

*Chapter 1*INTRODUCTION

THIS VOLUME is intended as a broad introduction to the evolution and scope of Islamist political thought from the early twentieth century to the present. Our sample is relatively small, and unavoidably so. Given the complexity of Islamist trends and how they relate to other religio-political orientations, even a much larger selection of texts could not capture the full range of arguments and commitments that constitute the Islamist movement. As a result, this reader aims not to be exhaustive or comprehensive but rather to be illustrative: we seek to map what is distinctive about Islamist discourses by attending to the regional breadth, gender dynamics, and political, theoretical, and theological complexity that currently travel under the rubric of Islamism. Our selections are drawn from the Arab Middle East, Africa, Iran, and South and Central Asia; include Sunni and Shi'i activists and intellectuals; incorporate those trained as 'ulama as well as the "new religious intellectuals" (cf. Eickelman and Piscatori 1996, 13, 44); and attend to a range of positions on the relationship between jihad and violence as well as Islam and democracy. Many of the voices herein reflect the fact that most Islamist ideologues and activists are male, yet women have become an increasingly crucial part of the movement. Consequently, this volume illustrates not only how male Islamists conceive of the role of women but also how certain prominent women have articulated their own Islamist vision. Such perspectives further provide a window onto those unwritten gender norms that help establish the parameters and content of Islamist arguments about politics, virtue, action, and the family.

The focus on Islamist thought inevitably tends to privilege writing over speech, ideas over particular practices. Yet this reader ultimately challenges the very opposition between "theory" and "practice" by showing the interrelation of thought and action in the lives of individual Islamists as well as in Islamist ideas and the dynamics of their political appeal. Thus, while the following chapters do not delve into the recent rise of Islamist organizations in Indonesia and Bangladesh or the strategies of such "radical" groups as Egypt's Gama'a al-Islamiyya and the Islamic Salvation Front in Algeria, they do illuminate the contours and complexity of an interpretive framework many Islamists share. The language of "interpretive framework," in turn, signals both an approach to Islamism and an argument for understanding it as a lens on the world rather than a mere reflection of material conditions or conduit for socioeconomic

grievances. Among other things, Islamist thought is a complex system of representation that articulates and defines a range of identities, categories, and norms; organizes human experience into narratives that assemble past, present, and future into a compelling interpretive frame; and specifies the range and meaning of acceptable and desirable practices.

Unlike other anthologies of Islamist writings, ours balances attention to broader political and theoretical frames with relatively substantial introductions to the life and work of each of the authors included here. The selected texts must speak for themselves, of course, but it is our hope that these individual introductions offer a more nuanced sense of the multifaceted contexts in which Islamist thought and activism have been articulated than is commonly found in the literature on contemporary Islamism. Within each chapter, we attend not only to the multiple and various ways Islamist thinkers reinterpret Islam but also to the specific historical, cultural and political contexts in which they are embedded, along with the particular problems, partisans, and audiences they seek to address. At the same time, we have organized the chapters thematically rather than chronologically to bring into view the web of concerns animating Islamists, as well as the polyvalent conversations across history and culture in which they participate.

Our approach and argument implicitly challenge the Manichaean worldview that currently pervades common perceptions and popular rhetoric about Islamism, one in which oppositions between good and evil or us and them are grafted onto a division between “the West” and “Islam.”¹ Such a perspective is, paradoxically, endorsed and reinforced by those who share little else, from Islamists who see themselves as the forces of light against infidel darkness, to patriots who depict America as God’s bulwark against encroaching heathendom, to proponents of the “clash of civilizations” thesis who posit a future riven into two clearly delineated and constitutively antagonistic cultural traditions (Mahbubani 1992; Huntington 1993, 1996). As this worldview congeals, it becomes increasingly difficult to recognize, let alone to make sense of, the wealth of information that challenges or disrupts it. In this way, the very opposition between Islam and the West becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy, presuming and sustaining a view of the world in which contradictory, multiple, and cross-pollinating histories and identities are pressed into the service of

¹Binaries such as West–non-West or West–Islam carve up the world in ways that obscure critical points of engagement and commonality between them, as well as the complex differences subsumed within each term. Given that such terminology not only is invoked by peoples all over the world but evokes allegiances and enmities with quite real political consequences, however, it is not possible simply to dispense with it. This is particularly true in the case of Islamist discourse, in which the opposition between “the West” and “Islam” frequently functions as a structuring premise. Subsequent references appear without quotation marks, but should be understood as representations of the world rather than accurate historical, cultural, or territorial descriptions.

neat binaries that distort rather than illuminate the political landscape (R. Euben 2002a).

If this volume is an implicit corrective to such reductionist generalizations, it is also intended as an explicit guide through the haze of polemic, fear, and confusion swirling around the subject of Islamism in the early twenty-first century. Such confusion even characterizes what might seem to be simple matters of terminology. What we call Islamism here has been described in the media and policy circles in numerous other ways, from “Islamic extremism” to “political Islam” to “fundamentalism,” still the most commonly used English term to refer to religio-political movements, Muslim or otherwise.² In the wake of the events of September 11, 2001, the array of names for the phenomenon has only proliferated, thereby adding to the terminological confusion. A case in point is “jihadism,” a neologism derived from the Arabic *jihad* (to struggle, to strive) that is frequently used in the press to denote the most violent strands of Islamism, those associated with what are alternatively called “suicide bombings” or “martyrdom operations” in particular. Older words put to new uses have also gained currency in the years since 9/11: such is the case with “Salafism,” which refers to contemporary Muslims who generally eschew the interpretive methods and norms of the medieval Islamic schools and take as a guide for proper behavior only the word of God, the teachings of the Prophet Muhammad, and the example set by the pious forbears.

But there is perhaps no other term with which Islamism has been more closely identified in recent years than “terrorism,” so much so that the two terms and the phenomena they name are often depicted as synonymous (Desai 2007, 23; Richardson 2007, 61–69). Some of the most violent Islamists clearly do engage in what the U.S. State Department defines as terrorism: “premeditated, politically motivated violence perpetrated against non-combatant targets by sub-national groups or clandestine agents, usually intended to influence an audience” (Title 22 of the United States Code, Section 2656f(d)). Yet, inasmuch as many terrorists past and

²“Fundamentalism” was coined in 1920 specifically to describe Protestant evangelicals anxious to rescue American Christianity and culture from what they viewed as the moral degeneration inaugurated by modernism, rationalism, and materialism. Such warriors for God sought to “do battle royal for the Fundamentals” by (re)establishing the Bible as the authoritative moral compass for American life, infallible not only in regard to theological issues but also in matters of historical, geographical, and scientific fact (Laws 1920, 834; Massee 1920, 5, 8; Barr 1978, 1, 37, 40, 46–47, 52; Marsden 1980, 118–23, 159). It is revealing that there was no equivalent for “fundamentalism” in Arabic, the language of the Qur’an, until the need to approximate the English term called for one. *Usuliyya*, derived from *usul*, the word for fundamentals or roots, has emerged as an Arabic name for Islamism, but its currency is due to the way it approximates the English “fundamentalism” rather than any correspondence with aspects of the Islamic tradition. Within this tradition, *usuli* is associated with scholarship on the roots and principles of Islamic jurisprudence, and experts in this discipline are often referred to as *al-usuliyyun*.

present are neither religious nor Muslim (Bloom 2005; Gambetta 2005; Pape 2005), and Islamists themselves are divided about the legitimacy of terrorist tactics, the terminology of “Islamist terrorism” takes a part for the whole while implicitly collapsing diverse Islamist perspectives about retaliatory action into an argument for violence against noncombatants. While such equations and assumptions have recently gathered steam, they are structured by broader cultural discourses that predate the U.S.-led “War on Terror” by decades and even centuries. As Richard Jackson shows, the field of terrorism studies, Orientalist scholarship on the Middle East, and long-standing Euro-American suspicions about Islam now interact and reinforce one another to produce a discourse on Islamist terrorism that is “highly politicized, intellectually contestable, damaging to community relations and largely counter-productive in the struggle to control subaltern violence in the long run” (R. Jackson 2007, 395, 397–400).

In contrast to many of these designations and the assumptions animating them, we prefer “Islamism,” perhaps the most widely used term among scholars of Muslim societies.³ We take Islamism to refer to contemporary movements that attempt to return to the scriptural foundations of the Muslim community, excavating and reinterpreting them for application to the present-day social and political world. Such foundations consist of the Qur’an and the normative example of the Prophet Muhammad (*sunna*; *hadith*), which constitute the sources of God’s guidance in matters pertaining to both worship and human relations. In general, Islamists aim at restoring the primacy of the norms derived from these foundational texts in collective life, regarding them not only as an expression of God’s will but as an antidote to the moral bankruptcy inaugurated by Western cultural dominance from abroad, aided and abetted by corrupt Muslim rulers from within the *umma* (Islamic community).

In contrast to those Muslims who primarily seek to cultivate a mystical understanding of the divine (which is not itself devoid of political implications) or who strive to carry on their devotional practices and scholarly pursuits indifferent to their political surroundings, Islamists may be characterized as explicitly and intentionally political and as engaging in multifaceted critiques of all those people, institutions, practices, and orientations that do not meet their standards of this divinely mandated political engagement. Using Max Weber’s terminology, Islamism is not defined by an “other-worldly” orientation in which salvation requires withdrawal from worldly affairs but rather is defined as a movement in which salvation is possible only through participation in the world or, more precisely, “within the institutions of the world, but in opposition to them” (Weber 1964, 166).

³“Islamism” is not, however, universally accepted and is frequently invoked with caution and caveats. An Algerian writer has argued, for example, that Islamism wrongly implies that those who claim the name have captured the essence of Islam, and thus its use is no more appropriate than calling David Koresh a Christianist (cited in Bennoune 1994, 37, n. 1).

In the following pages, we refine this preliminary definition further by delineating several aspects of Islamism that should be considered broad tendencies and “family resemblances” rather than fixed attributes, characteristics of Islamism that not every Islamist exhibits all of the time, yet which interweave to form a “complicated network of similarities overlapping and criss-crossing: sometimes overall similarities, sometimes similarities of detail” (Wittgenstein 1953, §66). We bring such tendencies and resemblances into sharp relief by way of contrast with several other Muslim orientations and groups crucial to modern and contemporary Islamic thought: modernists, *‘ulama* (traditionally educated religious scholars), Salafis, and Sufis. This way of situating Islamism is both an argument and a heuristic device designed, first, to identify the commonalities among Islamist thinkers; second, to make visible the heterogeneity of Islamist arguments and ideas; and, third, to suggest that the relationship between Islamist and non-Islamist religio-political orientations past and present is marked as much by continuities, complex overlaps, and subtle differentiations as by radical breaks.

SITUATING ISLAMISM

The Muslim Modernists and the ‘Ulama

The onset of European colonial rule across Muslim societies inaugurated a great deal of soul searching on the nature and causes of Muslim political decline and what could be done to reverse it. Many Muslim reformers of the nineteenth century insisted that the political subjugation of Muslims to foreign, non-Muslim rulers was the result of a falling away from adherence to their authoritative religious norms. The best, indeed the only way Muslims could hope to remedy their circumstances was through a renewed adherence to God’s commands. This would entitle them once again to God’s favor, the argument went, not just beyond the grave but in this world. This perspective was not new. Long before the advent of European colonialism, reformers and *mujaddidun* (renewers) had periodically arisen to guide the community out of what they saw as its moral anarchy. Not infrequently, such reformers had made common cause with members of the political and military elite in efforts to set things right as they thought God had intended.

Yet, if neither the diagnosis nor the remedy was new, calls for a revived Islamic piety did come to carry a new burden in colonial societies. In South Asia, a decade or so after the formal establishment of British colonial rule in 1857, some Muslim religious scholars began calling for a reinvigorated adherence to Islam in light of the Qur’an, hadith, and the norms of the Hanafi school of law dominant in India, embarking on sustained efforts to educate members of the Muslim community in these

norms.⁴ This reformist effort centered on a *madrasa*—a school of advanced Islamic learning—founded at Deoband in northern India in 1867, which gradually became the nucleus of numerous madrasas sharing the same reformist orientation and spread throughout South Asia and eventually beyond the Indian subcontinent (Metcalf 1982; Zaman 2002). The conviction that guided these religious scholars, the ‘ulama, was not just that the sorry state of their fellow Muslims reflected a laxity in adhering to God’s commands but also that, in the absence of Muslim political rule, religious knowledge, anchored in the foundational and other religious texts, was the best guarantee for the preservation of a distinct Muslim identity.

Such ‘ulama have had their analogues across modern Muslim societies (cf. Zeghal 1995; Zaman 2002, 144–80; Hefner and Zaman 2007). They have also had their opponents. Many of the opponents are what might be characterized as internal, that is, other ‘ulama committed to a rival doctrinal orientation or to different beliefs about, say, how the memory of a saint or of the Prophet Muhammad ought to be venerated or what customary norms might be accommodated into legitimate ways of being Muslim. But other Muslim reformers—whom scholars have often referred to as the “modernists”—have had very different ideas about what had gone wrong with the Muslim world and how to remedy it.⁵ To the modernists, the sort of institutions and practices represented by the ‘ulama, and the remedies proposed by them, pointed not to a solution of the problems Muslims had come to face in the colonial context but to their perpetuation. Modernist reformers also professed firm commitment to Islamic norms but with some crucial differences. They argued that it was no longer enough for Muslims simply to hold firm to the teachings of their faith as conventionally understood. The times had changed drastically. Muslims needed to acquire modern, Western forms of knowledge and to accommodate themselves to European practices, technologies, and institutions if they were to improve their lot and, indeed, to survive at all as a community. The early modernists also insisted—as have their successors to this day—that Islam itself needed to be reinterpreted in order to

⁴Most Sunni Muslims have long belonged to one of four *madhhabs* (schools of law) whose beginnings are attributed to scholars who lived in the eighth and the ninth centuries. The Hanafi school of law is named after Abu Hanifa (d. 767), the Maliki school after Malik b. Anas (d. 795), the Shafi‘i school after Muhammad b. Idris al-Shafi‘i (d. 820), and the Hanbali school after Ahmad ibn Hanbal (d. 855). Among the Shi‘a, there are several sectarian divisions. Of these, the largest community—the Imamis or the Ithna ‘asharis (“Twelvers”)—adhere to a legal system whose early articulation is attributed to the sixth Shi‘i imam, Ja‘far al-Sadiq (d. 765).

