

Islam and the West in world history

SHAHROUGH AKHAVI

ABSTRACT *Rejecting the thesis that Islam and the West are on a collision course, this article examines the nature of their relations over the centuries and concludes that, although convergence between them is not likely, grounds for mutual tolerance and co-existence have always existed and can, in future, exist. Understanding that proprietary liberalism is not the only model for democracy is a necessary first step in the assessment of the long-term prospects for stable relations between Islam and the West. In this article intellectual, social, economic and political trends are examined, the causes of tensions and conflicts between the two sides are analysed, the nature of the contemporary Islamist project is identified, and the possibilities for effective dialogue between mainstream tendencies in both the West and the Muslim world are assessed.*

By the early 21st century many have concluded that Islam and Muslims are hostile to Western perspectives, practices and institutions. Apart from the lurid and hyperbolic writings generated by some Christian evangelicals, Jewish fundamentalists and even scholars,¹ the 1990s witnessed an influential academic theory alleging an inevitable clash between Muslim and Western civilisations,² whose author provides anecdotal evidence to ‘prove’ this thesis.

Although this is not the place to debate Huntington’s argument,³ raising it allows one to ask how Muslims have viewed and will probably view the West in the context of world history. This is an extremely complicated question, because ‘Islam’ and ‘the West’ are such abstract concepts, and one must not reify them. Both entail such varied traditions and experiences that one cannot regard them as monistic units of analysis. Accordingly, although I will try to highlight the broad outlines of Muslim–Western encounters, readers should know of differences in Muslims’ reaction to that West. True, Muslims see the world largely in terms of their own internal processes. Yet their vision has been significantly influenced by their experiences with the West.

The point of departure for Muslims is trying to understand their world is their faith. The dictionary states that religion means ‘action or conduct indicating a belief in, reverence for, and desire to please a divine ruling power; the exercise or practice of rites implying this’; ‘recognition on the part of man of some higher unseen power as having control of his destiny, and as being entitled to obedience, reverence, and worship; the general mental and moral attitude resulting from this belief, with its reference to its effect on the individual or community’.⁴ Muslims specifically add to these general points that they must materialise God’s

Shahrough Akhavi is in the Department of Government and International Studies, University of South Carolina, Columbia, SC 29208-0001, USA. E-mail: akhavi@sc.edu.

commands as members of a living community. The interest of this community must be fostered, promoted and defended. Failing in this risks the lapse of the religious injunctions.

True, many Muslims compartmentalise their lives so as to keep religion in a purely private sphere and behave in the external world on the basis of non-religious criteria. Or, if they allow matters of religion to intrude into public arenas, they limit them to purely moral and pietistic concerns that bear not on social policy and politics but on ethical devotions—such as affirming the unity of God and Muhammad’s prophecy, congregational prayer, fasting during the month of Ramadan, pilgrimage to Mecca, and paying poor dues. For them, observing these is sufficient warrant to claim that they have materialised God’s commands as members of a community. For present purposes I will label this orientation the ‘minimalist view’.

For other Muslims, however, this compartmentalisation is risky at best and, at worst, an abandonment of the categorial imperatives of the faith. In their view the materialisation of God’s commands in their daily lives cannot be accomplished unless they construct the requisite economic, political, and social institutions. For them, Islam is both ‘religion and politics’.⁵ I will refer to this orientation as the ‘maximalist view’.⁶

Consider also that Islam is a highly legalistic religion. Islam is a communitarian system of ordinances and Muslims do not understand Christian tenets such as ‘render unto God that which is God’s and unto Caesar that which is Caesar’s’, or ‘the Kingdom of God is within you’. The mainstream⁷ or Sunni interpretation of Islam rejects this privatisation of faith, attaching overwhelming importance to the charisma of the community as a basis for salvation.⁸ Further reinforcing the legalistic aspects of Islam is the idea of the essentially inscrutable nature of God. While some religions emphasise learning about God’s attributes, essence and nature, Sunnism holds that God is ultimately unknowable, and so believers ought instead to know and act in accordance with God’s law.⁹ This emphasis upon law is so strong that we identify the Muslim clergy more as jurists, while we recognise Christian clergymen more as theologians.

This does not mean that Islam disparages theology. Indeed, Muslim seminaries teach scholastic theology, and no Muslim religious leader can claim to be learned who has not demonstrated knowledge of this field, which primarily relates to God’s characteristics and attributes (such as His unity and justice—though not His essence). These topics are indispensable for the acquisition of religious knowledge in Islam, not least because they also bear heavily on the human being’s characteristics, including freedom, responsibility and autonomy.

Withal, theology pales in relationship to jurisprudence for Islam’s men of religion (*ulama*), precisely because Muslim society requires experts in the law to show believers what God wants them to do and how they may best fulfill such desires.

Development of Islamic thought and early contacts with Western ideas

Significantly, the great translation movements of the ninth and 10th centuries, focusing on Greek, Syriac, Persian and Indian writings, and centred in the school

of Baghdad, focused on works of philosophy and, to some extent, theology, but not on the law. For Muslims believe that non-Islamic societies have least to teach them in that realm.

The Muslims had great need for translations of Greek and Latin works in theology and philosophy but for somewhat different reasons. In theology, they required concepts rather than any particular substantive arguments based on them. Encounters with Christians, moreover, provided opportunities for early Muslim theologians to sharpen their ideas in their disputes with one another.¹⁰ By the time of the first wave of translations in the ninth century, Muslim scholastic theologians had crystallised their notions and actually did not borrow much from non-Muslim works that had been translated into Arabic. In contrast, Muslim philosophers relied heavily on translations from the Greek for the development of their ideas and arguments. They read widely and deeply in Platonic and neo-Platonic philosophy and regarded Aristotle as their most important influence. Islamic mysticism, or gnosis, also valued Greek idealist philosophy.

In its first 10 years (622–632) the Islamic community was ruled by the Prophet, who acted as both the religious and temporal leader of the Muslims. His early successors continued as this, but gradually the two spheres came to be separated *in fact* in the practice of Islamic rulers came to diverge from the high-minded ideals of the faith. However, *the theory* continued to emphasise the integration of the two spheres. This notion persists even into the early twenty-first century for a variety of Islamist¹¹ movements whose goal is to reconstitute the integration of religion and politics that the exemplary model of the Prophet and his immediate successors had achieved.

The actual separation of politics from religion in Islam dramatically influenced the continuing development of the community. On the one side, the caliphs—the successors of Muhammad—tried to guard their political power against regional usurpers. Although they had abandoned such efforts by the mid-10th century and retroactively ratified these usurpations by princes (known as the phenomenon of amirate by seizure), by conferring upon these *amirs* diplomas of investiture, the practice of the Prophet and early caliphs had become a model for groups alienated by tyrannical or impious rulers. On the other side, the jurists accepted the separation of religious and political spheres, holding that even oppressive rulers were preferable to saintly ones if the latter were unable to avert existential threats to the community. Yet many Muslims have problems with this kind of *ex post facto* rationalisation.

