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Chapter 2

States, Beliefs, and Ideologies

Political discourse in the modern Arab world, according to a prominent scholar of the region, "has been awash in ideology."[1] The same could be said of politics in the non-Arab Middle Eastern states of Iran, Turkey, and Israel. Middle Eastern political leaders typically pepper their speeches with ideological terms, nationalist and religious imagery, and attacks on domestic opponents and foreign enemies. By comparison, political discourse in the emerging industrial states of Asia tends to focus more explicitly on economic issues, suggesting that political legitimacy there is measured more in terms of national economic growth than it is in the Middle East. Partly because the pace of industrialization in the Middle East has lagged behind East Asia's and Latin America's, Middle Eastern governments seek to legitimate themselves less through references to financial statements than through manipulating nationalist, religious, and other symbols. In the Middle East the primary purposes of ideology, which consists of beliefs and assertions that rationalize behavior, are not to define concrete objectives or identify strategies through which they might be achieved. Instead, ideologies are intended "to reassure both articulator and audience, to engender solidarity, and to resolve problems of personal or group identity." They are, in the words of Clement Henry Moore, "expressive" rather than "practical."[2]

Ideologies are both formal dogma and personal guidelines by which individuals define themselves in relation to society. In both of these manifestations

[1]Michael C. Hudson, *Arab Politics: The Search for Legitimacy* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1977), p. 20.

[2]Clement Henry Moore, "On Theory and Practice Among the Arabs," *World Politics* 19 (October 1971): 106–126.

Middle Eastern ideologies tend toward instability and fragmentation. They are unstable in that they are prone to rapid change, and they are fragmented because they do not inspire the wholehearted commitment of all those for whom the message is intended. Many countries in the region have ethnic, linguistic, and/or religious minorities that subscribe only partially, if at all, to the ideologies sanctioned by their respective states. Kurds, for example, an ethnolinguistic minority group who are overwhelmingly Sunni Muslim, reside in Iraq, Iran, Turkey, and Syria. In the latter they number a few hundred thousand, constitute less than 2 percent of the population, and are scattered among Muslim and Christian Arabs in Damascus and in the north. Having no hope of achieving independence or even autonomy from the government in Damascus, Syrian Kurds, although strongly aware of their own ethnicity, do not publicly articulate demands. They nevertheless covet the right to use the Kurdish language in schools and in the media and to be permitted other legal forms of ethnic expression. Fellow Kurds across the borders with Turkey and Iraq, however, do constitute large minorities whose powers are enhanced by their geographical concentration. Kurdish demands there, and to a somewhat lesser extent in Iran, have been far more expansive than in Syria, extending to claims for autonomy and even independence. Kurdish insurrections in Turkey and Iraq are paralleled at the ideological level by rejections of Turkish and Iraqi nationalisms and their claims to sovereignty in favor of a well-articulated Kurdish nationalism and its implied claim to the same territories.

Throughout the region, Christians' sense of their own national identities likewise varies in accordance with their possibilities of achieving autonomy or independence. In Lebanon, the collapse of the government in the wake of the 1975–1976 civil war made it possible for the large Christian minority, which constitutes about one-third of the population, to carve out an autonomous region that had many of the attributes of a sovereign state until Syria asserted control from late 1989. The ideology of the Lebanese Forces, the most powerful of the Christian militias and political movements at that time, was a strident form of Christian nationalism. It accentuated Lebanon's "distinctive" identity, which it traced to the ancient Phoenicians, thereby devaluing Muslim contributions to Lebanese accomplishments.

Christians in the Middle East as a whole, however, constitute only some 3 percent of the total population. Outside Lebanon they have virtually no chance of attaining political autonomy. Accordingly, they typically seek to express themselves politically within a majoritarian rather than minoritarian framework. Christian Palestinian Arabs have played leading roles in formulating Palestinian nationalism and organizing its various political expressions. In the mid-nineteenth century, Syrian Christian intellectuals laid the foundations for Arab nationalism. In Egypt, Coptic Christians played prominent roles in the interwar nationalist movement and continue to play important public roles.

As the cases of Kurdish and Christian minorities suggest, political behavior and beliefs are strongly conditioned by immediate demographic and political circumstances and are, therefore, subject to change according to those circumstances. This plasticity at the communal level is mirrored by the multiplicity and flexibility of personal identities. Different components of those complex identi-

ties are evoked by varying circumstances. Samir Wahhabi, for example, is a notable from the village of Bait Jann in the Galilee in northern Israel and onetime member of the Knesset (Israeli parliament) for the right-wing Likud Party. He identifies himself as follows: "I belong to the Druze sect, which is part of the Arab minority in Israel. It is part of the Arab nation, and personally my state is the State of Israel. In the past this land was called Palestine, so I could say I belong in that historical sense."[3] To many other Druze from that village, however, Wahhabi's identification with Israel is inappropriate and opportunistic. In their minds the proper Druze identity is Arab and Palestinian but not Israeli.[4] Variability of identities of non-Jewish Israelis is not limited to Druze. A sample of Palestinian Arab citizens of Israel were asked in 1966 whether they identified themselves as Israeli, Arab, or Palestinian. The majority replied that they preferred to call themselves Israelis. A year later, following the June 1967 war, a comparable sample ranked Arab identity first, followed by Palestinian and then Israeli. Seven years later a third survey revealed that only 14 percent of respondents believed the term *Israeli* described them, while 63 percent thought of themselves as Palestinian.[5] This shift in the self-identifications of Palestinian Arabs in Israel reflects the traumatic events of the 1967 war and, more generally, the politicization of that community and its increasing hostility toward Israeli Jews.

Survey research conducted among young citizens from virtually all Arab countries carried out since 1967 for the purpose of gauging preferred identifications of respondents has revealed not only that such identities are multiple but also that they tend to respond to political events and trends. The identities mentioned have included those of family, tribe, ethnic group (Arab, Kurd, Armenian, etc.), religion, citizenship, political party, movement, and ideology. The percentage of respondents identifying themselves as Arab has declined over the past decade, while preferences for Islamic or specific national identities have increased. These changes parallel what many observers believe to be a declining importance of pan-Arabism and its gradual replacement by state-based nationalisms or political Islam.[6]

Multiplicity and plasticity of identity are a reflection of political reality, not personal capriciousness. In this century, the Middle East has been forced to endure upheavals that have repeatedly altered the structural conditions upon which politically relevant beliefs and identities rest. A Lebanese in his or her late eighties, for example, would have entered the world as a subject of the Ottoman Empire and would then, for a brief period, have been under the control of the short-lived Damascus-based Arab state of Amir Faisal. Subsequently this person

[3]Julia Slater, "Palestinians in Israel: Who Are They?" *Middle East International* 329 (July 8, 1988): 16.

[4]*Ibid.*, p. 16.

[5]Lewis W. Snider, "Minorities and Political Power in the Middle East," in *The Political Role of Minority Groups in the Middle East*, ed. by R. D. McLaurin (New York: Praeger, 1979), pp. 247–248.

[6]For a review of this survey data, see Tawfic E. Farah, "Introduction," in *Pan-Arabism and Arab Nationalism: The Continuing Debate*, ed. by Tawfic E. Farah (Boulder, Colorado: Westview Press, 1987), pp. 1–18.

would have become a citizen of French-ruled Lebanon and, after World War II, a citizen of independent Lebanon. For almost a decade and a half after the onset of civil war in 1975, with the almost total collapse of that state, the life of this octogenarian would have been heavily influenced by one or more of the powerful militias that have all but displaced state authority. Since then, Syria has assumed quasi-sovereign status, rendering Lebanese nationality politically, if not psychologically, marginal.[7]

The Lebanese are not unique in having endured historical odysseys that in a lifetime have taken them through numerous national and subnational administrative arrangements and corresponding demands for political loyalties and identities. Palestinians now in their late eighties, for example, have been subjects of the Ottomans, British, and either the Israelis, Jordanians, or perhaps some other Arab state. These changes in citizenship, combined with the mosaic-like character of religious, ethnic, and linguistic groups in the region, help to account for the failure of any political ideology to be permanently established and thereby utterly transform and homogenize personal political identities.

Ideologies tend to sweep through the area gathering strength like hurricanes, then dissipate without having achieved their objectives. Personal identities modified in response to political victories, charismatic leaders, or ideological slogans can just as easily revert to their original forms when the new ideology and its champion encounter defeats. In the wake of the June 1967 Arab-Israeli war, for example, radical Palestinian nationalism tinged by Maoism swept through the Arab world. The Arab states, having promised to "liberate Palestine" but having in fact worked assiduously to contain Palestinian radical nationalism, were discredited by the crushing defeat. In the postwar climate, guerrilla war, rather than the armies of Egypt, Syria, and Jordan, held out the promise of victory over Israel. The Arab states regrouped, however, reestablished their power, and in Jordan in September 1970, which became known as Black September, the Palestine Liberation Organization was crushed. In the wake of that violent confrontation between Palestinian revolutionary mass mobilization and the power of Arab states, infatuation with Palestinian radicalism rapidly faded. Large numbers of Egyptians, Syrians, Iraqis, and other Arabs who had strongly but tem-

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[7]These rapidly changing configurations of sovereign authority, further exacerbated by Lebanon's involvement in the wider Middle East, spawned numerous potential affiliations upon which identities and ideologies can rest. The plethora of choices confronting Lebanese Maronite Christians is instructive:

> If nationalism has rapidly "invaded" the Arab mind, it has not been met with a clear definition of where the nation is. Take the example of a Maronite Lebanese who is told by the historians of his community (and modern warlords) that the Maronite nation has existed for ages. However, those Maronites who have rallied round the 1920 French-defined "Grand Liban" tell him that if the Maronites have ever constituted a nation, this nation has now been diluted in the wider Lebanese modern one. Then the proponents of Greater (or Natural) Syria tell him that Lebanon is a purely artificial creation of colonialist France and that his loyalty should go exclusively to a Syrian nation present since Sumer and the Akkadians. Arab nationalists will insist that the Arab nation is the only "true" nation.

Ghassan Salamé, "Introduction," in *The Foundations of the Arab State*, ed. by Ghassan Salamé (London: Croom Helm, 1987), p. 4.

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porarily identified with the transnationalist revolutionary message disseminated by Palestinians, witnessing the superior power of their own states, reverted to their original national identities and concerns.

In Iran, the 1978–1979 revolution stimulated a wave of enthusiasm for Khomeinism that then swept through the Sunni Muslim Arab world. Impressed by the success of radical Islamic fundamentalism in overthrowing the shah and confronting the United States, Arab Muslims in great numbers became convinced that in radical political Islam they might find solutions to their own problematic confrontations with Israel, the United States, and the authoritarian Arab governments under which they lived. However, the Khomeinist image was quickly tarnished by the war with Iraq, by excesses of the new regime, and by the Islamic Republic's inability to put the economy on a sound footing. Enthusiasm for Khomeinism waned, and although Islamic political activism has persisted, in most cases it has distinguished itself from the Iranian version.

That political ideologies are subject to bandwagon effects—rapidly gaining adherents in response to successes and then losing them as a result of setbacks—indicates that those ideologies are not reinforced by being integrated into political structures. Political leaders, unwilling to have their choices constrained, use ideologies not to institutionalize power but as political weapons to gain popular support that can be used to joust with enemies. Ideologies, in short, are seen as useful adjuncts to political power and are nurtured for that purpose. The Safavids, for example, a Turkish-speaking nomadic people who seized power in Iran at the outset of the sixteenth century, cemented ties to their Persian subjects by converting them from Sunni to Shi'i Islam. For this purpose they recruited Shi'i *ulema* (religious scholars) from what are now Bahrain, Lebanon, and Iraq and lavished them with patronage. In return, the ulema propagated a religious doctrine that emphasized subordination to established authority, thereby reinforcing the Safavid claim to rule.

Four and a half centuries later, Gamal Abdel Nasser of Egypt sought to enhance his powers by championing Arab nationalism and Arab socialism. A man of action rather than words, he delegated the important but mundane tasks of formulating ideology and reconciling it with specific political decisions to *apparatchiks* (party professionals), who previously had perfected their skills when working in radical opposition organizations, such as the Communist Party. In 1962 Saudi Arabia, entering into a military struggle with Egypt in North Yemen and into a broader ideological confrontation with radical Arab nationalism, founded the Muslim League. Its primary purpose was to stimulate Islamic consciousness and, in so doing, to undercut the appeal of radical secularist ideologies, including Nasser's versions of Arab nationalism and socialism. The Muslim League and its successors, the Islamic Pact (formed in 1966) and the Islamic Conference Organization (created in 1972) were staffed with religious functionaries who might be thought of as equivalents to Nasser's secular apparatchiks.[8]

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[8]On these Islamic organizations see Malcolm H. Kerr, *The Arab Cold War: Gamal 'Abdal-Nasir and His Rivals, 1958–1970* (London: Oxford University Press, 1971), pp. 106–114.