⁵The scholarly literature on Muslim modernism is substantial but uneven. Notable studies include Hourani 1983 (first published in 1962); Ahmad 1967; Troll 1978; Brown 1996; Khalid 1998; and Hefner 2000. The spectrum of modernist thought may usefully be seen in two anthologies edited by Kurzman, *Liberal Islam* (1998) and *Modernist Islam* (2002) and in Kamrava 2006.

meet the new challenges that confronted Muslims. It was not Islam that bore the responsibility for the political and intellectual weaknesses afflicting Muslim societies—as many a European observer of Islam suggested—but the failure of Muslims to properly interpret their foundational texts in accordance with changing needs.

While many among the ‘ulama have long affirmed the authority of their *madhhabs* (schools of law) and the need for strict adherence (*taqlid*) to school doctrines in order to maintain the continuity and coherence of their scholarly and especially their juridical tradition, modernists have seldom seen anything redeeming in such conceptions of authority.⁶ Taqlid, to them, is “blind imitation” of long dead masters and of their anachronistic views, which has stood in the way of people’s ability to adapt themselves to new challenges. The modernists have also alleged that, in holding firm to their outmoded ways, the ‘ulama were interested neither in the welfare of Islam nor in that of the community; they were only defending their own privileges as the guardians and authoritative interpreters of the religious tradition and the considerable social standing that often went with it. As the modernist reformers have understood it, there is nothing in Islam to stop people from interpreting its norms according to the needs of changing times. Indeed, the Qur’an invites people to reflect on it (“Will they not think about this Qur’an?” Q 4:82), which is the very opposite of the ‘ulama’s insistence on firm adherence to earlier authorities. As Muhammad Rashid Rida (d. 1935), the editor of the Egyptian journal *al-Manar* (1898–1935) and a disciple of the famous reformer Muhammad ‘Abduh (d. 1905), wrote in his commentary on Qur’an 4:82:

The only unavoidable requisite [to be able to reflect on the Qur’an] is knowledge of the language of the Qur’an, its words and its style, which [in any case] is the sort of thing required of anyone who becomes a Muslim. . . . Taqlid signifies preventing [people] from reflecting on the Qur’an. . . . Yet God himself has commanded us to reflect on His book and to reason with it; and no one from among His creatures can forbid what He has made obligatory. . . . By the rejection of taqlid, we do not mean that every Muslim can possibly become a Malik [d. 795] or a Shafi’i [d. 820] in deriving the juristic rules relating to the community, or that everyone ought to do so. We mean only that every Muslim is obligated to reflect on the Qur’an and to be guided by it in accordance with his abilities. It is never permissible for a Muslim to abandon [the Qur’an] and to turn away from it, or to prefer—over what he understands of its guidance—the words of anyone else, be it a *mujtahid* [a practitioner of *ijtihad*, i.e., of independent legal reasoning] or one committed to taqlid (*muqallid*). A Muslim’s religion is lifeless without the Qur’an. There is no

⁶On the ‘ulama’s conception of tradition, see Zaman 2002, especially 3–16; 2007b, 63–70.

book, by a master mujtahid or by a muqallid, that can make up for [direct] reflection on the Book of God. . . . If Muslims had stood firm in reflecting on the Qur'an and in being guided by it in every age, their morals and manners would not have been ruined, their rulers would not have been unjust and despotic, their authority would not have declined, and they would not have become dependent on others for their livelihood. (Rida 1947–54, 5:296–97)⁷

As this passage illustrates, central to modernist discourses across Muslim societies is the idea of *ijtihād* (cf. Kurzman 2002, 9–14), by which they have often meant not only the effort to formulate Islamic legal rulings on matters the foundational texts had left unregulated but *also* the reinterpretation of matters on which the generality of earlier scholars and even the foundational texts themselves had had a reasonably clear view. Many among the 'ulama have insisted that their school doctrines provide sufficient resources to meet all contingencies, and what remains to be done is to find a particular norm or doctrine that matches the question or problem at hand. Not all 'ulama of modern times have been averse to particular forms of *ijtihād*; indeed, the continuing necessity of *ijtihād* in at least some of its forms has come to be increasingly recognized by many among them (cf. Zaman 2008, 16–17, 64, 126). Still, the idea that specific legal rulings enunciated in the foundational texts might themselves be set aside in the name of *darura* (necessity) or subordinated to considerations of *maslaha* (common good) is, to them, tantamount to taking liberties with God's eternal word (cf. Zaman 2004, 133–39).

Needless to say, modernist reformers have never thought of their initiatives as taking liberties with God's commands. They have often insisted, however, that the literal word of God must always be understood in light of the overall "spirit" of the divine injunctions, taken both in their entirety and in their original historical context.⁸ Modernist discourses on

⁷This commentary, the *Tafsir al-Manar*, reflects the views of both Muhammad 'Abduh and Rashid Rida, though it was largely written by Rida.

⁸Invocations of the "spirit" of the Qur'an, of the Prophet's example, or of Islam at large are a common motif in modernist (and some Islamist) writings. Syed Ameer Ali (d. 1928), a Shi'i modernist scholar and judge in colonial India, had characteristically titled his best-known book *The Spirit of Islam*. For some other instances of the appeal to the spirit of Islam and the Qur'an, and related formulations, cf. Iqbal 1934, 149, 156; Kurzman 2002, 60, 256; Ramadan 2007, xi. The medieval juridical idea of the overarching "purposes" underlying the sacred law (*maqasid al-shari'a*), an understanding of which ought to guide the jurist in all his endeavors, might be thought to have something in common with modernist appeals to the spirit of Islam. And it is no accident that the work of the medieval Spanish jurist al-Shatibi (d. 1388), who is among those most closely associated with the elaboration of this idea, has remained especially popular in modernist circles. Medieval jurists understood the idea of the *maqasid al-shari'a* to mean that the *shari'a* was concerned, above all, with the preservation of life, religion, rationality, progeny, and property and that no legal rulings should violate these fundamental concerns. In marked contrast, however, to the careful exegetical and legal argumentation that went into demonstrating what the pur-

polygamy offer an illustration of their approach. The Qur'an allows polygamy: "If you fear that you will not deal fairly with orphan girls, you may marry whichever women seem good to you, two, three, or four. If you fear that you cannot be equitable [to them], then marry only one, or your slave(s); that is more likely to make you avoid bias" (Q 4:3). The Qur'an thus permits polygamy, but simultaneously insists on equity as the necessary condition for a polygamous household, a qualification supplemented by Qur'an 4:129: "You will never be able to treat your wives with equal fairness, however much you may desire to do so, but do not ignore one wife altogether, leaving her suspended. . . ." Modernist reformers have often seen the Qur'anic sanction for polygamy not just as being specific to extraordinary circumstances—as a way of providing for girls made orphan by war—but as effectively ruled out by the Qur'anic statement that men can never really be equitable toward more than one wife (cf. Rahman 1989, 47–48). To the 'ulama, this is specious reasoning, for if God had really wanted to prohibit polygamy He could simply have said so (cf. Shafi' 2005–7, 2:313–14, 592–93). That medieval jurists and exegetes are practically unanimous in allowing polygamy is, for their latter-day successors, further confirmation of the correctness of their own understanding of the Qur'an on this matter.

As this example suggests, at issue between modernists and the 'ulama is not only how particular norms are viewed but also how they are affirmed and defended. The 'ulama's scholarly tradition is constituted by a long and complex history of commentary, debate, agreements, and disagreements about the foundational texts and about all matters Islamic. As they see it, this tradition is not closed, frozen, or monolithic, yet it is with reference to the scholarly tradition that any given reading of the foundational or other texts finds meaning and legitimacy in their discourses. Modernist reformers, for their part, have usually seen this tradition precisely as closed and anachronistic, as occluding the true spirit of Islamic teachings, and therefore as unworthy of serious and sustained engagement.

Modernists, Islamists, and the 'Ulama

The contestation between the modernists and the 'ulama provides a way of situating the Islamists within a broad spectrum of competing but also overlapping orientations in the Muslim public sphere. Like the modernists, who themselves hold varied positions on the relationship between Islam and politics, many among the Islamists are products of modern, Western institutions of learning. Sayyid Qutb (d. 1966) was not trained

poses of the law were, how one knew what they were, and how the law was to be interpreted with reference to them (cf. Hallaq 1997, esp. 162–206; Weiss 1998, 78–87, 145–71), modernist appeals to the spirit or essence of Islam are often extremely vague.

as a religious scholar. Nor was Hasan al-Banna (d. 1949), the founder of the Muslim Brotherhood of Egypt, the oldest and one of the most influential of Islamist organizations in the Sunni Muslim world. Both were educated at the Dar al-'Ulum in Cairo, an institution founded in the late nineteenth century to establish something of a middle ground between al-Azhar University in Cairo and modern, secular education, although it gradually veered toward the latter and in 1946 became part of Cairo University (cf. Reid 1990, 139–49). Abu'l-A'la Mawdudi (d. 1979) of Pakistan did receive an intermittent madrasa education, but it was the vocation of a journalist, not that of an *'alim* (plural: *'ulama*), that he adopted. Thanks in part to this broadly similar educational background, Islamists also share with modernists a supreme confidence in their own ability to discern the true meaning or spirit of Islam through a more or less direct encounter with the foundational texts. As Charles J. Adams (1966, 396) has observed in comparing Mawdudi with Muslim modernists, “Both have claimed the ability to disengage the spirit or essentials of God’s guidance . . . to liberate themselves from the authority of the cumulative Muslim past and to undercut the position of the *ulama* who represent that authority.” Much the same might be said of Sayyid Qutb, as well as of many contemporary Islamists.

Despite such commonalities, Islamists frequently position themselves in opposition to the modernists. As the Islamists see it, the modernists have made Islam itself subservient to the project of establishing its compatibility with Western norms and institutions, rejecting or explaining away anything that does not conform to these norms. Mawdudi put it this way in deriding modernist discomfort with the implementation of punishments mandated by Islamic law:

I would like to put a straight question to these votaries of “modernity”: “What are the values that you believe in? Do you believe in the Islamic values of life and standards of morality or those of the modern civilization?” If you have made your choice and accepted some other values and some different standard of right and wrong, of virtue and vice, of the permissible and the prohibited as against those envisaged by Islam, it is then a difference of a very fundamental nature. It means that you differ with and disbelieve in the Islamic ideology itself. In this case you should have the courage to declare that you reject Islam outright. Is it not foolish to allege faith in a God whose laws you consider as barbarous? Anyhow, nobody can remain inside the pale of Islam after holding such an opinion about the law of God. (Mawdudi [Maududi] 1960, 67)

Polemics of this sort not only suggest the Islamists’ sense of what separates them from the modernists but also point to intermittent Islamist efforts to make common cause with the *'ulama*. Such efforts are often predicated on both the rhetorical claim that all sincere Muslims fully

concur in their conception of the *shari'a* (Islamic law) and the Islamists' astute recognition of the 'ulama's considerable standing in society. Unsurprisingly, some leading Islamists have sought to blur distinctions between themselves and the 'ulama to enhance their own authority. Usama bin Laden (b. 1957) styled his famous 1996 "Declaration of War against the Americans Occupying the Land of the Two Holy Places" as a *fatwa*, that is, a juridical opinion, thereby rhetorically obscuring the historical fact that fatwas have typically been the preserve of the 'ulama and, more specifically, of the *fuqaha* or *muftis* (jurists) among them. Bin Laden, however, has no formal scholarly credentials in matters Islamic. Mawdudi was commonly styled as *mawllana*, a common honorific for the 'ulama in South Asia. A deliberate blurring of distinctions is likewise evident in the statement of the Sudanese Islamist Hasan al-Turabi (b. 1932): "Because all knowledge is divine and religious, a chemist, an engineer, an economist, or a jurist are all 'ulama" (Turabi 1983, 245; also chapter 8 in this volume).

Yet, there *are* leading Islamists—in this volume, Khomeini, Mutahhari, Baqir al-Sadr, Fadlallah, 'Ali Nadwi, 'Umar 'Abd al-Rahman, and Qaradawi—who were trained as 'ulama, which means that porous boundaries between Islamists and the 'ulama are not just a matter of self-serving rhetoric by autodidacts. Given this fact, the distinction between Islamists and 'ulama turns less on stark differences in educational background and more on the character and content of their political commitments. More than anything else, Islamists seek to implement Islamic law through the agency of the state. Not all are willing to resort to violent means in pursuit of this end. Many, such as Yusuf al-Qaradawi (b. 1926), a highly influential Islamist and one of the most prominent 'ulama of contemporary Islam (Skovgaard-Petersen 2004; Krämer 2006), profess democratic commitments. But whatever the stance toward either democracy or violence, the public implementation of the *shari'a* is at the heart of all Islamism, in both its Shi'i and Sunni forms. This suggests an important contrast with many among the 'ulama.

Since the first centuries of Islam, the 'ulama have often sought to maintain a careful distance from the ruling elite, jealously guarding their institutions and practices from governmental interference. The 'ulama generally recognized that the functioning of legal and other Islamic institutions presupposed the existence of a Muslim government, and they defined a legitimate government as one that oversaw the implementation of *shari'a* norms. But they have typically understood the government's commitment to the *shari'a* to mean that the ruler defended the borders of the polity, regulated public morality, suppressed heretics, and appointed those proficient in legal matters to implement the law (cf. Crone 2004, 286–314). They have *not* understood any of this to mean either that the ruler should be able to offer absolute interpretations of God's law or that the realm of politics and statecraft should become synonymous with Islam itself. Yet this is precisely how Islamists have often conceived of the relationship

between Islam and politics and, more specifically, between Islam and the state: no calling is higher than striving toward the establishment of an Islamic state, and, once brought about, all will be in accordance with God's purposes. Mawdudi (1960, 177) claimed that "the struggle for obtaining control over the organs of the state, when motivated by the urge to establish the *din* [religion] and the Islamic Shari'ah and to enforce the Islamic injunctions, is not only permissible but positively desirable and as such obligatory."

