CHAPTER 2

Whither Post-Islamism: Revisiting the Discourse/Movement After the Arab Spring

Mojtaba Mahdavi

INTRODUCTION

The contemporary new social movements in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA), Iran's Green Movement, the Arab Spring, and Turkey's Gezi Park Movement, emerged in a post-Islamist condition and are characterized as *post-Islamist* movements.[1] These movements are, however, in deep crises and the MENA region is experiencing multidimensional predicaments.

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[1] See Mojtaba Mahdavi, 2011, "Post-Islamist Trends in Post-Revolutionary Iran," *Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa, and the Middle East*, 31:1, pp. 94–109; Hamid Dabashi, 2012, *The Arab Spring: The End of Postcolonialism* (London/New York: Zed Books); Asef Bayat, 2013, *Post-Islamism: The Changing Faces of Political Islam* (Oxford: Oxford University Press); and Asef Bayat, 2017, *Revolution Without Revolutionaries: Making Sense of the Arab Spring* (Stanford: Stanford University Press).

M. Mahdavi (✉)
University of Alberta, Edmonton, AB, Canada
e-mail: mojtaba.mahdavi@ualberta.ca

Chief among such catastrophes were the "twin shocks"[2] of the Egyptian military coup in 2013 and the rise of Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) in 2014. ISIS as a fake and phony state is no longer in place, but much of the socio-political conditions conducive to its emergence, and the organization itself remain intact. Moreover, the Arab secular despots such as Bashar al-Assad in Syria, el-Sisi's military junta in Egypt, and the populist Mohamed bin Salam of Saudi Arabia are consolidating their power. The so-called humanitarian intervention—a neoliberal invasion—has destroyed Libya. Bahrain's monarchy has suppressed the popular pro-democracy movement, and Yemen is now home to the world's worst humanitarian crisis due to a regional proxy war. Iran's Green Movement—the first MENA post-Islamist mass social movement—could not achieve its political goals, and the symbolic leaders of the movement are in house arrest. Thanks to Erdogan's iron fist, the Gezi Park Movement in Turkey has lost its momentum; and the early post-Islamist metaphor of Turkey's Justice and Development Party (AKP) has vanished in the middle of regional rivalries and the coup attempt in 2016.

It is not, therefore, surprising to get lost in the midst of such catastrophic conditions, dismissing what were the original quests of the MENA social movements, chief among them the Arab Spring: the popular quest for overthrowing the dominant regime (*Ash-sha'b yurīd isqāṭ an-niẓām*)—not only the political regime, but more importantly, as Hamid Dabashi argues, the hegemonic *regime of knowledge* and dominant apologetic postcolonial paradigms of pan-Arabism and other forms of state-sponsored nationalism, the outdated discourse of Third World socialism, and the exhausted *da'wah* of Islamism.[3] Equally important was the quest for *Hurriyya* (freedom), *'Adāla ijtimā'iyya* (social justice), and *Karāmā* (dignity). Millions of ordinary people—men and women, young and old, religious and secular, Muslims and non-Muslims—chanted such popular and post-Islamist slogans in Arab streets.

This chapter argues that a new metaphor/discourse/paradigm of *post-Islamism* has been introduced by ordinary people. Post-Islamism best captures the mode and metaphor of the MENA movements. Although these movements are in crisis, post-Islamism represents the *social* (though not necessarily political) climate and conditions of the region. The memory

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[2] Shadi Hamid & William McCants, eds. 2017, *Rethinking Political Islam* (New York: Oxford University Press), 1.

[3] Dabashi, *The Arab Spring: The End of Postcolonialism*.

and momentum of the MENA movements, as Bayat argues, are still alive. Moreover, the MENA region has gone through profound structural and social transformations, which will eventually bring new changes to the region.[4]

But what is post-Islamism? Why this is a paradigm shift from dominant discourses, and how do we characterize and problematize it in the post-Arab Spring MENA? In this chapter, I will first briefly shed light on the many faces of Islamism and problematize the rise of Islamism in the context of Muslims' encounter with colonial modernity. Next, I will conceptualize post-Islamism as a third alternative discourse to both the autocratic secular modernity and the essentialist Islamism.

The chapter argues that post-Islamism promotes a critical dialogue between tradition and modernity, expedites the possibility of emerging Muslim modernities, encourages civil/public religion but discards the concept and practice of "Islamic state." The third section briefly demonstrates the many faces of post-Islamism in post-Arab Spring MENA. It suggests that post-Islamism is a significant paradigm shift from Islamism as it rejects the concept of a divine state. Moreover, it argues that post-Islamists are as diverse as conservative, (neo)liberal, and progressive forces. Post-Islamism is neither monolithic nor necessarily progressive. It has its own limitations. The conclusion sheds light on post-Islamism and its enemies in the post-Arab Spring era.

The Crisis of Many Faces of Islamism

Islamism, contrary to the Orientalist literature, is neither a purely religious phenomenon nor a natural outcome of the Islamic tradition.[5] Islamists, too, represent themselves as the singular and authentic legitimate voice of the Islamic tradition. The reality, however, is that Islamism is a modern phenomenon. Islamism is a form of *traditionalism*; it does not represent the tradition, it *reinvents* the tradition. Islamism is a socio-political movement. It is "a multi-layered" phenomenon. It is the "product of modern European colonialism in the Muslim world and the failure of the modern nation-state to accommodate protest movements in their political

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[4] Bayat, *Revolution Without Revolutionaries*, 219–227.

