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EDITORIAL

Editorial Note

DAVID H. WARREN

This issue of the *American Journal of Islam and Society* comprises four main research articles, each of which engage themes of Muslim collectivity, community, and *umma* from different vantage points. We begin with Rezart Beka's contribution, "The Reconceptualization of the *Umma* and *Ummatic* action in Abdullah Bin Bayyah's Discourse." The Mauritanian Shaykh Abdullah Bin Bayyah is arguably among the most well-known members of the Sunni Muslim scholarly elite, the *ulama*, alive today. Beka explores this scholar's discourse of reform and the kind of Islamic politics he has argued for in the aftermath of the 2011 Arab Spring, which Bin Bayyah articulates by way of rethinking the role and function of the Muslim *umma* in the modern context. Important elements of this discourse include Bin Bayyah's view of how an understanding of the global Muslim *umma* fits into the global community and global challenges, be they in the realm of interfaith relations or international politics. This discourse is particularly significant in the light of Bin Bayyah's close relationship with the Emirati state and the role of the United Arab Emirates in supporting counter-revolutionary forces during the Arab Spring, and since.

We then turn to Ossama Abdelgawwad's work, "An Egyptian Ethicist: Muḥammad ʿAbd Allāh Drāz (1894-1958) and His Qurʾān-Based Moral Theory." In this article, we see Abdelgawwad take a comparative

ethics approach to this major thinker from the early twentieth century, his key text *La Morale du Koran*, and his theory of "moral obligation" in society. In the article, we see Abdelgawwad distinguish between different forms of ethical reasoning, ranging from societal command to divine command, and navigate a range of European thinkers and philosophers including Kant, Rauh, and Bergson. Abdelgawwad then argues that Draz adapts Western ethical theories while reinterpreting specific Qur'anic passages and Islamic literature to arrive at a sophisticated and original contribution to Muslim ethics.

As our third research article for this issue, we then have a co-authored study by Mujtaba A. Isani, Daniel Silverman, and Joseph J. Kaminski, "The Other Legitimate Game in Town? Understanding Public Support for the Caliphate in the Islamic World." The authors' point of departure is to consider the fact that, while old claims about apparent incompatibilities between Islam and democracy have been largely swept away as a result of public polling showing continued desire for democracy across Muslim-majority countries, Muslim public support for the Caliphate has yet to be explored in great detail at the quantitative level of public surveys. To address this question, the authors make use of existing cross-national surveys, as well as their own, to argue that the merits of both democracy and the Caliphate (conceptualized in different ways), are generally judged on their respective abilities to potentially provide services, welfare, and justice. That is, in instrumental terms.

The fourth and final research article in this issue is Ashwak Hauter's, "The Reparative Work of the Imagination: Yemen, ʿAfiya, and Politics of the *Umma*." Here, Hauter examines the work of Yemeni artists and filmmakers in reaction to a context of mental health crises, war, and displacement. Hauter's interviews and analysis highlight the ways that her interlocutors use their art to explore new imaginings of Yemeni history and identity. Notably, Hauter analyzes this reimagining as an act of repair, which considers Yemen and Yemenis' place within the wider Muslim *umma* above and beyond the modern world of nation-states.

This issue of the *American Journal of Islam and Society* also includes a number of insightful book reviews, including editor Ovamir Anjum's

review essay engaging Joel Hayward's recent work *The Warrior Prophet: Muhammad and War* and Celene Ibrahim's author response to a review authored in a previous issue on her book, *Women and Gender in the Qur'an.*

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ARTICLES

The Reconceptualization of the *Umma* and *Ummatic* Action in Abdullah Bin Bayyah's Discourse

REZART BEKA

Abstract

In the post-Arab Spring period, Abdullah Bin Bayyah has emerged as one of the principal exponents of the anti-revolutionary front. Dissatisfied with the Islamist solution to the socio-political crisis in the Middle East, Bin Bayyah has called for the establishment of a new jurisprudence based on *fiqh al-wāqiʿ* (jurisprudence of

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reality), which acknowledges and accepts the dictates of modern reality. He conceived his call for renewal (*tajdīd*) as one of the best ways to restore peace and unity in Muslim societies. This article aims to shed light on those aspects of Bin Bayyah's reformist discourse that directly affect how he envisions the role and function of the *umma* in the modern context. The essay then explores the place that *ummatic* unification occupies in Bin Bayyah's discourse and the kind of Islamic politics his post-Arab Spring religious discourse entails. Particular attention is also paid to the ways Bin Bayyah theorizes the significance of religious allegiances within the modern nation-state. The essay also considers Bin Bayyah's view of the role of the Muslim *umma* in the global community, its relationship with other religions, and the wider human community when responding to global challenges.