In the wake of the second Gulf war, Galal Amin, an Egyptian academic with a wry sense of humor, identified the qualities that Arab rulers desire in their intellectuals. Shaikh Jabir al-Ahmad al-Sabah of Kuwait requires those who can "evoke Islam, but in moderate dosage and without the least hint of any socialist or Arab nationalist shading." Intellectuals serving King Fahd of Saudi Arabia must be especially knowledgeable about the Quran, particularly "words related to the punishment on the day of atonement . . . while able to skirt any mention of foreign and domestic policy, Israel, or the situation of the mass of Muslims in Saudi Arabia itself." King Hussein of Jordan required virtually acrobatic skills of those who served him, so that the delicate balances that sustained his kingdom were not jeopardized. For this advocate "there is nothing wrong with Arab nationalism, socialism and even Israel, provided all this talk is academic in nature and remote from current affairs and any critique of a specific Arab government." In Egypt intellectual hypocrisy in support of the regime "is full of light spirit and good cheer. . . . Both the hypocrite and the subject of hypocrisy are not taken seriously. . . . They function rather like the singer at weddings who celebrates the beauty of the bride while everyone knows that she is very ugly."[9]

The considerable resources expended by the Safavids, Nasser, the Saudis, and others to disseminate religious beliefs or political ideologies (and in this context there is no real difference between the two) bespeak the comparative absence of structural legitimacy of their governments. Structural legitimacy—or what Max Weber has termed "rational-legal authority"—obtains when rules, supported by institutions to enforce them, underpin popular acceptance of government.[10] Such legitimacy is weak in the Middle East. New rulers must somehow solve the problem of how "some men come to be credited with the right to rule over others."[11] Their task is complicated by ethnic, linguistic, and religious diversity. In nine countries in the Middle East, such minorities constitute at least 25 percent of the population. In Syria, Lebanon, Bahrain, and Iraq, religious minorities control the government. In four Arab states bordering the Persian Gulf, resident aliens significantly outnumber citizens.[12] Nevertheless, the heterogeneity of Middle Eastern populations and its consequences for ideological fragmentation and instability can be overstated. Unifying roles are also played by the predominant language and religion. Arabic, despite local dialects and a sharp distinction between its written and spoken forms, is the mother tongue of the overwhelming majority of residents of Arab countries. In fact, as ranked by linguistic diversity, Arab countries "are among the most homogeneous in the

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[9]Galal Amin, "The Arab Intellectual and the Crisis in the Gulf," *The Arabs and the Calamity of Kuwait* (Cairo: Madbuli, 1991), pp. 50–57, cited in Raymond Baker, "Imagining Egypt in the New International Order," paper delivered to the annual conference of the Middle East Studies Association of North America (Washington, D.C.: November 23–26, 1991), pp. 26–27.

[10]Max Weber, *The Theory of Social and Economic Organization* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1947), pp. 130–132.

[11]Clifford Geertz, "The Politics of Meaning," *The Interpretation of Cultures* (New York: Basic Books, 1973), p. 317.

[12]R. D. McLaurin, "Minorities and Politics in the Middle East: An Introduction," *The Political Role of Minority Groups*, pp. 1–16.

world."[13] Only Iraq, which is about one-quarter Kurdish, is more linguistically fragmented than the majority of the world's nation-states. Islam is another unifying force, being the predominant religion in all states of the region except Israel. So the linguistic and religious bonds that unite most people of the region have often been drawn upon to reinforce political ideologies. Persisting ideological instability and fragmentation must, therefore, be accounted for by causes other than those of ethnic, linguistic, and religious differences.

Ideology and State Formation

The historical development of European ideologies provides a precedent that may be useful in understanding the development of political beliefs in the Middle East. From the time of the French Revolution up to the twentieth century, numerous ideologies contended for supremacy on the European continent. Various nationalisms and versions of democracy, fascism, socialism, and communism emerged as Europe was being carved into its present configuration of nation-states. Indeed, it was the very process of state formation, including the mobilization of citizens, the creation of national economies, and the construction of legitimate political orders that both required and gave birth to those ideologies. These processes were highly conflictual. As Europe was developing its state system and accompanying ideologies, it was wracked with what amounted to almost perpetual civil war from the Napoleonic era until 1945. Since 1989 the state system established by Soviet communism in Eastern Europe has been unraveling, and competitive nationalisms have been reemerging.

The Middle East today is wrestling with the same problems of state formation that have confronted Europe. The states of the Fertile Crescent, which extends from the southeastern Mediterranean coast northward into Syria and down the Tigris and Euphrates rivers into Iraq, were created as a result of the dissolution of the Ottoman Empire and were immediately placed under British or French control. Other countries in the region, including Egypt, Iran, Turkey, and those on the Arabian Peninsula, at the very least had their borders determined through the intervention of imperial powers. In some cases they were entirely the creations of such interventions. All these countries have confronted the interlocking tasks of nation- and state-building. The former is the process whereby a sense of shared national identity, patriotism, and loyalty to homeland develops. State-building refers more specifically to the construction of governmental and political institutions.

The more artificial the country, the more difficult are the challenges of nation- and state-building. Countries of the Fertile Crescent, for example, were carved out of the Ottoman Empire in accordance with British and French desires. National aspirations and identities of residents were not coterminous with state boundaries. To some of these residents, the idea of *nation* referred to their

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[13]Hudson, *Arab Politics*, p. 38.

specific ethnic or religious groups, many of which, as the result of new nation-states having been created, were fragmented, scattered among two or more countries of the region. The Druze were divided among Syria, Lebanon, and Palestine. Kurds, whose nationalist aspirations were frustrated despite their having been supported by President Woodrow Wilson at the Versailles Peace Conference, were left scattered as described above. To many Arabs, the division of their heartland into several small sovereign units, each under the control of Europeans, was a violation of the promise of a united Arab nation made by the British to induce Arab leaders to revolt against the Ottoman Turks during World War I. In their eyes, this fragmentation was also against the natural order of things. To these nationalists, because the region was populated primarily by Arabs it should therefore constitute a single Arab state. Given this array of sub-national and transnational identities competing with the new states for the loyalties of their residents, it was inevitable that the Fertile Crescent would become an arena for ideological confrontation. This tendency was further aggravated by Zionist claims on Palestine and, after 1948, by the presence of Israel in the midst of Arab states.

New governments struggled to establish their ideological hegemony over competitive calls for loyalty and identity, a struggle that they have gradually been winning but that is not yet over. Ba'thist ideology, for example, with which the contemporary governments of Syria and Iraq seek to legitimate themselves, originally and unambiguously elevated the principles of Arab nationalism and Arab unity to primacy of place. The concept of *al-qawmiyyat al-Arabiyya*, or loyalty to the generalized Arab nation, was ideally, in Ba'thism, preeminent over *wataniyya*, which is patriotism centered on a specific state. Arab states, in Ba'thist terminology, are still referred to as *aqtar* or *iqlim* (regions.) The term *nation* remains reserved for the Arab world as a whole, but this terminology now has little practical significance. Indeed, since the mid- to late 1970s, the leaders of both Iraq and Syria have increasingly emphasized the indigenous in official historiographies. In Iraq this has meant ascribing an Arab character to all ancient Mesopotamian civilizations, which is a straight-out fabrication, while in Syria it is manifested by references to Greater Syria, a historical-geographical unit centered on today's Syria, Lebanon, Jordan, and Israel. In short, *wataniyya* is displacing *qawmiyya* in Ba'thist ideology.[14] In Lebanon, loyalty to religious sects—or what, as a result of European influence, came to be called confessions—has seriously eroded patriotism focused on the nation-state. In Jordan, the most artificial of the Fertile Crescent states and one whose very existence is challenged by the commitment of its large Palestinian population to Palestinian nationalism, loyalty to the ruling royal family is engendered as the principal element in an otherwise comparatively diffuse and weak nationalism.

For Turkey, Iran, and Egypt, the nation-building process has been easier. Their peoples have stronger national identities based on impressive historical records of accomplishment and traditions of administrative autonomy. For the

[14]Amatzia Baram, "Territorial Nationalism in the Arab World," *Middle Eastern Studies* 26 (October 1990): 425–448.

Turks, the dissolution of the Ottoman Empire provided the opportunity to redefine the remaining geographical core of that entity based on Anatolia as a modern nation-state. Turkish ethnicity was substituted for Islam as the means by which the nation-state was legitimated. Pan-Ottomanism, an unsuccessful nineteenth-century attempt to foster a European-style secular nationalism to integrate the multiethnic, religiously diverse, and disintegrating empire, was abandoned. Iran is centered on a Persian-speaking people who have for millennia inhabited the central plateau area of that country and who constitute a majority of the population. While constructing an identity to serve as the basis for their nation-state, Iranians drew upon both the legacy of a monarchical, imperial tradition that predates Islam and the distinctive Shi'i faith that has for almost five centuries set off Iran from its neighbors. Similarly Egypt, unlike the Arab states in the Fertile Crescent, has a long if intermittent history of governmental autonomy, to say nothing of a remarkable civilization of antiquity whose remains provide visible reminders of what was once achieved.

Yet even for Turkey, Iran, and Egypt, nation-building has not been without difficulties and sudden, dramatic changes of course. Turkey has not resolved the contradictions resultant from basing national identity squarely on secularism and Turkish ethnicity. This definition is unacceptable to significant numbers of committed Muslims who want Islam to be enshrined as the state's religion. Similarly, emphasis on Turkish language and ethnicity relegates Kurds to what is at best an ambiguous status. Thus, Islamic revivalism and Kurdish militancy both pose threats to the definition of Turkish national identity.

Reza Shah and his son, Muhammad Reza Shah, like Turkey's Mustafa Kemal (Ataturk), were ardent secularists who sought to construct an Iranian national identity on non-Islamic foundations, which included both European ideas of nationalism and references to ancient Persia. Ayatollah Khomeini and his supporters challenged that conceptualization of Iranian nationalism, legitimating their revolution and the government it established solely on the basis of Shi'i Islam.

Egypt has had persisting problems reconciling national and transnational ideologies. In the first quarter of this century, an Egyptian nationalism centered on that state, and its native Arabic-speaking inhabitants, inspired the anticolonial movement. At the end of the 1930s, the spread of Arab nationalism in the Fertile Crescent, combined with the increasingly violent confrontation between Arabs and Jews in Palestine, stimulated in Egypt the growth of Arabism. It was that sentiment that Nasser, after 1952, enshrined as the central feature of his nationalist, or, more accurately, transnationalist ideology. While Anwar Sadat and, to a much lesser extent, Husni Mubarak worked to displace Arab nationalism with an Egyptian-centered patriotism, the growing trend of Islamic fundamentalism now offers a new transnationalist ideological challenge to the Egyptian government.

In the Arab states of the Fertile Crescent, nation-building has confronted greater obstacles and suffered more setbacks than it has in Turkey, Iran, and Egypt. Subnational, national, and transnational ideologies continue to compete for the loyalties of Lebanese, Syrians, Iraqis, Palestinians, and Jordanians. Many observers believe, however, that in the struggle to establish ideological hegemony, the Arab states are all gradually eroding minoritarian identities: at the

subnational level and defeating appeals by secular Arab nationalists and Islamic radicals to forge loyalties at the transnational level. Pan-Arabism, according to Fouad Ajami, "is nearing its end, if it is not already a thing of the past. . . . Now . . . *raison d'état*, once an alien and illegitimate doctrine, is gaining ground. Slowly and grimly with a great deal of anguish, a 'normal' state system is becoming a fact of life."[15] Abdul-Monem al-Mashat argues that the Arab world as a manifestation of the pan-Arab ideal is disintegrating, while William R. Brown describes the Arab nation as dying while, phoenix-like, Arab states are emerging from it.[16] Others, however, are not so sure. Walid Khalidi contends that in the doctrine of pan-Arabism "*raison d'état* is heresy," for in comparison with the "super-legitimacy" of pan-Arabism the legitimacy of individual Arab states "shrinks into irrelevance."[17] Hassan Nafaa argues that "a workable pan-Arab system of states based on the concept of *raison d'état* is hardly conceivable" because of the various conflicts between those states and because the ideology of pan-Arabism remains vibrant and motivating.[18] In a survey conducted between 1977 and 1979 of 6,000 residents of ten Arab countries, 78.5 percent of respondents said they believed in the existence of an Arab entity, and 77.9 percent agreed that this entity constitutes one nation; 53 percent believed that this nation is divided by artificial borders.[19] *Al-Mustaqbal al-Arabi*, a prominent Arabic journal, editorialized that the failure of the Arab State . . . in achieving true independence [and] . . . in liberating the occupied Arab territories in Palestine . . . will sooner or later strengthen the Arab citizen's conviction that the state has failed to achieve the major objectives it has set for itself. Consequently, this same Arab citizen will be inclined to work at a national [pan-Arab] level and transcend the local state phenomenon.[20]

There are, then, doubts as to whether the Arab world (and the Middle East more generally) is progressing toward the emergence of a regional political system founded on coherent states legitimated by nationalist ideologies, capable of sustaining productive, nonconflictual interstate relations while rejecting transnational appeals for unification. This should not be surprising. The Middle East, in comparison to Europe, is in relatively early stages of state- and nation-building. That does not mean, however, that those processes will exactly parallel

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[15]Fouad Ajami, "The End of Pan-Arabism," *Foreign Affairs* 57 (Winter 1978–1979): 355–373.

[16]Abdul-Monem Al-Mashat, "Stress and Disintegration in the Arab World," and William R. Brown, "The Dying Arab Nation," in *Pan-Arabism and Arab Nationalism*, pp. 165–176 and 152–164, respectively.

[17]Walid Khalidi, "Thinking the Unthinkable: A Sovereign Palestinian State," *Foreign Affairs* 56 (July 1978): 695–696.

[18]Hassan Nafaa, "Arab Nationalism: A Response to Ajami's Thesis on the 'End of Pan-Arabism,'" in *Pan-Arabism and Arab Nationalism*, pp. 133–151.

[19]Saad al-Din Ibrahim, *The Trends of Arab Public Opinion Toward the Issue of Unity* (Beirut: Center for Arab Unity Studies, 1980) (in Arabic), cited in Bahgat Korany, "Alien and Besieged Yet Here to Stay: The Contradictions of the Arab Territorial State," in *The Foundations of the Arab State*, pp. 53–54.

[20]K. Hasib, "The Words of *al-Mustaqbal al-Arabi*," in *al-Mustaqbal al-Arabi* 73 (1985): 7, cited in Ghassan Salamé, "'Strong' and 'Weak' States: A Qualified Return to the Muqaddimah," *The Foundations of the Arab State*, p. 226.

