents and even leaders will not fall back on crude majoritarian tactics, but it is important to begin with the premise that this is not the party's philosophy or stated intention.

One therefore can find in successful democracies different ways of accommodating religious aspects of society without religious leaders also being political leaders or religious laws being national laws. As was noted earlier, in one example a sovereign must be of a particular religion and is given a religious title ("Defender of the Faith"), but this does not translate into direct political power. There are also the examples of political parties on two continents that may be inspired by certain religious ideals but nevertheless behave in secular ways by not trying to impose their religious views through political means. Are these examples useful in relation to finding an accommodation between democracy and Islam?

The Arab and Islamic Worlds in Context

Why is the Arab world of particular significance to the international community and to the issue of democracy? After all, the combined population of the nations comprising the Arab League is only 370 million, which amounts to only about 5 percent of the world's population. Oil is, needless to say, an important part of the response. But even when the oil runs out, the Arab world will remain significant. One reason is because developments in the Arab world suggest that there might be a viable alternative to democracy.

The third wave of democratization that gathered force with the fall of the Berlin Wall was the first truly global wave. Its waters washed

over Asia, Africa, South and Central America, and of course Eastern Europe. Central Asia did not feel much of an effect, with the notable exception of Mongolia, which continues to hold fast to democracy. Central Asia had to deal with "desovietization" as well as issues of national identity and the collapsing CMEA economic system. Central Asian countries have no history of civil society formation or multiparty contestation, and it is perhaps explicable that there has been a continuation of authoritarian government though events in Kyrgyzstan in 2010 demonstrated that Central Asia's people may yet demand democracy.

The other region initially unaffected by the third wave was the Arab region. One can construct elaborate explanations for this Arab exceptionalism going back to the Ottoman Empire and the subsequent colonial divisions and spoliation, but the popular uprisings of the Arab Spring that burst forth in Tunisia in late 2010 and spread to half a dozen other Arab states suggested that Arab people were not exceptions to the rule but simply late to the party. From the perspective of the universal value and applicability of democracy this level of Arab demand filled an important lacuna. The Arab region is significant because it completes the universal picture of all or parts of every region and every civilization turning to democracy.

But as I noted previously, the main demand of the Arab Spring demonstrators was not democracy but dignity. Many saw these as broadly overlapping terms or even synonyms. The democracy support community certainly adopted this perspective and poured resources into the Arab world in support of its thesis. That thesis is well-founded only if there is no competing ideology that also promises to deliver dignity. But there is another ideology promising dignity. Islam is that ideology. In this regard, the term *ideology* is more appropriate than *religion* because, as will be discussed, Islam is focused not only on one's spiritual fulfillment but also on one's temporal existence. Like other utopian ideologies, Islam promises a system of law and government that will bring perfection in this world.

The question of the Arab peoples' demand for democracy remains open. If it turns out that it is democracy that they are ultimately after, then the value seen in democracy is truly universal and the task before the nations of the world is to work hard to turn that value into a working and sustainable system that delivers strong (though far from perfect) outcomes. But if the people of the Arab world turn to Islam as their form of law and government, then democracy cannot be claimed to be the universally desired system. Democracy may not be utopian, but it does see itself as universally applicable, so for an entire region of the world to hold out is a significant detriment.

The discussion thus far has dealt with the Arab world, which for ease of reference can be defined as the twenty-two nations of the Arab League. Within the world of Islam, however, this is a minority. There are well over one billion Muslims outside the Arab League nations. They comprise the majority in several large non-Arab nations—Indonesia, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Iran, Turkey, Afghanistan, and Malaysia—and several former Soviet republics. Using the Freedom House guide, none of these countries, nor any from the Arab League, are seen as "free," though several are in the "partly free" category and hold competitive elections.³ Iran also holds elections, but the religious establishment has the discretion to disqualify candidates, and even once in office, ultimate power resides with the religious hierarchy; this makes Iran a theocracy and clearly "not free." Afghanistan is in the midst of a continuing civil war and is also "not free." None of the former Soviet republics are "free." The remaining countries are all "partly free" and therefore more interesting from a democracy perspective.