Keywords: Arab Spring, Ummatic Action, Fiqh al-wāqiʿ, The Charter of Medina, Alliance of Virtue, Interfaith Dialogue

Abdullah Bin Bayyah is widely recognized as a prominent exponent of contemporary neo-traditionalism. Born in Mauritania in 1935, he acquired his traditional Islamic education within the intellectual circles of Mauritania. Following his legal studies in Tunisia, he entered a political career in Mauritania. Bin Bayyah occupied a number of significant posts, including Judge at the High Court of the Islamic Republic of Mauritania and Deputy Prime Minister. However, after the military coup in 1978, he withdrew from politics, devoting himself entirely to Islamic scholarship and becoming a leading authority in Islamic law. In this capacity, he assumed various religious positions, establishing himself as a noteworthy voice in contemporary Islam.[1]

In the Western academic literature, neo-traditionalism is often defined as "a denomination of Sunnism that emphasizes respect for and adherence to one of the four schools of law, the Ash'arī or Māturīdī schools of theology, and valorizes Sufism."[2] Abdullah Hamid Ali, adds to these essential features of neo-traditionalism the importance of the unbroken *sanad* (chain of transmission) and the "direct contact with

living human receptacles of knowledge."[3] However, the traditionalism of the neo-traditionalist movement, particularly that of Bin Bayyah himself, has been called in question in many academic quarters.[4] However, the settling of this issue is beyond the scope of this article. For our purposes, it is important to emphasize Bin Bayyah's clear positioning in the wake of the Arab Spring as one of the principal exponents of the anti-revolutionary front, and the role that this positioning has played in his reconceptualization of the role of the *umma* and *ummatic* action in the modern context.

Bin Bayyah's post-Arab Spring discourse represents an attempt to counter Islamists' *ummatic* politics and the ways they invoked it during the Arab Spring. Bin Bayyah contends that the post-Arab Spring period revealed a profound crisis in Islamic discourse, with Muslim scholars struggling to articulate a religious worldview that was responsive to modern needs. In Bin Bayyah's view, the post-Arab Spring rise of Islamic extremism (represented by ISIS) and the endorsement of a jurisprudence of revolution by Islamists are clear indications of the decline of Muslim thought and the contemporary Islamic discourse's inability to adapt to modern realities. To restore the unity of the *umma* and peace in Muslim societies, Bin Bayyah advocates for a new jurisprudence based on a jurisprudence of reality (*fiqh al-wāqi'*).[5] This approach acknowledges and accepts the dictates of modern reality, encompassing concepts such as the nation-state, citizenship, individualism, religious pluralism, tolerance, freedom, human rights, international treaties, multiculturalism, and multi-ethnicity.[6]

This article analyzes those aspects of Bin Bayyah's reformist discourse that directly affect how he envisages the role and function of the *umma* in the modern context. The article will explore the place that *ummatic* unification occupies in Bin Bayyah's discourse and the kind of Islamic politics his post-Arab Spring religious discourse entails. Particular attention will be dedicated to the ways Bin Bayyah theorizes the part that religious allegiances play within the modern nation-state and the Muslim *umma*'s role in the global community, its relationship with other religions, and the broader human community more generally as a response to global challenges. In order to shed light on these

important aspects of Bin Bayyah's discourse, the article will explore Bin Bayyah's particular views on 1) the caliphate and the Islamic status of the modern nation-state, 2) his articulation of a model of contractual citizenship centered on the Charter of Medina, 3) his theorization of religious pluralism and tolerance, as well as 4) his view on interfaith dialogue and global action based on his proposal for a New Alliance of Virtue. The exploration of these dimensions of Bin Bayyah's discourse will then allow us to better understand the nature and function he ascribes to the *umma* and *ummatic* action in his project of renewal.