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those of Europe. Middle Eastern socioeconomic and political systems prior to the rise of nation-states were fundamentally different from those of Europe. The methods that have been followed in building nation-states also differ. To understand contemporary Middle Eastern ideologies, therefore, one must look in greater detail at the nature of political beliefs prior to the establishment of the modern state system and then at the process by which those nation-states have been formed.

Premodern, Preideological Phase

According to Max Weber, a state is a "compulsory political association with continuous organization [whose] administrative staff successfully uphold a claim to the monopoly of legitimate use of force in the enforcement of its order . . . within a given territorial area."[21] Other definitions of the term typically stress powers to implement laws and extract taxes and to command the loyalty and allegiance of citizens.[22] States vary in strength according to their capacity to regulate the behavior of citizens and their ability to remain autonomous from those social forces that seek to capture the state and use it for their own purposes. These social forces can be classes, ethnic and religious groups, tribes, or other units. A state must extract enough revenue in order to pay for armies, bureaucracies, and the other structures that support it. According to Giacomo Luciani, "A state structure will tend to be stable in history if it commands sufficient resources to guarantee its own survival."[23] In the Middle East prior to the nineteenth century, the viability of states, as measured by their longevity and degree of control over what was nominally their territory, was highly variable. This was due both to the comparative scarcity of resources and to the segmented, unmobilized nature of society, which impeded the state's access to the resources that did exist. Wealth in the premodern Middle East tended to be generated more from long-distance trade than from agriculture, which itself was extensive rather than intensive except in the Nile Valley and along the eastern Mediterranean coast. By its nature, trade was an activity that governments had difficulty controlling and taxing. Extracting a surplus from agricultural production when farming was widely scattered and mainly at a subsistence level was likely to cost the state more than it would obtain in revenues. The relatively harsh climate, presence of mountains, deserts, and other significant geographical obstacles to transportation and communication, and a general absence of adequate roads further raised the cost to governments for extraction and regulation. *Bedouin*

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[21]Weber, *The Theory of Social and Economic Organization*, p. 154.

[22]See, for example, the definition offered by Iliya Harik, "The Origins of the Arab State System," in *The Foundations of the Arab State*, p. 23. For a discussion of definition of the term *state* and the application of that concept to the Middle East, see Bahgat Korany, "Alien and Besieged Yet Here to Stay," pp. 47–74.

[23]Giacomo Luciani, "Allocation vs. Production States: A Theoretical Framework," in *The Rentier State*, ed. by Hazem Beblawi and Giacomo Luciani (London: Croom Helm, 1987), p. 64.

(tribally organized nomads), who in the premodern period constituted about one-fifth of the population of the Middle East, were particularly resistant to governmental control. Even settled urban dwellers, however, were insulated from the weak states that presided over them by a far more dense and complex network of kinship connections than was the case in premodern Europe.

Forced to extract revenues in circumstances of limited and intermittent control over populations and territories, governments developed second-best strategies of indirect taxation. One of them was to hold ethnic, religious, tribal, and other groups responsible for payment of taxes, leaving it to the communities' leaders to collect them. Another method of raising revenue was to rely on *multazims*, or tax farmers. The state would grant *iltizams* (farms) in return for payment of taxes, which the multazims would extract from peasants. These arrangements enabled governments to raise revenues when otherwise none might have been collected. They were inefficient, however, because those individuals who were placed between governments and taxpayers—whether multazims or local notables—retained as high a proportion of revenue as possible for their own use. The pecuniary interests of such middlemen demanded that they seek to weaken government.[24]

Geographical, economic, and social conditions thus limited interactions between rulers and ruled to far fewer transactions than occur in a modern nation-state. Prevailing beliefs about the proper relationship between ruler and ruled reinforced this loose relationship. That system of belief was founded in Islam.

ISLAMIC DOCTRINE AND ORGANIZATION

Like other religions, Islam is at the same time theological and sociological. It is comprised of both religious doctrine and patterns of social, including political, relationships.[25] The creed of Islam is straightforward and universalistic. The message of the Prophet Muhammad to the residents of Mecca, whose beliefs in the early seventh century were shaped by animistic and totemistic religions as well as by Christianity and Judaism, was that God had last revealed himself to humanity by issuing through Muhammad the Quran. That volume, compiled after Muhammad's death, in conjunction with the *hadith*, the teachings and sayings attributed to Muhammad, the compiled form of which is called the *sunna* (tradi-

tions), together constitute the sources for the *sharia* (Islamic law). Conversion to Islam, which literally means the surrender of man to God (Allah), requires only the profession of the faith (*shahada*): "There is no god but God and Muhammad is the messenger (prophet) of God." The requirements of the faith, its "five pillars," are the shahada, *salat* (prayer), *sawm* (fasting) during the month of Ramadan, *zakat* (almsgiving), and making the *hajj* (pilgrimage) to Mecca at least once during a lifetime.

The simplicity of Islamic doctrine and the ease of conversion to the religion are essential to its universalism. It is intended not as the religion of a specific tribe, group, or nation of peoples or as a faith delineated by specific territory but as a religion appropriate anywhere to which anyone may convert. The period prior to the revelation of God's message to Muhammad in the early seventh century is known to Muslims as the *jahiliyya* (age of ignorance), in which tribal and other particularistic loyalties divided humanity. Islam is thus meant not only to rescue individuals from personal ignorance but also to serve as an antidote to sociopolitical incoherence and conflict.

This universalism in Islam has for politics been a two-edged sword. It facilitated Islam's expansion from the Arabian Peninsula to Indonesia in the east and the Iberian Peninsula in the west, from being a religion of the Arabs to being a faith that now encompasses members of virtually all of the world's major ethnolinguistic groupings and claims one billion adherents. On the other hand, unlike some other religions that are associated with a specific tribe or ethnic group, such as Judaism, or that are nonproselytizing, such as the heterodox Druze faith, Islam, once it had spread beyond the confines of Arabia, no longer benefited from reinforcing tribal, ethnic, or other solidarities. The socioreligious identity that characterizes Muslims is that they are members of the *umma al-Islamiyya*, the community of believers. Unlike adherents to the "political religions" of secular European nationalisms, who identify themselves with reference to a specific territory and state, members of the Islamic *umma* do not constitute a state, nor is their faith associated with any specific land. Islamic doctrine, therefore, is, strictly speaking, incompatible with nationalism, which refers to a specific people in a particular place.[26] Nationalism to Muslims, according to P. J. Vatikiotis, "implies a pre-Islamic kind of tribal particularism, jahiliyya."[27] The political cost of Islamic universalism has been high. "The most closely integrated states are those with a *raison d'[ê]tre* . . . a 'state idea.'" Such an idea "convinces all the people in all the regions (of the state) that they belong together."[28] Zionism, which is the nationalist ideology of Jews, has clear advantages over Islam because it is focused on territory. This is hardly surprising, for Zionism was heavily influenced by European nationalisms, which are themselves powerful state ideas defining common national identities with reference to

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[24]As late as the mid-nineteenth century the Ottoman annual land tax (*miri*) was collected primarily through middlemen. The consequences of this indirect method are described by Samir Khalaf as follows:

> Officially, the *miri* was supposed to be levied upon all sown land . . . yet neither in its assessment nor collection was the system consistent or regular. Indeed, the tribute was arbitrarily set and varied considerably with changing circumstances. Rather than being proportional to wealth, the *miri* was often a reflection of the amir's power or special standing vis-à-vis the Ottoman Pasha.

Samir Khalaf, *Lebanon's Predicament* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1987), p. 26.

[25]Suad Joseph, "Muslim-Christian Conflicts: A Theoretical Perspective," in *Muslim-Christian Conflicts: Economic, Political, and Social Origins*, ed. by Suad Joseph and Barbara L. K. Pillsbury (Boulder, Colo.: Westview Press, 1979), pp. 1–45.

[26]Hamid Enayat, *Modern Islamic Political Thought* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1982), pp. 111–159.

[27]P. J. Vatikiotis, *Islam and the State* (London: Croom Helm, 1987), p. 10.

[28]Alasdair Drysdale and Gerald H. Blake, *The Middle East and North Africa: A Political Geography* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985), p. 178.

place of residence. In the Islamic Middle East, however, "The nation is considered in religious terms to encompass those beyond and across the territorial boundaries of the individual states. There is a constant clash between the exigencies of the modern territorial state, and the wider nation, or community of believers."[29] While James Piscatori's argument is correct that Muslim political authorities have throughout history accommodated themselves to the reality of statehood, he underemphasizes the fact that the idealized myth of the Islamic umma remains potent.[30] The unresolved paradox of Islamic universalism and a world composed of nation-states periodically assumes political importance, as exemplified by the transnational appeals of the Islamic Republic of Iran and by indictments of sovereignty and nationalism as heretical in Islam by such Islamic activists as Ayatollah Khomeini and the Egyptian Muslim Brother, Sayyid Qutb.[31] There remains, in short, a continuing disjunction between the theory of Islam and the practice of the nation-state.

The universalism of Islam complicated the task of forging a compelling state idea from its doctrine. So too has its political theory caused problems for those who seek to draw upon Islamic doctrine in creating nation-states. The implementation of God's will, which is the principal obligation of Muslims, is not exclusively an individual act. It requires the creation of a social order that operates by Islamic precepts. Accordingly, there is ideally no separation between religion and politics—Islam is both *din wa dawla* (religion and state). In historical reality, however, Christian and Islamic doctrine did not lead to sharply different forms of government. Caliphs (successors to the prophet) had, by the tenth century, become subordinate to sultans, secular leaders whose authority rested primarily on their political power and only secondarily on their religious legitimacy. Since that time and even before, theocratic government in the Middle East has been notable by its absence. Nevertheless, Islam's insistence on the unity of individuals' personal, social, and political life has meant that although outright secular government that explicitly denies Islam's relevance to politics began to take shape in the Middle East from the early nineteenth century, its reconciliation with Islamic doctrine—hence its legitimacy—has never been completely accomplished.

A second aspect of Islamic political theory that has proven difficult to accommodate to the idea of the nation-state is its treatment of the relationship between rulers and ruled. Elegantly simple and well suited to the requirements of the *umma al-mu'minin* (community of believers) when it consisted of Muhammad and his followers, Islam enjoins believers to "Obey God, obey his Prophet, and obey those in authority over you." This fifty-ninth verse from the fourth *sura* (chapter) of the Quran points to a fundamental difference between the concep-

[29]Vatikiotis, *Islam and the State*, p. 13.

[30]James A. Piscatori, *Islam in a World of Nation-States* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986).

[31]Qutb denounces *al-hakmiyya* (sovereignty) in his most famous work, *Ma'alim Fi al-Tariq (Signs Along the Path)* (Cairo: Wahba Books, 1964) (in Arabic). For an analysis of Qutb's writings, see Gilles Kepel, *Muslim Extremism in Egypt: The Prophet and the Pharaoh* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1986), pp. 43–52.

tion of legitimate government in Islam and that in the contemporary Western world. In Western systems, sovereignty in theory resides with the people who are, therefore, the ultimate authority to which government is responsible. In Islam, sovereignty rests with God, to whom both rulers and ruled alike are responsible. While rulers, like their subjects, are bound by the provisions of the sharia, in the historical absence of institutions to constrain arbitrary rulers, their nominal subordination to religious law was often meaningless.

In the early days of Islam, the issue of mutual obligations between rulers and ruled was a subject of lively controversy and debate. By the twelfth century, however, the sultanate was so ascendant over the barely surviving caliphate that Islamic scholars, including the renowned al-Ghazali (died 1111), devised justifications for that reality. The community of the faithful was enjoined to obey its ruler simply because the alternative was chaos. This particular resolution of the dilemma besetting relationships between ruler and ruled was not, however, quite the end of the story. Precisely because it so tilted the balance in favor of the sultan, there subsequently arose extreme statements of the rights of the ruled. In the early fourteenth century Ahmad Ibn Taymiyya, a "religious firebrand" in Cairo and Damascus, to whom the political philosophies of numerous contemporary Islamic activists have been traced, preached that Islam justified the right to rebel against unjust rulers.[32] He was executed in 1328 by the Mamlukes then ruling Egypt. Since that time, there have been attempts to resuscitate doctrines similar to those propounded by Ibn Taymiyya, but the major thrust of Islamic political theory and practice has continued in the direction charted by al-Ghazali, who emphasized the obligation of obedience to authority. While that underpinning for government sufficed in the premodern period, appeals for obedience are inadequate bases for legitimacy for nation-states seeking to penetrate their societies to a much greater degree. Increasingly that legitimacy depends on the perceived effectiveness of political participation by citizens.