[5] In this chapter I have used some of the arguments in the following work: Mojtaba Mahdavi, "Muslims and Modernities: From Islamism to Post-Islamism," *Religious Studies and Theology* 32: 1 (2013) 57–71.

systems."[6] In other words, Islamism "is basically a social/political movement, which adopts a religious ideology with the primary aim of bringing the whole of society under the rule of the Sharī'ah." Hence, "Islamic movement is primarily a social movement."[7]

The Orientalist account of Islamism is deeply rooted in the discourse of "Muslim Exceptionalism," meaning Muslims are essentially and exceptionally different from others. In *Postmodernism, Reason and Religion*, Ernest Gellner, the towering figure of classical Orientalism, argues that Islam has been exceptionally immune to the forces of secularization, and that modernization has actually increased this immunization.[8] He explicitly argues that Muslim societies are essentially different from others in that "no secularization has taken place in the world of Islam."[9] Likewise, Bernard Lewis and Samuel Huntington argue that Western culture is unique and essentially differs from other civilizations, in general, and Islam, in particular.[10] According to Huntington, while "in Islam, God is Caesar," in the West, "God and Caesar, church and state, spiritual and temporal authority have been a prevailing dualism."[11]

Interestingly, the arguments of the towering figures of mainstream Islamism resonate with the Orientalist discourse. According to the major figures of modern Islamism such as Abul A'la Maududi of Pakistan, Hassan al-Banna and Sayyid Qutb of Egypt, and Ayatollah Khomeini of Iran, the idea of an Islamic state, or a divine polity, is a solution to the Muslim predicament and is endorsed by the Islamic tradition.

However, as Abdullahi An-Na'im argues, the idea of an Islamic state is a "postcolonial invention based on European model of the state and totalitarian view of law and public policy."[12] Likewise, as Edward Said put it,

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[6] Ibrahim Abu-Rabi', 2004, *Contemporary Arab Ought: Studies in Post-1967 Arab Intellectual History* (London: Pluto Press), 17.

[7] Abu-Rabi', *Contemporary Arab Ought: Studies in Post-1967 Arab Intellectual History*, 373.

[8] Ernest Gellner, 1992, *Postmodernism, Reason and Religion*. London: Routledge.

[9] Ernest Gellner, 1991, "Islam and Marxism: Some Comparisons." *International Affair*s 67 (January), 1–6, p. 2. https://doi.org/10.2307/2621215.

[10] Bernard Lewis, 1990. "The Roots of Muslim Rage." *Atlantic Monthly* (September). [Accessed 02/04/2018]. Available at: http://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/1990/09/the-roots-of-muslim-rage/304643; Samuel P. Huntington, 1996, *Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of the Modern World* (New York: Simon & Schuster).

[11] Huntington, *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of the Modern World*, 70.

[12] An-Na'im, Abdullahi, 2008, *Islam and the Secular State: Negotiating the Future of Shari'a* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press), 7.

"we need to understand the many 'political actualities' that the 'return to Islam' embodies."[13] In this approach, Islamism is not a cultural and civilizational product of the Islamic tradition. Instead, "Islamism is both a social and political movement with a clear religious worldview."[14] In other words, one must contextualize the Islamists' call for the establishment of an Islamic state in the modern context. Modern Islamism

> is not driven by the historical events of the distant past (i.e., early Islam) as much as by the events taking place in the modern world, such as the creation of the modern world system, the emergence of imperialism, and the moral and political bankruptcy of most, if not all, of the ruling elites in the postwar Arab world.[15]

Hence, Islamism must be examined "in the context of the massive social, economic, political, and structural transformations initiated by modernity since the inception of imperialism." It is a major "ideological response" to massive social and political changes in modern Muslim societies.[16] More specifically, Ibrahim Abu-Rabi argues,

> We cannot juxtapose Islamism and modernity or argue in binary terms. Islamism in this sense is a product of modernity and its imposition on the Arab world. That is to say, its presence in the modern Muslim world has been made possible by modernity, although in the final analysis, Islamism hopes to replace modernity as an historical and philosophical system with an Islamic Weltanschauung.[17]

In sum, Islamism as a modern phenomenon is not monolithic. It has represented itself with many diverse faces and political strategies in different socio-political settings: the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt, Khomeinism in Iran, many faces of Turkish Islamism, Lebanese Hezbollah, and Hamas in Palestine, among others. The common features of Islamist movements, however, are twofold: first, Islamists represent modern responses to colonial modernity and a top-down/autocratic process of modernization/secularization in postcolonial MENA. Islamist discourses, therefore,

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[13] Quoted in Abu-Rabi', ed. 2010. *The Contemporary Arab Reader on Political Islam*, ix.

[14] Abu-Rabi', ed. 2010. *The Contemporary Arab Reader on Political Islam*, xxiii.

[15] Abu-Rabi', ed. 2010. *The Contemporary Arab Reader on Political Islam*, ix.

[16] Abu-Rabi', ed. 2010. *The Contemporary Arab Reader on Political Islam*, xi.

[17] Abu-Rabi', ed. 2010. *The Contemporary Arab Reader on Political Islam*, xi.

reinvent the Islamic tradition and do not necessarily represent the tradition. Second, chief among the Islamist modern invention of tradition is the idea of an Islamic state, meaning establishing a divine state and/or an Islamist order sanctioned by the *Sharī'ah* as *the* solution to Muslim predicaments. Islamists have adopted different approaches to achieve this goal.

The crisis and failure of two autocratic secular discourses of Arab nationalism (and other forms of state-sponsored nationalism/modernization) and Third World socialism in postcolonial MENA profoundly contributed to the heydays of modern MENA Islamist movements in the 1970s, 1980s, and mid-1990s. "Islamists received support from different social groups—traditional and modern, young and old, men and women, the better-off and the lower classes." But Islamists' core constituency was the "middle class poor"—"modern educated, but often impoverished middle classes."[18] In other words,

> Islamism has been the political language not simply of the marginalized but particularly of high-achieving middle classes who saw their dream of social equity and justice betrayed by the failure of both capitalist modernity (represented in the regional monarchies and sheikhdom) and socialist utopia (embodied in the postcolonial modernist secular and populist states). They aspired to an alternative social and political order rooted in "indigenous" Islamic history, values, and thought.[19]

By the late 1990s, however, it was clear that Islamists were losing their social base. The crisis of Islamists in power in Iran, Turkish Islamist parties, and some Islamists in the Arab world was evident.[20] The Islamists were unable to respond to socio-economic and political demands of their social base. The urban poor was not quite pleased with the Islamists' neoliberal economic policy/agenda, their "exclusive social order," "patriarchal disposition," and "broadly intolerant attitudes toward different ideas and lifestyles."[21] The massive social and structural transformations in MENA societies and the failure of all three postcolonial ideologies—state-sponsored nationalism, Third World socialism, and Islamism—were conducive to the rise of a new discourse in MENA. This new social and discursive paradigm

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[18] Bayat, ed., *Post-Islamism: The Changing Faces of Political Islam*, 6.