The Caliphate, the Islamic State, and the Nation-State

In the context of the Arab Spring and the emergence of ISIS, Bin Bayyah dedicates significant space to the topic of the Islamic state. He acknowledges the novelty of the modern nation-state system compared to prevailing forms of government in Islamic history. However, he considers the nation-state a universal fact and an inescapable feature of modern reality. Therefore, any modern Islamic political system should be conceived within the general framework of the nation-state. For Bin Bayyah, the reality imposed by the modern nation-state, with its requirements and constraints, "necessitates a new jurisprudence that molds its concepts and answers its inquiries."[7] He assigns the task of harmonizing between the demands of modern times and the classic religious perspective on the Islamic state to *taḥqīq al-manāṭ* (the verification of the hinge).

In this context, the topic of the caliphate and its relation vis-à-vis the nation-state becomes central to Bin Bayyah's discourse on the Islamic state. Bin Bayyah argues that, in modern times, the classical idea of the caliphate, understood as a supranational political entity that unifies all Muslims under a single ruler, is irretrievable and harmful to the *umma*. Instead, he calls for a full endorsement of the nation-state model and the idea of multiple Islamic states and rulers, where each rules over a particular territory and receives complete obedience and allegiance from the people they govern. Relying on al-Juwayni and several other classical jurists, Bin Bayyah presents the caliphate as an issue pertaining

to Islamic jurisprudence and not creed. This allows him to portray most issues related to the Islamic State as open to ijtihad. In his view, most matters related to the caliphate lack certainty and are not definitive or categorical.[8]

Bin Bayyah discusses how, historically, classical jurists have allowed the appointment during the same time of more than one sultan or caliph, each ruling over their territory. This concession was the result of the expansion of Muslim territories and the practical impossibility of a unified governing authority effectively ruling over one vast Muslim territory. In this context, he quotes Ibn al-Azraq al-Gharnati al-Maliki (d. 1344) stating that, "The requirement of there being just one unified leader and no other in the same time period ceases to be binding when it becomes a practical impossibility."[9] To this end, Bin Bayyah adds that "it was part of the historical practice of the Muslims to have multiple states and rulers, and there is nothing to indicate or prove that any of them ever tried to use doctrinal justifications to unite all the various lands under a single banner."[10] For Bin Bayyah, then, the reestablishment of the caliphate as historically understood, is not a religious obligation. The caliphate, "is one possible means among others that could be replaced today by other means in order to achieve unity between nations so that they may cooperate and complement one another… there is no religious duty to pursue the establishment of a caliphate by force—even if we assume it is possible to do so."[11]

However, Bin Bayyah acknowledges that Muslim jurists have agreed "that there be an Imamate of some sort, namely, a government to manage and coordinate the affairs of the community."[12] Nonetheless, for him, "as regards the shape or form of this authority, or the nature of its powers and the extent of its mandate, or whether the office of government is hereditary or elected, there is no concrete requirement that conforms to a particular model."[13] Therefore, for Bin Bayyah, the various political forms and nature that the imamate has taken throughout Islamic history, including the caliphate, are not part of the religious obligation.[14] For him, the caliphate represents a historical institution and only one of the many forms that the imamate has taken throughout Islamic history. He grounds the necessity for an imamate not on doctrinal premises or

historical precedents but on rational and *maṣlaḥa* considerations. He presents the existence of a governing authority as a rational necessity to fulfill the higher purpose of "managing the affairs of the people and looking after their best interests."[15] For Bin Bayyah, the existence of an imamate is considered obligatory by the Shariʿa based on *maṣlaḥa*. In this *maṣlaḥa*-centric approach to the imamate, he makes recourse to ʿIzz ibn Abd al-Salam's (d. 1262) and al-Tufi's (d. 1316) approach on the topic and their emphasis on the necessity to build the rulings of the Shariʿa on the basis of reason's determination of the benefits and harms.