Even in religiously conservative Saudi Arabia, the issue of whether sovereignty derives from Allah or the people has become of paramount political importance. In the wake of the second Gulf war, King Fahd, seeking to reduce discontent caused by the war and his authoritarian rule, declared that a sixty-member *majlis al-shura* (consultative council) would be created. He reserved the right to appoint all members to that council to himself, however, claiming, "The democratic system prevailing in the world does not suit us in this region. . . . The system of free elections is not part of Islamic ideology." Secularized, liberal Saudis contested the king's assertion on the grounds that Islam has long recognized democratic practices and noted that even the Islamic Republic of Iran has a 270-seat elected parliament. For their part, ultrareligious Saudis argued against Fahd on the grounds that proper Islamic government requires true *shura* (consultation), which can only be ensured through elections. Muham-

[32]On the influence of Ibn Taymiyya on contemporary Islamic activists, see, for example, Emmanuel Sivan, *Radical Islam: Medieval Theology and Modern Politics* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1985), pp. 94–107. The term *religious firebrand* is his.

mad Hudaibi, leader of the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood, when asked if Saudi Arabia was a true Islamic society replied, "Of course not, because it does not have an elected government."[33]

Radical Islamic activists are divided among themselves over the issue of whether Islam does or does not require democracy of a Western sort. A spokesperson for Rashid Ghannouchi, head of *al-Nahda* (The Renaissance), the leading Tunisian Islamicist party, argues that "in Islam and in the Koran, the idea of liberty is fundamental. . . . [T]he closest political system to Islam is the democratic system of the West—especially the American Constitution." Ali Benhadj, on the other hand, a prominent figure in an equivalent Islamicist political party in Algeria, has stated that "Democracy is apostasy."[34]

The relative absence of a lexicon of democratic terminology in the major Middle Eastern languages associated with Islam, which are Arabic, Persian, and Turkish, reflects Islam's different conceptualizations of sovereignty and relations between government and the governed. These languages in their classical forms did not have a term for *citizen*. The neologism *muwatan* was coined in the nineteenth century.[35] When confronted with the task of finding a term to convey the meaning of freedom, the Arabic translators of Napoleon's famous declaration to the Egyptian people upon his arrival there in 1798 used the word *hurriyya*, which previously was a term used to distinguish free men from slaves.[36] In Turkish and Arabic, the word now used for independence, *istiqlal*, prior to the latter half of the nineteenth century was principally an Ottoman administrative term that meant "to act alone," referring to the discretionary powers of high officials.[37] In addition to coining terms to apply to concepts of government that were introduced in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, Muslim proponents of democracy began to "scour religious literature in search of prescriptions for the rights of the individual and checks on state power."[38] Rifa'a Tahtawi (1801–1873), for example, after a traditional education in Egypt, went to Paris as part of a mission sent by Muhammad Ali. He returned to Cairo and spent much of the remainder of his life reconciling Islam with Western notions of democracy. Tahtawi contended, for example, that the French idea of freedom had its equivalent in the Islamic concept of *adl* (justice, right, equality).[39] This exercise and others like it, however, tended to treat Quranic verses out of context and to stretch analogies, suggesting in the process that classical Islamic political doctrine and European democratic theory were quite different. The organization of Islam, like its political doctrine, has also not made the tasks of state- and nation-building any easier. There is, for example, no organizational equivalent in

Sunni Islam to the Christian church. The ulema, not having an organization autonomous of government, seldom imposed their will on political authorities. "Unwilling to admit the de facto dualism of religious and political affairs to which they had accommodated themselves," the ulema had to adopt a discourse that "tended to be expressive, defending the status quo, rather than practical, instigating fundamental change."[40] While they occasionally mobilized portions of the population, as they did against the Napoleonic invasion of Egypt at the end of the eighteenth century and as they did more frequently in Shi'i Iran, the ulema generally lacked the organizational structure necessary to institutionalize their leadership and power, and so to constrain government. Moreover, while the church served as a model for secular political organization in the West, the absence of an equivalent organization in Sunni Islam meant that secular groupings had no archetype to emulate.

Islamic doctrine and the comparative weakness of the religion's formal organizational structure do not alone account for the absence in the premodern Middle East of a "prolific network of institutions . . . between the state and the individual . . . which simultaneously connects the individual to authority and protects the individual from total political control," thereby creating what has been termed "civil society."[41] Indeed, in the Middle East prior to the rise of modern nation-states, subjects were in any case protected from "total political control" by a rich array of family, tribal, communal, and other groupings. The power of government over individuals was checked by these cohesive social units as well as by the physical barriers mentioned earlier. It is true, however, that there were comparatively few linkages between those traditional organizations and government. Their role was not so much to participate in government to affect decisions but rather to avoid its reach. When governments, as a result of technological modernization, eventually did obtain the resources required to subdue farflung populations, the traditional organizations of these peoples were simultaneously being undermined through the broader processes of modernization; thus were societies deprived of at least some of the network of institutions that comprise civil society and that both protect individuals and link them to government.

The degree to which Islam contributed to the weakness of civic organization is a highly contentious issue. Some scholars believe that intermediate groups situated between individuals and rulers confronted an impossibly difficult task in limiting arbitrary authority precisely because of Islamic theory and practice. Charles E. Butterworth argues, for example, that there is an absence of democracy in the Arab world.

There is nothing within the history of Arabic political thought comparable to the radical break with the past effected by Machiavelli and Hobbes in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries and then refined into a doctrine of liberal democracy. . . . In

[33]Caryle Murphy, "Saudi Arabia: A True Islamic Society?" *Washington Post* (April 28, 1992), p. 2.

[34]Cited in James Walsh, "The Sword of Islam," *Time* (June 15, 1992), pp. 30, 34.

[35]Enayat, *Modern Islamic Political Thought*, p. 126.

[36]Bernard Lewis, *The Political Language of Islam* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1988), pp. 109–111.

[37]Ibid., p. 112.

[38]Enayat, *Modern Islamic Political Thought*, p. 131.

[39]Ibid., p. 131.

[40]Moore, "On Theory and Practice," p. 114.

[41]Bryan S. Turner, "Orientalism and the Problem of Civil Society in Islam," in *Orientalism, Islam, and Islamicists*, ed. by Asaf Hussain et al. (Brattleboro, Vt.: Aman Books, 1984), p. 27.

sum, then, the absence of an unquestioned, perhaps unquestionable, belief in the fundamental need for popular sovereignty is what primarily explains why political life in the Arab world differs so markedly from political life in the west."[42]

Other scholars deny that differences in religious doctrine and organization account for the presence of an established tradition of legitimate opposition to arbitrary governments in the West and the absence of such a tradition in Islam. Civil society in the West is said to have developed because of the prior existence of legal rights for vassals in feudalism and because a strong, independent middle class emerged comparatively early in Europe.[43] Their equivalents were lacking in the Middle East. Also, prior to the nineteenth century in the Middle East, government was limited and remote, hardly affecting the lives of a great number of its nominal subjects. "It is a recurring historical truth," according to Hazem Beblawi and Giacomo Luciani, "that demands for democratic participation become louder, sometimes unrestrainable, whenever the state must ask for sacrifices, be they under the form of increased revenue or reduced expenditure."[44] In the West, such demands for participation arose much earlier than in the Middle East because from the end of the feudal era in the fourteenth century, the state began to acquire significant fiscal powers. It was not until the nineteenth and even twentieth centuries, however, that the unquestioned supremacy of government over financial and other matters made it the central focus for its subjects in the Middle East. Even though Islam regulates the daily lives of most Middle Easterners and profoundly influences their beliefs and attitudes, politics is too complex a phenomenon to be determined entirely by religion, even such an all-embracing one as Islam. Socioeconomic factors have constituted a major contribution to the development of political authority structures and attitudes toward them, but precisely how and to what degree is difficult to determine. What can be said with certainty is that in the premodern Middle East, prior to the emergence of nation-states that regulate comparatively closely the affairs of their citizens, there was a functioning system of government that worked remarkably well and in which Islam played an important role. According to Ira Lapidus, this system was "composed at base of small-scale, local communities unified by an embracing religious affiliation—Islam . . . and organized and identified in lineage, tribal, and ethnic terms."[45] In the words of Albert Hourani, pre-

[42]Charles E. Butterworth, "State and Authority in Arabic Political Thought" in *The Foundations of the Arab State*, pp. 91–92, 111.

[43]See, for example, Turner, "Orientalism," p. 35, and Enayat, *Modern Islamic Political Thought*, pp. 131–135. According to Ira Lapidus, under feudalism, vassals had "rights to be consulted, rights to be judged by peers and guarantees as to their incomes and properties. All of these are the basis of our parliamentary notions of democracy and ideas about 'no taxation without representation.' So here is a cultural, conceptual fact which reinforces the institutional differences between the two societies and has favored the formation of European democracies." Personal communication to the authors, September 20, 1988.

[44]"Introduction," in *The Rentier State* (London: Croom Helm, 1987), p. 19.

[45]Ira Lapidus, *Contemporary Islamic Movements in Historical Perspective* (Berkeley: Institute of International Studies of the University of California, 1983), p. 50.

modern Islamic societies comprised "not so much a single community as a group of communities each of which claimed the immediate loyalty of its members. These communities were regional, religious, or functional, or, to some extent, a mixture of all three."[46] The political regimes that prevailed over these local communities but only loosely regulated their affairs were comprised of royal courts and bureaucratic as well as quasifeudal institutions, all of which were at least partially legitimated by Islam. Before the rise of the nation-state in the Middle East, Islam did provide the essential ingredients for functioning political systems. It defined sociopsychological identities and presented an explicit code for the conduct of relations between Muslims and non-Muslims. A comprehensive legal system was supplied by the sharia and those ulema, including *qadis* (Muslim judges), skilled in legal interpretation and adjudication. Finally, Islam legitimated the ruler and, to a lesser extent, the system of governance by virtue of the Islamic injunction on subjects to obey established authority. That this system worked well is attested to by the accomplishments of the great Islamic empires, the first of which came into being over 1,300 years ago, and the last of which, the Ottoman, was only finally extinguished in this century. Yet, it is also fair to say that from at least the eighteenth century, the states of the West, increasingly legitimated by nationalist ideologies and capable of mobilizing the energies of their citizens, were far more powerful than Muslim governments of the Middle East. The latter were unable to harness the energies and resources of the remarkably diverse and inward-looking groups of which Middle Eastern societies were composed. The most important of these groups were the various religious communities.

RELIGIOUS DIVERSITY

Sunni and Shi'i Islam   There are two major branches of Islam—Sunni and Shi'i, the former constituting almost 90 percent of the world's Muslims. This division originated in the seventh century as a political dispute between the Shi'a (party or faction) of Ali, the cousin and son-in-law of the prophet Muhammad, and those who opposed his ascension to the caliphate in A.D. 656. The latter became known as Sunnis because of their identification with the Sunna (precedents set by the prophet) and their veneration of the "Golden Age" of Islam under the *Rashidun*, the first four successors (caliphs) to Muhammad (Abu Bakr, Umar, Uthman, and Ali). The Sunnis rose in revolt against the succession of Ali after the murder of the third caliph, Uthman. Mu'awiya, the governor of the Syrian province of the new Arab empire, cousin of Uthman and member of the aristocratic Umayyad family, led the uprising that culminated in A.D. 661 with the defeat of Ali's forces.

Mu'awiya created the Umayyad dynasty (A.D. 661–750), and his son and successor, Yazid, finally ended the possibility that Ali's descendants might ultimately

[46]Albert Hourani, *Arabic Thought in the Liberal Age, 1798–1939* (London: Oxford University Press, 1962), p. 29.

regain the caliphate by having Ali's second son, Hussain, and his followers massacred at Karbala (in today's Iraq) in A.D. 680. From that time, differences between Sunnis and Shi'is, which had been confined until then to the issue of the succession to the caliphate, broadened to include ritual, legal, and theological matters. The schism ultimately took on ethnic and geographic dimensions, for over 50 percent of the world's Shi'is now reside in Iran. The other principal concentrations of them in the Middle East are in the Arab littoral countries of the Persian Gulf, including Iraq, Bahrain, Kuwait, the United Arab Emirates, and the Eastern Province of Saudi Arabia, although there are also significant Shi'i communities in Lebanon, North Yemen, and Syria.

Division of the *Dar al-Islam* (House of Islam) into Sunni and Shi'i has through history exacerbated the problems of state-building for Sunnis. With the major exceptions of Fatimid Egypt (A.D. 968–1171) and post-fifteenth-century Iran, as well as intermittently in Yemen in the twentieth century and Syria since the mid-1960s, the Sunnis have led every government in the area. The Ottomans, beset with the difficulties of ruling a far-flung, heterogeneous empire and having constantly to engage in warfare against the West, had also to contend with a condition of more or less permanent hostility with the Shi'i dynasties in Iran—first the powerful Safavids, subsequently the weaker Qajars. Ottoman-Persian relations, in the absence of religious division, may have taken a different course and one less enervating for both sides.

Of greater and more enduring importance to the issue of state formation in Sunni political systems has been the presence within them of groupings of Shi'is. The writ of government has run up to, but until recently not usually beyond, the boundaries of these communities. Their refractory nature resulted from their minority religious status and accompanying anxieties, and from the inherent weakness of premodern Islamic governments in comparison with the strength of Shi'i informal organizations.

The majority of Shi'is are known as Imamis, or Twelvers, because they trace the line of rightful descent from Ali, who is the first Imam, through twelve successors. The last, Muhammad al-Muntazar (Muhammad the Expected), vanished in about A.D. 873 and is expected to return as the *Mahdi* (savior) of humanity at a propitious time. The Twelver sect has adherents in Iran, Lebanon, Iraq, and many Arab countries of the Persian Gulf. In Iran, Twelver Shi'ism is the state religion and the faith of the great majority of the population. Another group of Shi'is, the Isma'ilis, is known as Seveners because they regard Isma'il as the rightful seventh and last Imam. They are to be found principally in Pakistan, India, and Iran, while a few descendants of the Assassins—radical Isma'ilis who opposed Mamluke rule in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries in the Fertile Crescent—are still resident in the coastal mountains of central Syria. Still another sect, the Fivers, who trace a separate line of succession from the fifth Imam, are also known as Zaydis after the founder of the sect, Zayd, a grandson of the martyred Hussain, son of Ali. The Zaydis are to be found principally in Yemen.

The Kharajites are a non-Shi'i sect who broke with Ali and his supporters because of their disapproval of his willingness to compromise with his Umayyad opponents and his desire for the caliphate to be hereditary. Kharajite survivors,

known as Ibadi Muslims, established themselves both in Oman, from whence in the eighteenth century they established a sizable empire, and in southern Algeria. The Druze, who currently reside principally in Lebanon, Syria, and Israel, are an offshoot of the Fatimids, who controlled Egypt from the tenth to the twelfth centuries. The Alawis, so named by virtue of their veneration of Ali, who over the past two decades have dominated the Syrian government, are a heterodox sect whose claim to be Shi'i is disputed by some Muslims who consider their profound attachment to Ali, veneration of Jesus, and other of their beliefs to be heretical.