[19] Bayat, *Revolution Without Revolutionaries*, 73.

[20] Bayat, *Revolution Without Revolutionaries*, 69–91.

[21] Bayat, ed. *Post-Islamism: The Changing Faces of Political Islam*, 7.

shift was post-Islamism. As a mass social movement, it first manifested itself in Iran's Green Movement in 2009, and then in the Arab Spring in 2010–2011 followed by Turkish Gezi Park movement in 2013.

Post-Islamism as a Third Alternative

"*Why* exactly does the Middle East suffer from a lack of legitimate order?" Asks Shadi Hamid in his *Islamic Exceptionalism*. The MENA "legitimacy defeat," he argues, "is tied to a continued inability to reckon with Islam's relationship to the state."[22] "Islam is *different*." And "Islamic exceptionalism is neither good nor bad." The rationale for such a *difference*, he argues, is that "the relationship between Islam and politics is distinctive, [and therefore] a replay of the Western model—Protestant Reformation followed by an enlightenment in which religion is gradually pushed into the private realm—is unlikely."[23]

Moreover, the dramatic rise of the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria "is only the most striking example of how liberal determinism—the notion that history moves with intent toward a more reasonable, secular future—has failed to explain Middle East realities."[24] For Hamid, ISIS "draws on, and draws strength from, ideas that have a broad resonance among Muslim-majority populations. They may not agree with the group's interpretation of the caliphate, but the notion of a caliphate is a powerful one, even among more secular-minded Muslims."[25] He then concludes that "this is not to say that most Arabs or Muslims are Islamists. Most not. However, one can sympathize with or support Islamist politics without being an Islamist—the phenomenon of *Islamism without Islamists*."[26]

Hamid's rationalization and theorization of "Islamic exceptionalism" and "*Islamism without Islamists*" is highly problematic and does not capture the complex reality of the contemporary MENA region. First, the main slogans of the ordinary Muslims/people in the MENA streets in the 2010–2011 Arab Spring, as well as the 2009 Iran's Green Movement and the 2013 Gezi Park in Turkey, were absolutely devoid of a single reference to concepts/ideals such as the caliphate and/or the Islamic state. As Juan

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[22] Shadi Hamid, 2016, *Islamic Exceptionalism: How the Struggle over Islam is Reshaping the World* (New York: St. Martin's Press), 6.

[23] Hamid, *Islamic Exceptionalism*, 5.

[24] Hamid, *Islamic Exceptionalism*, 11.

[25] Hamid, *Islamic Exceptionalism*, 11.

[26] Hamid, *Islamic Exceptionalism*, 13.

Cole reminds us, during the *Tamarod* (Rebellion) movement "in June 2013 some 22 million Egyptians signed a petition asking Morsi to leave office, far more than 13 million who voted for him."[27] Second, Hamid's concept of "Islamic exceptionalism" and/or rather a vague and essentialist idea of "*Islamism without Islamists*" is an ahistorical and decontextualized theorization of a phenomenon such as ISIS where the American-led invasion of Iraq and the failure of post-invasion state-building profoundly contributed to the rise of the Islamic State. The abstract historical idea of a caliphate in the Muslim imaginary played a little role in the rise of ISIS. Third, although Hamid correctly acknowledges the significance of religion for the Islamist forces (and here we need to remind ourselves that Islamism is not merely a religious phenomenon and is different from religious fundamentalism in the Christian/Protestant tradition), the overwhelming majority of citizens in Muslim majority states are *not Islamist*. If Islamism is defined by the idea of an Islamic state, the MENA social movements demonstrated that most ordinary people in the region do not associate themselves with Islamism. It is important to note that ordinary people hold different degrees of religiosity and enjoy multiple/hybrid identities, consisting of class, gender, race/ethnicity, and age, as well as religious and non-religious cultural traditions. It is not clear why religion—often with a very static and ahistorical notion—is defined as the only/major component of people's identity in the MENA and/or remains the most significant driving force for the socio-political actions in the region. Fourth, the idea of an Islamic state is a modern "postcolonial invention" with little to no divine justification in the Islamic tradition. Like Islamism, the idea of an Islamic state is a modern invention. Fifth, Hamid rightly points out that liberalism, as we experience in the West, will not be the future of Muslim majority states and that "there is no particular reason why Islamic 'reform' should lead to liberalism in the way that Protestant Reformation paved the way for the Enlightenment and, eventually modern liberalism."[28] What is problematic in his argument, however, is the way he explains such a difference. For Hamid, all the "difference" between Muslims and the West boils down to one word: "Islam." Because of its "fundamentally different relationship to politics," Islam "was simply more

[27] Juan Cole, 2014, *The New Arabs: How the Millennial Generation is Changing the Middle East* (New York: Simon & Shuster), 20.

[28] Hamid, *Islamic Exceptionalism*, 25.

resistant to secularization."[29] His argument resembles Ernest Gellner and other classical Orientalists in that "no secularization has taken place in the world of Islam." This is clearly an ahistorical argument, essentializing secularism as a merely progressive democratic phenomenon. It also undermines the predicaments of *autocratic secular modernization* in postcolonial MENA, which gave rise to the rise of Islamism. Six, it is true that "for the religious, religion can offer both meaning and legitimacy to ideas that might otherwise seem temporal and temporary. But to exclude Islam or to hope for—or, worse, impose—a top-down secularism requires yet more violence."[30] What seems, however, problematic in his argument is the characterization of Muslim majority nations in line with Islamist and/or Islamic exceptionalism. Muslim societies are not peculiar or unique in their religiosity; "they should not be measured by the 'exceptionalist' yardstick of which religio-centrism is the central core."[31] Muslim societies hold hybrid identities shaped by various degrees of religious affiliation, national cultures, socio-economic structure, historical experiences, and political settings. The missing metaphor in Hamid's argument seems to be *post-Islamism*: a concept referring to a profound discursive and socio-historical transformation in MENA societies where neither hegemonic universalism of colonial modernity nor cultural essentialism/particularism of Islamism captures the complexity of the region.