Pakistan and Bangladesh have been holding elections for many years, and they are often meaningful and expressive. But the military has cast a constant shadow over both countries by either violently taking over or exercising a type of veto power. Pakistan is on the verge of its own civil war, which is ongoing in the tribal areas bordering Afghanistan and whose tentacles are reaching into the cities. Interestingly, the cause of the current chaos is not democracy but Islam. Pakistan is inextricably tied to Islam because the partition of the British Raj created Pakistan as an expressly Islamic state to distinguish it from India. One interpretation of Pakistan's current travails is that it cannot form a social contract as to the meaning of what it entails to be an Islamic state. Bangladesh's problems have more to do with an irreconcilable form of winner-takes-all partisanship that has a political grip over the nation, but we are also currently seeing an ideological wing of Islam casting its shadow over the country.

Indonesia and Malaysia have also been holding elections for many years. In the Suharto period of Indonesia's modern history, elections were used not as a means to determine leadership but as a formal celebration of existing leadership. In the post-Suharto era, elections have come to have far greater significance, and the election in 2014 of Joko Widodo as president marks the first election of a post-Suharto politician and a final break from that period of Indonesian history. There are several Islamic political parties in Indonesia, but they are having difficulty exerting any great significance in political decisionmaking, though if the wearing of head scarves by women is an indication, Islam is certainly having an increasing social impact.

Malaysia has not had a change of government at the federal level since independence, more than half a century ago. Practicing a type of consociational politics bolstered by soft authoritarianism, the United Malays National Organization (UMNO) together with its Chinese and Indian coalition partners has won every national (but not every state) election. Unlike Indonesia, where some 90 percent of the population lists itself as Muslim, only about 60 percent of Malaysians call themselves Muslim, and the divide is bolstered by ethnic divisions in that the non-Muslim community is primarily of Chinese or Indian ancestry. For much of its history, Malaysia's major opposition party has been the Parti Islam Se-Malaysia (PAS), which sought to challenge UMNO in the Malay Muslim heartland. The result has been a contest between the two Malay parties as to which is the more faithful guardian of Islamic law and values. The dilemma for both parties is that the further this pushed them toward the Islamification of society, the more difficult it was to gain non-Malay support. Anwar Ibrahim and his Justice Party has tried to trump the existing discourse through appeals to democracy and anticorruption with considerable but not decisive success.

Turkey also presents an interesting case study in the place of Islam in politics. For several generations Turkey followed Kemal Atatürk's vision of becoming a modern secular European nation, with the military in the vanguard of this movement. In 2001, Recep Erdoğan, a popular mayor of Istanbul who had fallen foul of the military, established the Justice and Development Party, which swept into office the following year on a platform of reform, anticorruption, and support for Islamic ideals. After some legal squabbling, Erdoğan regained his right to run for office and became prime minister. Ever since, Turkey has been conducting a national conversation, expressed in words and votes, about the place of Islam in society and politics. Having put down the 2016 coup, Erdoğan is consolidating his power and his Islamic vision for Turkey.

In several non-Arab countries with a Muslim majority holding competitive elections, Islam has become the central issue in politics. In Pakistan it is central to national self-identity. In Turkey it centers on the social mores of society and the degree to which Islam will be their arbiter. In Malaysia it expresses itself as a means of winning the Malay vote between two Malay parties, both bidding to be seen as the true champions of Islam. Yet it could not be said that in any of these three large countries there is mainstream support for Islam as an ideology to govern the country. It is more about changing the look and feel of society, displaying indices of piety, and fighting Western permissiveness. Support for Islam the ideology comes from the Arab world.

Islam as Ideology

At what point does a religion cross the threshold and become an ideology? Both religion and ideology can be defined as a set of beliefs and theories to explain the world. Religion does so by reference to a god or gods or some other superhuman being that has a critical role in the explanatory narrative. Further to its set of beliefs, ideology has a vision for the whole society and a means to arrive at this vision. Religions usually list prescribed and proscribed conduct that will please this god. The wider the prescriptions and proscriptions, the closer religion comes to ideology. That is because ideology complements its set of beliefs with its own set of prescriptions and proscriptions to achieve its goal. Whereas religion may satisfy itself with individuals' spiritual well-being, ideology is necessarily interested in temporal matters. Perhaps all religions began as ideologies but gradually moved their sphere of influence toward the spiritual and away from the temporal.