To many 'ulama, this amounts to nothing less than making religious norms subservient to political goals. As Mufti Muhammad Taqi 'Uthmani, a leading Deobandi scholar of Pakistan, notes in his rejoinder to views such as Mawdudi's,

In their zeal to refute secularism, some writers and thinkers of the present age have gone so far as to characterize politics and government as the true objective of Islam, the reason why the prophets were sent [by God to the people], indeed the very reason for the creation of the human being. And they have not only given other Islamic commandments—for instance, on matters of worship—a secondary position, they have even deemed them to be mere means for political ends, just a way of training people [toward political mobilization]. ('Uthmani 1998, 25–26; cf. Zaman 2008, 116–18)

Not all 'ulama share such misgivings about the subordination of Islam to politics, though it should be noted that they would see this in terms not of any such subordination but rather of the utter inseparability of the religious and the political. By far the most notable of these among the Shi'a is Ayatollah Khomeini (d. 1989) of Iran. Against a long-standing tradition of Shi'i political quietism in the absence of the hidden Shi'i *imam*, Khomeini argued that the Shi'i 'ulama ought to assume direct political leadership, and he then proceeded to spearhead the movement that culminated in the fall of the Iranian monarchy and the establishment of the Islamic Republic of Iran.⁹ His doctrine of the *velayat-e faqih* (guardianship of the jurist) is a radical rethinking of Shi'i political theology, blurring any meaningful boundary between religious and political authority (see chapter 6). It is precisely Khomeini's commitment to establishing an Islamic state along these lines that warrants his classification as an Is-

⁹The Imami or Ithna 'ashari Shi'a believe that the twelfth and last of their imams went into *ghayba* (hiding) in 874 and that he will eventually return as the mahdi—a messianic figure who alone can restore proper order to the world, inaugurate an era of unalloyed justice, and reclaim for the Shi'a the rights of which they have been dispossessed by the Sunnis and by corrupt rulers for much of the history of Islam. Shi'i scholars have long debated the question of what sort of authority the leading religious scholars ought to have in officiating in the imam's absence. Khomeini's view, disputed by many other scholars, was that the leading scholar(s) ought to discharge the full range of the imam's functions, including the political headship of the community.

lamist, notwithstanding his well-recognized status as one of the leading Shi'i 'ulama of his generation.

The Azhar-educated Yusuf al-Qaradawi has, for his part, criticized many fellow Islamists on several issues but not on the fundamental question of their political orientation. Just as Khomeini had chastised the “propaganda institutions of imperialism . . . [for trying] to persuade us that . . . the religious leaders must not interfere in social matters and that the fuqaha [jurists] do not have the duty of overseeing the destiny of the Islamic nation” (Algar 1981, 141), Qaradawi insists that denying the political orientation of Islam amounts to its willful distortion:

Among the interpretations with which the secularists [*almaniyyun*] and the modernists [*al-hadathiyyun*] calumniate [Islam, properly understood, and those committed to it] is the notion of “political Islam,” which, without doubt, is an idea alien to our Islamic society. By [political Islam] they mean an Islam that concerns itself with the internal and external affairs of the Muslim community. [They mean by it] actions aimed at freeing the community from the foreign power that directs [Muslim] affairs, physically and morally, as it pleases. [They also mean by it] actions seeking to cleanse the community of the cultural, social, and legal sediments of Western colonialism so that the community can return once again to submission to God’s law in different areas of life. They use this characterization of “political Islam” in order to alienate people from its [aforementioned] content and to frighten them away from those calling to a comprehensive conception of Islam—one that is inclusive of belief and law, worship and social interaction, proselytism and the state. (Qaradawi 2007, 93)

Islamist political commitments are often intertwined with critiques of the scholarly tradition and its attendant institutions and practices, and this criticism provides us a crucial way of thinking further both about what distinguishes Islamists from the 'ulama and about how to view Islamism itself. What the 'ulama cannot but see as a cavalier attitude toward their scholarly tradition is, we suggest, better viewed as part of a larger Islamist critique, one that goes to the heart of how Islamism ought to be understood as a phenomenon. It is a critique of particular Muslim beliefs, practices, mores, and institutions that are deemed to have only a tenuous basis in “true” and “authentic” Islam; of the repeated wrong turns Muslims have taken throughout their long history; of the corrupting “foreign” influences—from Sufism to Greek philosophy, to the lure of modern Western cultures—by which Muslims have allowed themselves to be seduced; and of their unwillingness to do whatever it takes to establish the *hakimiyya* (sovereignty) of God on earth. That it is the sovereignty of God that Islamists seek ultimately to affirm in their individual and public lives reminds us that their critique of the past and the present is a political critique, anchored in and driven by aspirations to institute a

new religio-political order. Whether this critique is articulated in concrete or vague terms, in a seemingly moderate or plainly militant language, there is no mistaking either its principal target—facets of the Islamic tradition—or its fundamentally political orientation.¹⁰

Islamists have often insisted that the word of God can and should be approached directly, without the mediation of present or past scholars, and without any need for the edifying tales, the philological debates, and the long-winded theological disquisitions so often found in medieval exegetical literature, a major facet of the Islamic scholarly tradition (cf. Carré 2003, 18). Shukri Mustafa, an Egyptian Islamist executed in 1977 for the murderous activities of his Society of Muslims (popularly known as the Society of Excommunication and Emigration), had famously asserted that all one needed to resolve uncertainties in one's understanding of the word of God was a dictionary (Kepel 1993, 79). Sayyid Qutb did not go quite that far. But he, too, affirmed that the fundamental teachings of Islam were entirely transparent: "What we are saying about Islam is no invention of ours, or any new interpretation of its essence. It is simply plain Islam as it was understood by its first adherent, Muhammad, and his sincere Companions and those close to its authentic source" (Qutb 1996, 9, with minor change).

The implication of Qutb's striking assertion is twofold. First, behind a rhetoric of humility in relation to divine knowledge, Qutb implicitly claims the full backing of God and His Prophet for the "plain Islam" he sets forth. More specifically, he essentially depicts his own understanding of Islam as synonymous with God's eternal intent, much as Khomeini's pronouncements as the *vali-ye faqih* (guardian jurist) presumed to articulate what Islam itself stood for or required on any given matter. Second, the statement implies not only that views other than his are mere interpretations but that they are the more reprehensible for being "novel"—a suggestion that evokes the notion of *bid'a*, that is, of illicit, capricious in-

¹⁰That Islamism should be seen as a wide-ranging *critique* of the world and of the Islamic tradition is a reminder, of course, that critique is not an inherently secular phenomenon nor does it necessitate a secular framework. As Talal Asad (2008) has observed, given a wide variety of "possible instances of critique/criticism . . . what we have . . . is a family concept for which it is not possible to provide a single theory because the *practices* that constitute them differ radically" (also cf. Mahmood 2008; Taylor 2008). Nor should our viewing Islamism as a politically motivated critique suggest that other, competing orientations in modern Islam cannot also be seen as critiques of particular practices, particular forms of knowledge. What does distinguish an Islamist orientation from others is, once again, both the degree to which Islamist critiques break with their past and present *and* their aspiration to remake the world in accordance with their understanding of immutable divine commands. This is markedly different from how the 'ulama might critique particular aspects of their scholarly tradition in the interest of a stronger sense of continuity with that tradition or in order to make it more receptive to what they see as the community's changing needs. It is also very different from how Muslim modernists often break with the scholarly tradition in order to *adapt* Muslim norms and institutions to the dominant political and cultural institutions of their contemporary world.

novation in matters of religion. Such a view of Islam jettisons much of what would normally count as its history and civilization. “The history of ‘Islam,’” Qutb tells his readers, “is the history of the true application of Islam—in people’s conceptions and their practices, in their lives and their social systems. Islam is the fixed axis, around which people’s lives revolve in a fixed frame. When they go out of this frame, or when they categorically abandon this axis, what then do they have to do with Islam?” (Qutb 1967a, vol. 2, part 4, 169; quotation marks around “Islam” in original). It is for the fixed axis, the plain Islam—and in opposition to much of its history—that the Islamist professes to stand (cf. Grunebaum 1962, 251–52).

Qutb, however, is far from consistent in his attitude toward the scholarly tradition or in how he seeks to articulate his own authority in relation to it. His faith in the transparency, and the transformative immediacy, of God’s words would appear to make *all* exegesis superfluous, yet he himself had proceeded to write a major commentary, *In the Shade of the Qur’an*, that would exceed four thousand pages in print. The justification he offers for it in the opening lines of the commentary is audacious, not apologetic:

Life in the shade of the Qur’an is a blessing. It is a blessing unknown to anyone who hasn’t tasted it. . . . All praise be to God! He has granted me the opportunity to live in the shade of the Qur’an for a period of time, during which I have tasted His blessings as I never had earlier in my life. . . . I have listened to God the exalted conversing with me through this Qur’an—with me, a small, little slave. . . . I have lived, in the shade of the Qur’an, looking from an elevation at the *jahiliyya* [pagan ignorance] raging in the land and the petty concerns of its people. [From this vantage], I have seen the pride the people of this jahiliyya take in their childish knowledge, their childish ideas, their childish preoccupations. [I have looked upon them] like an elder looks upon the frivolities of children, upon their efforts, and upon their lips. (Qutb 1967a, 1:3)

These resounding words serve, *inter alia*, to explain why a new commentary should have been needed at all: the mind-numbing impact of the jahiliyya has made people incapable of responding to even the most direct of divine summons, and only someone who has lived “in the shade of the Qur’an” can understand their plight and remedy it. From the perspective Qutb adopts here, any appeal to the scholarly tradition, any effort to rest his authority on it, would appear altogether out of place. Yet Qutb’s claims to authority do not derive exclusively from his conversing with God through the Qur’an. To some degree, they also depend on his being seen as having mastery over the very exegetical tradition of which he is otherwise frequently dismissive. Qutb cites a small number of earlier commentators and other authorities when it suits his purpose to do

so,¹¹ just as he sidesteps the exegetical tradition when doing so offers a rhetorically more effective way of arriving at a conclusion. More traditional exegetes, past and present, also pick and choose, of course. But they have typically done so within an overall framework that is defined by a continuous engagement with the exegetical tradition as a whole (cf. Saleh 2004). By contrast, Qutb and other Islamist exegetes write *outside*, and often in conscious opposition to, any such framework. The conversation is not with the earlier exegetes but directly with God, though this might, on occasion, be aided by illustrations from the earlier exegetical tradition.

If there are unacknowledged ambiguities in Qutb's relationship with the Islamic tradition, as we have observed, a frequently acerbic stance does nonetheless remain characteristic of how he views it most of the time. Qutb is anything but unique in this respect. Yet if Islamists share, almost by definition, a critical stance toward facets of this tradition, there is much that also separates them from one another in precisely how this critique and its implications are articulated in different instances. Although the mere presence of disagreement among Islamist intellectuals and activists is hardly remarkable, the scope and implications of some of the disagreements, inasmuch as they relate to the scholarly tradition, are nonetheless worth examining here. For they suggest that, while Islamists share the conviction that particular institutions, practices, and norms need to be refashioned in light of immutable divine commands, this conviction often rests on quite different views of Islamic history and civilization, of contemporary Muslim societies, and, not least, of religious authority and its loci. Nowhere, perhaps, is this more evident than in some of the writings of Yusuf al-Qaradawi. Like Qutb, Qaradawi is among the most influential Islamist ideologues in the Sunni world. He is also one of Qutb's severest critics from within the Islamist camp (see especially Qaradawi 1994, 101–31).

That “Muslim” societies lacked a proper Islamic foundation made it futile, Qutb had argued, to debate specific questions of Islamic law and

¹¹These include, inter alia, Muhammad ibn Ishaq (d. 767), the author of the *Sirat rasul Allah*, one of the earliest biographies of the Prophet Muhammad; al-Tabari (d. 923), the author of *Jami' al-bayan li-ta'wil ay al-Qur'an*, one of the most influential commentaries of the Qur'an ever produced; al-Baghawi (d. 1117), whose commentary is titled *Ma'alim al-tanzil*; al-Qurtubi (d. 1273), the author of a work, *al-Jami' li-ahkam al-Qur'an*, which is especially attentive to the legal content of the Qur'an; and Ibn Kathir (d. 1373), the author of a Qur'an commentary, *Tafsir al-Qur'an al-'azim*, which has been popular among many Muslims of a Salafi orientation. On occasion, Qutb also cites influential fellow Islamists. See, for example, Qutb, *Fi zilal al-Qur'an*, vol. 2, part 4, 132 (Mawdudi); vol. 2, part 5, 25 (Nadwi); vol. 2, part 6, 143 and 150–53 ('Abd al-Qadir 'Awda, an Egyptian Islamist and legal scholar executed under the Nasser regime in 1954). Occasionally, Qutb cites Rida's *Tafsir al-manar* as well, though, more often than not, to register his disagreements with Rida and with the latter's mentor, Muhammad 'Abduh. For a detailed comparison between the commentaries of Rida and Qutb, see Carré 2003.

how it dealt with particular social or economic issues. The ‘ulama were pathetically deluded if they thought that the interests of Islam could be furthered through disquisitions on the shari‘a in such conditions of pervasive ungodliness (Qutb 1967b, 183–90). What people needed before anything else was a return to the basics of the faith. The task of righteous preachers was to instruct them in these matters and to help them recognize what the sovereignty of God demanded of them (Qutb 1991, 35; cf. Qaradawi 1994, 102–4). All other matters, including the niceties of juristic discussion, were best postponed until a properly Islamic society based on this foundation had been realized.

Qaradawi vehemently disagrees with Qutb, arguing that educated Muslims are not pagans but believers and, as such, do not need to be tutored in the fundamentals of their faith. What they often do not understand very well—and here Qaradawi concurs with other Islamists—is the nature of Islam as a *nizam* (social and political system). The problem of Muslims, in other words, is not godlessness but simply *ignorance* (which is what the term *jahiliyya* literally means) of the teachings of Islam in their comprehensive, all-encompassing dimensions. As Qaradawi sees it, many “captives of Western thought” have doubts not about the essentials of their faith but rather about Islam as a comprehensive system; and it is their unaddressed misunderstandings, their ignorance, on the latter score that sometimes opens the door to doubts about matters of belief itself (Qaradawi 1994, 113–14). To continue to expound on the social, political, and other teachings of Islam while the society is yet imperfect is not to endorse or strengthen the jahili order, as Qutb had alleged, but only to help ordinary people in their effort to lead virtuous lives even in iniquitous circumstances.