The proliferation of Shi'i sects, each with its own esoteric doctrine to which its supporters frequently adhere with extreme commitment, has rendered governmental control difficult and in some cases impossible. The Assassins are but an extreme case of Shi'i resistance to outside control. Holed up in their mountain redoubts, they fought off Mamluke rule for decades. Such geographical isolation has long characterized Shi'is living in Sunni-ruled lands. The mountains of South Lebanon and coastal Syria, the marshes of southern Iraq, the Jabal Akhdar (Green Mountain) of Oman, the rugged south central area of Anatolia in Turkey, and the oases of southern Algeria are among the traditional bastions of Shi'i and Ibadi preponderance.

In recent years Shi'is have poured out of these peripheral enclaves into the major cities of the Middle East in search of educational, vocational, and other opportunities. Even here, though, they have maintained cohesive communities, which in many instances are within sprawling slums. Like Shi'i societies in the remote areas they left, these new, urban ones are remarkably resistant to governmental control. The poor suburb of al-Thawra in Baghdad, for example, has since the 1960s been a center of Shi'i political activism, providing a constant test of the Iraqi government's control. What have become known in Beirut simply as "the suburbs," by which is meant the southern periphery of that once cosmopolitan Mediterranean city, are, along with the Beqa Valley and the South, the centers of Shi'i strength in Lebanon. The inability of government troops to enter those suburbs during the long-running civil war and continuing reticence to do so provide graphic evidence of how Shi'i communities have through history succeeded in thwarting governmental control. In Bahrain, Kuwait, and the United Arab Emirates, ministates too small for geography to provide a buffer between community and government, Shi'is have erected a dense network of social institutions centered on clubs, homes, mosques, *diwaniyyas* (assemblies), and *hussainiyyas* (centers for mourning). This network performs the function of sharply defining the community's identity and reinforcing its separateness from Sunnis and their government.

Doctrinal elements of Shi'ism have facilitated challenges to Sunni hegemony and frustrated state-building efforts. *Taqiyya*, the practice of disguising one's true beliefs to hide them from a potential oppressor, is a quietist Shi'i response to perceived threats. Activist political behavior is also condoned by Shi'i doctrine, which emphasizes usurpation of power by the Sunnis, the martyrdoms of Imams Ali and Hussain, and the sufferings of Shi'is everywhere. The themes of usurpation and martyrdom, for example, are portrayed vividly in annual Ashura rites, which commemorate the martyrdom of Hussain in the form of a passion

play conducted in the streets. Prior to the Islamic revolution in Iran, *ta'ziyyas*, as passion plays are called there, were used as a vehicle of political protest and mobilization. The evil Yazid, the Umayyad caliph who had Hussain killed, was portrayed as being analogous to the shah.[47]

Further reinforcing the solidarity of Shi'is and delineating the border that separates them from Sunnis is the Shi'i theory and practice of *ijtihad* (interpretation). From the beginning of the tenth century, Sunnis tended to restrict further interpretation, so the "door of ijtihad," if not altogether closed, was nearly so. The possibility that theologians and jurists could apply independent, novel reasoning when interpreting the Quran and the Sunna was substantially reduced. Shi'is, on the other hand, never concurred in this conservative step. Their doctrinal tradition emphasized independence. That predisposition was structurally reinforced by the existence of *mujtahids*, which is the term given to Shi'i ulema, or mullahs as they are known in Iran, and means "those who interpret." The practice of *ijtihad* thus underscored the importance to Shi'is of their ulema, providing the need and justification for an independent clergy that Sunni Islam has always lacked. The Shi'i ulema have thus provided an organizational backbone to their religious community and in so doing further enhanced its distinctive and separate nature. This independence has clearly hampered the integrative tasks of state-building of those Sunni-dominated governments that have presided over Shi'is.[48]

But doctrinal differences between Shi'is and Sunnis can be overemphasized. Both are Muslims and as such believe in the same pillars of the faith. There are few sharp divergences in their legal systems. As Bernard Lewis observes, divisions between them are "not as rigid as the differences between Protestants and Catholics, or between the different Protestant churches in Christendom."[49] In communities with but one mosque, for example, Sunnis and Shi'is both pray in it. Among Sunnis there is widespread respect and reverence for Ali and Hussain. So there are enough similarities to facilitate amicable communal relations. Conversely, there are sufficient differences to stimulate antagonisms and conflicts. Which condition prevails is determined more by the larger environment within which Sunni-Shi'i relations are conducted than by factors inherent to the faiths themselves.

Al-Islam al-rasmi versus al-Islam al-sha'bi (Establishment versus Populist Islam) Most religions, and especially scripturalist ones that are founded on a corpus of written doctrine, such as the Quran, the Torah, or the Bible, have both established, official versions and populist, unofficial variants. Establishment religion is that which adheres closely to the ideal as described in texts and interpreted by religious scholars. In many instances it is a state religion and as

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[47]Peter J. Chelkowski, ed., *Ta'ziyeh: Ritual and Drama in Iran* (New York: New York University Press, 1979).

[48]For an excellent discussion of Shi'i resistance, see Augustus Richard Norton, *Amal and the Shia: Struggle for the Soul of Lebanon* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1987).

[49]Bernard Lewis, "The Shi'a in Islamic History," in *Shi'ism, Resistance, and Revolution*, ed. by Martin Kramer (Boulder, Colorado: Westview Press, 1987), p. 22.

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such is formally bound up in the legitimacy of government.[50] Populist religion, on the other hand, comprises those religious beliefs and practices that prevail among the people; it emanates from the underside, the periphery of society. Residence in outlying provinces or sprawling slums, illiteracy, and other factors that impede access to religious scholars and written texts, distance populations from established religions and make possible the existence of lively populist movements.

Virtually throughout Islamic history, there have been official and populist Islams, and both have political relevance. Muslim rulers have typically sought to cloak themselves in the legitimacy provided by al-Islam al-rasmi. In return for material favors and recognition of their status, the ulema have generally facilitated that legitimation process by using their prerogatives accordingly. Preaching Friday sermons that underscore obedience to authority, issuing *fatwas* (Islamic legal opinions) supportive of governmental policies, and in general by emphasizing the inseparability of Islam and government, the establishment ulema have contributed to the close identification of al-Islam al-rasmi with the government in control.

Relations between governmental power and populist Islam have been more ambivalent. Recognizing the mobilizational capacities of an Islam that is not under the direct control of the ulema and that frequently contains highly emotive beliefs and practices, rulers have been wary of al-Islam al-sha'bi. One approach has been to outlaw various manifestations of it. In the latter half of the nineteenth and early part of the twentieth centuries in Egypt, for example, the government, under pressure from European powers, sought to suppress what it termed the "excesses of popular religion."

Many of these efforts were directed at Sufi *tariqas* (orders), which are brotherhoods of Islamic mystics. Sufism, a search for divine knowledge through the emotions rather than purely through the intellect, emerged in the ninth century as an antidote to the austere, scripturalist, rational nature of Islam. It has always met with an ambivalent response from the ulema, some of whom have opposed Sufism and others of whom have themselves joined *tariqas*. Large orders, such as the Naqshbandiyya, have swept through the Muslim world at various times in history, carrying with them the potential of widespread political mobilization and disruption. It is not surprising, therefore, that Egyptian governments, like many others, sought at early stages in their consolidation of power to bring Sufi orders under control. Initial efforts focused on ridding orders of distinctive practices that reinforced their identities and elicited strong loyalties and sacrifices from their members. Thus the practice of the *shaikh* (leader) of the order riding on horseback over the backs of prostrate members, as well as self-infliction of wounds, was outlawed in the late nineteenth century. The eventual subordination of Sufi orders to the state, however, was accomplished only years later, when a Supreme Council of Sufi Shaikhs was created, over which was

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[50]The prominent Egyptian writer Fu'ad Zakariyya dubs establishment Islam "Petro-Islam," for it is underpinned by financial subsidies from the conservative, oil-rich Arab states. For a discussion of Zakariyya's indictment of this type of Islam, see Issa J. Boullata, *Trends and Issues in Contemporary Arab Thought* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1990), pp. 154–157.

appointed a Shaikh of Shaikhs, who in fact is a civil servant responsible to the government in Egypt.

Governments have also enlisted the support of the ulema in condemning various popular beliefs and practices as non- or anti-Islamic. The *zar*, for example, is a public ceremony in which women, led by an exorcist and accompanied by song and dance, seek to counter the influence of *jinns* (evil spirits) and, according to some interpretations, carve out a sphere of female autonomy in a male-dominated society.[51] Zars have long been officially discouraged in Egypt, yet they still occur. Saint worship, which in strict interpretations of Islam is considered irreligious, is nevertheless widespread. One manifestation of it is pilgrimages to tombs of those venerated as saints and whose *baraka* (heavenly blessing, grace, or power) is sought to assist in resolving personal and social problems. Living persons can also be attributed with baraka, which can reinforce claims to political leadership. Muhammad Ahmad, known as the Mahdi, cultivated a popular belief in his baraka to reinforce his leadership of the anti-British uprising in the Sudan in the 1880s. Mu'ammar Qaddafi is an example of someone having more or less failed in the attempt to appear as one possessed of baraka, while former King Hassan of Morocco enjoyed somewhat greater success in a similar effort.

Fitting loosely within the category of populist Islam are those members of the ulema who have in recent years directed their messages to the masses disaffected from the state and from official Islam. Egypt has had the greatest number of such ulema, many of whose reputations have spread throughout the Arab world. Some, like Shaikhs Abd al-Hamid Kishk and Omar Abd al-Rahman, have been accused of being associated with violent underground *jama'at* (groups) of Islamic activists, while others, like Shaikh Mitwalli Sha'rawi, have with the aid of television succeeded in developing a style that appeals to Muslim masses but does not directly challenge established authority. The government of Egypt, like those of other Arab states, monitors very closely the activities of such preachers and occasionally restricts their movements, imprisons them, or closes the mosques in which they preach.

Mosques, in fact, are frequently sites of confrontation between official and organized variants of populist Islam—between government and Islamic activist opposition. Islamic activism, the roots of which are to be found partially in Islamic populism, has in recent years increasingly been centered both in some of the most venerable mosques in major Middle Eastern cities and in the newer, much more humble ones that have sprung up, especially in poorer urban areas. Frequently these new mosques are constructed or dedicated by private individuals and are nothing more than basements of apartment buildings, garages, or other empty spaces. In Egypt, between 1970 and 1981, the number of such *ahli* (private, independent) mosques increased from 20,000 to 40,000.[52]

Governments have sought to control such religious spontaneity and underscore their own religiosity. They have attempted to control more closely the activities of imams who preach in mosques and to prevent the proliferation of private mosques. Religious faculties for the training of imams have been expanded out of the calculation that providing officially recognized training for imams and placing them on the public payroll will reinforce their political loyalties and commitment to al-Islam al-rasmi. Over the past two decades, governments have also indulged in a frenzy of mosque building and restoration. The erection of new structures and the cleaning and repair of old ones are meant to attest to governmental devoutness and to attract worshipers away from mosques less closely supervised by the representatives of official Islam. The struggle to control mosques, which can serve as symbols of either al-Islam alrasmi or al-Islam al-sha'bi, attests to the contemporary intensity of the conflict between these two Islams.

Non-Muslims   About 3 percent of Middle Easterners, mainly in the southern Sudan, believe in non-Muslim tribal religions. Another 3 percent or so are Christian, less than 2 percent are Jewish, and small numbers of Baha'is, Zoroastrians, and believers in other religions are scattered throughout the area. The greatest concentration of Christians is in Egypt, where the some 5 to 8 million Coptic Orthodox and Coptic Catholics constitute more than 6 percent of the population. While Lebanese Christians, including Maronites (a Latin-rite church), Greek Orthodox, Greek Catholics, Armenian Orthodox, and various smaller sects, make up somewhat less than half of the Lebanese population, they number only around 2 million.[53] Jews, of whom there are fewer than 5 million, are now overwhelmingly concentrated in Israel, whereas prior to the creation of that state in 1948, significant communities of Sephardim, who are also termed Oriental Jews, were found in most Arab states. In Morocco, for example, 1 of every 25 citizens in 1948 was Jewish, whereas now the ratio is 1 of every 1,400, even though the 16,000 Jews still in Morocco constitute the largest community of Middle Eastern Jews outside Israel.[54] Despite the comparatively limited numbers of non-Muslims, they, in combination with Shi'is, have complicated state- and nation-building in the region. From its inception, Islam accorded a subordinate but protected status to Christians and Jews, who as "people of the book" (Bible and Torah, respectively) were respected by Islam. They were obliged to pay a special tribute known as the *jizya*, but otherwise, like other *dhimmis* (tolerated peoples), their individual and collective rights, including those of worship, property, security, and legal autonomy, were recognized and protected. This arrangement was

[51]On zars, see Cynthia Nelson, "Self, Spirit, Possession and World View—Illustration from Egypt," *International Journal of Social Psychiatry* 17:3 (1971): 194. On popular religious festivals, see Joseph Williams McPherson, *The Moulids of Egypt* (Cairo: N. M. Press, 1941).

[52]Hamied Ansari, "The Islamic Militants in Egyptian Politics," *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 16 (March 1984): 123–144.

[53]Demographic statistics on the Middle East are notoriously unreliable, in part because governments are reluctant to release census figures that pertain to such sensitive questions as numbers of religious minorities. Lebanon, in fact, has not had a census since 1932 because the Christian-dominated government did not want it officially established that their confession is a minority.

[54]Dale F. Eickelman, "Changing Perceptions of State Authority: Morocco, Egypt and Oman," in *The Foundations of the Arab State*, p. 182.

ultimately regularized by the Ottomans who, having captured Istanbul in 1453, appointed patriarchs of the Greek and Armenian Orthodox and Jewish communities. These minority groups were termed *millets,* a term that by the mid-nineteenth century had been broadened to include ethnic as well as religious communities. According to Suad Joseph, "The dhimmi and millet systems further deterred the development of state institutions," for they segmented the empire, the unity of which was limited to transitory conditions of factional balance.[55] The millets were themselves only loose collectivities, serving more as tax categories than cohesive, self-aware, and self-governing communities. Segmentation of the Ottoman political community and economy was further increased by the fact that religious and ethnic minorities tended to concentrate in various crafts and occupations.