The key distinction then is the breadth of the set of prescriptions and proscriptions, the set of conduct that is *halal* or *haram*. Beginning with the most common, many religions have food taboos as this is an easy way to distinguish one set of believers from the others and also imposes a certain discipline on the religious community. Another common code of conduct concerns dress as, again, this is important to distinguish believers from the others. It also allows for certain gender biases to be given scope, a subject that will be discussed in Chapter 8. Because religions need to sustain themselves on this Earth, it is common for them to have certain taxing power (tithing) though with limited enforcement capacity. It is also common for them to have gatekeeping rules to allow believers to enter or former believers to leave the religion. These conversion and apostasy rules can be a source of conflict in society.

The main friction point between religion and secular society concerns family law. Family law covers the rites of passage—birth, initiation, marriage, death—and various aspects of life associated with these, such as divorce, inheritance, and adoption. The battle between secular society and religion traditionally has centered on the extent to which religion and religious hierarchy will govern the family law aspects of life and whether the state will establish a parallel and competing structure. One of the key distinctions between Christian and Muslim society concerns the degree to which the latter allows a far wider role for religion in family law. While religious governance of family law may well lead to injustices and gender bias, it does not in itself cross the threshold to ideology. Admittedly, a very broad interpretation of family law imposing rules on whom one is allowed

to see and to be seen by, on limitations on mobility, on the proscription of certain cultural products, and on the conduct of personal and business affairs comes close to an ideological view of the world in its effects on those subject to its jurisdiction; but in general, family law is the traditional field of battle between religion and society. Of course, this is a distinction based less on logic than on history and practice. An argument might be advanced that the family is part of the private realm and thus should not be governed by the institutions of the public sphere, but this distinction is becoming ever more difficult to sustain. If there is one important lesson feminists have taught us it is that the personal is political. Until recently, the arc of history has been toward the limitation of religious rules on society even in relation to family law. But has that arc reached its zenith?

Religion becomes ideology when it advances well beyond family law to other aspects of life. When it purports to be the arbiter of what is criminal, it has crossed the line. When it asserts control over enforcement of rules, it has crossed the line. When it claims relations with outsiders can only be viewed in a religious context, it has crossed the line. And when it insists on applying its dogma literally to establish society's rules, it has clearly crossed the line.

Most Muslims wish to contain the struggle of their religion to the confines of the spiritual and the family. Most Muslims recognize national authority and accede to its laws. Most Muslims view the world as a collection of nation-states. Most Muslims are tolerant of other religions. For most Muslims the public conversation concerns the reach of religion on matters of family law but not beyond. For most Muslims, the sort of accommodations that other religions have concluded in their societies—concerning political parties based on religious ideals but not dogma and symbolic public positions being held by co-religionists—would be satisfactory.

Jihadism

The jihadis are not like most Muslims, and their worldview has crossed the threshold from religion to ideology. Jihadis are not reformers. They are not pragmatists. They are not fatalists patiently awaiting theistically driven developments. They may not be united and there may be tactical difference among them, but the jihadis have a fully formed worldview, a utopian goal, and a clear means of getting to it—jihad. There was once a definition of *jihad* as a personal battle for self-improvement, but the insistent howls of the political jihadis have shouted down that meaning.

Today the only commonly understood meaning of *jihad* is pitiless armed struggle to reestablish the caliphate and bring peace and harmony to a Sunni Islam world.

In 2014 a well-armed group of jihadis took control of a significant parcel of territory in Iraq and Syria and declared the Islamic Caliphate. This was a sign of confidence verging on bravado and also a propaganda message to all Muslims that the Mohammedan vision (as interpreted by the jihadis) was not a theoretical construct but an exciting and current project. What does a caliphate entail? The constructive response is that it entails a return to a mythical time a millennium and a half ago when for a fleeting moment Mohammed established paradise on earth. The deconstructive response is a little more complicated. The caliphate is a rejection of the nation-state. It is a rejection of the construction of the international community based on the Treaties of Westphalia in the seventeenth century whereby the local secular prince would have the sovereign right to govern (that is tax, conscript, and impose his religion on) the people within the confines of the territory he controlled. This European invention paralleled the rise of colonialism, which saw it ultimately imposed on the rest of the world such that today there are some two hundred sovereign states. The caliphate is a rejection of those two hundred states. The caliphate is also necessarily a rejection of the international system constructed by those two hundred states. It is necessarily a rejection of international law, the inescapable building blocks of which are sovereign states. It is therefore also a rejection of the thousands of treaties concluded and the international organizations constructed by those sovereign states. That is why communications between the jihadis and the rest of the world are so stilted. The world talks about humanitarian law and Geneva Conventions; the jihadis talk about the Koran and tales of Mohammed and his companions.