This view represents an appeal to what Qaradawi has repeatedly referred to as the moderate path or *al-madrasa al-wasatiyya* (the “centrist school”; cf. Qaradawi 2006, 137–217)—one that locates itself on a putative middle ground between a complete rejection of the world, including Muslim societies, and its total embrace. Qaradawi is equally concerned with rescuing Islamic history and civilization from outright dismissal at the hands of Islamists like Qutb.¹² The idea that jahili norms had begun to creep back into the Muslim community shortly after the death of the Prophet and that they have remained unchallenged for much of Islam’s history ignores all those, Qaradawi says, who have continued to represent the path of righteousness throughout the history of Islam. Contrary to the conviction of the Sunnis that “the community will never agree on error”—as the Prophet is said to have promised—the notion of a perva-

¹²Among leading figures Qaradawi singles out for criticism in this regard are, besides Qutb, Mawdudi, and the Egyptian Islamist scholar Muhammad al-Ghazali (d. 1996). See Qaradawi 2005b, 46–64. It is worth noting that, despite these and other disagreements, Qaradawi has written respectfully of all three, devoting an entire book to his long association with Muhammad al-Ghazali (see Qaradawi 1995).

sive jahiliyya suggests, moreover, that the community did, indeed, agree on error.¹³ Most grievously, perhaps, Islamist critiques tend to suggest that the shari‘a has almost never been implemented in Muslim societies after the very first years of Islam. Ironically, says Qaradawi, such indiscriminate rejection of Islamic history inadvertently reinforces *secularist* arguments that the shari‘a is unsuited to practical application (Qaradawi 2005b, 46). Qaradawi’s critique of Qutb and other Islamists is, finally, an argument for the continuing centrality of the ‘ulama to the task of providing authoritative guidance to the community. His understanding of who constitutes the ‘ulama is far more expansive than that of most Deobandi ‘ulama of South Asia. But, like them, he is in no doubt that serious religious scholars, as distinguished from amateurish autodidacts, are crucial to the task of providing authoritative religious and moral guidance to the community.

Although we have sought to illustrate certain facets of the Islamist critique of the scholarly tradition and of the world as some key Islamist thinkers have articulated it, we do not wish to suggest, of course, that Islamists are necessarily “intellectuals.” Whatever Qutb, Khomeini, Mawdudi, and Qaradawi might think of other scholars and intellectuals, or of themselves in relation to them, the former obviously *are* religious intellectuals. The same is hardly true of many other Islamists. Yet even those with little or no intellectual pretensions are often recognizable *as Islamists* not only for their commitment to the public implementation of Islamic norms grounded in the foundational texts but also—and as a corollary of the former—for their often self-conscious critique of and disengagement from the norms and mores they see around them. In contemporary Lebanon, for instance, Shi‘i Islamists have often seen their text-based religious commitments as marking a clear departure from earlier and existing religious practices. As anthropologist Lara Deeb (2006, 20) observes, “They viewed it as new and different—different from what they often referred to enigmatically as ‘before’ or ‘how we were’ and different from what they called *al-taqalid* (traditions). . . . In lieu of practices and beliefs cast as traditional, they espoused . . . [an] ‘authenticated’ Islam, expressed in public piety.”¹⁴ Many Islamists living in refugee camps in Gaza have had a similar view. To them, “Palestinians . . . had either become lost in foreign ideologies . . . or they had become ‘Muslims by con-

¹³The conviction that the community at large is divinely protected from error is an important basis of the authority of “consensus” as a major source of juridical norms in Sunni Islam. For modern debates on consensus and some of the literature on this subject, see Zaman 2006.

¹⁴The “traditions” here primarily refer to customary norms and devotional practices, rather than to the centuries-old discursive tradition from which the ‘ulama, both Shi‘i and Sunni, derive their authority. Islamist critiques are often directed as much, however, at traditions in the sense of “inauthentic,” culturally rooted religious practices as they are at the scholarly tradition of the ‘ulama, which, to them, is equally inauthentic in having obscured the simple and fundamental teachings of the foundational texts.

vention' who went along with the fast or prayed now and then because this was 'custom and tradition' (*'ada wa taqlid*). This lack of conscious, zealous adherence to Islam had resulted in social weakness leading to defeat at the hands of Israel" (Lybarger 2007, 211). There is much that such analyses share with the writings and pronouncements of the leading Islamist intellectuals.

Islamists and Salafis

Just as it is not always easy to differentiate 'ulama from Islamists or Islamists from modernists, it is sometimes difficult to clearly distinguish between Islamists and the Salafis. The latter derive this self-designation from claims of strict adherence to the normative practice of *al-salaf al-salih* (the pious forbears), usually understood as the Muslims of the first generations of Islam. The guiding Salafi assumption is that these first Muslims, in being contemporaries of the Prophet Muhammad and the immediate successors of those contemporaries, exemplify most perfectly what it means to be a virtuous Muslim and that later generations can do no better than emulate the example of these first generations. Some version of this view would find broad resonance among Islamists, but also ordinary believers, though the Shi'a of various doctrinal orientations have always had a far more restrictive view of precisely who is worth emulating. Again like the Islamists, the Salafis insist on deriving their norms directly from the Islamic foundational texts, the Qur'an, and the example of the Prophet Muhammad, unmediated by the medieval schools of law. This means doing away with the sort of historically articulated scholarly tradition from which the 'ulama have tended to draw much of their authority. The Salafis do have their own 'ulama—Qaradawi is a notable instance, as are members of the Saudi religious establishment—but even their authority is based far more on directly interpreting the foundational texts than it is on any systematic engagement with the Islamic scholarly tradition.

All this sounds a good deal not just like the Islamists but also like the modernists. This should not be surprising, for the Salafi orientation is an important part of the genealogy of both modernism and Islamism. The Salafi reformer Muhammad 'Abduh, though a traditionally educated scholar who served toward the end of his life as the grand mufti of Egypt, was a key influence in the development of Islamic modernism. But while some of 'Abduh's disciples developed his ideas in the direction of secular nationalism, others—notably the Salafi journalist and Qur'an commentator, Rashid Rida—eventually took them, despite his modernist proclivities, in a decidedly conservative direction (Hourani 1983; also cf. Dallal 2000). Hasan al-Banna, the founder of the Muslim Brotherhood, was close to many Egyptian Salafis: Muhibb al-din al-Khatib (d. 1969), a leading Salafi of the time and the owner of the Salafi Publishing House in

Cairo, was in charge of one of the Brotherhood's first journals (Mitchell 1993, 185); and after Rida's death in 1935, it was at Banna's initiative that Rida's influential journal, *al-Manar*, would continue to be published for some years (R. Mitchell 1993, 186).

For all their affinities, however, Salafis cannot simply be subsumed with the Islamists any more than they can with the modernists. Unlike the early Salafis and other modernists, Islamists have almost invariably sought to address themselves to a wide, popular audience rather than to the intellectual elite (cf. R. Mitchell 1993, 211). The Salafis have also been far more preoccupied with matters of correct belief, the nuances of doctrine, than have either the Islamists or the modernists (cf. Haykel 2009 [forthcoming]). By the same token, while many Islamists have had a somewhat ambivalent relationship with Sufism, Salafis have usually been unrelentingly hostile to devotional Sufi practices. But if it is useful to distinguish the Salafis from other competing orientations in modern Islam, it is important also to recognize that there is much on which Salafis themselves have disagreed, sometimes sharply. In question in these "internal" differences is not their overall orientation—toward the Islamic foundational texts and the pristine norms of Islam's first generations—but rather the precise implications of this orientation for belief and conduct in the present. A consideration of some of these differences should, in turn, further illustrate how the Salafis ought to be distinguished from other competing camps.

Where many Salafis see the schools of law as obstructing and, indeed, distorting the simple message of the foundational texts, others view the legal tradition as representing Islam's rich intellectual legacy from which Muslims ought to draw both inspiration and guidance. Qaradawi, for instance, has been critical not just of the Muslim modernists but also of fellow Salafis for their irreverence toward the riches of the legal tradition, their uneducated proclivity to set it aside all too callously. On this view, a rejection of the taqlid-bound 'ulama should not lead to the other extreme—exemplified by not a few Salafis—of jettisoning the scholarly tradition altogether.

Salafis also differ among themselves in their attitudes toward modern, Western institutions and practices. In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, Salafi reformers like Muhammad 'Abduh and Rashid Rida in Egypt and Jamal al-din al-Qasimi (d. 1914) in Syria had called for a reorientation toward the foundational texts as a way of justifying, not resisting, changes in law and education as well as other facets of social reform (cf. Hourani 1983; Commins 1990). On this view, a direct recourse to the Qur'an and the sunna offered the best way of demonstrating the accord between their teachings and the reformist project.¹⁵ In

¹⁵Symptomatic of other disagreements among the Salafis is the very question of precisely who the salaf are whose example ought to be emulated. The narrower views limit the salaf to the first three generations of Islam—the age of the Prophet Muhammad and his companions, their successors, and the latter's immediate successors—but even these narrow views

contemporary Europe, Tariq Ramadan, an influential Swiss Arab philosopher, has argued that Muslims living in Western societies ought to feel at home in, and contribute toward, those societies while retaining and cultivating their distinct Islamic identity. He, too, appears to see himself in the genealogy of what he characterizes as “Salafi reformism” (on this characterization, see Ramadan 2004, 26–27), and he has echoed Qaradawi in some of his views (cf. Ramadan 1999, 93–99).

Other Salafis have remained staunchly opposed to institutions and practices of a Western provenance. An especially influential figure in the genealogy of the latter position is the eighteenth-century puritanical reformer Muhammad ibn ‘Abd al-Wahhab (d. 1792), whose alliance in 1744 with Muhammad ibn Sa‘ud contributed to the establishment of the first Saudi state in the late eighteenth century. Ibn ‘Abd al-Wahhab was hostile not only to Shi‘ism and to Sufi devotionalism but also to anything he deemed not to be in strict conformity with the teachings of the foundational texts. There was much that seemed to him to fail this standard, all of which he branded as one or another form of unbelief. The Wahhabis—as the followers of Ibn ‘Abd al-Wahhab are often known, though they prefer to think of themselves simply as good Muslims or, at best, as Salafis—often adhere to the legal norms of the Hanbali school of law, though it is the teachings of the foundational texts, irrespective of this or any other school doctrine, that they profess to follow. The most stringent of the Saudi Salafis, as well as others elsewhere, are a very far cry indeed from what Qaradawi would characterize as “centrist” Salafi reformers, let alone from the early twentieth-century Salafi modernists.

The political views of the Wahhabis and, more broadly, of the Salafis are likewise anything but uniform. In Saudi Arabia, Wahhabi religious scholars have long affirmed a quietist political stance, which has meant leaving matters of the state to the ruling family. For much of the history of modern Saudi Arabia, the ruling elite, for its part, has imposed few constraints on the Saudi ‘ulama in matters of religious life, the regulation of social norms, and judicial administration (cf. Vogel 2000). On several occasions, however, this relationship has come under severe strain. In 1979 a group of Wahhabis who rejected the legitimacy of the Saudi state yet had ties with some prominent religious scholars—including ‘Abd al-

feel constrained to make room for such revered figures as Ahmad ibn Hanbal, the putative founder of the Hanbali school of law, and the fourteenth-century Damascene scholar Ibn Taymiyya (d. 1328). Other views are rather more expansive, not just in chronological but also, and crucially, in intellectual terms. Thus, Muhammad ‘Abduh thought the salaf to also include such theologians as al-Ash‘ari (d. 935), al-Baqillani (d. 1013), and al-Maturidi (d. 944). See Hourani 1983, 149. Such a view obviously opens the door for precisely the sort of theological debates that other Salafis, as well as Islamists, often frown upon for taking the believers very far from the simple and direct words of God. ‘Abduh’s disciple, Rida, again took a narrower view of the salaf and, later in his career, became a strong defender of the Wahhabis. Cf. Hourani 1983, 230–32.

‘Aziz Bin Baz (d. 1999), later the grand mufti of Saudi Arabia—took over the sacred precincts of the Ka‘ba in Mecca in a short-lived but extremely embarrassing challenge to Saudi royal authority (cf. Hegghammer and Lacroix 2007). In 1990 King Fahd’s decision to invite American troops to defend the kingdom against the threat of an Iraqi invasion created widespread resentment among Saudis, the effects of which continue to this day. The stationing of non-Muslim military personnel in Islam’s holiest land was deemed by the king’s critics to be scandalous and even sacrilegious. A number of prominent Saudi Salafis publicly criticized the king’s decision on this occasion, calling upon him, as well as on Bin Baz and others at the helm of the Saudi religious establishment, to reorient the Saudi polity toward its true religious foundations. Many of these dissidents—who were also joined by “secular” Saudi critics of the royal family—were, and have remained, restrained in their criticism even as they called for stricter conformity to Islamic norms as the panacea for all ills (cf. Fandy 1999). Others, however, have denounced the royal family and its Western allies in no uncertain terms. Bin Laden is only the most notorious of those who broke with the royal family in the wake of King Fahd’s decision to invite Western troops in 1990, and who called for the overthrow of the royal family and for jihad against Western powers. Such strident calls have been continued by other Salafis, both before and after the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, as well as in the aftermath of the U.S.-led invasion of Iraq (al-Rasheed 2007).

It should be clear, in light of the foregoing, that any understanding of the differences between Islamists and the Salafis must rest on taking account of the diversity *among* the Salafis. Salafis who often reject much of the Islamic scholarly tradition in favor of a direct recourse to the foundational texts are not necessarily rendered “Islamist” simply by virtue of this stance. For, as noted, many of these Salafis continue to profess a resolutely quietist stance, which, in the case of the Saudi Salafis, means affirming allegiance to the Saudi royal family. This position is represented, for instance, by Bin Baz, the erstwhile grand mufti, as well as by other leading members of the Saudi religious establishment. A pro-regime stance or one indifferent to politics is no less “political,” of course, than a position of strident hostility to the established order at home and abroad. For our purposes, however, it is only when the Salafis reject the existing dispensation and begin striving—though not necessarily through militant means—for a new religio-political order that they can be said to join the ranks of the Islamists.

It is worth noting, finally, that Salafi positions, among Saudis and elsewhere, are marked not only by diversity but also by considerable fluidity (al-Rasheed 2007). The same activist or intellectual might, at various times, move among a variety of seemingly incompatible positions—appearing to be more “moderate” on some issues than on others. For all his criticism of radical Islamists, Qaradawi, for instance, has himself written in justification of suicide bombings by Palestinians against Israelis (see

chapter 9 on Qaradawi). And Saudi Salafis like Safar al-Hawali and Salman al-‘Awda—who came to prominence in the early 1990s—have alternated between criticism of the Saudi policies and denunciations of radical Salafi calls to jihad against the Saudi regime (see al-Rasheed 2007, 59–101; on al-Hawali, also see Reichmuth 2006). Their shifting views reflect changes in their relations with the Saudi regime, but they also point to the broad spectrum of positions which Salafis have taken at different times, in different contexts, and before different audiences. Thus, even as al-Hawali and al-‘Awda have condemned terrorist acts directed against Saudi Arabia and advised Saudis not to fight American troops in post-Saddam Hussein Iraq, they have called upon the Iraqis themselves to resist American troops and have characterized that effort as a “defensive jihad” (al-Rasheed 2007, 94–95).