Post-Islamism has emerged as a third alternative to the hegemonic voice of a singular and superior colonial/Western-centric modernity and an essentialist nativist vision of Islamism. Post-Islamism is a dialogical discourse. It promotes dialogue between tradition and modernity, faith and freedom, religiosity and rights, transcending many false dichotomies and constructed binaries in postcolonial MENA. It expedites the possibility of emerging *Muslim modernities* by challenging a singular concept of Western modernity and promotes the idea of *alternative modernities* and "*multiple modernities.*"[32]

Equally important, post-Islamism categorically rejects the concept of Islamic state. Like Islamism, it encourages the public role of religion in

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[29] Hamid, *Islamic Exceptionalism*, 26.

[30] Hamid, *Islamic Exceptionalism*, 30.

[31] Asef Bayat, 2007. *Islam and Democracy: What Is the Real Question?* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press), 6.

[32] Charles Taylor, 1999, *A Catholic Modernity?* Ed. James L. Heft, S. M. (Oxford: Oxford University Press), 16–19.

civil society and political society. However, unlike Islamism, it challenges the concept and legitimacy of *Islamic state*. The state is a *secular* entity and cannot be Islamized.[33] Islamic state in theory is an oxymoron; it is, to use Wael Hallaq's concept, "the impossible state."[34] Islamic state, as Abdullahi An-Na'im argues, is a modern postcolonial invention.[35] Islamic state is a secular entity ruled by Islamist elites who act and speak on behalf of their human interpretation of Islam. Hence, political leaders, not abstract dogmas, speak or act for the state. The concept of Islamic state, in sum, marks a distinction between post-Islamism and Islamism.[36] An-Na'im's words best represent the intellectual basis of post-Islamist discourse: "Instead of sharp dichotomies between religion and secularism that relegate Islam to the purely personal and private domain, I call for balancing the two by separating Islam from the state and regulating the role of religion in politics."[37]

A post-Islamist discourse, as Bayat argues, is neither anti-Islamic nor un-Islamic.[38] Nonetheless, in post-Islamism, Islam is neither *the* solution nor *the* problem. Islam actively contributes to the socio-political life of Muslims. Post-Islamism, contrary to the conventional liberal discourse, discards the privatization of Islam; it encourages civil/public religion at the societal level. But, state remains a neutral/civil, *urfi* entity. Post-Islamism, in this way, may echo Jürgen Habermas concept of *post-secularism*, where religious and secular citizens have much to offer to one another.[39]

As Talal Asad (1997, 190–191) reminds us, both Orientalists and Islamists share "the idea that Islam was originally—and therefore essentially—a theocratic state"; but, for the Islamists, "this history constituted the betrayal of a sacred ideal that Muslims are required as believers to restore," and for the Orientalists, "it defines a schizophrenic compromise that has always prevented a progressive reform of Islam." The reality,

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[33] Mahdavi, "Post-Islamist Trends in Postrevolutionary Iran."

[34] Wael Hallaq, 2013, *The Impossible State: Islam, Politics, and Modernity's Moral Predicament* (New York: Columbia University Press).

[35] An-Na'im, *Islam and the Secular State*.

[36] Mahdavi, "Post-Islamist Trends in Postrevolutionary Iran."

[37] An-Na'im, *Islam and the Secular State*, 267.

[38] Bayat, *Islam and Democracy: What Is the Real Question*?; Bayat, ed. *Post-Islamism: The Changing Faces of Political Islam*.

[39] Jürgen Habermas, 2006, *Religion in the Public Sphere. European Journal of Philosophy*. 14 (1): 1–25. Also see, Mahdavi, "Post-Islamist Trends in Postrevolutionary Iran."

however, is that the Islamic state is not that much product of some Islamic essence as "it is the product of modern politics and the modernizing state."[40]

Post-Islamism, in sum, is not post-Islami*c*. It is post-Islam*ism*. Not all Muslims, contrary to Hamid's argument, are Islamist. However, for many Muslims, Islam remains active and alive as one of their individual and collective multiple identities. A post-Islamist polity is not a caliphate; it is a modern civil/*urfi* democracy attentive to local culture and values including Islam. Post-Islamism is a grassroots discourse—a "universalism from below,"[41] which has synthesized the global and local paradigms of social justice, freedom, human rights, and Islamic values. It is a *glocal* paradigm!

The Many Faces of Post-Islamism in Post-Arab Spring MENA

Post-Islamism, Asef Bayat argues, "represents both a *condition* and a *project*." It refers to a *condition* where Islamism "becomes compelled, both by its own internal contradictions and by societal pressure, to reinvent itself." It is also a *project*, "a conscious attempt to conceptualize and strategize the rationale and modalities of transcending Islamism in social, political, and intellectual domains." Post-Islamism signifies the impact of secular exigencies on a religious discourse.[42] Moreover, post-Islamism has been used as historical and analytical categories in reference to diverse politico-intellectual and social trends such as various forms of Muslim reformist trends in postrevolutionary Iran, the Ennahda, or *Hizb al-Nahda/* Renaissance Party of Tunisia, Turkey's Justice and Development Party, as well as the 2013 Gezi Park Movement in Turkey, Justice and Development Party in Morocco, Imran Khan's Movement for Justice/*Tehreek-e-Insaf* in Pakistan, many faces of civil Islam in Indonesia, and the Centre Party/*Hizb*

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[40] Talal Asad, 1997, "Europe Against Islam: Islam in Europe." *e Muslim World* 87(2): 183–195. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1478-1913.1997.tb03293.x; also see, Mojtaba Mahdavi, 2009, "Universalism from Below: Muslims and Democracy in Context," International Journal of Criminology and Sociological Theory 2, no, 2 (December), 276–291.

[41] Mahdavi, "Universalism from Below: Muslims and Democracy in Context."