Along with the rejection of the international system is the rejection of legislated law. This is a sweeping rejection applying to all positive law from the constitution down to enabling regulations, because such laws are human-made and therefore necessarily imperfect whereas Koranic law was written by god himself through the hand of the illiterate Mohammed and is therefore perfect by definition. Between these opposing views there can only be a dialogue of the deaf. All the virtues that modern society might see in the passage of laws—the debate over options, contestation over different policy visions, deliberations about likely outcomes, eventual adjudication by skilled and dedicated jurists, compassionate enforcement by a caring government—are to the jihadis simply evidence of such laws' imperfection.

Democracy fares no better in the eyes of the jihadis. The first reason is that democracy and sovereignty remain "joined at the hip."⁴ This is because every democracy needs to be able to identify its demos through a census and registration process within a defined territory. And because the world is currently organized in a system of some two hundred sovereign states, it is within each of those states that the institutions of democracy are constructed. Many Arab Islamist movements, such as the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt, Hamas in Gaza (a part of a putative state), and Ennahda in Tunisia, have accommodated themselves to this reality and found doctrinal interpretations that justify the decision to form a political party and run for office in elections within a sovereign state. The main doctrinal support for democracy in the Koran flows from the use of the term *shura*, meaning consultation in a single passage.

The jihadis distinguish themselves from these Islamists by rejecting democracy on a number of grounds.⁵ To begin with, democracy is a human-constructed system, not god-made, and therefore not acceptable to those who follow god's will (as they see it). The rejection of the sovereign state also logically leads to the rejection of that institution to which it is joined at the hip. And it is the embrace of the politics of a sovereign state through participation in democratic processes that has caused the great rift between the jihadis and nationalist Islamist movements. Going beyond the doctrinal issues, however, the jihadis see in democracy only the theoretical rationalization for the autocracies that dominate the Arab world and for the states of Europe and America that support them. Grievance is the fuel that propels jihadis, and the conflation of democracy with the policies of the states they despise is a convenient way of tarring the concept with the brush of grievance.

As noted in Chapter 1, Jihad has certain attractions. Doctrinally, it is simple to understand. The world it describes is one of black and white, right and wrong, allowed and forbidden, *halal* and *haram*. There are no difficult gray areas. Tactically, jihad is particularly convenient. After all, when god has established heaven on earth and shown the path toward it (jihad), nothing can stand in the way. Everything done to progress along that path is justified. Concepts such as human rights or humanitarian law are simply seen as imperfect and inferior positive law at best, and the tricks of the enemies of god at worst. Emotionally, jihad is exciting. The concept of a soldier of god has been a recruiting tool for millennia. Why spend years studying, then competing against many others, while often being discriminated against, simply to achieve a boring middle-class existence when the prospect of adventure in the service of god beckons? Simple, convenient, exciting; no wonder thousands of Muslims from all

over the world including Western countries are flocking to the Levant in the service of jihad. Of course, those thousands of jihadis constitute the smallest fraction of the Muslim world. The vast majority of Sunnis understands the reckless folly of the jihadi mission. They understand that it will fail to live up to the impossible rhetoric. They are embarrassed and discomfited by an ideology that tries to turn the clock back a millennium and a half. But as in any large group there will be some who stand outside the bounds of group constraint. That is the catchment area jihadi recruitment targets.

Is there a competing political movement that stands in the way of jihad? On the battlefield, jihadis may win or lose various skirmishes, but the war can only be won within the Muslim world as a whole and the Arab world in particular. The bitterness of the feud between jihadis and the Arab nationalist Islamists is a sign that this is the key friction point of the war. Both groups are fueled by similar grievances and appeal to similar disaffected individuals. The nationalists have chosen to accept the modern world as it is, including the existence of sovereign states over which they wish to exert influence. On the whole the Arab nationalist political movements have heeded the call of the mid-twentieth-century Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood to work peacefully. Success in peaceful political contestation through incumbency and the patronage and policy power it confers would be the best argument in the contest against the jihadis. But democratic success is always compromised. There is forever the fear of losing the next election. There are always the constraints on action imposed by positive law, by querulous civil society, and by the international community. Democracy cannot lead to utopia, though it can avoid dystopia. Yet even this constrained form of success has eluded the Arab Islamist parties. Hamas in its frustration has turned to armed conflict, the result of which can only be loss and further grievance. The Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood won office but governed incompetently. A democratic system should have been allowed to operate and to punish that government at the polls, but instead the army stepped in, and one effect may be to push the Brotherhood to violence. Ennahda holds out some prospect of democratic success and is the role model for finding an accommodation between Islam and democracy in the Arab Sunni world.