Sufis and Islamists

It seems much simpler, on the face of it, to distinguish between Islamists and Sufis. The characteristic Sufi conviction that there are levels of meaning in the Qur’an that go beyond the literal and the obvious and that a select few—the “friends of God”—are endowed with the unique ability to discern them is anathema to all those who insist that God intends His teachings to be equally intelligible to all. Despite their tendency to view themselves as bearers of true Islam, Islamists typically regard the Sufi idea that some people have a privileged relationship with God as suspect, the basis not only for sanctioning interpretations of Islam that lack warrant in the plain teachings of God and the Prophet but also for practically “worshipping” these friends of God. Islamists (and modernists) have frequently also been critical of the way Sufi devotionism can yield a turning away from the world rather than an effort to change it, as well as a preoccupation with personal spiritual transformation at the expense of concerns for the welfare of the community at large.

Sufi practices and the teachings of the Sufi masters have varied enormously throughout the history of Islam, yet Islamist critiques of Sufism are seldom attentive to its nuances or to the complex ways it has related to other facets of Islam. Nor have Islamists taken much account of the fact that many leading figures of earlier times were, besides much else, Sufis as well. This is true even of Ibn Taymiyya (d. 1328), whose prestige in Islamist and Salafi circles is matched by few others, and who was, in his day, a member of the Qadiri Sufi order (Makdisi 1974). Even if one argues—as an Islamist might be inclined to—that “good” Sufism is nothing but proper Islam itself, the very fact that such figures had a Sufi identity at all necessarily complicates what is supposed to be the pristine simplicity of a faith shared equally by all believers.

Complicating things still further is the variety of ways in which some leading Islamists relate to Sufism. Ayatollah Khomeini was a lifelong student of Islamic mysticism, and the influence of the medieval Spanish

Sufi Ibn ‘Arabi loomed especially large in his thought. To Khomeini, mysticism—often referred to as *‘irfan* (gnosis), especially when intertwined with Islamic philosophy and theology (Knysh 1992, 632)—was crucial to a proper understanding of God’s relationship with the world and with the human being. It was also essential for one’s ethical formation, for a mastery over the self, and ultimately for realizing in oneself the attributes of what Ibn ‘Arabi had called “the perfect man” (cf. Knysh 1992, 635; also Mottahedeh 1985, 180–85). Some of the austerity of Khomeini’s personal life probably also derived from Sufi asceticism. And though he anchored his conception of Islamic government in an exposition of Shi’i juridical thought rather than in Islamic mysticism, the sort of religious authority he came to enjoy on the basis of his reformulation of Shi’i political theology seems to echo mystical ideas of the perfect man who embodies and upholds the moral order as the microcosm of the universe.

Unlike Khomeini, Qutb was not a Sufi, and he gives no indication of sharing any of Khomeini’s enthusiasm for the great Sufi thinkers of earlier times. Even so, echoes of a mystic’s direct encounter with the fountainhead of truth and knowledge are hard to miss in Qutb’s writings, especially in his commentary on the Qur’an (cf. Carré 2003, 95–97). The very first sentence of his commentary—“life in the shade of the Qur’an is a blessing . . . unknown to anyone who hasn’t *tasted* it”—evokes the familiar Sufi idea that incontrovertible knowledge of Reality is ultimately acquired only through direct personal experience (*dhawq*, that is, the “taste” of the Truth). The great medieval Sufi al-Ghazali (d. 1111) had authored a famous autobiographical account of how it was only through the immediacy of his personal mystical experience that he was able to overcome his debilitating epistemological doubts and reassure himself of the necessary truths (Watt 1998, 57). Qutb does not mention Ghazali in this context, but it is difficult not to be struck by the mystical resonance of some of his language. Here is one example, which occurs in his commentary on *sura* (chapter) 53 of the Qur’an:¹⁶

¹⁶The early verses in this *sura* of the Qur’an have been understood by Muslim exegetes as referring to the Prophet’s revelatory experience as well as to his “night journey” and his ascension to heaven, or *mi’raj*: in the course of one night, he was transported first from Mecca to Jerusalem and then to the presence of God before being returned to Mecca.

Unrelated to the night journey but related to his revelatory experiences, the exegetical significance of this Qur’anic *sura* also lies in its connection with the so-called Satanic Verses. According to certain exegetical reports, Muhammad was in the course of receiving a revelation when Satan interpolated some verses into it—verses praising three goddesses revered by the polytheists of Mecca. It was not until sometime later that Muhammad realized his error, whereupon the verses interpolated by Satan were removed. The episode of the “Satanic Verses” has been a controversial one in Islamic history long before Salman Rushdie’s novel of that name and Khomeini’s juridical ruling (*fatwa*) calling for Rushdie’s death. Most Muslim scholars have found it too shocking to believe that the Prophet could have made such a grievous error and have denied that any such incident ever took place. Yet some

I was chatting one evening with some companions when to our ears came the sound of someone reciting the Qur'an nearby, reciting the Sura of the Star [al-Najm], and we interrupted our conversation to listen to the Noble Qur'an. . . . Little by little my heart entered into what was being recited, into the heart of Muhammad as he journeyed to the Heavenly Host. I was with him as he saw Gabriel in the angelic form in which God had created him. . . . I was with him in his lofty and free-flying journey to the Lote Tree of the Boundary and the Garden of the Refuge. . . . I was with him to the extent that my imagination could form a vision of it and to the extent that my feelings could bear it. . . . Then came the final cry and my whole being shook at the fearful reproach: "Do you marvel at this discourse, and do you laugh and not weep, and make merry?" [Q 53:59–61]. When I heard "Bow down before God and serve Him" [Q 53:62], the trembling in my heart had become a physical and visible trembling throughout my body that I could not resist. My body kept shaking and I could not control it. Nor could I hold back the tears that were pouring forth, however much I tried. (Qutb, *Zilal*, vol. 7, part 27, 74–75; quoted from Carré 2003, 333–34, with minor changes)

The Qur'an's profound impact on the aesthetic sensibilities of its listeners is a familiar motif in discussions of its literary qualities (cf. Graham and Kermani 2006). As someone whose early writings were concerned with Arabic literary criticism and specifically with the literary excellence of the Islamic scripture (Qutb 1949b), Qutb was especially receptive to this aspect of the Qur'an. The sense of being transported back to the time of the Prophet and to witnessing the Prophet's ascension (*mi'raj*) to the presence of God—which is how the passage being commented on by Qutb here has commonly been interpreted by the exegetes—can likewise be seen as an illustration of the overpowering impact the words of the Qur'an can have on the believer. Qutb's account of conversing with God through the Qur'an (cited earlier) is, again, something he may have wanted to see all believers do. Yet all believers can scarcely do so, any more than all aspirants even on the Sufi path can experience the transformative mystical "states" that God bestows on His special friends (*awliya*). Irrespective of whether he saw it in quite this way, Qutb's assertion that he is able to enter "into the heart of Muhammad" and to see Gabriel as *Muhammad* saw him surely gives him a perspective that others encountering the word of God do not have.

The point is not, of course, that Qutb was ever recognized by his followers as a Sufi master but that some of the hermeneutical authority he claims has a distinctive Sufi ring to it. More broadly, the sort of unques-

leading scholars of early and medieval Islam—including Ibn Taymiyya—accepted the historicity of this incident. See S. Ahmed 1998.

tioning religio-political authority Islamist leaders have often enjoyed over their followers is not unlike that of the Sufi master over his followers. Beginning with Hasan al-Banna, the founder of the Muslim Brotherhood and once himself a member of a Sufi order, the leader of this organization is formally referred to as the *murshid* (guide) or, more specifically, *al-murshid al-'am* (the general guide [R. Mitchell 1993, 165]), which is a familiar term for the master in Sufi contexts. For his part, Abdessalam Yassine, the founder and leader of 'Adl wa'l-Ihsan Party of Morocco (often referred to as the Justice and Spirituality Association, or JSA), has, like Khomeini, gone well beyond simply echoing Sufi conceptions of authority in his own discourses. He, too, was once a member of a Moroccan Sufi order, and he has continued to draw on Sufi themes in his writings. The very name of Yassine's political organization evokes a central Sufi idea, namely, *ihsan*. This is a Qur'anic term (cf. Q 7:56) that, translated literally, means "to do good," though Sufis have understood it to mean much more than that. Following a well-known statement attributed to the Prophet Muhammad, they have often interpreted *ihsan* to mean going beyond the externals of Islamic ritual practices to "worship God as if you see Him" (Schimmel 1975, 29), that is, cultivating a sense of personal communion and intimacy with God. Even as Yassine has sought to distance himself from what he deems to be the excesses of Sufism, there is little doubt that his political appeal owes much to carefully calibrated efforts to combine distinctive Sufi ideas with his own brand of Islamism (cf. Lauzière 2005; see also chapter 12 on Nadia Yassine in this volume).

Finally, Mawdudi's Jama'at-i Islami—one of the earliest Islamist organizations in the Sunni world—illustrates both the Islamists' complex relationship with Sufism and their pragmatic recognition of its appeal in many Muslim societies. Mawdudi had once been a harsh critic of Sufism, blaming it for many ills afflicting Muslim societies. Yet, the Jama'at-i Islami gradually came to soften its stance on Sufi practices considerably, no doubt in the interest of broadening some of its support base in Pakistan, where saints and Sufi shrines are an important part of the religious and political landscape. Already in Mawdudi's lifetime, Mian Tufayl Muhammad, his successor as the head of the Jama'at-i Islami, had taken the extraordinary initiative of translating an early Sufi classic, the *Kashf al-mahjub*, into Urdu. The author of this work, Shaykh 'Ali Hujwiri (d. 1072), is buried in Lahore in Pakistan, and his much-frequented shrine is home to precisely the sort of devotional practices that Islamists and modernist reformers, let alone Salafis, have often frowned upon (Nasr 1996, 124).

These diverse examples are not intended to obscure the real differences between the generality of Islamists and most Sufis. Their significance lies rather in illustrating the difficulty of distinguishing between Islamism and other religious, intellectual, and political trends in terms of neat charac-

terizations, of grand, translocal generalizations. As the foregoing suggests, the same is true, and more so, when it comes to characterizing Islamists in relation to the ‘ulama, the Muslim modernists, and the Salafis. Indeed, as Loren Lybarger has argued with reference to those usually characterized as “secular nationalist” or “Islamist” Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza, differences within the ranks of young secular nationalists and Islamists can sometimes *also* shade into significant similarities between these supposedly rival orientations (Lybarger 2007). Many Islamists have sought to distance themselves from what they see as the rigidity and authoritarianism of other Islamists and to argue not just for the implementation of the shari‘a but also for democracy and pluralism. Conversely, not a few of the younger secular nationalists have “adopted Islamist theodicies that explained the failure to overcome Israel as the result of falling away from piety; their conclusions mirrored Islamist ones, too: the road back from the brink had to trace its course through a renewed commitment to Islam, but not necessarily in the manner that the Islamist movements might have intended” (Lybarger 2007, 237–38; quotation at 238).

Yet if neat categories remain elusive, a combination of the Islamists’ self-consciously political goals, their multifaceted if not always explicit political critiques of many past and present ways of understanding and living Islam, and an unshakeable confidence in their own ability to discern God’s will from the foundational texts do often provide enough grounds to broadly distinguish them from other activists, intellectuals, and orientations in the Muslim public sphere. What this combination amounts to varies from one social, political, religious, and cultural context to another, and so therefore do the ways in which Islamists relate to one another or compete and overlap with other groups and orientations.

THE POLITICS OF ISLAMISM

From Aeneas’s mythical founding of Rome to the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ to Muhammad’s migration to Medina, foundational narratives are as common to collective life as the movements that periodically arise to revive them and claimants to the mantle of legitimacy they confer. So understood, Islamists’ political aspirations to restore foundations located in a mythical past are far from unique. Nor are Islamists alone in their conviction that scriptural authority is guaranteed by its divine author—for in that all Muslims agree. Rather, the chapters in this volume suggest that what makes Islamist politics distinctive (if not *sui generis*) is the claim to recuperate an “authentic Islam” comprised of self-evident truths purged of alien and corrupting influences, along with an insistence on remaking the foundations of the state in its image. Given the limits of human understanding relative to God’s knowledge, Islamists simultaneously depict such fidelity to the unadulterated word of Allah as

the ultimate expression of deference to divine omniscience and portray humility as a constitutive feature of the human condition. Aspirations to fully know and master the natural and social worlds thus entail not only a human hubris deaf to the Qur'anic admonition that "Allah knows, but/and you do not know" (Q 3:66) but also a transgression against a divinely-ordained ontological order.

It is notable, however, that the Islamist emphasis on the limits of human knowledge requires humility only in relation to Allah; it rarely yields humility in regard to their own claims to speak in His name or toward other human beings who dissent from the premise of divine omnipotence and Islamist accounts of what it requires. This suggests that while Islamist challenges to state power are obviously political, the Islamist claim to authenticity is also political in the coercive power it routinely enacts and justifies, most notably by way of the silences it imposes and the debates it forecloses. Aziz al-Azmeh points out that "the notion of authenticity is not so much a determinate concept as it is a node of associations and interpellations, a trope by means of which the historical world is reduced to a particular order, and a token which marks off social and political groups and forges and reconstitutes historical identities" (al-Azmeh 1993, 41). Whether in the service of Arab nationalism, Christian fundamentalism, European romanticism, or Muslim modernism, the claim of authenticity is an act of power that functions not just to reflect the world but to construct it by determining who is included and excluded, who may and may not speak authoritatively, what is the proper realm of debate, and what is beyond contestation.