A tradition attributed to the Prophet advises the believer to ‘Seek knowledge, even unto China’. This reference to what at that time was perceived to be the furthest reaches of the known world indicates that early Muslims were aware of distant imperia. Western Arabia then was a busy place, athwart the trade routes from Africa to the Levant. Jews and Christians disputed with Muslims, precipitating a tradition of exegetical debate. Because the Romans ignored theoretical matters and Greek thinkers residing in Roman territories were persecuted, they migrated to Islamic areas where they, too, engaged in debates with the Muslims. The religious trends of this time were suffused with Manichaean, Zoroastrian, Buddhist, Hindu, Judaic, Christian and Muslim thought, and this resulted in a remarkably rich cultural interaction.¹²

Muslims felt extremely confident in their debates with representatives of other faiths. In fact, they believed that Judaism and Christianity, though embodying many religious truths, were superseded religions on the grounds that Jews and Christians had turned from God's ordinances. Yet Muslims have generally respected the Jewish and Christian scriptures as foundational texts for Islam and thus consider Jews and Christians as 'people of the book', deserving protection.

Muslim theology and philosophy in interactions with the West

Muslim theology eventually crystallised into what may be termed an Islamic central tendency. The key issues were the attributes of God, causality and pre-determinism. The dominant view, called Ash'arism, held that the Qur'an was the speech of God. Because God could not be limited in His actions, neither could His attributes, whence it was reasoned that the Qur'an was uncreated in historical time or space because God was eternal. To hold otherwise was to place limits on God. Ash'arite ontology held that the cosmos consisted of monads in constant flux. The doctrine emphasised the contingency of occurrences and rejected causal relationships in nature as a violation of God's sovereign power and will. Ash'arism addressed the problem of evil in the world by arguing that, although God directed the occurrence of phenomena, He was not responsible for the suffering produced by human beings. People, it was felt, 'acquire' their actions from God at the moment of their action (permitting the denial of free will), but God Himself takes no responsibility for the evil that people do (thereby it could be maintained that evil in the world is actually the fault of humans). Finally, the Ash'arites maintained that a grave sinner was condemned to hell in advance and that no dispensation could save him/her.

The opposing minority view, known as Mu'tazilism, maintained that God had only one indivisible essence and no separate attributes, such as hearing, sight, speech. The Mu'tazilites interpreted Qur'anic references to these attributes metaphorically and argued that referring to God's speech as an eternal attribute was to erect a hypostatisation that offended the doctrine of the absolute unicity of God (*tawhid*). They argued that, although God was the sovereign creator of the cosmos, He does not direct people to act in any particular manner. He gave humans the freedom to determine their own conduct. They also upheld the idea of God's justice—that the Qur'anic threats of punishment in hell and rewards in paradise were not adumbrated in some offhand manner. To the contrary, they believed that people would face the consequences of their good or bad deeds but felt that only God knew whether a grave sinner would be damned or not.¹³

Ash'arism prevailed over Mu'tazilism, even though the Caliph al-Ma'mun (ruled 813–833) sought to make these latter doctrines the official thought of the Muslim community as a way of ending the divisions in Islamic theology. Later, as the Mu'tazilite views became marginalised, especially as a result of the work of Abu Hamid al-Ghazali (d 1111), it was left to Shi'ism to identify more closely with the radical rationalism inherent in their positions. How the triumph of Ash'arite over Mu'tazilite ontology and epistemology influenced the way Muslims have perceived the West is not immediately apparent from the discussion so far. However, I will argue that ultimately Ash'arism's dominance has

induced Muslims to be sceptical of Western culture, especially in the post-Cartesian period. It has also facilitated Western views of Muslims and Islam as fatalistic and indolent—views that I believe are highly ahistorical and tendentious.

Philosophy, too, was to become the subject of debate by Muslims, Jews, Christians and others in the early centuries of Islam. Mainstream Muslims are wary of philosophy because its intellectual point of departure is not revelational but rather deductive and empirical. Of course, the great Muslim philosophers accepted Islamic revelation and, indeed, believed that Islam itself could better be understood and reaffirmed through discursive and inductive reasoning. Nevertheless, neither the Sunni nor even Shi'i clergy have ever generally accepted such claims. The rise of Islamic philosophy itself from scientific works translated into Arabic from a variety of ancient Greek, Sanskrit and Old Persian texts that considerably antedated Islamic revelation was itself a reason for the clergy's mistrust of Muslim philosophers and their science.

The first great Muslim philosopher, al-Kindi (d ca 870), flourished at a time when Mu'tazilism was in vogue. He was conversant with Aristotelian and Platonic philosophy, albeit his knowledge was deficient. He declared that the knowledge God gave to the prophets was also attainable by ordinary human beings, although it might be less complete and perfect. He felt lay persons should be able to study reality and its relationship to the world of forms, with Plato regarding the world of corporeal beings as transitory and attributing enduring reality to those forms which could be known by the senses, by mathematics and logic. Al-Kindi influenced Jewish philosophy, especially the North African neo-Platonist Isaac Ben Solomon Israeli (d ca 940).

In fact, Jewish philosophers who lived under Muslim rule wrote in Arabic and easily interacted with Muslim philosophers. Although non-Muslims knew al-Kindi, even more influential among them was perhaps the greatest of the Muslim philosophers, al-Farabi (d 960). He applied the thought of the ancient Greeks to the problems of order and instability in Muslim life. Elevating reason above revelation, al-Farabi noted that ordinary people benefit from the truth that religion generates through the use of religious symbols. However, pure truth, unmediated by religious symbols, is within the grasp of the philosopher. Standing in relation to the state as does God to the universe, the philosopher is the benefactor of the Muslim community. While his perspective did not endear al-Farabi to the Muslim theologians and jurists, it propelled him into the forefront of thinkers for whom a science of politics was necessary. Al-Farabi's utopia was the 'perfect city' (*al-madina al-fadila*), headed by the philosopher. This utopia is not so much the community of believers but a body of citizens deriving their happiness from their membership in it. As the ancient Greeks believed that no person could maximise his potential outside the polis, al-Farabi emphasised that no Muslim could do so outside the perfect city.

Other Islamic philosophers, especially ibn Rushd (Averroes, d 1198) also significantly influenced both Jewish and Christian thinkers.¹⁴ He wrote that Islamic revelation was God's gift to human beings to ensure their enlightenment and prosperity. Accordingly, it was seemly for Muslims to implement the basic rituals associated with that revelation as a sign of respect for and submission to

God. However, he argued that human beings also had the God-ordained duty to seek the truth. Normal individuals could acquire a modicum of knowledge and understanding, but specially endowed individuals were capable of achieving superior knowledge, the knowledge of philosophy. Theologians, he believed, were not competent to undertake scientific inquiry.