[42] Bayat, *Islam and Democracy: What Is the Real Question*?; Bayat, ed. *Post-Islamism: The Changing Faces of Political Islam.*

al-Wasat and the younger generation (not the old guards) of the *Ikhwan al-Muslimeen/*the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt.[43]

As mentioned before, the contemporary MENA social movements—the 2009 Iran's pro-democracy Green Movement, the Arab Spring, and the 2013 Gezi Park Movement—symbolize a post-Islamist turn in the region. There was no demand for a "religious government" during the MENA mass uprisings. Popular slogans in the Arab streets were human dignity, liberty, and social justice, not Islamic state. The popular mode, however, was not anti-religion; the Arab Spring, "dearly upholds religion."[44] Furthermore, the post-Islamist mode of the Arab Spring did not reject the public role of religion; it challenged the false dichotomy of religion and secularism. It transcended the religious-secular divide to a social movement against authoritarianism and in the service of democratization.

In the post-Islamist climate of the Arab Spring, even the political statements of the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood and/or its sponsored political arm, that is, *Hizb al-Hurriya wal-Adala/*the Freedom and Justice Party did not refer to the establishment of an Islamic state. The Freedom and Justice Party explicitly stated it does not wish to implement a theocracy, which is characterized by a "government of the clergy or by divine right." The statements highlighted the party's attitudes toward freedom of religion, "rejecting sectarian strife" and recognizing the importance of allowing Christians to build churches. As is revealed alongside similar statements however, "*Sharīʿah* law" remained the frame of reference.[45] It is beyond the scope of this chapter to examine the intellectual flaws and strategic mistakes of the Muslim Brotherhood and its political arm, Freedom and Justice Party, as well as President Mohamed Morsi's policies in post-Arab Spring Egypt. Suffice it to say that as much as the younger generation of the party demonstrated their commitment to a post-Islamist polity, the old guards were often trapped in their exclusivist and patriarchal Islamist discourse. One of the most concerning case was the Muslim Brotherhood's response to the "End Violence to Women" campaign. The campaign, initiated by the United Nations sought for the "elimination and prevention

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[43] Mahdavi, "Post-Islamist Trends in Postrevolutionary Iran"; Bayat, ed. *Post-Islamism: The Changing Faces of Political Islam.*

[44] Bayat, ed. *Post-Islamism: The Changing Faces of Political Islam*, 260.

[45] Freedom and Justice Party, 2011, *FJP 2011 Program on Freedoms and Political Reform.* [Accessed 02/04/18]. Available from: http://www.ponline.com/arti-cle.php?id=197.

of all forms of violence against women and girls." The response of the Muslim Brotherhood was to label this initiative "misleading and deceptive" and "contradicting the principles of Islam." Among some of the main issues were "granting equal rights to homosexuals," "full equality in marriage legislation," "cancelling the need for husband's consent with regards to travel and work," and "granting rights to adulterous wives and illegitimate sons."[46] The Muslim Brotherhood's response to the camping clearly did not represent the egalitarian and post-Islamist principles that initially inspired the Arab Spring. A much better example of the Egyptian post-Islamist party was the *Hizb al-Wasat/*the Centre Party, which spoke clearly of equality of religion and equality for women and men. The party has been a perfect example of more progressive trends within a post-Islamist turn in Egypt.[47]

But a much more sophisticated post-Islamist party of the Arab Spring is the Tunisian Ennahda/*al-Nahda* Party or Renaissance Party. The statements of the party clearly demonstrate a shift from Islamism to post-Islamism as they highlight the citizens' rights—including minority rights, issues of gender, and religious freedom. They contain numerous "buzz phrases" such as the need for a "thriving democracy with mutual respect," the desire for a "culture of moderation," the guarantee of "equality for all citizens," and the "affirmation of political pluralism."[48]

Ennahda explicitly "rejected a Khomeini type revolution and viewed a civil and democratic state as compatible with the spirit of Islam."[49] "Religion should not be imposed," argues the leader of Ennahda Party Rached Ghannouchi; "All the teachings and text of religion [Islam], emphasizes the principle of no compulsion in religion. Freedom of religion is absolutely affirmed in Islam. It is not the task of the state to impose a doctrine on the people. Its mission is to provide services to the people and maintain security."[50]

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[46] IkhwanWeb, 2013, *Muslim Brotherhood Statement Denouncing UN Women Declaration for Violating Sharia Principle.* [Accessed 02/04/18]. Available from: http://www.ikhwanweb.com/article.php?id=30731.

[47] Al-Wasat Party, 2011, *FAQ.* [Accessed 02/04/18]. Available from: http://www.alwasatparty.com/questions.php.

[48] Ennahdha Movement, 2011, *Statute of the Renaissance Movement* (after the revised Ninth Congress), [Accessed 02/04/18]. Available from: www.ennah-dha.tn.

[49] Bayat, ed. *Post-Islamism: The Changing Faces of Political Islam*, 261.

[50] Al-Ghannouchi "Islam Is Accepting of Secularism and Freedom of Belief." *Al-Hayat Newspaper*, May 22, 2016. Accessed May 1, 2018. Similarly, in his work, Ghannouchi dem-

Moreover, both Rached Ghannouchi and the former Prime Minister Hamadi Jebali of the Ennahda used the concept of *dowla madaniyah/*civil state instead of *almaniyah/*secularism (which carries anti-religious baggage) to distance the postrevolutionary Tunisian state from a religious state (Stepan 2012, 94–97). Although Ghannouchi and his party did not use the concept of secularism, his understanding of the concept is revealing: secularism in the West, he argues, is not an atheistic ideology as some think. Secularism is the separation of functions: separation of religious function from political function. This does not mean that the state will be at war on religion. Rather, the state protects all religions and stands in a highly neutral manner toward religions. Ghannouchi argues there is no necessary relationship between democracy and secularism. You can be secular and a terrorist or a dictator. And you can be secular and democratic. You can be an Islamic and a terrorist, and you can be a democratic Muslim. The necessary and inevitable link between secularism, modernity, and democracy is an arbitrary link. Therefore, we consistently affirm that Islam and democracy are compatible and that democracy is the modern practice of the *shura/*consultation.[51] In fact, many *Muslim democrats often point to the key Quranic concepts of shura/consultation, ijma'/consensus, and adala/justice to support democracy.*

In an interview, he criticizes Islamist who "chose the path of violence." They formulate their own "excessively strict interpretation of religious texts … aimed at monopolizing the right of explaining it, which means for those organizations that the text has one meaning only, and anybody who disagrees with their exegesis and understanding of it is a disbeliever and godless."[52]

More recently, Ghannouchi explicitly argued, "no political party can or should claim to represent religion and that the religious sphere should be managed by independent and neutral institutions, [as] religion should be

onstrates how Islam is compatible with democracy and human rights. See Rached al-Ghannouchi, 2015b, *Democracy and Human Rights in Islam* (Beirut, Lebanon: The Arab House for Science).