It is certainly the case that a single "Islam" captures and organizes the perspectives of millions who self-identify as Muslim (among other things), yet what travels under its rubric is inescapably diverse, multiethnic, and defined as much by disagreement as consensus. Just as the Torah and Bible lend themselves to at times radically divergent interpretations of what it means to be Jewish or Christian, the Qur'an and hadith are complex and susceptible to many different, and at times contradictory, enactments. So understood, Islam is less a fixed essence than a living tradition that captures what is imagined as continuous and unitary in dialectical relationship to those concrete articulations and practices by which it is transformed and adapted in different contexts for plural purposes. It is precisely this understanding of religion that is anathema to Islamists who seek to fix the parameters of Islamic authenticity once and for all and thereby arrogate for themselves the right to determine who qualifies as a good Muslim; to discredit those 'ulama unable or unwilling to purge Islam of purported impieties; to declare nominally Muslim rulers apostates unfit to govern; and to characterize all who disagree as corrupt, heretical, guilty of unbelief, or victims of false consciousness.

These general political tendencies, however, must be carefully situated within a dialectic of the global and the vernacular, understood to reflect

the ways in which unifying macrohistorical dynamics inform and are in turn transformed by diverse, contingent, and fluid local circumstances. In a world stamped by Western dominance and the consolidation of postcolonial authoritarian regimes, Islamists confront a common set of constraints and challenges. Inasmuch as such constraints and challenges have made Islamist thinkers (often reluctant) participants in conversations across both culture and history, their efforts to remake the foundations of collective life reveal a shared interpretive framework and common religio-political grammar. At the same time, this frame and grammar are continually being reworked in relation to the distinct public spheres in which Islamists operate and to which they carefully calibrate their political commitments.

Attention to this complex dynamic suggests that the Islamist movement cannot simply be characterized as violent, antidemocratic, and oppressive of women, labels invoked so frequently in scholarly and popular literature on the subject that they have become virtually synonymous with Islamist politics. Such characterizations do capture crucial dimensions of Islamist politics, yet they also sidestep the paradoxes its variegated and often contradictory expressions present. Instead, we argue that Islamist politics can be productively read *in terms of* and *against the grain* of such broad categorizations as antidemocratic, antiwoman, or violent—that is, as commitments that, at different moments in various locales, both encourage and constrain broad-based political participation, disrupt and ratify hierarchical gender norms, resist and reproduce state-sanctioned brutality. The point of reading Islamist politics in this way is not to suggest that Islamists are secretly democratic, feminist, and opposed to violence. Rather, the point is to draw attention to the complexity and contradictions erased by easy generalizations, on the one hand, and the often unacknowledged fluidity and cultural adaptability of otherwise familiar political categories, on the other.

Islamism and Democracy

Despite important differences among Islamist thinkers, they have in common a tendency to view human sovereignty as transgressive of divine law and share the aspiration to establish shari‘a as the primary or sole source of authority. As is often noted, such premises and aspirations run afoul of assumptions about popular rule at the heart of democracy, namely, that human beings have the right to legislate rules for collective behavior and are capable of the wisdom required to devise just laws. In recent years, policy makers and commentators have evinced a particular preoccupation with the ways in which Islamist notions of divine authority throttle the spirit and practice of popular sovereignty. Some have even gone so far as to characterize Islamists as “Islamofascists,” animated by hatred of the “democratic West,” psychologically unable to contend with the fluidity

and indeterminacy that mark popular rule, and eager to convert elections into a “one-man, one-vote, one-time” mechanism for establishing an Islamic state (Murdock 2002; M. Rubin 2005; Kramer 1993).

Such views are echoed by those Islamists keen to portray democracy not only as antithetical to the supremacy of divine law but as a Trojan horse for Western imperialism. For many Islamists, including several in this volume, democracy is just one symptom of a metastasizing moral and spiritual bankruptcy whereby moral transgressions are transfigured into natural urges, crass self-interest becomes the bedrock of collective life, and the divine plan for the universe and all things in it is reduced to a system of physical causality just waiting to be mastered by way of human ingenuity (R. Euben 2007). Qutb calls this diseased view of the world *jahiliyya*, and it signals not only human arrogance but a transgression against divine authority, the scope of which encompasses both public and private domains of human affairs as well as both visible and unseen dimensions of the universe. For many Islamists, such transgression is at the root of much of what passes for Muslim rule in the contemporary world—nationalist, democratic, and monarchical alike. Such arrogance is also said to be the pattern underlying a long history of unrelieved Western aggression against Islam in which the Christian Crusades, European colonialism, Israeli treatment of Palestinians, ethnic cleansing in Bosnia, German anti-Turkish violence, the American invasion of Iraq, and Dutch cartoons of Muhammad are but a few examples.

Yet there is a range of views among Islamists about both the substance of democracy and its compatibility with the religio-political renewal they advocate. According to Qaradawi, for example, “the essence of democracy . . . is that people choose who rules over them and manages their affairs; that no ruler or regime they dislike is forced upon them; that they have the right to call the ruler to account if he errs and to remove him from office in case of misconduct; and that people are not forced in economic, social, cultural or political directions that they neither recognize nor accept” (Qaradawi 1997, 132; also chapter 9 in this volume). To him, there is no heavier burden oppressing Muslims in the contemporary world than despotism; indeed, it is through despotic governments that Muslims have been forced to submit to other ills, including the neglect of the *shari‘a* and the coercive imposition of secularism and westernization. Democracy then recommends itself to Qaradawi as the most effective available antidote to despotism and the afflictions of which it serves as a vehicle.

Where many among the Islamists and the ‘ulama have seen considerable tension between Islam and democracy, Qaradawi professes to see none. As we suggested earlier, by far the most common of the Islamist reservations about a democratic system relates to the sovereignty of the people, which is taken to contravene the idea that God alone is sovereign. Qaradawi, however, is unperturbed by such concerns. The rule of the

people ought to be seen, he argues, not in opposition to the rule of God, but rather in opposition to the rule of the despot. More fundamentally, Qaradawi's view of democracy does not necessarily require that the people should be able to overturn divinely instituted norms. Rather, his assumption is that people exercise their sovereignty within constitutional bounds, and Muslims living in a predominantly Muslim democratic polity would, likewise, not wish to transgress the parameters of legitimate human action laid down in the Islamic foundational texts (see Qaradawi, chapter 9 in this volume; and cf. Feldman 2007).

Nadia Yassine of Morocco's Justice and Spirituality Association is another case in point. While critical of the democratic gestures embraced by a monarchy that she depicts as allergic to genuinely popular sovereignty, Yassine insists that the model of Muslim rule adumbrated in the umma founded by the Prophet Muhammad and, in particular, the Constitution of Medina¹⁷ is nothing short of democratic (N. Yassine 2005d; 2005e). Unlike the Muslim dynasties that arose to usurp it, Yassine contends, this community was participatory, egalitarian, committed to freedom, and expressive of God's mercy. Most important, it was governed always by the Qur'anic principle of *shura* (consultation), by which Yassine means a philosophy of power that places sovereignty in the community rather than in any individual, links virtue to deliberation rather than obedience, and exhorts believers to continually adapt Qur'anic principles through *ijtihad* rather than adhere reflexively to precedent (N. Yassine 2006a, 182–86; 2005d). Many scholars and journalists remain skeptical of the JSA's as yet untested commitment to procedural democracy and worry that Nadia and her father, Abdessalam, ultimately seek to establish an Islamic state inhospitable to tolerance, pluralism, and civil liberties (Maghraoui 2001; Brandon 2007; Whitlock 2006). Yet others argue that the JSA is a genuinely populist organization that represents the unrepresented, tends to the welfare of the dispossessed, and both expresses and contributes to an increasingly vibrant civil society in Morocco (Cavatorta 2006; Entelis 2002).

Qaradawi's and Yassine's arguments together suggest that democracy can and has served as either a cosmetic cover for despotism or an authentically Islamic check upon corrupt and arbitrary rule. At issue in Islamist arguments for and against democracy, then, are not only what counts as "authentic Islam" and the intentions of those who claim to know it but also the content and character of democracy itself. Paradoxically, both Islamists opposed to democracy and those who take Islamism as inherently antidemocratic regard this as a simple matter with an obvious answer: democracy is an expression of, and even synonymous with, liberalism, capitalism, and the West. Yet democracy is both more capacious and

¹⁷The Constitution of Medina was an agreement the Prophet had entered into with the local communities, including Jewish tribes, upon his emigration from Mecca to Medina.

more distinct than this presumption suggests. The word itself, of course, derives from the ancient Greek *demokratia*, which means rule (*kratos*) of the people (*demos*), and many derive the equation of democracy and the West from this association with classical Greece. Yet ancient Greek philosophers such as Plato saw in democracy the specter of mob rule particularly vulnerable to demagoguery and despotism (a suspicion notably echoed by American founder James Madison). Contrary to the democratic ideal of inclusiveness, moreover, citizenship in Greek democracy excluded a substantial part of the population, including women, slaves, and foreigners. Finally, the extent to which the ancient Greeks may even be called Western is a matter of great dispute, particularly as the “West” is a category of relatively recent provenance through which history and geography have been retroactively organized.¹⁸ Despite depictions of the Hellenic world as Western, ancient Greeks did not, in fact, view themselves in these terms.¹⁹

The equation of democracy with the West also presupposes the existence of a coherent “Western civilization” with either culturally homogeneous roots or clearly delineated historical and contemporary boundaries, or both. Yet what is called the West is an amalgamation of multiple traditions, including the Greek, Roman, Judaic, Christian, and Islamic—traditions that are themselves polyvalent rather than homogeneous—and is today characterized by porous borders, hybrid subcultures, and myriad debts to diverse civilizations past and present.²⁰ As a geographic marker, it is virtually impossible to pinpoint exactly where the West begins and ends, and this is especially so now that peoples, information, and material goods crisscross cultural and national borders at will, creating all kinds of transnational, subnational, and multiple identities that shift and reconstitute themselves in unpredictable ways. Even those values identified as Western often appear elsewhere in other guises. Indeed, scholars suggest that a variety of the “standards exported by the West and its cultural industries themselves turn out to be of culturally mixed character if we examine their cultural lineages” (Pieterse 1995, 53).

Many also argue that democracy is not only distinct from but in tension with both the theory and practice of politics in “Western” societies,

¹⁸Michael Gillespie (1999, 7–10) argues that the rereading of history, geography, and culture through the prism of this sense of “the West” began no earlier than the nineteenth century. The idea of a timeless and bright line between West and East is also challenged by Jeremy Brotton’s study (1998, 90, 96–97) of the diplomatic and intellectual exchanges between Europe and the Ottoman Empire in the early modern period. Brotton shows not only the extent and amity of such exchanges but a persistent uncertainty about where, precisely, Europe “ended” and Asia “began.”

¹⁹Ancient Greeks understood themselves as geographically west of the barbarians but not Western in the contemporary sense, that is, as both a cultural and historical category.

²⁰Steven Runciman’s work (1954, 3:480) on the Crusades, for example, demonstrates a “long sequence of interaction and fusion between Orient and Occident out of which our civilization has grown.”

many of which are more accurately classified as liberal and capitalist (Wood 1994; Wolin 2001; Ball and Dagger 1999). While it is now commonplace to speak of “liberal democracy” in a single breath, liberalism and democracy are concepts and practices with very different histories and presuppositions. Unlike democracy, for example, liberalism emerged from the crucible of Christian religious wars, and in tandem with the ascendance of a middle class that presaged the end of European feudalism. The liberal nation-state can thus be viewed as both an expression and a consolidation of capitalism, on the one hand, and the principle of a separation between church and state, on the other. By contrast, there is nothing about democracy either as a system of governance or a culture of participation that is inherently secular. Indeed, Alexis de Tocqueville famously insisted that American democracy cannot and should not be secular, as religion helps shift attention away from immediate material preoccupations to larger concerns of community, cooperation, and morality. In fact, many democratic theorists argue that genuinely inclusive popular sovereignty is antithetical to the sharp inequalities of wealth and political power that capitalism often produces and legitimates.

Such ongoing definitional and substantive debates suggest that there is much more at stake in democratic politics than procedures pertaining to government, authority, and order and point to a widespread, if elusive, understanding of democracy not just as a set of institutions but, as Tocqueville suggests, a way of life. Several political theorists have characterized this elusive understanding in terms of a “democratic ethos.” By this they mean both an ideal and an argument for a culture of participation, active power sharing, mutual accountability, inclusiveness, and deliberation in which citizens may routinely and safely challenge not only specific policies and political institutions but also the values that govern collective life, principles of inclusion and exclusion, and the premises of authority itself (Connolly 1995; J. P. Euben 2003; Sadiki 2004). A democratic ethos is much more difficult to measure or quantify than, for example, Samuel Huntington’s parsimonious definition of democracy as a polity in which there have been two consecutive, peaceful changes of government by way of free and fair elections (Huntington 1991).²¹ Yet a democratic ethos makes it possible to both recognize and disaggregate the preconditions, aspirations, mechanisms, and institutions bundled into “democracy,” thereby bringing into focus, for example, the frequently antidemocratic

²¹Many political scientists prefer to define democracy in terms of procedures designed to realize popular rule, including free, competitive, and fair elections, along with state protection of certain rights and liberties. Such a formal, minimalist definition has the advantage of detaching democracy from questions of origins and offering a standard to which all governments may be held regardless of culture and place. As Keith Topper (2005, 205–7) argues, however, it also tends to sidestep knotty questions about the substance of representation, power, responsiveness, and accountability that are arguably central to democratic politics.

cast to elections imposed by elites or foreign powers, the felt impotence of many citizens in established democracies, and those highly participatory civil societies that flourish even under monarchic or theocratic rule.

For our purposes in particular, a democratic ethos makes visible the paradox of an Islamist movement that seeks to mobilize ordinary Muslims against coercive power but in the name of a religio-political order largely immunized from challenge. Qutb is an apt illustration here, as his tendency to ground his own special authority and insight in the unsullied wisdom of ordinary believers makes it possible to read his work as either a brief against democracy (among other things) or an enactment of it. Inasmuch as democracy as a form of governance is identified with popular sovereignty, Qutb's basic premise that the foundation of legitimate authority must be divine rather than human suggests that he is unambiguously antidemocratic. Moreover, Qutb's efforts to pluralize religious and political authority express, not a confidence in common wisdom, but rather a desire to claim for himself the stature of a religious expert who, despite his lack of Islamic academic credentials, can clearly see what others cannot. Qutb characterizes the real Islam as self-evident, but he also assumes that only a small vanguard of believers besides himself will have the ability to recognize it and act decisively to remake the world in its image. So understood, the sign of "chosenness" is unyielding commitment to establishing a religio-political order that simultaneously presumes the supremacy of the few capable of true knowledge and promises a world in which dissent itself will become both unnecessary and illegitimate.