Millets provided channels through which Western influence, both economic and intellectual, began to flow as the Ottoman Empire weakened. Through the Capitulations, which had originally been granted in the sixteenth century to resident foreign communities by Ottoman rulers to facilitate trade but that were subsequently utilized by the West to extract further concessions and were broadened to include local Christians and Jews, significant economic and legal advantages were provided to those minorities. As the "sick man of Europe" decayed further, the European powers, in their scramble to secure concessions, cultivated religious minorities. They legitimated their imperial ambitions by claiming to protect the persecuted. The French cemented ties to Maronite Christians in the Levant, a move the British countered by "protecting" the chief opponents of the Maronites, the Druze.[56] The Russians sought to expand their influence, particularly in Jerusalem, through the Russian Orthodox faith. For the European nations, missionaries performed not just religious but also political roles, mobilizing Eastern Christians in support of Western ideas and specific political claims.

By the beginning of this century, the Ottoman millet system had all but broken down under pressures resultant from increasing Western influence and the expanding power of the Ottoman state. Spreading ideas of secular nationalism inspired hope among minorities who sought to escape their subordinate status. In the pre-nation-state period when political control had been weak and intermittent, religious identities had not been sources of major political conflict and had been a sufficient basis on which to organize communal affairs and relations with higher authority. However, the European secular model held out the promise to minorities in the Middle East that religion could be effectively separated from politics. In this way, the political community could be redefined so that Muslims and non-Muslims would be equal citizens. As Middle Eastern gov-

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[55]Joseph, "Muslim-Christian Conflicts," p. 2

[56]The relationship between the French and the Maronites was so intense and wide ranging that in the wake of the Druze-Maronite conflict of 1840–1841 Viconte Onffroy, a French colonial official, saw fit to try to alleviate the situation by encouraging Maronites to migrate to Algeria where they could participate with the French in the colonization of that country. On his plan, see Daad Bou Malhab Atallah, *Le Liban, Guerre Civile ou Conflict International? A Partir du Milieu du XIXe Siecle* (Beirut: Dar al-Hurriyat, 1980), pp. 247–248.

ernments began to demand more of their subjects, so did those subjects, Muslims and non-Muslims alike, increasingly insist on new relationships with that expanding authority. Political ideologies thus developed in tandem with the process of state formation.

The Emergence of Modern States and Ideologies

COMPARISON WITH EUROPE

The emergence of European nation-states, accompanied as it was by a protracted civil war, nevertheless occurred in more favorable circumstances than those surrounding the state-building process in the Middle East. The principle of secularism had in much of Western Europe been established by the late eighteenth century.[57] From the seventeenth century, the European economy had been expanding rapidly. The bourgeoisie—that class to which secular nationalism most appealed—gained the upper hand against the aristocracy in the nineteenth century. Moreover, Europe was not at the mercy of stronger imperial powers constantly meddling in its internal affairs.

In the Middle East, none of these favorable conditions were obtained. In the nineteenth century, as the Iranians and Ottomans began to modernize their societies in order to defend themselves against Western domination, they encountered difficulties in assimilating, organizing, and mobilizing their populations. They drew upon two sources in constructing ideologies to facilitate those tasks: religion and secular nationalism. While the latter came to assume greater importance, it never succeeded in supplanting religion as a major source of politically relevant personal identity. This is because "the relationship between nationalism and religion in the Middle East is complex and curvilinear. Both value structures are to varying extents held by an overwhelming majority of the population and generate at times mutually reinforcing, and at other times conflicting, patterns of behavior."[58] Thus political ideologies in the Middle East resemble a museum of intellectual history, for they range from Marxist-Leninism, to classical liberalism, to versions of Islamic fundamentalism that look to the Golden Age of the seventh century for their inspirations.

Whereas European economies were expanding rapidly during the state-formation period, Middle Eastern economies grew unevenly and at a much

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[57]Secularization in Europe, which began with peasant revolts and the Reformation initiated by Martin Luther in the sixteenth century and that was then facilitated by the great religious wars of the seventeenth century, finally came to fruition in conjunction with and possibly only because of the development of modern industrial society. On the travail that accompanied European secularization and its implications for the Middle East, see Bassam Tibi, *The Crisis of Modern Islam: A Preindustrial Culture in the Scientific-Technological Age* (Salt Lake City, Utah: University of Utah Press, 1988), pp. 127–148; and Tamara Sonn, *Between Qur'an and Crown: The Challenge of Political Legitimacy in the Arab World* (Boulder, Colorado: Westview Press, 1990), pp. 1–30.

[58]G. Hossein Razi, "Legitimacy, Religion and Nationalism in the Middle East," *American Political Science Review* 84 (March 1990): 82.

slower pace. Imperialism did stimulate production of some commodities in the Middle East, especially agricultural raw materials such as cotton and silk, but it undermined production of many others, particularly manufactured goods. The net result was that economies did not expand with sufficient speed or across a broad enough front to provide states with the additional revenues required to finance the necessary institutions. This failure, in turn, reduced the speed and extent to which segments of the population were integrated into the new nation-states. Because states and economies could not effectively demonstrate an ability to provide the resources necessary to ensure the livelihoods of ever-expanding numbers of citizens, the population clung to kinship, sect, and client loyalties that had traditionally provided sources of employment and security.

In Lebanon, where rapid economic growth did occur, the state—hobbled at the outset by the unwillingness of the leaders of the country's major religious sects to surrender their powers to the new government—never achieved sufficient control over the economy to wean citizens away from their dependence on confessions and kinship groups. Those primordial ties provided jobs, licenses, and other resources that the state could not deliver impartially or directly, a fact of which the Lebanese were all too aware. The Lebanese state, according to Samir Khalaf, "compared to other forms of primordial loyalties and communal allegiances, has always been an enfeebled and residual institution."[59]

In those countries where the state did achieve greater leverage over primordial groupings, faltering economies have subsequently eroded state power, thereby clearing the way for primordialism to reemerge or other challenges to the state to arise. In Egypt, for example, the Egyptian government expanded very rapidly after Nasser consolidated his power in the mid-1950s. The necessary resources were provided by the confiscated assets of foreigners and wealthy Egyptians, while foreign aid made available further revenues to underwrite Nasser's Arab socialism. A fairly comprehensive social welfare system was created, education was made free at all levels, graduates were guaranteed jobs in the civil service, and government employment mushroomed. The state's domination of the economy and its ability to provide resources to citizens underpinned the appeal of Nasserism, an ideology that combined Arab nationalism with socialist ideas and practices while being careful not to appear as anti-Islamic. By the mid-1960s, however, it was apparent that the regime had overextended, there being insufficient economic resources to support such a large state. Erosion of the appeal of Nasserism to Egyptians closely paralleled deterioration in the government's ability to provide adequate jobs, welfare payments, health and educational facilities, and the like. Under Sadat and Mubarak, as economic growth has failed to keep pace with population expansion and the government's share of national wealth has also declined, so have a network of populist Islamic *jam'iyyat* (societies) moved to fill the breach. They provide unemployment insurance, textbooks and free tutors to poor students, clinics and hospitals, and other important services. Not surprisingly, the appeal of Islam as a political doctrine has grown accordingly. To many of those provided services

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[59]Khalaf, *Lebanon's Predicament*, p. 234.

by such societies, "Islam (and not the semisecular state) is the solution"—the slogan of Egypt's Muslim Brotherhood. That Islamic societies are becoming "a state within a state" attests to the continued deterioration of the government's ability to influence the lives of citizens.

Role of the Bourgeoisie The comparatively slow expansion of Middle Eastern economies and, in cases like Lebanon, the state's limited control over resources, have set the Middle Eastern process of state-building apart from that of Europe. The role of independent merchants, manufacturers, and professionals (the *bourgeoisie*) was also vastly greater in Europe than it has been in the Middle East. The reasons for the relative weakness of the bourgeoisie in the Middle East are contentious. One view is that Islam is incompatible with the rise and existence of an independent entrepreneurial class. Ernest Gellner, for example, has argued that because Islam propagates the belief that "the duty of the state is to proscribe evil and enforce good," it habituates Muslims to the idea that resources "should be distributed according to moral and political requirements, and not be left to the vagaries of the market."[60] Gellner implies that the hostility toward a market-based economy creates an inhospitable environment for entrepreneurialism. On the other hand, Maxime Rodinson, a noted French scholar of the Middle East, has written a lengthy book to dispel the belief that Islamic doctrine is hostile to entrepreneurialism.[61] Fawzy Mansour attributes the weakness of the Middle Eastern bourgeoisie to the fact that judicial authority was insufficiently independent and absolute to guarantee impartial, binding adjudication of contractual disputes.[62] Alternatively, Peter Mansfield contends that "a self-confident and enterprising Islamic bourgeoisie did exist in the Middle Ages but it never succeeded in achieving political power as a class because from around the eleventh century this was in the hands of the Mamlukes and other Turkish and Caucasian military."[63] Since these rulers frequently were of tribal origin and more interested in waging war and in agriculture, "they tended to leave trade and commerce to European traders and to non-Muslim ethnic minorities (such as Greeks, Armenians, and Jews) who were, however, completely at the mercy of the despotic power of the Ottoman state."[64] The Middle Eastern bourgeoisie, lacking independence from government, could, in this view, be neither the economic nor the political equivalent of the bourgeoisie in the West that played such an important role in creating capitalism and strong nation-states.

After reasonably strong states did emerge in the Middle East in the 1950s and 1960s, elites in control of them then used those states "to inhibit the development of an independent bourgeoisie . . . which might have threatened political

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[60]Ernest Gellner, "Foreword," in *From Nationalism to Revolutionary Islam*, ed. by Said Amir Arjomand (London: Macmillan, 1984), p. x.

[61]Maxime Rodinson, *Islam and Capitalism* (London: Allen Lane, 1974).

[62]Fawzy Mansour, *The Arab World: Nation, State and Democracy* (London: Zed Books, 1992), p. 72.

[63]Peter Mansfield, *The Arabs* (London: Penguin Books, 1985), pp. 84–85.

[64]Bassam Tibi, *Arab Nationalism: A Critical Enquiry* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1981), p. 51.

stability" by demanding democratization of those polities and liberalization of their economies.[65] Moreover, Middle Eastern economies have been insufficiently independent and developed to provide adequate foundations upon which indigenous merchants, financiers, and manufacturers might construct internationally competitive enterprises. Hanna Batatu summarizes the comparative role of the bourgeoisie in Europe and the Arab world as follows:

> It is not an accident that the "third estate" played an important role in the emergence of such European nation-states as France or England in the dawn of the modern age, or that the process of German unification was impelled in the 1860s in part by the manufacturing classes of the Rhine region, or that the shipping, manufacturing, and commercial interests in America's thirteen colonies were an important motive force in the 1780s behind the trend toward a strong federal government. In the Arab countries the counterparts of these classes have never been strong in the modern era. International economic relationships have been so structured, the financial, organizational, and technical powers of the multinational corporations have been so overwhelming, and Arab conditions so under-developed that, with some exceptions, Arab private entrepreneurs have not been able to grow autonomously, or have been able to thrive only as appendages of either the multinational corporate system or of their own governments.[66]

Classes Created Through State Formation Whereas in Europe the state and its ideological underpinning, which was provided by secular nationalism, were fashioned by the bourgeoisie, in the Middle East the state emerged independently of that or any other class. Created as a result of the efforts by ruling elites to defend their territories against the West, and subsequently by colonial administrators, the state in the Middle East was not the product of the bourgeoisie nor of secular nationalism. Instead, the state itself fostered the growth of certain classes and specific ideologies.[67] Seeking to expand and centralize their personal control, rulers "were logically moved to weaken the classes most identified with Islam, especially the ulema, and to establish what is often called secularism, although state control over religion would be a more accurate designation."[68] Muhammad Ali, who ruled Egypt for most of the first half of the nineteenth century, was the first major Middle Eastern ruler to adopt this strategy. Having been assisted by the ulema in his rise to power amid the chaotic conditions that prevailed after the withdrawal of the French expeditionary force in 1801, once he

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[65]Lisa Anderson, "The State in the Middle East and North Africa," *Comparative Politics* 20 (October 1987): 11.

[66]Hanna Batatu, "The Pan-Arab Experience of Syria's Ba'th Party," in *Arab Nationalism and the Future of the Arab World*, ed. by Hani A. Faris (Belmont, Mass.: Association of Arab-American University Graduates, 1986), p. 63.

[67]For an analysis of Tunisia and Libya from this perspective, see Lisa Anderson, *The State and Social Transformation in Tunisia and Libya, 1830–1980* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1986).

[68]Nikki R. Keddie, "Ideology, Society and the State in Post-Colonial Muslim Societies," in *State and Ideology in the Middle East and Pakistan*, ed. by Fred Halliday and Hamza Alavi (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1988), p. 11.

received Istanbul's formal confirmation of his status as ruler he quickly subordinated the ulema to his will. He and his successors progressively divorced religion from education by sending Egyptians to Europe for advanced training and by creating a state-sponsored educational system. Dar al-Ulum, the famous teacher's training college, along with other state educational institutions and private, European-sponsored ones, gradually marginalized al-Azhar, the thousand-year-old premier Egyptian institution of Islamic learning. Graduates of the state educational system and private European schools played a prominent role in fashioning the secular version of Egyptian nationalism that contributed to the Ahmad al-Arabi and 1919 revolutions, the first of which, in 1882, caused the British to invade Egypt and the second of which resulted in their granting Egypt nominal independence.