Wahhabism

Developments in the Arab world are far more influential than developments in the Muslim world as a whole. While Islam has pretensions to be

a global religion and, indeed, *the* global religion, it is an Arabic-language religion—as god wrote the Koran in Arabic—and this establishes the Arabic-speaking people as its privileged members. It follows that Arabs do not consider the non-Arabic speaking countries as particularly interesting or relevant as role models. John Stuart Mill counselled to only compare like with like, and it is human nature to focus on difference. Racial, ethnic, and linguistic differences trump religious similarities. Political developments in Indonesia and Malaysia or Pakistan and Afghanistan are not followed closely in the Arab streets. Politics in Turkey are of greater interest given the Ottoman connection to the Arab world and Turkey's role as a regional hub. Thus, while academics and commentators may look to precedents of Islamic accommodation with democracy in places such as Indonesia and Turkey, most Arabs do so only fitfully.

The types of Islam being practiced are also quite different within and outside the Arab world. Southeast Asian Islam, for example, is hardly seen as relevant to the Arab world because it is famously syncretic.⁶ In this region, Islam was an accretion on previous religious practices and was happily blended into them. The Talibanization of Afghanistan and perhaps even Pakistan is of more interest to traditional communities, though it has very little to attract sophisticated urban Arabs. Wahhabism is the Islam that is making waves in the Arab world. The impact of Wahhabism can be measured in monetary terms: "Estimates of Saudi spending on the funding of Muslim cultural institutions across the globe and the forging of close ties to non-Wahhabi Muslim leaders and intelligence agencies in various Muslim nations that have bought into significant elements of the Wahhabi worldview range from \$75 to \$100 billion."⁷

I recently taught a short course at a university in Najaf, in southern Iraq, a city that prides itself on being the birthplace of Shiite Islam. It seemed far removed from the chaos in other parts of Iraq, and the city had a strong sense of community. I was struck by the commonly repeated analysis from academics and clergy that all the problems of the Arab world flow from Wahhabism. The problem was not the Sunni branch of the religion but, in their view, the Wahhabi sect. A few years earlier I had been giving a talk in Tunis, capital of Tunisia, and in the discussion that followed, several people talked about the destabilizing tactics of the Saudi and Qatari governments in propagating Wahhabism in Tunisia. One participant lost his temper, asking, "Why do these people want to impose a Bedouin religion on me? I am a city person and I will follow Islam as a city person." There is considerable truth in this accusation. Wahhabism is the biggest part of the problem of jihadism. The problem flows from the notion of "purity" propagated by Wahhabism. It is, on reflection, an

absurd concept in relation to any religion. Religion is a function of human society, and it cannot logically exist in a "pure" form. Furthermore, it leads to the struggle against impurity, from which concepts such as *takfir* flow. *Takfir* is the accusation that because of his or her conduct the accused has turned away from Islam and should be treated as an apostate, for which some believe capital punishment should apply. So to the Wahhabi worldview, a rejection of this Bedouin sect is apostasy.

Whether jihadis trace their doctrine to Wahhabism or not, jihadism flows directly from its concepts. That does not necessarily mean that the Saudi government is supporting jihadism. In fact, Saudi Arabia is a victim of jihadi terrorism. But jihadism draws doctrinally from Wahhabi ideology and financially from private Gulf money, itself generated by oil. Wahhabism is based on a simplistic concept to return to "pure" Islam. It is an attempt to turn back the clock 1,400 years to the time of the Prophet. It draws on the religion's creation myths and takes them literally. It is necessarily intolerant of any other strand of Islam. Jihadism has borrowed these concepts and in many ways is a purer form of Islam than the Saudi Wahhabi version, which has partly accommodated itself to the modern international community. Jihadis accuse the Saudis of being impure, demonstrating the plasticity of the concept of purity.