[51] Rached al-Ghannouchi, 2015a, "Al-Omq: Moqbala ma' Rached al-Ghanocui." Interview by Ali al Thafiri, *Aljazeera News Network*, Dec. 7. Accessed April 20, 2018.

[52] Noureddine Jebnoun, 2014, "Tunisia at the Crossroads: An Interview with Sheikh Rached al-Ghannouchi." *Al-Waleed Bin Talal Centre for Muslim-Christian Understanding, Georgetown University Occasional Papers*, April. https://repository.library.georgetown.edu/bitstream/handle/10822/1045379/Noureddine%20Jebnoun_Tunisia%20at%20the%20Crossroads_April%202014.PDF?sequence=1&isAllowed=y.

nonpartisan."[53] Ennahda's statements made it clear that citizen rights are universal, regardless of their faith. *Ghannouchi has explicitly argued that "his party should embrace the historic specificity that Tunisia for more than sixty years has had the Arab World's most progressive and women-friendly family code."*[54] This is shown by the Ennahda's inclusion of women into the constituent assembly.

As Sayida Qunissi, an Ennahda member of the parliament in Tunisia, shows Ennahda has always considered itself "different from the Muslim Brotherhood at both the ideological and political levels."[55] For her, the maturity of Ennahda in the public debate is evident: "It is no longer a matter of the relationship between Islam and state any more, or traditionally 'Islamic' issues, but rather a commitment to finding solutions to corruption, economic development, social justice, and human rights."[56] Since October 2011, and even before the uprisings, Ennahda's philosophy was based on "unity and inclusion." More specifically, Ennahda worked with two Tunisian secular parties, the secular-liberal Congress for the Republic and the socialist Ettakatol in post-Arab Spring.[57] *Ghannouchi and Moncef Marzouki, a secular-minded human right activist, have been able to work together in postrevolutionary Tunisia.* Furthermore, following the elections in 2014, Ennahda conceded its loss to Nidaa Tounes, a center-right secular party, and formed a coalition government with it.

Sayida Qunissi's argument clearly represents main conclusions reached at Ennahda's tenth Congress, held May 20–23, 2016, in which the party explicitly distanced itself from Islamism and the idea of an Islamic state, defining itself as a party of Muslim democrats. "'Muslim democrat' is the most accurate term to describe what Ennahda has been trying to accomplish since the beginning: reconciling Islam and democracy in the Arab world."[58] She then continues,

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[53] Rached Ghannouchi, 2016, "From Political Islam to Muslim Democracy: The Ennahda Party and the Future of Tunisia." *Foreign Affairs*, *95* (5), 58–67, p. 63.

[54] Alfred Stepan, 2012, "Tunisia's Transition and the Twin Tolerations." Journal of Democracy 23(2), (April): 94–97. https://doi.org/10.1353/jod.2012.0034.

[55] Sayida Qunissi, 2017, "Ennahda from Within: Islamists or 'Muslim Democrats'?" In Shadi Hamid & William McCants, eds. *Rethinking Political Islam* (New York: Oxford University Press), 230–243, p. 232.

[56] Sayida Qunissi, "Ennahda from Within: Islamists or 'Muslim Democrats'?" 234.

[57] Sayida Qunissi, "Ennahda from Within: Islamists or 'Muslim Democrats'?" 235–236.

[58] Sayida Qunissi, "Ennahda from Within: Islamists or 'Muslim Democrats'?" 238.

> When Rached Ghannouchi first used the term "Muslim democratic," it was an effort to help the media understood the pitfalls of instantly and unanimously labeling diverse political actors as "Islamists," despite their differences. Highlighting the parallel with Christian Democratic parties in Europe, like Germany's Christian Democratic Union, seemed to be the easiest way to signify Ennahda as a political party bringing together both democratic principles and religious values.[59]

Post-Islamist movements in post-Arab Spring MENA are experiencing a setback. Tunisia has been a relative success with the recent development in the Ennahda Party, breaking away from Islamism and branding itself a "*Muslim democrat*" similar to Christian Democratic Parties in Europe. Ghannouchi and other party leaders distanced themselves from Islamism and its central concept of Islamic state. The call for a civil state, not a religious state, promoting human rights and citizenship is a big step forward. The party seems, however, falling into a trap of a neoliberal elitist and ivory tower discourse, ignoring the urgent question of social justice. As I have argued elsewhere, democracy, particularly in the Global South, badly needs an egalitarian pro-social justice discourse. Abstract liberal notions of Rights need to be translated into tangible social justice policies. Otherwise, either secular despots or populist demagogues will use the rhetoric of social justice to mobilize the masses. Moreover, uneven development is a common problem in the MENA region and only a grassroots egalitarian democracy is able to protect the social and political rights of masses, and particularly the rights of "middle class poor" who served as the main force of the Arab Spring.[60]

In Egypt, the post-Islamist *Wasat* Party is small in number but could have possibly been a source of greater inspiration for the younger generation of the Muslim Brotherhood. Mohamed Morsi's mistakes, the miscalculations of secular forces, and el-Sisi's coup have been a setback to post-Islamism in Egypt. Nonetheless, as Juan Cole reminds us, the Egyptian Spring was a post-Islamist movement. The following poem entitled *ana 'almani* (I am secular), which was posted at a young Egyptian website in April 2012 represents such a post-Islamist climate in the Egyptian civil society:

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[59] Sayida Qunissi, "Ennahda from Within: Islamists or 'Muslim Democrats'?" 237.