Ibn Rushd attacked al-Ghazali's book, *The Incoherence of the Philosophers*, an attempt to synthesise mainstream (Ash'arite) theological views and Sufism. Entitling his own work *The Incoherence of the Incoherence*, ibn Rushd wrote that al-Ghazali misunderstood philosophical discourse and misused its concepts in an unsuccessful effort to demolish their arguments. Ibn Rushd broadened his criticisms by saying that theologians and mystics lacked knowledge of scientific methodology and discursive logic and so must stop trying to control philosophical research. His remarkable attack was made the more compelling because of his own stature as a jurist with a profound knowledge of Islamic law. The greatest philosopher of the Western realms of Islam, his works were translated into Hebrew and Latin and were read by St Thomas Aquinas (d 1274). It has even been stated that ibn Rushd's impact on Jewish philosophy rivaled and perhaps surpassed that of the great Jewish thinker, Maimonides (d 1204).¹⁵

Decline of Islam and its impact on relations with the West

Although the decline of a civilisation is difficult to date exactly, for the caliphate the consensus is that it began after the 10th century. By then the four major schools of Sunni law were established, the territorial reach of the community had extended its furthest, and the authority of the caliph had been challenged by the leaders of Turkic tribes migrating from Central Asia into the heartland of the Middle East. They converted to Islam but represented major threats to the centre as they seized power in various districts of the caliphate. In exchange for recognition of their status, the chiefs agreed to allow the invocation of the caliphs' names in the mosques, and also to use coinage bearing the names of ruling caliphs. The constitutional jurists produced a theory of the caliphate that maintained the legitimacy of these arrangements, thereby justifying under the 'doctrine of necessity' effective loss of power by the caliphs to warlords.

In 1258 the Mongols destroyed Baghdad, seat of the caliphate. Meanwhile, Crusaders had invaded the Muslim heartland in a series of campaigns between 1095 and 1291, intending to remove Muslim rule from the 'Holy Land'. Although they failed to entrench Christian power there, even their temporary successes in establishing Latin enclaves in the region distressed the Muslims. Interestingly, however, they regarded the Crusaders less as the representatives of Christendom than as hordes of barbaric Franks who dared to threaten the abode of Islam.

Muslim forces, led by the Kurd, Salah al-Din al-Ayyubi (Saladin, d 1193) routed the Crusaders from Jerusalem, assisted in this by internecine intra-Christian fighting during which they sacked Constantinople itself. At the time Muslims regarded the invaders as a serious challenge, but they did not believe they were a Christian force representing Europe. This was partly because Muslims had permitted Christians (and Jews) to live among themselves and

believed that the *local* Christian leaders effectively represented Christianity. Thus, it was left to later generations, mainly after Napoleon's invasion of Egypt in 1798, retroactively to perceive in the Crusader forces an example of Christian European civilisation's efforts to destroy Islam.¹⁶

In the face of the threats posed to Muslim institutions by the Turkic tribes, the Mongols and the Crusaders, the *ulama* became increasingly defensive and promoted emulation of the ideas of previous generations as a way to protect the faith. This imitative reaction formation was to reinforce even further the bias of Ash'arism against rationalism, innovation and reform. Although Muslim thinkers such as ibn Taymiyya (d 1328) and ibn Khaldun (d 1406) would occasionally criticise the decline of Islam these were basically lone voices.¹⁷ Islamic thought entered a long period of stagnation that was to last until the 19th century.

Meanwhile, European scholars began to abandon their earlier fascination with the ideas of the great Muslim philosophers. Although ibn Rushd was very much in vogue in European universities toward the end of the 13th century, his ideas soon came under attack. Eventually, intellectuals such as Albertus Magnus (d 1280) and Thomas Aquinas—both of whom studied and taught at the University of Paris—and Dante (d 1321) began to attack Arab philosophy and Islamic theology. Magnus defended the doctrine of the soul's immortality against the European followers of ibn Rushd, who maintained, with the master himself, that a single intellect common to all human being is all that remains after death. Aquinas, a student of Magnus, rejected ibn Rushd's thesis that revelation and reason produced two truths that can finally contradict one another. Dante placed Islam's Prophet, Muhammad, in hell in his master work, *The Divine Comedy*, as 'a disseminator of scandal and schism'.¹⁸

Islam and the West in the early modern period

Military conflicts between 'Islam' and 'Christendom' between the end of the Crusades and the fall of Constantinople (1291–1453) were limited to the contest between the Ottomans and the Byzantine Empire and the battles leading to the final ejection of Muslims from the Iberian Peninsula by the late 15th century.¹⁹ Europe ignored the Ottomans in the early years of the dynasty (1312–1453), but this changed after the latter conquered Constantinople. Between 1453 and 1683 the Ottomans were a formidable threat to Austria, Hungary and Russia. However, relations between the Ottomans and Europeans in this period were by no means uniformly hostile. Indeed, the Ottoman sultans were highly pragmatic and signed many agreements with European rulers.²⁰

Western ideas during the period of Ottoman ascendancy rarely influenced Muslim society. Indeed, the printing press, critical for the diffusion of such ideas in the West itself after the mid-15th century, was not even introduced in the Empire until 1721.²¹ The powerful states of Islam were the Ottoman Empire (1312–1923), Safavid Iran (1501–1722) and the Mughal Empire (1526–1721) centred in India. The Ottomans besieged Vienna on two different occasions, in 1529 and 1683 during the peak years of their power. Meanwhile, the sultans deigned to permit merchants and diplomats to come to the Sublime Porte (as the imperial palace was called) and even magnanimously granted them certain

privileges and signed various agreements with them. During the mercantilist era (16th–18th centuries) Muslims were unaware of the momentous consequences for them of developments in lands far away. As precious metals were brought back from the New World by explorers, the circulation in Ottoman domains of European specie containing the new metals caused the debasement of Ottoman coins and an inflationary spiral. Also, voyages of discovery enabled shipping to circumvent the traditional land trade routes that went through Muslim territories. This sharply reduced the export trade and tax revenues on imports. The double economic impact—fiscal and commercial—of these trends was devastating for the Empire.

Beginning with the second siege of Vienna in 1683, the Empire entered into a long period of decline and European domination that ended only in 1923. The theoretical and actual separation of church and state in the West, sparked by the Cartesian epistemological revolution, greatly influenced the West's ascendancy. Without the triumph of Cartesian radical rationalism, the disembedding of church and state and the scientific and industrial revolutions could probably not have occurred. It is, of course, highly symptomatic that by the time of empiricist and rationalist thinkers such as Francis Bacon (1561–1626), René Descartes (1596–1650) and Gottfried Leibniz (1646–1716), European scholars had lost their interest in Muslim philosophy.

In fact, Western writers now levelled polemical attacks on Muslim thought. This trend actually went as far back as Peter the Venerable (d 1156), who reviled the Prophet as an imposter. Later thinkers joined in, including the English scientist, Roger Bacon (1220–1292), the French mathematician and philosopher, Blaise Pascal (1623–1663), the iconoclastic Enlightenment thinker, François Marie Arouet Voltaire (1694–1778),²² the French Encyclopedist, Denis Diderot (1713–1784), the English historian, Edward Gibbon (1737–1794), the French religious historian, Ernest Renan (1823–1892), the British Orientalist, Sir William Muir (1819–1905) and the English writer, HG Wells (1866–1946).²³ It is true that a few writers, such as the Marquis de Condorcet (1743–1794), Johann von Goethe (1749–1832) and Thomas Carlyle (1795–1881), had favourable things to say about Islam and its Prophet, but this was a small group.

The Ottomans mostly won their military confrontations with Europe in the 16th to mid-17th centuries. They did lose the naval battle of Lepanto in 1571 to the Holy League, but respective victories over Spain in 1574, Portugal in 1578 and Venice in 1669 gained them Tunis, Fez (Morocco) and Crete. They almost lost central Hungary and Romania to the Austrians in the war of 1593–1606 but ultimately prevailed. Yet, in the Peace Treaty of Zsitvatorok (1606), the Ottomans acknowledged the leader of Austria as Kaiser, a significant symbolic concession of equality that hitherto had only been granted to Elizabeth I of England and Francis I of France.