The Wahhabi push for Islamic purity, patriarchy, and asceticism has had limited influence in Southeast Asia but far greater impact in Pakistan and Afghanistan, where it provides a major means of schooling. The closest Sunni Islam comes to a ruling hierarchy is the Wahhabi establishment in Saudi Arabia, and, bolstered by Saudi wealth, Wahhabism is able to exert influence in the Sunni world. As noted, it has a tense relationship with jihadism, with which it shares doctrinal similarities but with which it differs on the issue of sovereignty. Saudi Arabia's social contract is to grant the Saud family the right to govern while allowing an unfettered Wahhabi monopoly on religious issues. The problem with this social contract is its imprecision. Problems of governance can be papered over while wealth is generated from oil. Mismanagement and corruption can be forgiven when there is so much to go around. Whenever the Saudi authorities are confronted with public disquiet, they merely shower more money on Saudi citizens. The problem arises more acutely over the other part of the social contract: religious issues. How broadly does this term extend? It extends to teaching Wahhabism all over the Muslim world. It extends to funding groups that share Wahhabi ideals. And there is no doubt in my mind that it extends to funding jihadism. Once again, the common denominator for success is oil—all that funding must come from somewhere.

Which leads me to a sour piece of optimism. Jihadism is weak in numbers and influence, and so it must resort to the weapon of the weak, terrorism. Ideologically and financially jihadism is largely fueled by Wahhabism. Wahhabism's global influence flows from oil. When that oil stops being pumped because the world recognizes that to protect the planet the oil reserves must remain stranded, Wahhabism will slowly but surely lose its global influence. Jihadism will lose its principal patron. And terrorism will recede.

Conclusion

The ideological choices facing the denizens of the Arab streets are not particularly attractive. Democracy is losing its soft power and is associated with Western permissiveness, including homosexuality. The type of liberal constitutionalism in support of democracy has fewer and fewer adherents in part because of the conflation of this Western developed system with unpopular Western policies. The political parties that champion this system are particularly weak and only have a hope of success in Tunisia. In Egypt, for example, the champions of democracy gravitate toward civil society rather than politics and therefore have the more limited role of carping from the sidelines.

Islam is the force that motivates people in the Arab world today. The expression of Islam in politics takes several forms. From democracy's perspective, the most hopeful path is the acceptance by Islamic political parties of the institutions of democracy and perhaps eventually the culture of democracy. Various Islamic parties agreed to play by the rules of the game, but the results have not been positive. The Islamic Salvation Front in Algeria was a straw in the wind. It won local elections and began the process of learning how to govern at the local level. In 1991 it won national elections, but before it could take the reins of government an army coup, with tacit Western support, toppled it, leading to a decade of bitter civil war. The next great chapter was written by the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt, with very similar results as in Algeria though Egypt has thus far avoided civil war. Once again, only Ennahda in Tunisia shows some promise of finding an accommodation between Islamism and democracy.

Inertia is often a popular choice and, it can be argued, has been the dominant choice in the Arab world for many decades. Inertia means rule by either kings or generals. Many people in the Arab world will laud the stabilizing role of monarchy. It is the system in use in much of the Gulf,

in Jordan, and in Morocco. A distinction needs to be made between the royal families of the Arab world and the constitutional monarchies of northern Europe. A couple of little anecdotes may illustrate the issue. Many years ago, as a junior diplomat in Paris, I accompanied the Australian ambassador to Rabat, where he presented credentials to King Hassan II. We were not to wear suits, national dress, or even evening dress for the occasion. The Moroccan embassy in Paris (from where many ambassadors are accredited to Morocco) gave me a sheet of instructions explaining that we had to hire tails and top hat for the ceremony. We were dressed to the tails, but the Chief of Protocol who accompanied us to the palace was in his military whites. What struck me most that day were the hundreds of male courtiers sitting on the floor along both sides of the long corridors in their comfortable *jalabiyyahs* playing with their prayer beads and doing strictly nothing. It would have looked the same hundreds of years ago. Now fast-forward to a few years back in Oslo where I found myself in a delegation accompanying Ted Turner, who dropped in on the palace to say hi to his old yachting buddy, King Harald V of Norway. In fact it was Queen Sonja who gave us the tour of the palace. What stands out in my memory was a rather tetchy explanation by the queen of how mean the parliament was being in denying her the funds to replace the tatty curtains. Thus can one witness the difference between the medieval monarch and the modern constitutional monarch.