[60] Mojtaba Mahdavi, 2017, "Iran: Multiple Sources of Grassroots Social Democracy?" In Peyman Vahabzadeh, ed. *Iran's Struggles for Social Justice* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan), 271–288.

I am secular: That is, for me, religion is for God and the nation is for all. I am secular: that is, for me, there is no religion in politics and no politics in religion. I am secular: that is, your name, your title, your religion, your color, your sex are not important for me: all of us are Egyptian and equal before the law.[61]

Post-Islamism in Iran is strong at the societal level but remains in a deep crisis at the political/state level. The Green Movement as the first MENA post-Islamist mass movement has not succeeded politically but remains strong socially. The depth and diversity of intellectual debates on the question of religion, democracy, gender, and human rights in post-revolutionary Iran are exemplary.[62] However, like the Tunisian case, the (neo)liberal post-Islamist discourse in Iran undermines the middle-class poor and social justice. The only notable progressive post-Islamist discourse in postrevolutionary Iran is that of *neo-Shariatis*—a generation of new-Muslim left scholars and activists who are inspired by a new reading of Ali Shariati (1933–1977), a celebrated critical postcolonial Muslim thinker. The neo-Shariatis have produced a synthetic emancipatory discourse of "freedom, social justice and civil spirituality," proposing an alternative discourse to the hegemonic and West-centric secular modernity, Islamist essentialism, and an elitist neoliberal post-Islamism.[63]

Turkey is another complex case where the Justice and Development Party (AKP) demonstrated features of post-Islamist politics in their 2002 party platform. The AKP platform has always been socially conservative and economically neoliberal. However, there has been a great setback and regression in the party's post-Islamist policies over the past few years. President Erdogan's iron fist and authoritarianism, his "new-Ottomanist" foreign policy in the region, and the suppression of the popular Gezi Park Movement in 2013 were conducive to the deterioration of Turkish post-Islamism. The Gezi Park Movement, in my view, is now a better representative of Turkish post-Islamism as it encompassed many diverse religious and secular dissidents in Turkey, ranging from post-Kemalists to post-Islamists to environmental activists, LGBTQ, and anti-capitalist Muslims.[64]

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[61] "*Ana ʿalmani*," April 2012, http://semsam.blogpost.com, quoted in Juan Cole, *The New Arabs: How the Millennial Generation is Changing the Middle East* (New York: Simon & Shuster, 2014), 17.

[62] Mahdavi, "Post-Islamist Trends in Postrevolutionary Iran."

[63] Mahdavi, "Post-Islamist Trends in Postrevolutionary Iran."

[64] Cihan Tugal, 2016, *The Fall of the Turkish Model: How the Arab Uprisings Brought Down Islamic Liberalism* (London: Verso).

Post-Islamism, in sum, can be labeled to a vast amount of different socio-political positions, some arguably more democratic than others. Post-Islamists are as diverse as conservative, (neo)liberal, and progressive forces. However, they all believe in an active role of public religion in civil society but denounce the religious/divine state. Most post-Islamist parties are socially conservative and have adopted neoliberal economic policies. Post-Islamism is a significant paradigm shift from Islamism in the MENA region as it rejects the concept of a divine state. However, post-Islamism is not monolithic and has its own limitations and enemies.

Conclusion: Post-Islamism and Its Enemies

The MENA post-Islamist discourses/movements represent a significant paradigm shift toward more democratic and emancipatory politics. Post-Islamism in the post-Arab Spring MENA, however, is in a profound crisis: it is at once present and absent; alive and dead; growing and in retreat. The MENA post-Islamist discourses/movements are currently facing several problems. I have identified four major obstacles and enemies of post-Islamism in contemporary MENA.

The first and foremost enemy is from within, that is, *authoritarianism*. Erdogan's authoritarianism, his iron fist and repressive policies at home, and the interventionist regional policy of "neo-Ottomanism" is a case in point. The post-Islamist discourse of Justice and Development Party, which once brought some hope to the MENA democratic transition, has now degenerated into Erdogan's hegemonic repressive discourse and an ideological means of political pragmatism/opportunism. The crisis of AKP has contributed to the rise of an old Orientalist cliché of "Muslim Exceptionalism," meaning Muslims are exceptionally resistant to democratic culture and institutions.

Equally important is how the MENA authoritarianism has immensely contributed to the rise of "*sectarianization*," not "*sectarianism*." The conventional and dominant Orientalist discourse of *sectarianism* is deeply rooted in an essentialist reading of the MENA conflicts, reducing the geopolitical rivalries of regional and global powers into a simplistic idea of the Sunni-Shi'a theological fights. It perpetuates the idea of *Middle East Exceptionalism*, meaning Middle East culture is exceptionally immune to peace and democracy. The *sectarianization* thesis, however, proposes that "authoritarianism, not theology is the critical factor" in the rise of the post-Arab Spring MENA conflicts in Syria, Yemen, Iraq, Lebanon, and

Bahrain.[65] "Sectarianization is a process shaped by political actors operating within specific contexts, pursuing political goals that involve popular mobilization around particular (religious) identity markers. Class dynamics, fragile states, and geopolitical rivalries also shape the sectarianization process." On the contrary, the "term *sectarianism* is typically devoid of such references points. It tends to imply a static given, a trans-historical force—an enduring and immutable characteristic of the Arab Islamic world from the seventh century until today."[66]

The second enemy of post-Islamism includes agents, advocates, and friends of *autocratic secularism and despotic modernization*. They are no less than *Brown Skin, White Masks*[67]—to borrow Dabashi's concept who himself was indebted to Frantz Fanon. They either theorize/legitimize, or actively participate in war and economic sanction, foreign intervention, and/or military coup in order to "save" MENA from Islamism and/or "civilize" it by establishing a "secular liberal" regime. This has been done in the name of neoliberal democratization/humanitarian intervention. Iraq and Libya are two prime examples of such catastrophic discourses/policies.