For 42 years between 1683 and 1792, the Ottoman Empire lost wars with the Holy League (a coalition involving the Vatican, the Holy Roman Empire and Venice), Austria and Russia. Disastrous as these defeats were (the Empire lost Hungary, Transylvania, Bukovina, the Banat of Temisvar, Bessarabia, Podolia and the Crimea), also momentous was the Porte's coerced recognition of Austria's and Russia's right to intervene legally on behalf of the Christian

subjects of the Empire, rights that had been granted already to other European powers.²⁴

To stem the tide, the Empire sent officials to Europe to learn the secret of European power. Beyond Europe's dismissive attitude, the ideas that these individuals brought back with them were so alien to the Ottoman rulers that, with the exception of a superficial imitation of European dress, garden parties and horticulture, they had little impact until the 19th century. European writers such as Montesquieu and Voltaire wrote imaginative stories of exotically dressed Muslims with strange habits travelling to Europe in order to report back on what they saw. Composers, artists and writers, such as Mozart, Rossini, Delacroix, Ingres, Byron and Fitzgerald, depicted Muslims in fantastic stories of harems, repressive rulers and flying carpets.

The Islamic world and the West in the modern period

The French revolution occasioned the introduction of European political ideas to Muslim countries. Partly this was because of the spread of communications and intensification of European travel to these areas. But, it was also a result of European military and political intervention. Finally, Muslim rulers had become more convinced that reforms based on Western patterns could ensure their societies' survival without losing their cultural identity. The European powers pressed the Ottoman, Iranian and Mughal governments to modernise their societies and political systems so they could more efficiently impose their colonial control there.

The conservative clergy resisted these reforms, arguing that they would be tantamount to the undoing of the *shari'a* (holy law) itself. This would mean that Muslims could not follow the law and hence would be unable to execute God's commands, which in turn would cause Muslims to enter into a state of unbelief. By contrast, reformist-minded clergy were prepared to experiment with notions of constitutionalism and parliamentary institutions by concentrating on those aspects of the tradition that emphasised equality and commended holding rulers to account for their conduct. Additionally, they invoked sayings attributed to the Prophet such as that Muslims must not obey a creature against their Creator (meaning no ruler could command impious acts); and in Qur'an 3:159 and 42:38—verses enjoining the principle of consultation in affairs.

The great reform movement of Islam known as the *salafiyya* (literally, return to the model of the ancestors) during the years 1880–1935 was open to a dialogue with the West, but within limits.²⁵ The leaders of this movement, including Jamal al-Din al-Afghani (d 1897), Muhammad 'Abduh, Grand Mufti of Egypt (d 1905) and 'Abduh's student, Rashid Rida' (d 1935) all agreed that Islam had nothing to fear from science. They also emphasised the importance of independent judgment [*ijtihad*] by jurists to determine legal rules of behaviour for circumstances where the traditional sources were silent. This doctrine had long been dormant in the Sunni Muslim world, although in Shi'ism it had been vindicated already in the late 1700s. During the Iranian Constitutional Revolution of 1905–09, for example, the constitutionalist clergy innovatively resorted to *ijtihad* to activate the Islamic *social* doctrine of accountability through the supervision

of public morals (*hisba*) as a way to limit the *political* power of the monarch. 'Abduh and Rida' emphasised through *ijtihad* that rulers have imprescriptible responsibilities to the believers. For one thing, the Qur'an itself (5:1) stipulates that the believers must 'fulfil contracts'. Salafi thinkers believed that the theorists of the caliphate, such as al-Baghdadi (d 1037), al-Mawardi (d 1058), al-Ghazali (d 1111), and ibn Jama'ah (d 1313), had established that the caliph and the believers maintained mutually contractual relations. Therefore, Muslim modernists could find a retroactive authorisation in the Qur'an for parliaments and modern constitutions, invoking the sacred text itself on behalf of a variant of social contract theory that most observers in the West relate to Hobbes, Locke, Rousseau, Kant and Ferguson.

However, there are limits to how far even modernists could go in dialogue with the West. After all, the Western states had inflicted devastating territorial defeats on the Muslims, championed the breakaway rebellions of the non-Muslim nationalities against the Ottoman Empire, drawn up secret treaties in World War I that betrayed their promises of independence to the Arabs, and supported the Zionist movement to convert Palestine into a Jewish state.²⁶

Despite Western hegemony in the Middle East in the interwar period, the various Western political models—liberal, fascist and Marxist—all failed. Fascism's failure can be explained largely by the episodic nature of Italian efforts to control their zones of influence (mainly Libya and Somalia). Marxism's failure reverts to its identification with atheism and a foreign power, the USSR. As for liberalism, despite its association with colonialism, aspects of liberalism could be accommodated in an Islamic *Weltanschauung*. Liberalism's roots in capitalism are in principle not an obstacle to the acceptance of parts of the model's economic features in Islamic societies.²⁷ Nor are observers such as Samuel Huntington and Daniel Pipes convincing in claiming that 'Islam' is inherently anti-democratic. For democracy features a number of elements that are not absent in Islamic history and traditions.²⁸ As Talmon,²⁹ Arendt³⁰ and others have often noted, equality and justice are critical values of the French revolutionaries and later democrats. Equality of believers is a central value in the Islamic tradition, even though the actual *political* and *economic* equality of all individuals in the social order has proven elusive.

Instead, it is *proprietary individualism* that underpins the difficulty modernist Muslims have with liberal democracy. Note that it is not individualism *per se* that is problematical. Even the most dedicated Muslim communitarians today are perfectly content to allocate an arena of life in which the individual may express herself or himself. Instead, the problem seems to be what CB MacPherson has called 'the political theory of possessive individualism' that is endemic to mainstream liberal thought. In MacPherson's view, possessive individualism is at the heart of liberalism, with roots extending back to Hobbes (1588–1679) and Locke (1632–1704). To MacPherson, the flaw in liberalism is that it ultimately treats the individual

as essentially the proprietor of his own person or capacities, owing nothing to society for them. The individual was seen neither as a moral whole, nor as part of a larger social whole, but as an owner of himself. The relation of ownership, having become for more and more men the critically important relation determining their

actual freedom and actual prospect of realizing their full potentialities, was read back into the nature of the individual. The individual, it was thought, is free inasmuch as he is proprietor of his person and capacities. The human essence is freedom from dependence on the wills of others, and freedom is a function of possession. Society becomes a lot of free equal individuals related to each other as proprietors of their own capacities and of what they have acquired by their exercise. Society consists of relations of exchange between proprietors. Political society becomes a calculated device for the protection of this property and for the maintenance of an orderly relation of exchange.³¹

This perspective is far from *any* Muslim theory of society, including those, such as that of the modernist Muslim Muhammad Iqbal (1877–1938), that emphasise the self-affirmation of the individual.³² In all Muslim outlooks the arrant individualism that MacPherson has described is simply missing. Efforts to establish liberalism in the Muslim world have been resisted because it conflicts with the central idea of salvation in Islam, according to which God has placed the human being on earth as His trustee, whose full potential can be realised only by membership in a community of believers, a community whose existence and welfare is warrant for the religious injunctions.³³ The individual's moral worth is shaped by the contributions of the community of believers, even as that community is itself shaped by what that individual has to offer it.