They may address each other as brothers and sisters, but they are different species. The northern European constitutional monarchies are true figureheads. Their political power is minimal. Importantly, they have little or no private wealth and are dependent on the public purse. In return they provide an important service as role models, national representatives, and chief mourners in national tragedies. The Arab royal families are executive rulers or hold a veto power on government decisions. Far from being poor, they are the wealthiest families in their kingdoms, and they use their political power to protect and indeed increase their wealth. While they retain this wealth, they cannot be transformed into northern European-style constitutional monarchs. Inertia means remaining under this type of feudalism, with royal paternalism being the best possible outcome. The Jordanian royal family seems at first blush to be the exception, but when I tried to discuss this with civil society colleagues in Amman, they went into silent mode, so perhaps we should leave a question mark there.

Are the generals different? They may begin their tenure as popular heroes preaching pan-Arabism or Baathism or simply anticolonialism, but they invariably fall into the pharaonic mindset and begin to resemble

kings. They prefer dynastic politics, with the best example being the Assads in Syria. They rule through absolutism, with the best example being Qaddafi in Libya. They develop megalomania, with the best example being Saddam in Iraq. These are the precedents open to Abdel Fattah el-Sisi in Egypt, along with three other pharaonic former military figures—Gamal Abdel Nasser, Anwar Sadat, and Hosni Mubarak.

A rejection of greedy monarchs or absolutist generals should lead to democracy. But with its soft power in retreat, militant Islam becomes a viable alternative. Compared to the deeply unattractive Wahhabi Bedouin style of Islam, the tribal mentality of the Afghani and Pakistani Taliban, and the failed attempts to govern by nationalist Islamists, modern jihadism as practiced by al-Qaeda or the Islamic State has its attractions. It attracts adherents because of its simplicity, convenience, and excitement. A disaffected Arab youth with few prospects, little hope, and many grievances will see the jihadi project as the adventure of a lifetime. And so will Muslim youths in the Western or Russian worlds, especially if they are already on the wrong side of the law. Through the eyes of many young people, jihad is far more appealing than democracy.

Notes

1. Royal Family webpage, "The Queen, the Church and Other Faiths", <https://www.royal.uk/queens-relationship-churches-england-and-scotland-and-other-faiths>.
2. CDU, "History of the CDU," <http://www.cdu.de/partei/geschichte>.
3. Freedom House, *Freedom in the World*, 2014, http://freedomhouse.org/report-types/freedom-world#U_Nz5PldVlo.
4. Laurence Whitehead, "State Sovereignty and Democracy," in Peter Burnell and Richard Youngs (eds.), *New Challenges to Democratization* (Oxford: Routledge, 2010), p. 27.
5. Nelly Lahoud, *The Jihadis' Path to Self-Destruction* (London: Hurst, 2010). In particular, see the chapter entitled "Why Jihad and Not Democracy."
6. Merle Ricklefs, *Mystic Synthesis in Java: A History of Islamization from the Fourteenth to the Early Nineteenth Centuries* (Norwalk, CT: EastBridge, 2006).
7. James M. Dorsey, "Creating Frankenstein: The Saudi Export of Wahhabism," 2016, <http://mideastsooner.blogspot.sg/2016/03/creating-frankenstein-saudi-export-of.html>.

7

Where Does the Middle Class Stand?

This chapter will gallop through some theories of democratization. These are not theories of democracy, which is a field approaching philosophy, but theories of why and how countries become democracies—a subject anchored in the political science literature. The question is not without significance. Figure 2.2 listed all the democracy support institutions; these groups must rely on some sort of theory of democratization to guide and sustain their work, whether they articulate the theory or not. *Theory* can be a terrifying word. To a layperson it seems to denote complicated formulae with Greek letters, the sort of thing Sheldon from *The Big Bang Theory* would write on his whiteboard. But *theory* is simply another word for *causation*—what caused this to happen? What caused these countries to become democracies? The complication does not flow from the concept of causation with which everybody is comfortable, but from the difficulty of determining causes given the vast number of inputs in the process of democratization and the long length of time for those inputs to have their causative effects. The difficulty lies in sifting through what is causation, correlation, or simply coincidence. *Theory* implies a certain amount of generalization to determine the main cause or causes of democratization.

Three Theories of Democratization

The dominant theory of democratization is modernization theory, which will be the subject of the next section. It might be useful, however, to