Subsequent state-builders elsewhere in the region similarly fostered changes that simultaneously undermined traditional Islam and its leaders, created new social groups and classes, and contributed to the growth of bureaucracies, armies, and other modern state institutions. Ataturk and Reza Shah (whose careers will be examined in greater detail in Chapter 5), for example, both encouraged women to enter the work force so that their labor power would be available to the state and the hold of traditional Islam over them would be reduced. Ataturk's assault on Islam and the Turkish ulema was relentless, including such measures as the abolition of the caliphate, banning of the *fez* (hat with Islamic connotations) and *tekkes* (Dervish groups), and substituting the roman for the Arabic alphabet. Reza Shah, confronting ulema whose independent power was reinforced by Shi'i doctrine and by the financial autonomy resulting from their access to *zakat* and *khums* (Islamic taxes) and from control over income from *waqf* (religious endowments), had to tread more warily. That neither Reza Shah nor his son, Muhammad Reza Shah, ever fully succeeded in subordinating Iranian ulema to the state was made abundantly clear by the revolution of 1978–1979. The growing influence of Islam over Turkish society and politics suggests that Ataturk's steamroller approach suppressed Islam but did not eradicate it as a root source for social and political thought and behavior.

Muhammad Ali, Ataturk, Reza Shah, and other Middle Eastern modernizing rulers greatly enhanced the size and power of the bureaucratic middle class as a by-product of their expansion of public bureaucracies, civilian and military alike. That class, whose interests were coincidental with an expanding state, became the primary bearers of nationalism, whether in the Turkish, Iranian, Egyptian, or Arab variants. Before seizing power in their own right in Turkey, in Egypt, and elsewhere in the Arab world (and briefly in Iran during the Musaddiq interlude from 1951 to 1953), this class had to overcome not only traditional rulers but also another class that had likewise risen to preeminence as a result of the state-formation process. That class comprised rural elites, usually landowners, whose support was required by modernizing governments in order to control the countryside, extract revenues from it, and provide political support against various opponents.

The importance of the landowning class varied in proportion to the strength of the central government. In Turkey, where Ottoman reforms in the

nineteenth century paved the way for Ataturk's unrelenting centralization of power, the government did not have to rely heavily on rural notables to control the peasantry or extract revenues. Thus Ataturk's Turkish nationalism has always been much more closely associated with the bureaucratic middle class than with any other social force. In Iraq, by contrast, the precarious hold of the regime in Baghdad forced King Faisal's government to rely heavily on large landowners and tribal shaikhs. As David Pool has argued, government in Iraq was comprised of a tripartite coalition consisting of landowners-shaikhs, bureaucrats, and the king with his entourage.[69]

Similarly, in Egypt, governments have since the Muhammad Ali period relied on landowners for purposes of rural control and extraction. As a result, landowners, despite having been subjected to three agrarian reforms during the Nasser period, have been amazingly successful in maintaining their presence within the political elite.[70] In Iran, large landowners comprised a key element of support for the regime of Reza Shah. His son, who wanted greater political autonomy, sought to undermine some of their power through the land reforms that he promulgated in 1963. While he did succeed in reducing their political influence, the loss of the political support of landowners helped contribute to the shah's overthrow in 1979.

The landlord class brought into existence by state-building contributed some famous leaders to national movements, such as Sa'd Zaghlul in Egypt. In general, however, this class was not as stridently nationalist, nor did it exhibit as much ideological homogeneity as the bureaucratic middle class. Both Islamic reformism and secularism attracted the landowning class, further exacerbating fissiparous tendencies characteristic of most political organizations based on rural notables. Landowners tended to be classic liberals, favoring a restricted rather than an interventionist role for government, which put them at odds with forces seeking to build stronger states. The period of landowner ascendancy, which was the first half of the twentieth century, has been referred to as the liberal era.

Conflict between the two major classes that had been fostered by state-building processes came to a head after World War II. In most instances, the bureaucratic middle class was able to shoulder aside landowners and other elements of the ancien régime. The success of the bureaucratic middle class was due to its close association with the military, to the discrediting of landowners and their allies as defenders of privilege and collaborators with imperialism, and to the superior organization characteristic of middle-class politics. Members of the bureaucratic middle class were strong proponents of secular nationalist ideologies, despite the fact that the large majority of these countries' populations remained religious traditionalists. The existence of this gap, and the

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[69]David Pool, "From Elite to Class: The Transformation of Iraqi Political Leadership," in *The Integration of Modern Iraq*, ed. by Abbas Kelidar (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1979), pp. 63–87.

[70]See Leonard Binder, *In a Moment of Enthusiasm: Political Power and the Second Stratum in Egypt* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1978).

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failure to bridge it, accounts in large measure for "the return of Islam" since the late 1960s.

The Contending Ideologies

ARAB NATIONALISM

While the state-based nationalisms of Turkey, Iran, and Egypt were from the outset propagated by modernizing rulers, the history of Arab nationalism was different. The earliest manifestations of the Arab Awakening, as George Antonius called it, were the writings of Syrian and Lebanese intellectuals, both Muslim and Christian.[71] In the second half of the nineteenth century, these writers began to articulate thoughts of Arab distinctiveness and identity. Theirs was a response to the increasing emphasis on Turkish ethnicity and, for the Christians at least, Islam, the two chief alternative beliefs/identities through which their proponents sought to legitimate and perpetuate the Ottoman Empire.

Another factor that stimulated the Christians' search for a new political ideology was the breakdown in Muslim-Christian relations that ensued after the withdrawal of Egyptian forces from Syria in 1839. Ibrahim Pasha, Muhammad Ali's son, had sought the support of religious minorities after occupying Syria in 1831. "In every town he occupied," observes Kamal Salibi, "Ibrahim removed the traditional restrictions imposed on Christians and Jews and placed these communities on an equal footing with Moslems."[72] Christians were even granted exemptions from impositions levied on Muslims and Druze. When Egyptian protection was withdrawn less than a decade later, Christians in particular came under threat from Syrian Muslims who resented their favorable treatment and collaboration, real or imagined.

Christian ideas of Arabism and modes of expressing it were also influenced by educational experiences in Western-supported institutions, most important of which was the Syrian Protestant College, which subsequently became the American University of Beirut. The Arabist literary *nahda* (Renaissance) was led by such Christian scholars as Nasif al-Yaziji (1800–1871), Faris al-Shidyaq (1805–1887), and Butrus al-Bustani (1819–1883). Subsequently, organizations of intellectuals began to spring up, and in 1875 the first "secret society" with a specifically political intent was organized at the Syrian Protestant College.

Christian Arabs, who shared ethnic and linguistic but not religious identities with fellow Arabs, sought to emphasize Arab history and the Arabic language while deemphasizing or altogether eliminating religion as a source of personal and national political identity. In one variant of Christian-propagated Arab nationalism, Antun Sa'ada identified common geographical origins in Greater Syria as the tie that should bind together Syrians, Iraqis, Jordanians, and Palestinians. Sa'ada founded the Syrian Social Nationalist Party in 1932. It was a

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[71]George Antonius, *The Arab Awakening: The Story of the Arab National Movement* (Beirut: Khayyat's, 1955).

[72]Kamal S. Salibi, *The Modern History of Lebanon* (New York: Fredrik A. Praeger Publishers, 1965), p. 28.

major force in Lebanese and Syrian politics until the early 1960s and was still operating in the 1990s.[73]

Ba'thism, the most successful of the intellectual trends within Arab nationalism in that it actually came to power in two states, is most heavily indebted for its principal ideas to the Greek Orthodox thinker and activist Michel Aflaq. His way of dealing with the issue of Islam was to relegate it to the status of having been a historically formative force but one with no specific contemporary ideological or political role. By saying that Islam *was* Arab nationalism, Aflaq could then go on to spell out a romantic, vague, but essentially secular interpretation of that nationalism. Similarly, versions of Arab nationalism that have drawn most heavily on Marxist theories are also typically the products of Christians. George Habash, for example, is a Greek Orthodox doctor trained at the American University of Beirut. Prior to founding the Marxist-oriented Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine, Habash organized the radical Arab Nationalist Movement, which established branches in numerous Arab countries.

Although Christians contributed disproportionately to the Arabist literary revival of the late nineteenth century, the emergence of the Arabist protonationalist movement shortly before and during World War I, and then its conversion into full-fledged Arab nationalism after that time, was due principally to the efforts of Muslim political activists.[74] Like Christians, they had increasingly been alienated by the Ottoman elite's growing emphasis on Turkish ethnicity and language, which, among other things, prejudiced their chances for recruitment and promotion in the Ottoman bureaucracy. Muslim Arab nationalists of this era were also influenced by Islamic modernism or reformism, which held that a revitalization of the true Islam—the Islam of their ancestors—would necessarily restore those to whom Islam was first revealed, the Arabs, to preeminence in the Muslim world. Following the collapse of the Ottoman Empire, Arab nationalism spread rapidly in the newly created Arab states, especially those in the Arab heartland stretching from the Mediterranean coast to the Iran-Iraq border. The relative paucity of wataniyya, combined with the occupation of Syria, Iraq, Palestine, and Lebanon by the British and French, underlay the attraction of al-qawmiyyat al-Arabiyya. The rapid expansion of state structures under colonial control stimulated the growth of the bureaucratic middle class, to whom Arab nationalism had a particularly strong appeal.

Sati al-Husri (1882–1968), a prominent Muslim Arab nationalist whose writings served as textbooks for Arab students of post–World War II generations, personified many of these broader trends. His father, a Syrian, was the Ottoman Qadi in Yemen. Sati al-Husri received a traditional Islamic education. Subsequently he studied in Europe before being assigned by the Ottoman govern-

[73]On the Syrian Social Nationalist Party, also known as the PPS, see Labib Zuwiyya Yamak, *The Syrian Social Nationalist Party: An Ideological Analysis* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard Middle Eastern Monograph Series, vol. 16, 1966).

[74]For an analysis of the changing historiography of the Arab nationalist movement, see Rashid Khalidi et al., *The Origins of Arab Nationalism* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1991).

ment to a number of teaching and administrative posts. During the twilight of the Ottoman Empire, he made contact with the Arab nationalist underground in Syria. When an Arab state under Amir Faisal was created in Damascus in 1920, Sati al-Husri was named minister of education. After the French thwarted that attempt at statehood some four months later, he accompanied Faisal to Iraq, where the latter was proclaimed king and al-Husri was appointed dean of the Baghdad University Law School. In 1941 he was deported to Syria, following a British-backed coup to overthrow the anti-British government of Rashid Ali al-Gailani. He later went on to Cairo, where for twenty years he worked for the Arab League, which had been founded in 1945.

Sati al-Husri's career reveals much about Arab nationalism. An Ottoman official, he rejected Ottomanism for Arabism. Educated in Islamic schools, he modified Islamic formulations to accommodate European conceptualizations of nationalism. His writings inspired innumerable students and political activists, including Michel Aflaq. His very presence in Cairo from 1947 to 1966 not only served to spread Arab nationalist ideas among Egyptians but also, from the mid-1950s, provided tangible evidence of Nasser's claim that Egypt (and by implication Nasser himself) should be leader of the Arabs.[75] Sati al-Husri, like other prominent intellectual Arab nationalists such as Aflaq, was not just a political thinker but also a symbol exploited in inter-Arab struggles for power and by governments seeking to legitimate themselves.

By the 1960s Arab nationalism appeared to have triumphed. Leading Arab states vied with one another in the claim to be the purest embodiment of that ideology. But their very audacity and grandiose claims, their inability to develop adequately their economies and, ultimately, their defeat by Israel in 1967 not only undermined those governments but eroded the appeal of Arab nationalism itself. That process was further hastened by the new balance of power in inter-Arab politics. Conservative Arab states, especially those in the Gulf, had always been skeptical of Arab nationalism, both because of its radicalism and because it had been used as a foreign policy tool against them by Egypt, Syria, Iraq, and other Arab states. These conservative states, therefore, seized the opportunity to undercut radical Arab nationalism. Their new oil wealth, especially after 1973, made it possible to offer incentives to Arab rulers to establish amicable state-to-state relations, while at the mass level those funds were used to encourage the growth of Islamic ideas, or "Petro-Islam," at the expense of secular versions of Arab nationalism.

The speed with which Arab nationalism was displaced, however, cannot be explained entirely by the defeat in 1967, by the lure of petrodollars, or by the vagaries of inter-Arab politics. Arab nationalism had never been fully secularized or firmly established as the undisputed state idea of countries such as Egypt, Iraq, and Syria. Arab nationalists had seized power through the military, and

[75]On Sati al-Husri, see William L. Cleveland, *The Making of an Arab Nationalist: Ottomanism and Arabism in the Life and Thought of Sati al-Husri* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1971); and Tibi, *Arab Nationalism.*

their ideology remained "confined to learned elites."[76] The states over which they presided were never strong enough to relate secular nationalism systematically to political institutions and hence to instruct citizens in precisely what being an Arab nationalist meant. Under these conditions, the political elite gave way to the inevitable by blurring the distinction between Arabism and Islam, for the latter is much more readily understood and accepted at the mass level. This left nationalist elites and their states vulnerable to political appeals couched in straightforward Islamic terminology.

ISLAMIC REFORMISM

Two strains of Islamic political thought and action have attracted the support of Muslims for more than a century. That which appealed initially to the wealthy, partly Westernized elite, of whom landowners were the most important element, was a modernist, reformist Islam that took shape from the mid-nineteenth century as a result of interaction with European thought. Rifa'a Tahtawi, one of the earliest and most influential Islamic reformers, instructed his fellow Egyptians that Islam was compatible with European conceptions of state, nation, and patriotism. Jamal al-Din al-Afghani (1839–1897), a colorful Iranian thinker and political militant, advocated a "defensive modernization" of Islam, whereby it would be strengthened through a rediscovery of its heritage and by unification of Muslims under a single government. Afghani's ideas served as a point of departure for his Egyptian disciple Muhammad Abduh (1849–1905), whose Salafiyya movement emphasized that Islam could be revitalized only through Western-style rational inquiry and, unlike Afghani's message, by "cultural rather than political activity."[77] While Afghani's and Abduh's thoughts both contributed to the development of Arab nationalism through such thinkers as the Syrian Abd al-Rahman al-Kawakibi and also influenced Islamic revivalism through Abduh's disciple Rashid Rida, the main thrust of the Salafiyya movement was essentially apolitical, hence conservative. Abduh was himself a figure of the religious and social establishments, rising to the post of Qadi with the encouragement of Britain's Lord Cromer, the virtual ruler of Egypt.