Ironically, the British and French glossed their colonial rule over the Muslims with the rhetoric of liberal democracy, but their policies denied precisely the kind of outcomes that liberal ideas and institutions are meant to implement. These powers ensured that the parliaments and constitutions that they imposed on the Muslims did not lead to the demise of their imperial rule. Electoral laws were written in such a way as to deny broad enfranchisement. Parliamentary elections were rigged so that pro-European landlords would be the big winners and sit in the legislature to enact laws beneficial to the colonial powers. And the pro-British and pro-French executives in these Muslim societies remained relatively immune from constitutional restrictions on their pro-European policies. This situation bred cynicism among Muslim populations regarding Western democracy. Western states were willing to encourage democracy at home but sought to prevent real democracy from taking root in Muslim societies.

Evolution of the Muslim experience since World War II

Eventually the European states withdrew, Muslim societies established independent states, and various kinds of authoritarian regimes took power. At first, they enjoyed political legitimacy by the sheer fact of being led by native rulers. However, their incompetence and despotism sharply narrowed their support. Losses in wars by Arab states to Israel in 1948–49, 1956, 1967, 1973 and 1982, American support for Israel and for generally corrupt pro-American Arab regimes and, above all, the fate of the Palestinians, combined to push Muslims to 'Islam' as the solution.

This surprised many observers but, in retrospect, it might have been anticipated, given the failures of the Western models as noted earlier. Also, there were some historical precedents. Shortly before World War I the Ottoman sultan had

raised the banner of pan-Islamism to save his realm. In the late 1920s the Muslim Brotherhood was created in Egypt to establish the rule of Islamic law and to expel the British. Eventually, the Brotherhood grew into a social movement with a large following. It survived its darkest days as an underground organisation under the rule of Jamal 'Abd-al-Nasir (Nasser, 1954–1970), and Nasser's successor, Anwar Sadat (ruled 1970–1981), deliberately cultivated relations with it in an effort to enhance his popularity. Meanwhile, branches of the Brotherhood have been established in many Muslim countries, including Sudan, Syria and Jordan, as well as in the West Bank and Gaza Strip.

Beginning in the 1970s a variety of groups split off from the parent organisation in Egypt and pursued violence in the effort to create a society ruled by Islamic law. One of them assassinated Sadat in 1981. In the Gaza Strip the organisation known as Hamas (an acronym standing for the Islamic Resistance Movement) broke away from the Brotherhood in that district. Ironically the Israelis initially supported this development in an effort to weaken the secular PLO. In Algeria the Islamic Salvation Front (FIS) emerged and was poised to sweep general elections in 1992 when, to the relief of the USA and France, the army stepped in. In violent reaction to this development, the Armed Islamic Group, a splinter of the FIS, has formed and committed many violent acts and atrocities, and the regime has resorted to oppression and atrocities of its own. In southern Lebanon, two Shi'i groups, 'Amal and the more militant Hizbullah, have fought the Israeli soldiers occupying the 'security zone' they created after their invasion of Lebanon in 1982. In Pakistan Harakat al-Mujahidin and Jaysh-i Muhammad are active, and across the border in Afghanistan a variety of 'mujahidin' guerrilla organisations combatted the Soviet occupation of 1979–89 but then fell to quarrelling among themselves until the Taliban regime took over in the mid-1990s. The Iranian revolution of 1978–79, which overthrew the monarchy—a client regime of the USA—gave further impetus to many of these developments.

All these violence-prone Islamist groups hold the 'minimalist perspective' identified earlier to be a mortal threat to 'Islam'. The only way to triumph against this threat is to support the 'maximalist perspective', which means restoring the integration of religion and politics and making the *shari'a* the exclusive law of the land. None of these violence-prone groups shares the tolerance of earlier Muslims for those of other religions, much less of different Islamic sects.

In retrospect, it was the disastrous June war of 1967 that really launched the revival of political Islam.³⁴ Some Muslims even argued that the Israelis won because they had remained faithful to God (the same God of the Muslims) while the Muslims had chosen secularism. The 1967 war marked the decline of Arab nationalism under the leadership of Egypt. The argument is not that Arab nationalism was finished, but that it had been discredited. Apart from the secular PLO, the rising organisations in the Muslim world since 1967 have been Islamist: the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt, Sudan, Syria, Jordan, the West Bank, and the Gaza Strip; Hizbullah and 'Amal in Lebanon; the Welfare Party and its successors in Turkey; the Nahdah (better known, ironically, by its French name, the Tendance) in Tunisia, the FIS and the Armed Islamic Group in Algeria, the Nahdatul Ulama in Indonesia, the Jama'at-i Islami in Pakistan, and the

Khomeinists in Iran. The names of the prominent political figures in the Muslim world were no longer the secular nationalists but people such as Bediuzeman Sa'id Nursi (d. 1960) and Necmettin Erbakan in Turkey, Said al-Hawa' in Syria, Rachid el-Ghanouchi in Tunisia, 'Abbasi Madani in Algeria, Muhammad Fadl Allah in Lebanon, Sayyid Qutb and Muhammad al-Ghazzali in Egypt, Hasan al-Turabi in Sudan, Ahmad Yasin in the Occupied Territories, Abu al-'Ala al-Mawdudi in Pakistan, and 'Ali Shari'ati and Ruhullah Khomeini in Iran. All these individuals strongly opposed the West in various ways, although a few did so less categorically.

The paradigmatic leaders of the Islamists have been Khomeini, Mawdudi and Qutb. Khomeini advanced the novel argument in Shi'ite law that the clergy must rule society until the return of the Hidden Imam, an eschatological figure believed to have vanished in the late ninth century whose miraculous reappearance as messiah will mark the beginning of true justice in the world. Mawdudi and Qutb both argued that the language in certain verses in the Qur'an (5:44, 5:45, 5:47, 12:40 and 12:67³⁵—dubbed the 'sovereignty verses') had been misinterpreted by earlier commentators and jurists. They focused on the root h-k-m, both in its verbal noun form as *hukm* and in its third person plural form *yahkumu* to maintain that these words did not mean 'judgement' or 'they judge' but rather 'rule' and 'they rule'. All three determined that any modern day ruler of an Islamic society who failed to 'rule' according to Allah's revelation was an unbeliever and hence could legitimately be resisted.

The more radical followers of Qutb, whom Nasser's regime executed in 1966 for revolutionary activities, assassinated Sadat in 1981 and occasionally launched attacks on tourists and police on these grounds. Mawdudi died in 1979, two years into the rule of Pakistani President Zia al-Haqq, who expended great efforts to persuade his people that he was a legitimate Muslim ruler, a claim rejected by Mawdudi. Khomeini came to power in Iran in 1979 and ruled for 10 years under the new rubric of the Faqih (Jurist) of the Islamic Republic. Relations with the USA were broken when, in October 1979, after Washington invited the Shah to the USA for treatment of his cancer (a step widely believed in Iran to be a prelude to the restoration of the Shah in the same way that the USA had restored him in 1953), students in November overran the US embassy in Tehran and captured its diplomats, and a rescue mission in April 1980 failed. Relations entered a deep freeze for many years, with Tehran accusing the USA of trying to undo the results of the revolution, seeking to impose its hegemony over Iran and the region, and underwriting Israel's domination of the Arabs and Muslims of the Middle East. For its part the USA blamed Iran for encouraging terrorism, opposing peace between Israel and its Arab neighbours, and for clerical absolutism. Although Khomeini and, after his death in 1989, his successors, tried to downplay the Shi'ite Muslim aspects of Iranian politics and foreign policy, ultimately the differences between Sunnism and Shi'ism proved too great an obstacle to their being generally accepted as the acknowledged leaders of the Islamist revival.