Yet, if democracy refers not only to a system of governance or set of procedures to realize popular sovereignty but also to practices that disrupt those forces which concentrate power and establish political exclusion, the characterization of Qutb's work as simply antidemocratic misses a crucial dimension of its significance and appeal. As the sacred texts contain the rules and regulations meant to govern both public and private affairs, Qutb's insistence that ordinary, untrained Muslims must engage them directly is, in many ways, a democratization of access to authority. Such access can disrupt deeply entrenched patterns of power and powerlessness, particularly when conjoined to Islamist arguments that arbitrary power is un-Islamic; that religious knowledge depends on commitment rather than training or expertise; that Muslims have the right and obligation to determine when rulers are illegitimate; and that those who prefer order to justice, security to freedom, and money to piety have forfeited any claim to authority.

This aspect of Islamism has frequently been compared to the Protestant Reformation and, more specifically, to Calvinists' attempts to transfer "religious authority away from officially sanctioned individuals who interpret texts to ordinary citizens" (E. Goldberg 1991, 3; also cf. Loimeier 2005). Such a parallel has sparked a great deal of scholarly speculation

regarding a possible “Islamic Reformation”²² and a range of arguments about whether and how Islamism might facilitate the democratization of Muslim societies, much as the Protestant Reformation is said to have heralded the emergence of European “liberal democracy.” While such comparisons are evocative, a fuller understanding of Islamism requires first situating it in relation to a historical shift in the nature and locus of religious authority in Islam beginning in the nineteenth century. As scholars of Muslim societies have pointed out, the impact of mass education, new technologies for disseminating knowledge and information, and dramatically changed social, economic, and political contexts have made available to amateurs what had previously been the purview of religious experts. At the same time, it has inaugurated a fragmentation of authority within the very ranks of the ‘ulama that continues to the present day.²³ In this context, the ascendance and influence of autodidacts such as Qutb, Hasan al-Banna, ‘Abd al-Salam Faraj, and Bin Laden simultaneously express and accelerate an ongoing renegotiation of authority over who may speak for Islam and on what basis, the path of which is still unfolding and the outcome as yet uncertain.

Islamism and Gender

One already apparent consequence of this ongoing renegotiation over who may speak for Islam and on what basis is the entry of women into the interpretive fray. This development is increasingly unsettling those unwritten gender norms arguably at the very heart of Islamist thought, disrupting the standards of masculinity and femininity that reflect how particular cultures organize human beings’ social and reproductive activities into roles that are, in turn, thought to express the “nature” of men and women. Such norms are frequently considered tangential to the knotty problems of defining Islamism and adumbrating its central ideas, yet a range of scholarship on cultures past and present has shown that gender is consistently the terrain over which battles for political control and cultural identity are fought. More specifically, research in disciplines such as anthropology, history, classics, and postcolonial studies has demonstrated that cultures in which female bodies and behavior are regarded as indices of moral purity tend to symbolically transform women into conduits of cultural corruption in times of internal crisis and external threat (Papenek 1994; Chatterjee 1990; Tavakoli-Targhi 1991; Just 1989; Cohen 1991; Welter 1966; Bloch 1978). This is especially true of contem-

²²For a late nineteenth-century assessment of the prospects for a “Muhammadan Reformation,” see Blunt 1882, 132–73.

²³Eickelman and Piscatori 1996, 37–39, 131–35; Zaman 2006. Such fragmentation has in many ways been accelerated by the explosion of digital cultures, which promote, among other things, a “form of empowered amateurism” (Mirzoeff 2002, 6).

porary religio-political movements, whose members tend to “idealize patriarchal structures of authority and morality,” endorse gender dualism as god-given or natural, and condemn vigorously recent changes in gender relations as a symptom and symbol of secularist moral bankruptcy (Riesebrodt 1993; Moghadam 1992; Hawley 1994).

Several chapters in this volume illuminate Islamist gender norms by revealing the character and content of Islamist concerns about the place and purity of Muslim women—preoccupations Fatima Mernissi (1991, 99) has gone so far as to characterize as an obsession. Despite important differences among Islamists thinkers, many endorse gender norms in which the fairly conventional insistence that female nature is defined in and through reproduction undergirds an understanding of women as symbols of moral virtue and vessels of cultural purity. This view sustains the claim that men and women are equal in religious belief but perform fundamentally different and complementary functions in society. While men are naturally made to rule in both the public and private domain, a woman belongs in the domestic realm where her primary role is to be a wife and mother, as well as to insure the integrity of the family, the first school of moral education. As such functions are rooted in an inescapable human nature fashioned by God, a woman’s inability or unwillingness to perform her duties signals a disobedience to the divine will and presages the corruption of the Muslim family from within. From this vantage point, the Western insistence on full equality between the sexes is doubly pernicious: it at once liberates women from basic moral constraints and enslaves them to mutually reinforcing sexual and capitalist exploitation. As Murtaza Mutahhari (1998, xxxi) argues, capitalism makes use of women to market its goods “by trading in honour and respect, through [their] power to entice,” thereby “transform[ing] man into an involuntary agent of consumption.” Inasmuch as women are responsible for producing the next generation of Muslim men destined to restore Islam to its former glory, it is not only the virtue of women or the integrity of the family that hangs in the balance but the future of Islamic civilization itself.

Zaynab al-Ghazali and Mutahhari make several of these arguments explicitly and in detail (see chapters 10 and 11), but in much of Islamist rhetoric, the nature and significance of women are established indirectly and symbolically, and through three recurrent images in particular. The first is of women as silent symbols of cultural, moral, and sexual vulnerability, voiceless figures in need of masculine protection or, when it is too late, defiled bodies that mutely demand vengeance. So, for example, ‘Abdallah ‘Azzam (one of Bin Laden’s mentors; see chapter 18) graphically details the agonizing humiliation of young men unable to act when the Afghan woman is “crying out for help, her children are being slaughtered, her women are being raped, the innocent are killed and their corpses scattered” (‘Azzam 1987a). In the second image, women function

much like a chorus that speaks in permitted cadences to ratify masculine endeavors. Such is the case, for example, in Bin Laden's 1996 "Declaration of War against the Americans Occupying the Land of the Two Holy Places" (see chapter 18), where the women exhort men to jihad in the following way: "Prepare yourself like a struggler, the matter is bigger than words! Are you going to leave us . . . for the wolves of Kufr [unbelief] eating our wings?! . . . Where are the free men defending free women by arms?! Death is better than life in humiliation! Some scandals and shames will never be otherwise eradicated."²⁴ In the third image, women are creatures not of this world but of another, virginal rewards for the courageous martyr in the afterlife. This is evident in the final instructions for the 9/11 hijackers, for example, where Muslim "brothers" are urged to purify their carnal impulses, sharpen their knives for the *dhabbh* (slaughter), and heed the call of the *hur 'ayn* (the black-eyed ones) awaiting them in Paradise (see chapter 19).

Such rhetoric primarily registers women as an extension, mirror, or measure of masculinity and, together with explicit Islamist arguments about human nature and the family, articulates Islamist gender norms in which men and women each have a proper location and purpose in a divinely ordained social hierarchy. Deviance from this gendered script thus signals disruption of a much broader religio-political order it both presumes and seeks to bring into existence. The disruption caused by foreign aggression in particular exacerbates the tendency to translate conflict into an assault on Muslim masculinity and to conceptualize women as potential vehicles for Western corruption in need of guiding and guarding. Women such as Zaynab al-Ghazali and Nadia Yassine who seek a prominent place and voice within the Islamist movement have had little choice but to contend with this gendered script. Doing so has entailed, among other things, navigating carefully between Islamist characterizations of women's visibility and agency as symptomatic of the new jahiliyya, on the one hand, and essentializing arguments that equate Islam with veiling, female genital mutilation, and honor killings, on the other.

As the chapters on Ghazali and Yassine suggest, Islamist women have negotiated between such constraints and pressures and their own ambitions in different ways. A pioneering *da'iya* (one who invites Muslims to greater piety), Ghazali's own life reveals a fierce resistance to conventional norms of domesticity, even as much of her (earlier) work appears to embrace an Islamist gender ideology that defines women as wives, mothers, and "builders of men" (al-Hashimi 1990, 118). By contrast, Yassine is a wife and mother who embraces an "Islamic feminism" that requires "reappropriating the instruments of classical theology" and en-

²⁴The Islamist journal *Sawt al-Jihad* has gone so far as to feature "women's voices" in the form of role models named, for example, *umm al-shahid* (mother of the martyr), although it is unclear that these "voices" are actually women's (S. Usher 2004).

gaging the texts directly through *ijtihad* (N. Yassine 2003). In this respect, Yassine must be understood as part of a broader effort among Muslim women with different political commitments to simultaneously advocate and enact their right to recuperate the “original intent” of the Islamic texts. If women and men do, in fact, have distinct perspectives on the world, Yassine suggests, women have a special obligation to excavate what they see as the gender parity of the Qur’an buried beneath those “macho interpretations” of Islam upon which men have built their privilege and power (Khalaf 2006).²⁵

Many Anglo-American and European feminists worry that Islamists seek only to secure or restore patriarchal power. Conversely, many Islamist women view feminism as a term and a movement inescapably Western in origin, freighted with the legacy of colonialism, and uneasily implicated in cultural imperialism. This applies even to Yassine, who is unwilling to adopt without qualification a label she associates with agendas opposed to her own: the West, the Moroccan state, Maghribi (Northwest African) elites. Yet feminism itself is a highly contested term *within* the so-called West: it is the bearer of multiple meanings, some of which are even opposed, and is characterized by deep disagreements about who women are, what women need, who is authorized to work on women’s behalf and by what means. Inasmuch as these various feminisms may share only a stated concern for women’s welfare, there is nothing incoherent in modifying “feminism” with “Islamic,” “Muslim,” or even “Islamist,” unless one is committed to arguing that, first, Islam is an unchanging essence beyond history, politics, and culture; second, there is a neutral, objective vantage from which to identify this essence once and for all; and, finally, the Islamic essence so identified is fundamentally incompatible with efforts to improve the conditions and quality of women’s lives. By the same token, Islamist women who reject the term feminism can be (although not always are) deeply committed to improving women’s welfare, as well as actively resistant to efforts that reduce or transform them into silent accessories of male power.

Yassine and Ghazali differ about what women are and should be yet, broadly speaking, both may be considered part of a recent trend toward the feminization of *da’wa*. *Da’wa* literally means call, appeal, or summons, but the term has come to signify a variety of practices and arguments meant to exhort, invite, and guide Muslims to what is regarded as proper conduct and moral devotion. Women’s participation in *da’wa* is

²⁵Women’s participation in the “production of official Islamic knowledge” has a long history, although they have often done so in relative obscurity and without the benefit of education in the Islamic sciences that has legitimated direct engagement with the sacred texts (Cooke 2001, xiv; Badran and Cooke 2004). Pioneering attempts to read gender equality in Islam are also not confined to writing by women, as evinced by Qasim Amin’s *Tabrir al-mar’a* [The Liberation of Woman] (1899) and Mumtaz ‘Ali’s *Huquq-e niswan* [The Rights of Women] (1898).

not a brand new phenomenon, as is evident in Ghazali's work with the Egyptian Society of Muslim Ladies in the 1930s. Yet, from Egypt to Pakistan to Saudi Arabia to the United States, the number of female da'iyas has proliferated exponentially in recent years (Cooke 2001; Mahmood 2005; Hirschkind 2006). This reflects, in part, current doctrinal emphases on da'wa as incumbent upon both men and women, and dependent less upon technical knowledge than moral virtue and practical familiarity with the Islamic tradition (Mahmood 2005, 65–66). It is also a consequence of recent political and socioeconomic transformations in Muslim societies, including the expansion of mass education that has not only increased women's literacy and social mobility but also made Islamic texts more accessible; the proliferation of technologies—from the cassette tape to the Internet—that facilitate the circulation of religious knowledge even among those who cannot read or travel; the precedent set by the vigorous participation of Iranian women in postrevolution debates about Islam; and the model of legal activism evident in the Islamist movement's own challenge to the 'ulama's status as gatekeepers of religious knowledge (Singerman 2005; Mir-Hosseini 1999).

If Ghazali and Yassine exemplify the feminization of da'wa among elites, the mosque movement in Egypt illustrates the growing participation of women from diverse social backgrounds in religious classes devoted to studying and debating what Islam requires for a woman to be “morally upright” in the contemporary world (Mahmood 2005). Conceptualizing piety in terms of a deep and holistic commitment to self-transformation, participants in the mosque movement are concerned less with matters of sovereignty and politics conventionally understood and more with the “moral cultivation” of those daily practices seen as crucial to becoming closer to God (Mahmood 2005). Some Islamists have criticized this focus on practices of worship as apolitical and overly privatized, yet such criticism misses the force of Islamists' own insistence on *din* (religion) as a way of life in which the domains of public and private are inextricably linked.²⁶ As Saba Mahmood (2005, 193, 194) shows, these women's intense efforts at “retraining ethical sensibilities” have a “sociopolitical force” that extends well beyond matters of governance, facilitating no less than the emergence of a “new social and moral order.” Evidence of its transformative power may be found not only in the sheer numbers and variety of women—wealthy and poor, literate and illiterate—participating in the mosque movement but also in the rhetorical and political efforts by the state and some Islamists to curtail, control, or discredit it (Mahmood 2005, 71, 194).

²⁶Participants in the mosque movement, in turn, are often critical of what they see as the reduction of Islam to tokens of cultural authenticity, or of its instrumentalization by both nationalists and Islamists they characterize as more interested in political maneuvering than religious piety.

Understood to include both written and embodied practices, the feminization of da‘wa illustrates the ways in which women from different perspectives and social classes are insisting on engaging the sacred texts directly for and with one another, without the mediating authority of men, who have traditionally held the monopoly on such activities. As Sudanese Islamist Lubabah al-Fadl argues, “As an *insan* [human being] who happens to be a woman, I have a right to reject the manipulative exegeses of our *shari‘a* that threaten my existence in a way that is not consistent with the Godly way, and to apply my own *ijtihad* to rectify erroneous tendencies by some *shuyukh* [plural of shaykh]” (Sadiki 2004, 290). Despite the proliferation of voices intent on claiming for themselves the authority to demarcate what is authentically Islamic and un-Islamic once and for all, contestation over its scope and meaning proceeds apace, facilitated at least in part by women formerly excluded from the conversation. At the same time, Islamist women’s agency and claims to authority are frequently still predicated on a willingness to follow fairly patriarchal rules about where, how, and with whom they may practice their vocation (Hirschkind 2003; Sadiki 2004, 283).