Reformist Islam did not become a powerful political movement in its own right for several reasons. Its moderation and stress on accommodation cut it off from a mass base. It was appropriate for the conservative upper class, but that class itself was being challenged by the more radical bureaucratic middle class. When reformist Islam shaded in the direction of anti-imperialist political activism, it immediately encountered the opposition of the occupying power and the local government under its control. Afghani, one of whose followers assassinated Nasir al-Din Shah of Iran in 1896, elicited the fear and scorn of the British. He was eventually banished from Egypt. The more moderate Abduh, on

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[76]Saad Eddin Ibrahim, "The Concerns and the Challenges," in *Pan-Arabism and Arab Nationalism*, p. 62.

[77]Tibi, *Arab Nationalism*, p. 66. *Salaf* means "ancestors," referring to the leaders of Islam in the Golden Age.

the other hand, was patronized by Lord Cromer out of the calculation that he posed no serious political threat.

Another factor that prevented a reformist Pan-Islam from emerging as the dominant ideology to challenge colonialism was that its legitimacy was tarnished by the last ruling Ottoman sultan, Abd al-Hamid. He terminated the Young Ottomans' experiment with liberalism in 1876, hoping to substitute Pan-Islam for the appeal of political liberty. In so doing he further discredited Islam among those bent on reform, especially the members of the rising middle classes. Finally, moderate, reformist Islam was eclipsed during the colonial and immediate postcolonial periods by Arab nationalism and by Islamic revivalism because both of those alternatives embodied more activist responses to the threat posed by Western intervention and therefore had greater popular appeal.

Contemporary Islamic reformers, like their forerunners, are in conflict with more radical Islamicists. Fu'ad Zakariyya, for example, cautions Egyptian Islamic activists against religious dogmatism and the supposition that contemporary government can be based on Islamic ideals embodied in the Quran or sharia. According to him, "Islam is what Muslims have made of it in history; it is not some ahistorical system beyond human experience."[78] To him, revivalists stress the form rather than the content of Islam, placing undue emphasis on such matters as dress codes at the expense of substantive issues such as welfare and justice. Fu'ad Zakariyya's colleague, Faraj Fuda, an even more trenchant critic of revivalists and a staunch defender of secularism, was gunned down in the streets of Cairo in June 1992 by members of the Islamic Jihad organization.

ISLAMIC REVIVALISM

Islamic revivalism, also referred to as fundamentalism, Islamic activism or populism, or simply as Islamism or Islamicism, can be traced back to rural tribesmen, such as those associated with the Mahdi in the Sudan or with Abd al-Qadir (1807–1883) in Algeria, who, like the Sudanese Mahdi, resisted foreign control with the aid of radical Islam. Gradually, Abd al-Qadir's movement and other rural uprisings were suppressed as remote areas and their populations were brought under state control. Accompanying that process was the emergence of a new social force to whom Islamic revivalism appealed. This group comprised those individuals who had been profoundly, and generally negatively, affected by the expansion of state power. Even though many had had modern educations, they remained excluded from the benefits and privileges enjoyed by those with better training and preferential access to the state.

Hassan al-Banna, for example, who founded the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt in 1928, was a poorly paid schoolteacher in the provincial city of Isma'iliyya. Those he recruited to his cause were predominantly of similar lower-middle-class backgrounds. They saw in revivalist Islam a means of overcoming the social injustice they believed to be perpetrated by the secularists in control of

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[78]Fu'ad Zakariyya, *al-Haqiqa wa-l-Wahm fi al-Haraka al-Islamiyya al-Mu'asira (Reality and Delusion in the Contemporary Islamic Movement)*, cited in Boullata, *Trends and Issues*, p. 155.

the state. Since the 1920s, Islamic revivalism in Egypt and elsewhere in the region has recruited heavily from such marginal elements, including those in traditional occupations threatened by modernization as well as recently urbanized, moderately well-educated individuals who have not been able to find employment commensurate with their educations and expectations.[79]

In recent years revivalism has also been attracting even those who are comparatively well situated in their social orders and political economies. This is due to a general erosion of the quality of life in the poorer countries and the widespread belief there that incumbent governments, seen as being subservient to the West, are responsible for the deterioration of services, rising unemployment, skyrocketing inflation, and corruption. In the rich Arab oil-exporting countries of the Gulf, revivalism attracts Shi'i as well as Sunni Muslims who chafe under the control of the family-based regimes that dominate those states and which are also seen to serve the interests of the West rather than their own populations.

The ideological worldview of revivalism, according to John Esposito, includes the following beliefs: Islam encompasses all aspects of life; shortcomings in Muslim societies result from deviations from the "straight path of Islam" in the direction of Western secularism and materialism; the renewal of society depends on a return to Islam and the emulation of its earliest practices; Islamic law must replace Western-inspired legal codes; science and technology are acceptable but must be subordinated to Islam; and re-Islamization requires organizational activity. More radical Islamic revivalists believe that violent revolution is required to achieve these objectives because Muslims confront the power of the West and Zionism. They also contend that God has commanded Muslims to live under Islamic government; that governments not based exclusively on the sharia are illegitimate, as is "establishment" Islam; and that jihad against unbelievers, including Christians and Jews, is a religious duty.[80]

While in its extreme forms Islamic revivalism may well be incompatible with democracy, Islamic activists and their organizations throughout the Middle East have both called for and participated in *ta'addudiyya*, the process of political pluralization.[81] In Algeria, Egypt, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Morocco, Sudan, Tunisia, and Yemen, Islamic movements have contested parliamentary elections. Throughout the region, Islamic activists are debating the relationship between Islam and democracy. One school of thought contends that the Quranic concepts of *shura* (consultation), *ijtihad* (interpretation, independent reasoning), and *ijma* (consensus) constrain autocracy or even underpin popular sovereignty. Another view, whose most articulate spokesperson was Egypt's Sayyid Qutb, is that democratization necessarily usurps God's sovereignty and therefore is a form of *jahiliyya*, or ignorance.

[79]On recruitment of the former type, see Hanna Batatu, "Syria's Muslim Brethren," *Merip Reports* 110 (November-December 1982): 12–20. On recruitment of newly urbanized lower-middle-class elements, see Hamied Ansari, *Egypt: The Stalled Society* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1986), pp. 211–230.

[80]John L. Esposito, *Islam: The Straight Path* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991), pp. 163–164.

[81]On this process, see Michael Hudson, "After the Gulf War: Prospects for Democratization in the Arab World," *Middle East Journal* 45 (Summer 1991): 407–426.

The question arises among those fearful of Islamic revivalism as to whether representatives of that movement would continue to be democrats when and if they rose to power. As demands for ta'addudiyya spread in the region, and as governments permit more political participation, this becomes an ever more central question. In Algeria in January 1992, the military provided its own answer. When it appeared inevitable that the Islamic Salvation Front (FIS) would come to power through the ballot box, the army staged a putsch, justifying its actions on the ground that the FIS would usurp all power and abolish democratic practices. The Algerian military thus averted the first vital test of Islamic revivalists' real commitment to democracy. The issue thus remains unresolved, hanging over governments and oppositions alike.

State-Building and the Challenge of Ideology

Arab governments, most of which have rested their claim to legitimate rule on versions of Arab nationalism, have grimly persisted in the face of a growing challenge from those who would seek to mobilize the masses with an Islamicist message. Governments have sought to counter Islamic revivalism by emphasizing their commitments to Islam and by using the powers of the state to stem its growth. The powers of the state, however, are nowhere so firmly established that its preeminence is guaranteed. In the poorer Arab countries, rapid population growth, stagnating economies, and a decreasing governmental share of national income are eroding the quality of government services. As public infrastructure (roads, hospitals, schools, sanitation services, provision of utilities, and so on) deteriorates, so do questions arise, not only about the competence of political elites but also about the appropriateness of the political ideologies they have propagated. Religious organizations, both Muslim and Christian, some with strong political commitments, are pouring into these administrative and ideological vacuums.

In the wealthy Arab oil-exporting countries, which have been referred to as *rentier* states because they live off "rents"—income from oil—there are other problems.[82] These states have sought to buy the loyalties of their populations by distributing a vast array of goods and services. They too have been unwilling to permit widespread political participation. Dirk Vandewalle observes:

> The rentier nature of state revenue thus militates against the creation of a strong state or the involvement of its corresponding society. In this light the massive revenues accruing to the government in a rentier state are a double-edged sword, allowing the local governments to dole out revenues with minimum attention for representation, on the basis of the reverse principle of no representation without taxation.[83]

[82]On rentier states, see Beblawi and Luciani, *The Rentier State*.

[83]Dirk Vandewalle, "Political Aspects of State Building in Rentier Economies: Algeria and Libya Compared," in *The Rentier State*, p. 160.

Rentier states have sought to depoliticize their populations and to prevent the spread of political ideologies, which they perceive as potential challenges to their power and legitimacy. As substitutes for ideology they have provided "bread and circuses." Kuwait, for example, prior to its invasion by Iraq in 1990, had the world's most comprehensive welfare system, and "circuses" in the form of such diversions as ice rinks and other entertainment complexes. As a result of these policies, "Politics fades away, not merely as a subject for serious discussion, but even as a favorite topic of gossip."[84]

What typically passes as semiofficial ideology in these rentier states is a mix of Islam and loyalty to the ruling family, with a thin veneer of Arab nationalism, which governments are seeking to replace with state-based nationalisms. In sum, neither the poor nor the rich Arab countries have succeeded in creating nation-states based on widespread institutionalized political participation. These governments will, therefore, continue to confront challenges to their legitimacy as the process of state formation proceeds.

In addition to organized opposition movements the largest and most effective of which are Islamicist, there is in many countries a sprawling, unorganized, alienated, and potentially volatile mass public. Often only recently and insecurely urbanized, living in poor quarters, and generally young, those who fall into this category are not yet mobilized by organizations or ideologies. They are, however, ready participants in quasi-organized street violence, such as the bread riots that have affected various countries since the 1970s. This potential opposition force may be the most dangerous of all. It is in some countries comparatively large and strategically located in capital cities. Because its members have so little to lose, they are willing to engage in truly desperate acts. The secret police are unable to track down and arrest leadership elements precisely because of the comparative lack of organization. Finally, this sprawling urban lower class provides a vast recruitment pool for radical organizations, especially those of revivalist Islam.

In the face of the challenge mounted by these real and potential opposition forces, governments have responded with placatory policies, such as maintenance of subsidies for basic foodstuffs, and by seeking to divide and rule the opposition, balancing one against the other. They have sought to drive home to reformist and revivalist Muslims the differences that separate their two movements, and to secularists the gap between themselves and Islamicists. They have alternated policies of repression with concessions. In short, they have played for time, hoping that the current phase of oppositional strength and governmental weakness will not be a lasting one. Ultimately they could be successful in this strategy, in part because they may be forced to expand political participation in order to contain the threat to their existence. State formation, in this scenario, would be facilitated by the process of political competition. The government, in creating arenas in which contending forces struggle for power, would serve as midwife to the birth of a participatory political order.

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[84]Afsaneh Najmabadi, "Depoliticization of a Rentier State: The Case of Pahlavi Iran," ibid., p. 213.

Alternatively, one or more of the organized opposition forces could seize power, or the unorganized opposition could simply swamp political systems by bringing about a protracted breakdown of order. That such scenarios are even possible attests to the magnitude of the problems currently confronting Middle Eastern governments and to the progressive deterioration of ideological consensus. In the absence of such consensus, governmental legitimacy is limited. Secularism is unacceptable to vast numbers of the religiously committed in Arab countries, Turkey, Iran, and Israel, while theocracy is anathema to secularists in those countries. Whether governmental weakness will facilitate a compromise between these and other conflicting forces, or whether it presages the establishment of a new order dominated by one of them, will be the major political question in this region of the world at the end of the twentieth century.

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Chapter 3

The Genes of Politics: Groups, Classes, and Families

In the Middle East, individuals express their social and political demands through membership in various groups. These collectivities range from family units to class aggregations, from recreational groupings to religious affiliations, from personal cliques to political associations.[1] Middle Eastern societies contain a kaleidoscopic array of overlapping and interlocking groups in constant flux. Individuals maintain membership in a large number of groups. In so doing, they build webs of personal connections that constitute the basic sinews of the social system.

Group formations dominate the vertical dimension of stratification as family, friendship, ethnic, religious, professional, recreational, and political groups exist in a state of continual interaction. The social and political systems resemble mosaics composed of a "limitless crisscross of groups."[2] This web of fluctuating groups, however, is not a seamless one. Differing levels of power, wealth, and prestige indicate a system of stratification. The lines etched into this system cut horizontally across other group configurations. In this sense, family, tribal, and religious groups, for example, are embedded within a structure of interrelated classes.

The key political dimensions of power and authority are shaped in the Middle East largely by the prevailing group and class structure. A complex prism of

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[1] For purposes of our analysis, a *group* is defined as a collectivity of individuals who interact in varying degrees in pursuance of a common interest or goal. This definition is broad enough to include aggregations exhibiting a wide variety of organizational styles yet narrow enough to exclude collectivities of individuals who neither interact nor share similar goals.

[2] This is Arthur F. Bentley's phrase. See Bentley, *The Process of Government* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1967), p. 204.