Meanwhile, admirers of Qutb and Mawdudi, such as the Egyptian Shaykh 'Umar 'Abd al-Rahman and the Saudi expatriate businessman, Osama Bin Laden, gained notoriety. The supporters of the former, who had fled Egypt to

escape arrest, set off explosives at the World Trade Center in New York in 1993. Bin Laden, who had offended the Saudi government by attacking the corruption and authoritarian rule of the ruling house, as well as its willingness to allow the US government to establish a base in Saudi Arabia during the Gulf crisis of 1990–91, escaped from Saudi Arabia and established himself eventually in Afghanistan. There he funded the training of Algerian, Sudanese and other militant Islamists and openly spoke of his intent to kill Americans in the Middle East. His supporters' most dramatic act was to fly aeroplanes into the World Trade Center buildings and the Pentagon in September 2001, which precipitated the US bombing of Afghanistan and the overthrow of the Taliban regime there.

However, this kind of antipathy is not endorsed by the overwhelming majority of Muslims in the world. Even in areas where violence-prone political Islam has earlier been strong, it is in retreat. For example, developments in Iran since 1997 have favoured a change in tone and perhaps eventually in substance in regard to the relationship between that government and the West. This began with the presidential elections of May 1997, which were won by Muhammad Khatami, a former Minister of Culture who had been removed for his liberal policies, and who campaigned for the presidency on themes of reform, civil society, democracy and criticism of global capitalism. Then, in February 2000, parliamentary elections were won overwhelmingly by pro-Khatami candidates, with significant implications for altering the hostility in mutual relations. In Yemen since 1994 the trends have also seemed potentially significant, as a movement has swept society there that is basically anti-authoritarian. In Jordan and Kuwait, tentatively but noticeably, social movements are taking root that no longer accept the old clichés from rulers that stability is necessary above any immediate desires on the part of the population for greater autonomy from the state.³⁶ The deaths of Jordan's King Hussein and Morocco's King Hasan, authoritarian rulers who had ruled their countries for decades, provide opportunities for a loosening up of politics in these countries.

Conclusions

It is telling that during periods of exuberance and confidence, Muslims have lived peaceably alongside non-Muslims and creatively interacted with them to their mutual benefit. Thus, in the eighth and ninth centuries, Western thought played an important role in the development of Islamic philosophy, just as that philosophy itself was to be influential in Western thinking a few hundred years later. A similar situation of coexistence was to develop in the Cordoba caliphate in Spain during the period 711–1236, a time that both the Muslim and non-Muslim peoples of the Iberian Peninsula in those centuries considered a golden age of tolerance. Intriguingly, the Muslims of Spain were apparently able to persist in their feelings of toleration for the people of other religions during the era of the Crusades in the Muslim East (1090s–1290s). Not surprisingly, this was less the case for the Muslims of Syria, Palestine and Egypt, where many of the battles of the Crusades were fought. Under siege by the enemy, these Muslims understandably developed enmity towards their military foes, and this enmity could not be restrained from spilling over into the realm of Muslim intellectual

writings about the West.

A comparable dialectic of confidence/tolerance may be seen in the period of the Ottoman Empire in its heyday (1453–1683), although in this case Muslim tolerance towards Westerners in the Ottoman era was to extend even well in to the period of Ottoman decline (1683–1923). In fact, even in the period since 1967, where hostility shown toward the West by the most radical of the Islamist groups has been at a peak, their leaders have been guarded in their conduct toward the West. If the ‘clash of civilisations’ thesis is correct, then how is it that Ayat Allah Khomeini, for instance, never called for a *jihad* against the West?³⁷ Indeed, Khomeini presided over a political system whose institutional features include certain classic Western forms, such as a constitution with references to national sovereignty, a presidential system, electoral laws specifying periodic elections, and separation of powers.

In other words, today’s criticism of the West in the Muslim world, frequently accompanied by a rejection of Western secular culture, seems to be positively correlated with the Muslims’ sense of weakness and vulnerability in the face of powerful Western states and economic domination. This suggests that if the relationship between the Muslim and Western worlds were to become more equal in the future, Muslim rejectionism could be expected to be transformed into more tolerant attitudes and behaviour. The bitterness toward the West associated with the most radical Islamist movements in the 1980s and 1990s should be seen in the historical context of their era. Historical circumstances, by their nature, are not constant but, rather, variable.

There is nothing automatic about recent modest trends towards pluralism in the Muslim world. Much will depend on developments in regard to Palestine and Kashmir, for example, and on Washington’s willingness to question its tendency to support leaders in the Islamic world disliked by their own people (as in Saudi Arabia or Indonesia under Suharto). It will also be contingent upon the ability of non-violent Islamist groups to repudiate the coercive behaviour of those movements and organisations that do rely on force. Moreover, it is likely that, even if pluralist trends are not suppressed and in some cases allow movements based on them to take power, they will not result in systems rooted in proprietary liberal democracy (ie Western models). This is because of the West’s devaluation of the individual as a moral being in favour of the individual as a proprietor of him- or herself.

Meanwhile, those who maintain that Islam and democracy are incompatible are unconvincing. Indeed, depending on actual political developments, prospects exist for an increasing valorisation in the Muslim world of trends all democrats value: contestation of spaces, multiplicity of interpretations, indeterminacy and contingency of positions, and non-finality of solutions. Democracy can grow under these conditions, but it will be institutionally different from the Westminster model. This difference, far from being fatal for the relationship between Islam and the West, would be liberating for both. After all, there have been periods, as we have seen, where relations between the two have been stable and informed by understanding and tolerance.