Egypt under el-Sisi's militarism is another example of this setback. As Faruqi and Fahmy demonstrate, "illiberal currents among liberals," in Egypt and by extension in some other Muslim majority nations, point to much deeper epistemological contradictions of "the very issue of illiberalism within liberal paradigm" in the postcolonial context.[68] The arrogance of colonial modernity and its hegemonic universalism have consistently suppressed cultural differences and provided a one-size-fits-all model of modernization. Some of the old secularists, both the old liberals and the orthodox leftists, have subscribed to the unilinear Enlightenment project of Progress, forcefully pushing religion into the private sphere and ignoring cultural characteristics of their own societies. In the Egyptian case, this approach turned some of the secularists into an ally of the army when the

[65] Nader Hashemi and Danny Postel, eds. 2017, *Sectarianization: Mapping the New Politics of the Middle East* (London: Hurst & Company), 2–5.

[66] Nader Hashemi and Danny Postel, eds. *Sectarianization: Mapping the New Politics of the Middle East*, 4–5.

[67] Hamid Dabashi, 2011, *Brown Skin, White Masks* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press).

[68] Daanish Faruqi and Dalia F. Fahmy, 2017, "Egyptian Liberals, from Revolution to Counterrevolution." In Dalia F. Fahmy and Daanish Faruqi, Eds. *Egypt and the Contradictions of Liberalism: Illiberal Intelligentsia and the Future of Egyptian Democracy* (London: OneWorld), 1–25, pp. 23–24.

military hijacked the popular *Tamarod* (Rebellion) movement, degenerating it to a military coup of July 3, 2013. The agents and/or advocates of autocratic secularism and despotic modernization are enemies of authentic grassroots changes from within, which have been manifested in MENA post-Islamist discourses/movements.

The third enemy is Orientalism-in reverse, nativism, or cultural essentialism. The challenge of post-Islamism is to develop a theoretical approach that is equally free from the arrogance of West-centric hegemonic universalism and the illusion of nativist particularism. In other words, the challenge is to make a clear distinction between an *alternative modernity* and an *alternative to modernity*. While the former is conducive to the development of a critical *glocal* third way, the latter, Ernesto Laclau argues, is no less than nostalgic traditionalism, "self-apartheid, narcissistic retirement within oneself, which can only lead to a suicide exile and self-marginalization."[69] Post-Islamists should remain critical of tradition and modernity. Apologetic traditionalism in the name of Islam is counter-productive.

The success of a post-Islamist turn depends in part on a critical dialogue and mutual understanding between religious and secular citizens. Let us remember that *neither the French laicity nor a complete separation of religion and politics is required for democracy. What is needed for both democracy and religion to flourish is "a significant degree of institutional differentiation between religion and the state." More specifically, what is needed is the "twin tolerations," that is, "religious authorities do not control democratic officials who are acting constitutionally, while democratic officials do not control religion so long as religious actors respect other citizens' rights."*[70]

The fourth and final major enemy of post-Islamist discourses/movements in the post-Arab Spring MENA is the global structure of neoliberal order. The Arab Spring was profoundly affected by the neoliberal global condition. "Rich as movement but poor as change," argues Bayat, "the Arab Spring lacked the kind of intellectual foundation and social-political radicalism that marked their twentieth-century Cuban, Iranian, and Nicaraguan counterparts."[71] Furthermore, in the post-Arab Spring era,

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[69] Ernesto Laclau, 1996, *Emancipation(s)* (New York: Verso), 26–32; Mahdavi, "Post-Islamist Trends in Postrevolutionary Iran," 107.

[70] Alfred Stepan and Juan J. Linz, 2013, "Democratization Theory and the Arab Spring," *Journal of Democracy* 23(2), (April): 15–30, p. 17.

[71] Bayat, *Revolution Without Revolutionaries: Making Sense of the Arab Spring*, 219.

"the subaltern demands for distributive justice (jobs, land, housing, collective consumption) did not receive concrete support from the political class (whether neoliberal Islamist or secular), and the claims for dignity, democracy, and recognition were likewise frustrated both by intransigent Islamism and the custodians of the old order."[72]

Neoliberalism is ethnocentric. Despite its rhetoric of the Rights, it does not believe in difference. It advocates a hegemonic universalism, neoliberal modernity, neoliberal market, and neoliberal democracy. It epistemologically rejects and politically hinders multiple paths to homegrown models of democracies. It categorically discards alternative modernities/democracies. At the discursive level, neoliberalism claims a universal monopoly of the truth. Politically, it is interventionist and economically demoralizes social justice and egalitarianism. In *Undoing the Demos: Neoliberalism's Stealth Revolution*, Wendy Brown argues that "neoliberalism, is a particular form of reason that configures all aspects of existence in economic terms and is quietly undoing basic elements of democracy. These elements include vocabularies and principles of justice, political cultures, habits of citizenship, practices of rule, and above all, *democratic imaginaries*."[73] More specifically, the catastrophe is simply beyond "degrading democracy" into "plutocracy"; it is "normative economization of political life."[74] The (neo)liberal "reason" produces extreme social inequality, reduces human agent into a "market actor," and empowers capital, not citizens.[75] In this structural context, post-Islamist movements/discourses need to exercise an "epistemic disobedience,"[76] delinking from the hegemonic order without falling into a trap of nativism. An authentic grassroots discourse and polity from within requires thinking and acting independently. It also requires greater inclusion of ordinary people into politics by adopting a more egalitarian, pro-social justice discourse in the age of neoliberal hegemony.

[72] Bayat, *Revolution Without Revolutionaries: Making Sense of the Arab Spring*, 220.

[73] Wendy Brown, 2015b, *Undoing the Demos: Neoliberalism's Stealth Revolution* (Boston, MA: MIT Press), 17.

[74] Wendy Brown, 201.

[75] Wendy Brown, 2015a, Neoliberalism Poisons Everything: How Free Market Mania Threatens Education – And Democracy. *Salon*, June 15. Accessed April 22, 2016. http://www.salon.com/2015/06/15/democracy_cannot_survive_why_the_neoliberal_revolution_has_freedom_on_the_ ropes/.

[76] Walter Mignolo, 2015, Foreword: Yes, We Can. In Hamid Dabashi, *Can Non-European Think?* (London: Zed Books), viii–xiii.

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