Islamism and Violence

If gender is frequently an implicit preoccupation among Islamists, jihad is arguably Islamists’ most consistently explicit concern. Jihad is derived from the Arabic verb that means to struggle or to strive, yet it is a particular kind of struggle that is of concern to many of the figures collected here: the often violent struggle against apostates and infidels both at home and abroad to which every individual Muslim must contribute. The claim that fighting unbelievers is the preeminent enactment of individual Muslim piety seems to justify characterizations of Islam in general and Islamism in particular as sanctioning, even encouraging, violence. Yet what Islamists represent as jihad *tout court* is a historically specific understanding derived from a highly selective use of texts and precedents, prominent among them a formerly obscure claim by the influential fourteenth-century jurist Ibn Taymiyya that Mongol rulers who had contravened Islamic law could be subject to forcible removal. Far from a definitive expression of Islam “properly understood,” such Islamist arguments not only mark a significant departure from much of antecedent doctrine and practice but also diminish the importance of ongoing disagreements among Muslims about the form and purposes of jihad.

To begin with, Muslim scholars have tended to consider jihad against foreign enemies a *fard kifaya* (collective obligation), that is, a duty a group of people within the community may perform on behalf of the rest, and one that presupposes a legitimate Muslim leader to declare or lead the charge. Jurists have distinguished this from the *fard ‘ayn* (individual duty) that must be fulfilled by every single Muslim in cases of defensive jihad,

that is, when the umma is under attack. Many Islamists included here take a much less nuanced view of jihad. As a mode of political action, Qutb argues, jihad must be regarded as a “permanent condition, not an occasional concern,” one that in current circumstances requires deeds rather than words, struggle rather than contemplation, revolution at home as well as resistance abroad (Qutb 1991, 67–68, 82). ‘Abd al-Salam Faraj argues along similar lines that the nature of the attack on Islam makes political authorization by a caliph (“deputy,” referring to a legitimate successor to the Prophet’s leadership) unnecessary: after all, “leadership over the Muslims is (always) in their own hands if only they make this manifest. . . . If there is something lacking in the leadership, well, there is nothing that cannot be acquired” (Jansen 1986a, sec. 93).

Such arguments are a deliberate rejection of early Muslim modernists who had emphasized the largely defensive character of jihad and sought to show that relations between Muslims and non-Muslims were normally peaceful rather than antagonistic. Mahmud Shaltut (d. 1963), the rector of al-Azhar from 1958 to 1963, had argued, for example, that the Qur’anic verses on fighting “prohibit the provocation of hostility and this prohibition is reinforced by God’s repugnance to aggression and by his dislike of those who provoke hostility” (Peters 1996, 74; on Shaltut, see Zebiri 1993). Conversion by force is anathema to Islam, Shaltut avers, and fighting is commanded only in defense, in response to aggression initiated by others. Even defensive jihad must aim at “the termination of the aggression and the establishment of religious liberty devoted to God and free from any pressure or force” (Peters 1996, 75).

Many Islamists explicitly dismiss such arguments as a symptom of false consciousness, one among many destructive effects of colonial domination. Mawdudi argues, for example, that while imperialists ravage the world to satisfy their greed, jihad alone “conjures up the vision of a marching band of religious fanatics with savage beards and fiery eyes brandishing drawn swords and attacking the infidels wherever they meet them.” Having internalized this image, Muslims rush to apologize and renounce armed struggle. In this way, he laments, colonialists retain the exclusive right to “fight with arms and ammunition while we are contented with our pen and our tongue” (Mawdudi 1948, 1–3). Sayyid Qutb, for his part, agreed that Islam does not countenance spreading its message by force and coercion, yet he had little patience with those who sought to present jihad as legitimate only in self-defense:

If we insist on calling Islamic jihad a defensive movement, then we must change the meaning of the word “defense” and mean by it “the defense of man” against all those forces that limit his freedom. . . . When we take this broad meaning of the word “defense,” we understand the true character of Islam, in that it proclaims the universal freedom of every person and community from servitude to any other

individual or society, the end of man's arrogance and selfishness, the establishment of the sovereignty of Allah and His Lordship throughout the world, and the rule of the divine shari'a in human affairs. (Qutb 1990, 50)

Qutb does not name any names in castigating the "writers with defeatist and apologetic mentalities [who] write about 'jihad in Islam' and try to remove this 'blot' from Islam" (Qutb 1990, 46), but he could very well have had his distinguished fellow Egyptian Mahmud Shaltut in mind.

These arguments about jihad may be said to constitute a common grammar and framework of analysis for many Islamists, although several thinkers in this volume carefully calibrate such claims to suit various purposes and different public spheres. In his justification for the assassination of Egyptian president Anwar al-Sadat, for example, 'Abd al-Salam Faraj depicts the struggle to reclaim the moral foundations of the Egyptian state as a fight against jahiliyya from within, arguing that the jihad against a corrupt nationalist regime at home must take precedence over fighting enemies elsewhere. The Charter of Hamas (see chapter 15), however, insists that all Muslims recognize the primacy of the jihad for Jerusalem, welding Islamist rhetoric to that of nationalist resistance in an effort both to fight Israeli occupation and to compete for adherents with the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO). In contrast to both Faraj and Hamas, Bin Laden embraces a global jihad that essentially collapses distinctions between national and international, offensive and defensive fighting, enemies at home and those from afar.

Yet despite such differences, these arguments tend to presume that violent jihad is a necessary response to the pervasive power of those with demonstrated hostility to Muslim lives, lands, pieties, and sensibilities, a form of retaliation whose urgency and legitimacy derive from the violence—psychological and economic as well as physical—of the initial assault. This view of jihad subsumes individuals into archetypes of "infidels" and "believers" and, in so doing, vitiates more conventional distinctions between, for example, soldier and civilian, or collective and individual responsibility. It is far from inevitable that those who harbor such views will automatically act upon them, yet the carnage wrought by the attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon in 2001, a Bali nightclub in 2002, Madrid commuter trains in 2004, and throughout Iraq on a daily basis suggest just how lethal such claims can be, given the right circumstances. The fact that such violence does not discriminate among victims only further fuels rhetoric characterizing Islamists as irrational fanatics "in love with death," terrorists animated by a religion characterized by a propensity for violence and authoritarianism.²⁷

²⁷Anxieties about the particular susceptibility of Muslims to irrationality, insularity, and fanaticism have a long and distinguished pedigree in Euro-American history and political thought. See, for example, Renan 1883, 3.

As in so many other matters, however, Islamists are hardly of one mind on the subject of jihad; indeed, there are Islamists who explicitly reject the reduction of struggle to violence. A case in point is Nadia Yassine (2003; 2005c), who insists that jihad is the dedicated struggle against *istikbar* (arrogance), particularly in its common form as the lust for power and domination. As jihad against *istikbar* is both a final goal and a prescription for action, Yassine suggests, it is antithetical to violent practices that aim at domination. The primary instruments of jihad are not bombs but words, particularly those deployed in the art of persuasion (Fararazi 2005; N. Yassine 2006a). When Islamists such as ‘Abd al-Salam Faraj and ‘Umar ‘Abd al-Rahman seek to legitimize violent revolution by recourse to Islamic texts, she argues, they contravene the true meaning of jihad to serve their own arrogant ends. By the same token, Bin Laden’s decision to “fight evil with evil and barbarity with barbarity” not only violates specific Islamic prohibitions against harming civilians, women, and children but also betrays the ethical imperative to embody the message of a merciful God who cautions believers that (Q 88:22) “You have no power over them” (N. Yassine 2005c; *Daily Excelsior* 2002).

Such persistent disagreements among Muslims past and present suggest that Islam is no more inherently violent and bloody-minded than it—or Christianity or Judaism, for that matter—is inherently peaceful. Islamists often claim to speak for an unchanging authentic Islam that exists outside of time and space, yet the political purchase of their perspective derives from the ways it assembles disparate yet recognizable contemporary experiences of suffering, frustration, and loss into an explanation that resonates with Muslims who live in communities culturally, linguistically, and geographically distant from one another. The extent to which Islamist arguments resonate broadly across Muslim societies thus depends upon a set of experiences and phenomena that mark this particular moment in history, including the ways in which contemporary global inequalities compound a legacy of historical asymmetries to continually reproduce a sense of Muslim powerlessness—both real and imagined—relative to the West; continuing Euro-American political and financial support of corrupt autocrats, many of whom preside over nation-states brutally stitched together by Western fiat; the persistence of authoritarian regimes eager to control domestic unrest by catalyzing “Muslim rage” toward external targets; the sense of emasculation produced by decades of political repression and economic frustration; and the continual flow of images of bloodied Muslim bodies delivered by a burgeoning array of video, satellite, and electronic media.

It is notable that the understanding of jihad many Islamists proffer mirrors the very state-sanctioned violence against which they have struggled for almost a century. Along with thousands of Muslims caught in the machinery of twentieth-century state violence, prominent Islamists from Qutb to Ghazali to Ayman al-Zawahiri—al-Qa‘ida’s second in command—

are well known to have been radicalized by extended and often brutal terms of incarceration in Egypt, Syria, Iraq, Jordan, Israel, Algeria, and elsewhere (on al-Zawahiri and prison, cf. Kepel and Milelli 2008, 152–54). It is thus far from surprising that Islamists forged by interrogation torture in prison camps would conclude that the preeminent enactment of Muslim piety is violent struggle. “Prison,” as Palestinian Khaled Abu Hilal has said, “is my university” (Erlanger 2007), an argument made in greater detail in a different time and place by Russian writer and revolutionary Maxim Gorky (1868–1936):

A people brought up in a school that reminds one of the torments of hell on a small scale; a people accustomed to the clenched-fist, prison, and the whip, will not be blest with a tender heart. A people that the police agents have ridden over will be capable in their turn of walking over the bodies of others. In a country where unrest has reigned so long it is difficult for the people to realize from one day to the next the power of right. One cannot demand from a man who has never known justice that he should be just. (Gorky 1920)

In this context, as Timothy Mitchell (1990, 195–96, 199, 207–8) suggests, Islamist views of the world can be characterized as both a mode of resistance to state mechanisms of coercion and an expression of them. Such is the dynamic evident in Ghazali’s memoirs, for example, when she describes how the “darkness of prisons, the blades of torture, and the vicious beatings only increase the endurance and resolve of the faithful” (Ghazali 1978, 6).

There is, no doubt, a great deal of pragmatism at work in Islamist arguments about violence. As Qutb (1991, 64, 47–48) dryly notes, the path to freedom must occasionally be hewn by way of the sword because tyrants are not reasoned out of power and “jahiliyya is not ‘abstract theory’ . . . [it] consciously or unconsciously strives to preserve its own existence, to defend its essence . . . to annihilate dangerous elements which threaten its very being.” Yet it is also the case that, for many of these Islamists, jihad is both a means and an end, an effort to eradicate those obstacles to restoring a just community on earth that simultaneously brings human action into accord with God’s plans and purposes (Haddad 1983, 21). While the Qur’an (2:256) states that “there is no compulsion in religion,” Islamists contend that only in a state in which Islamic law reigns supreme are human beings free from enslavement to one another’s rule and all are equal by virtue of their common submission to God. As Qutb (1991, 107–8) argues:

When the highest authority in society is God alone—expressed in the rule of divine law—only then is humanity truly and completely liberated from slavery to men. Only this is “human civilization,” because the essential foundation of human civilization is the true and com-

plete freedom of humanity and the absolute dignity of every individual in society. There is no true freedom and dignity for humanity or the individual in a society where some people are lords who legislate and others are slaves who obey.

From this perspective, the realization of justice, liberty, equality, and choice itself necessitates the forcible removal of the constraints imposed by jahiliyya, along with those who aid and abet it, *no matter the cost*. As Mawdudi (1954, 160–61) writes,

[W]hy is it that in religion such importance is given to jihad that the Qur'an pronounces the judgment of hypocrisy upon those who shirk and evade it? Jihad is but another name for the attempt to erect the system of truth, and the Qur'an declares jihad to be a touchstone on the same footing with a man's faith. In other words, he who has faith in his heart will neither be content with the domination of the system of evil, nor will he grudge the expenditure of life and wealth in the struggle for erecting the system of truth. If one shows weakness in this matter, his faith itself is doubtful. What can anything else beside then profit him? . . . The man who professes faith in this religion cannot fulfill his duty only by trying as far as possible to pattern his life on Islam. The nature of his faith itself requires that he should concentrate all his effort upon wresting leadership from unbelieving and corrupt men to entrust it to the righteous, and upon erecting the system of truth that has been ordained for the conduct of the world according to the will of God. Because this end is unattainable without the highest degree of collective effort, there must exist a righteous community committed to the principle of truth and devoted to the sole purpose in the world of erecting, maintaining, and properly realizing the system of truth.

The fact that some Islamist thinkers sanctify violent struggle in such terms does not mean, of course, that all those who advocate or engage in jihad endorse violence.²⁸ Nor does it imply that those who claim to kill for Islam are entirely without ulterior motives, those manipulative purposes and psychological motivations that even the most rarified scriptural arguments can express or serve. What the preceding analysis does suggest, however, is that the reduction of this view of jihad to irrational blood lust, the self-interested grab for temporal power, or a door through which to pass into the hereafter misses a crucial dimension of its significance and appeal: for true believers, jihad is no less than an enactment of

²⁸Even as he spoke of a new era of jahiliyya and of jihad, Mawdudi himself stopped well short of recommending or condoning the actual resort to violence in the manner many other Islamists did. As Nasr (1996, 70) observes, Mawdudi's organization, the Jama'at-i Islami, "has avoided violent social change and has instead viewed the path to the Islamic state as lying within the existing sociopolitical order." Also see the chapters 5 and 3 on Qutb and Mawdudi in this volume.

a divine imperative to remake the foundations of collective life. In this respect, Islamist views of jihad can be seen as part of a long-standing association between violence and political foundings upon which no particular culture or historical epoch has a monopoly. This association and the “legacy of violence” it bequeaths to future generations are no less apparent in those radical revolutions of renewal that move by way of the sword from the margins to the center than those political foundings that claim to create something out of nothing (Connolly 1995, 251). In either case, the toll of such brutality can be immeasurable, for in addition to the victims who suffer directly, the “practice of violence, like all action, changes the world, but the most probable change is to a more violent world” (Arendt 1972, 177).