Notes

- ¹ Such as Daniel Pipes & John Emerson, for example. See Abd al-Wahhab al-Affandy, 'Terrorism by any other name', *Middle East International*, 615, 24 December 1999, pp 25–27.
- ² Samuel P Huntington, 'The clash of civilizations?', *Foreign Affairs*, 72 (3), 1993, pp 22–49. It was later developed into a book, *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order*, New York: Simon and Shuster, 1996. Note that the question mark in the journal article title has disappeared in the book title.
- ³ The argument, in my opinion, is flimsy and tendentious. Harvard historian Roy Mottahedeh—a colleague of Huntington—has put paid to the 'clash' thesis on both theoretical and empirical grounds in his scintillating essay, 'The clash of civilizations: an Islamicist's critique', *Harvard Middle Eastern and Islamic Review*, 2, 1996, pp 1–26.
- ⁴ These are definitions three and five under the entry, 'Religion', *Oxford English Dictionary*, Vol XIII, New York: Oxford University Press, 1989, pp 568–569.
- ⁵ Muslims adhering to this view never tire of declaring that '*islam din wa dawla*' ('Islam is [both] religion and state').
- ⁶ I am aware that posing matters in terms of 'minimalist' and 'maximalist' views risks constructing misplaced polarities. Nonetheless, for the purposes of developing the argument at this juncture, I will put the analysis in the form of a dichotomy.
- ⁷ Since law is the queen of the Islamic sciences and 'trumps' theology, 'orthodox' seems inappropriate usage here because it denotes a church-sanctioned creed. In Islam, creeds lack the sanction of a synod or curia. Hence, 'Muslims are more concerned with right conduct or orthopraxy, rather than with right belief [orthodoxy]'. The word 'mainstream' seems more apposite and is utilised here as a synonym for 'Sunni', which relates to a pre-Islamic root meaning a well trodden path. In early Islam, 'Sunni' referred to the exemplary model of the Prophet's thoughts and deeds—his *Sunna*. Upon the consolidation of the Islamic community in the 'Abbasid caliphate (749/50-1258), the Sunnis came to be identified as those adhering to the well established and articulated way. Sunnis believed that either sectarian or Sufi (mystical) movements were marginal and unworthy to be followed. The citation is from W Montgomery Watt, *Islamic Creeds: A Selection*, Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1994, p 34.
- ⁸ The emphasis upon the consensus of the members of the community as to what is best for it is associated with the Sunni perspective and contrasts with the Shi'i view, which emphasises that the community's welfare depends upon the knowledge of immaculate, inerrant and charismatic individuals—Imams—deemed the 'proofs' of God's existence.
- ⁹ Herbert J Liebesny, *The Law of the Near and Middle East*, Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1975, pp 3–4.
- ¹⁰ W Montgomery Watt, *Islamic Philosophy and Theology: An Extended Survey*, 2nd ed. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1985, pp 29–30, 41–42; and Watt, *Muslim-Christian Encounters*, New York: Routledge, 1991, pp 52–53.
- ¹¹ 'Islamist' is a neologism in English, although the use of its equivalent in the Arabic plural—*al-islamiyyun*—goes back to the mediaeval thinker, Abu al-Hasan al-Ash'ari (873/74-935/36), who used it as a way of objectifying Muslim beliefs in an action sphere of reference. In doing so, he was suggesting that many Muslims had left off being actively engaged in promoting the faith and had become passive bystanders for whom the divine injunctions to call people to the true faith had become emptied of any requirement to exert themselves for the sake of God.
- ¹² Marshall GS Hodgson, *The Classical Age of Islam*, Vol I of the trilogy *The Venture of Islam*, Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1974, p 235.
- ¹³ The disputes between the Mu'tazilites and the Ash'arites are summarised well in W Montgomery Watt, *The Formative Period of Islamic Thought*, Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1973, pp 209–250, 303–318; and Watt, *Islamic Philosophy and Theology*, pp 46–55, 64–68.
- ¹⁴ To be sure, Muslim philosophers remained peripheral in the development of Muslim thinking more generally speaking. Thus, their important impact on *Western* thought remains one of the great ironies in the relationship between the Muslim and Western worlds. As Watt puts it:

Through the great philosophers writing in Arabic, notably Avicenna or Ibn Sina (d 1037) and Averroes or Ibn Rushd (d 1198), Islamic civilization made a significant contribution to the development of philosophy in the Western world; and this might lead those unfamiliar with that civilization to suppose that the philosophical movement was a prominent part of the stream of Islamic thought. Yet this is far from being the case. The truth is rather that the Falasifa [Muslim philosophers] were never part of the main stream but at most an unimportant side channel—that is, unimportant for the great majority of Muslims.
- Watt, *Formative Period*, p 204.
- ¹⁵ Among the classic works on Islamic philosophy are EIJ Rosenthal, *Political Thought in Medieval Islam*, London: Cambridge University Press, 1958; and Muhsin Mahdi, *Ibn Khaldun's Philosophy of History*, Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1957.

- ¹⁶ Bernard Lewis, *Islam and the West*, New York: Oxford University Press, 1993, pp 12–13.
- ¹⁷ Ibn Taymiyya strove to eliminate the common practice on the part of the Muslim clergy of blind imitation of preceding generations of jurists. He advocated in place of such blind imitation a reverence of the practice of the Prophet, maintaining that later Muslims had deviated from the Prophet's teachings and had been guilty of superstitions and cultic practices that had no place in Islam. But Ibn Taymiyya was hardly a spokesman for rationalism and especially attacked the philosophers' claim that they could acquire knowledge of God by rational means. Indeed, he is the principal jurist invoked by militant Islamist groups in the past 30 years when they condemn the rulers of their societies for being infidels. In this, they base themselves on Ibn Taymiyya's famous *fatwa* (authoritative opinion) condemning the Mongols for being unbelievers, even though they had officially embraced Islam.
- ¹⁸ Bernard Lewis, *The Arabs in History*, New York: Harper Torchbooks, 1960, p 48.
- ¹⁹ Christian efforts to oust Muslim power from the Iberian peninsula began as early as 718, but these were unsystematic. The aggressive spirit behind the anti-Muslim campaign known as the *Reconquista* began to take hold in the 11th century. Muslims in Grenada held on until the Spanish Inquisition (1490s), a phenomenon that spelled disaster for Jews as well as Muslims.
- ²⁰ James Piscatori, *Islam in a World of Nation States*, New York: Cambridge University Press, 1986, p 50ff.
- ²¹ Bernard Lewis, *The Emergence of Modern Turkey*, London: Oxford University Press, 1961, p 50.
- ²² Voltaire was of two minds about the Prophet. He sometimes termed him a fanatic but at other times spoke in praise of his wisdom and tolerance.
- ²³ The epithets levelled at Muhammad included such things as 'false prophet', 'hypocrite', 'fanatic', 'cut-throat', 'demoniac', 'lecher', and 'enemy of Civilization, Liberty, and the Truth'. Wells went as far as to assert that the Prophet had been a man of 'shifty character', characterised by 'vanity', 'greed', 'cunning' and 'insincere religious passion'. And he described the Qur'an as 'certainly unworthy of its Divine authorship'. See James Piscatori, 'The Rushdie affair and the politics of ambiguity', *International Affairs*, 66 (4), pp 767–768. See also Norman Daniel, *Islam and the West: The Making of an Image*, Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1960. Some writers, such as Henri de Comte de Saint Saire Boulainvilliers (1658–1722) wrote positively of the Prophet as 'a rational, incomparable statesman and legislator superior to all those produced by ancient Greece' and approvingly noted that Islam was not a religion of mystery that might defy reason. Lewis, *Islam and the West*, p 90. For a probing of the significance of the basically negative image held by European thinkers for an understanding of Islam, see the polemical but scholarly work of Edward Said, *Orientalism*, New York: Vintage Books, 1978. Among Said's list of distorters of Islam and Middle Easterners who have not yet been mentioned are Friedrich Schlegel (1772–1829), Joseph-Arthur Comte de Gobineau (1816–1882), Wilhelm von Humboldt (1765–1835), Heymann Steinthal (1801–1852), Eugene Burnouf (1823–1899), Jean Pierre Abel Remusat (1788–1832), Edward Henry Palmer (1840–1882), Gustav Weil (1808–1889) and Reinhart Dozy (1820–1893).
- ²⁴ These are the famous 'capitulatory rights' or 'capitulations'. The term comes from the 'chapters' of treaties and conventions signed by the Ottomans with European governments and Renaissance city states as early as the 14th century. In the beginning these rights were magnanimously granted by powerful sultans to European supplicants appealing for the right to trade on the lands of the Empire. Later, they became modified to include exemptions from certain taxes; still later, they became converted into rights to speak on behalf of certain minorities; and finally, they became licences for outright intervention in the political affairs of the Empire. Capitulations were granted as follows: Genoa, 1352; Venice, 1384/87; Naples, 1498; Poland, 1553; France, 1569; Britain, 1580; Netherlands, 1612; Austria, 1699; Sweden, 1737; Sicily, 1740; Denmark, 1756; Prussia, 1761; Russia, 1774; Spain, 1783. See Halil Inalcik & Donald Quataert (eds), *An Economic and Social History of the Ottoman Empire, 1300–1914*, New York: Cambridge University Press, 1994, pp 192–195.
- ²⁵ On the *salafiyya* reform movement, see Charles C Adams, *Islam and Modernism in Egypt*, London: Oxford University Press, 1933; Albert Hourani, *Arabic Thought in the Liberal Age*, London: Oxford University Press, 1961; and Malcolm Kerr, *Islamic Reform*, Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1966.
- ²⁶ The following list identifies territorial losses to European powers or derogations of influence as a consequence of European intervention in the Ottoman Empire and Iran since 1792 (includes break-away nationalist movements supported by the European states): Georgia, 1810; Bessarabia, 1812; Greece, 1827; Algeria, 1830; Alden, 1839; Cyprus, 1878; Bosnia Herzegovina, 1878; Serbia, 1878; Romania, 1878; Montenegro, 1878; Tunisia, 1881; Egypt, 1882; Persian Gulf Sheykdoms, 1880s–1890s; Mauritania, 1904; Bulgaria, 1908; Libya, 1911; Morocco, 1912; Palestine, 1917; Syria, 1920; Lebanon, 1920; Iraq, 1920; Jordan 1921.
- ²⁷ See the important book by Maxime Rodinson, *Islam and Capitalism*, Austin, TX: University of Texas Press, 1976. Rodinson maintains that there is nothing in Islamic traditions and institutions to prevent

the establishment of an effectively operating capitalist economic system.

- ²⁸ Even the critical Orientalist scholar, Bernard Lewis, has declared that one ‘can discern elements in Islamic law and tradition that could assist the development of one or another form of democracy’ and notes that ‘Islamic tradition strongly disapproves of arbitrary rule’. See Lewis, ‘A historical overview’, *Journal of Democracy*, 7 (2), 1996, p 55.
- ²⁹ Jacob L Talmon, *Totalitarianism*, New York: Beacon Press, 1952, pp 1–11.
- ³⁰ Hannah Arendt, *On Revolution*, New York: Viking Press, 1963, pp 39–40. She notes:
 There is no period in history to which the Declaration of the Rights of Man [of 1789] could have harkened back. Former centuries might have recognized that men were equal with respect to God or the gods, for this recognition is not Christian but Roman in origin; Roman slaves could be full-fledged members of religious corporations and, within the limits of sacred law, their legal status was the same as that of the free man. But inalienable political rights of all men by virtue of birth would have appeared to all ages prior to [the French revolution] is ... a contradiction in terms.
- ³¹ Crawford B MacPherson, *The Political Theory of Possessive Individualism: Hobbes to Locke*, London: Oxford University Press, 1964, p 3.
- ³² Muhammad Iqbal, both a poet and a philosopher, was an Indian Muslim known for his assertion of an activist ethos, in contrast to a fatalistic and passive perspective. He had little patience with Islamic mysticism because of his view that mysticism encouraged passivity and introspection. He purported to find that Islamic traditions encouraged creative self-affirmation. There is little doubt that Iqbal was influenced in his thought by contemporary European thinkers, and in this context this meant Friedrich Nietzsche. However, it would be a mistake to conclude that Iqbal was a Nietzschean pure and simple. Paradoxically, he believed that self-affirmation and self-realisation could be achieved mainly by adherence to ideals of brotherhood and belonging, and even self-sacrifice after the idealised model of the Prophet. See, for example, his *The Reconstruction of Religious Thought in Islam*, London: Oxford University Press, 1934; and *The Secrets of the Self*, trans RA Nicholson, London: Macmillan, 1920.
- ³³ What I have discussed is the Sunni perspective of Islam, which emphasises the charisma of the community of believers as the basis for belief in the finality of the Islamic message. Shi’i Muslims emphasise the charisma of the Imams, instead, because of their understanding that ordinary Muslims are too ignorant to be aware of what God’s law is.
- ³⁴ Political Islam is a term that has been used interchangeably with a variety of others, including ‘Islamic fundamentalism’ and ‘Islamism’. The central idea is the sharpened political consciousness of the believer in regard to the integration of religion and politics in Islam; and the demand to replace existing legal arrangements in Muslim societies—systems that are hybrids of Islamic personal status and aspects of Islamic criminal law and Western penal, commercial, labour, financial and constitutional law—with the holy law. Islamist movements are not necessarily violence-prone, although they may be so. See also footnote 11. The following are among the better works on ‘political Islam’: Said Arjomand, *The Turban for the Crown*, New York: Oxford University Press, 1988; François Burgat & William Dowell, eds, *The Islamic Movement in North Africa*, Austin, TX: University of Texas Press, 1997; Dale Eickelman & James Piscatori, *Muslim Politics*, Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1996; JG Jansen, *The Neglected Duty*, New York: Macmillan, 1986; Serif Mardin, *Religion and Social Change in Modern Turkey*, Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1989; Henry Munson, Jr, *Islam and Revolution in the Middle East*, New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1988; Jammes Piscatori, ed, *Islamic Fundamentalisms and the Gulf Crisis*, Chicago, IL: American Academy of Arts and Sciences, 1991; Olivier Roy, *Islam and Resistance in Afghanistan*, New York: Cambridge University Press, 1986; Bruce Lawrence, *Shattering the Myth: Islam Beyond Violence*, Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1998; Emmanuel Sivan, *Radical Islam*, New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1990; and Sami Zubaida, *Islam, The People and the State*, London: IB Tauris, 1993.
- ³⁵ The relevant portions of 5:44, 5:45 and 5:47 had traditionally been interpreted as follows: ‘those who do not judge according to Allah’s revelation are unbelievers’; ‘those who do not judge according to Allah’s revelation are oppressors’; ‘those who do not judge according to Allah’s revelation are evil doers’. Similarly, the relevant parts of 12:40 and 12:67 had been traditionally interpreted as: ‘judgment belongs to Allah alone’ (the language is the same in the two verses). Intriguingly, much of Khomeini’s argument also focuses on the trilateral root, h-k-m, this time identifying the active participial form, hakim. He maintained that the traditional rendering of this word as arbitrator or judge was wrong and that it should be understood to mean ruler. It should be noted that the root, h-k-m, has both the meaning of judging, arbitrating, judgement, arbitration, etc, and ruling, exercising authority, rule, rulership.
- ³⁶ For some of these trends, see John Esposito & John Voll, *Islam and Democracy*, New York: Oxford University Press, 1996; and Augustus R Norton (ed), *Civil Society in the Middle East*, two vols, Leiden: EJ Brill, 1995, 1996.
- ³⁷ To my knowledge, the only militant Islamist to have done so is Osama bin Laden, who is not qualified to issue such a verdict since he is not a jurist.