In contemporary Islamic thought, the invocation of Abd al-Salam's and al-Tufi's approaches to *maṣlaḥa* has been a fixed element of the Islamic modernist strategy to disassociate religion from politics by reducing the imamate, in terms of secular politics, to a system of managing the affairs of people and redistributing resources in a just way. In this manner, the imamate's doctrinal and religious elements like upholding the divine message (*iqāmat al-dīn*), facilitating stewardship of the earth, or establishing justice and prosperity for all people in conformity with the divine imperative and the Islamic system are, to a degree, divorced from the reasons that affirm the necessity of the imamate. In Bin Bayyah's discourse, the invocation of Abd al-Salam's and al-Tufi's *maṣlaḥa* approach fulfills a similar objective. It allows him to historicize the scriptural proofs or historical precedents for the caliphate, and present as Islamic any system that is built upon the principle of promoting benefit and avoiding harm. The function and role of the imamate, then, are reduced almost exclusively to utilitarian considerations of managing and coordinating the affairs of the community. Although they are not negated, nevertheless, the creedal and ideological aspects of the imamate are attenuated or considered non-essential for its necessity. In short, for Bin Bayyah, it is reason and *maṣlaḥa* considerations of harm and benefit, rather than doctrinal positions or historical claims that should be at the center of any attempt to create a working concept or model for a contemporary Islamic state that responds to the norms of the age.

What is the form and nature of the Islamic state in the modern context? What is the relation between an Islamic State's religious and

mundane dimensions? In the 1990s, Bin Bayyah's discourse on the nature of the Islamic state followed closely the discourse of many Islamist centrist (*waṣaṭī*) scholars in which the Islamic state is presented as a civil state with a religious reference.[16] In other words, a state in which the importance of Islamic values for public order is recognized, at least officially. This state portrays itself as the guardian of Islam and Islamic institutions. Its laws might not necessarily derive from the letter of Shariʿa. However, as a result of the broad scope ascribed to *maṣlaḥa* and interpretation (*taʾwīl*), they are considered in harmony with the spirit of Islamic law. The political form this Islamic state takes is judged in accordance with "the degree of what has been realized in terms of benefit, social peace, and proximity to the spirit of the Divine Law and its texts."[17] As we shall see in his later writings, Bin Bayyah's vision for the Islamic state shifts from the civil state with a religious reference paradigm towards modern forms of constitutional liberalism, where political identity is not based on religion but on shared constitutional values. Nevertheless, as Bin Bayyah states, "We believe every Muslim state, indeed every state with a majority Muslim population, to be an Islamic state."[18]

In Bin Bayyah's view, even though the caliphate remains "the ideal to which we all aspire and which best serves our religious and mundane interest," nevertheless, "given how much the conditions, time, place and situation have changed, the legitimacy of the nation states is no longer even in question." This means that "the same degree of obedience must be given to the leaders and laws of these states as was given to those Muslim states of the past."[19] Bin Bayyah conceives the nation-state as structurally compatible with Islam. He endorses it out of principle, and not as an interim necessity before the establishment of the universal Islamic state. In his view, in the modern context, the attempts to recall the historical caliphate are utopian and harmful. Bin Bayyah argues that from a *fiqh al-wāqiʿ* perspective, nowadays, the establishment of the caliphate is neither desirable nor feasible. It is undesirable because its pre-modern imperial nature does not fit well with the spirit of the age, and its reestablishment in the modern context seems utopian. It is also unfeasible because the nation-state model is not a transient development

but an inevitable and irreversible reality as well as a constitutive feature of modernity. In this regard, he states,

> *We do not mean to disparage our history—the caliphate fulfilled its function admirably in Islamic history and gave a great many wonderful things to the Muslim people—but times have changed so much that what was a benefit in the past may well have become a harm in the present.*[20]

Regarding the nation-state, he argues that,

> *The nation-state in all its shapes and forms in the Islamic world is a valid and legitimate system of government. And so long as it is built on the principle of promoting benefit and avoiding harm—the axis around which all the laws of Islam revolve—it can be considered no less legitimate than the major Muslim empires of the past.*[21]

In his discourse on the Islamic state, Bin Bayyah downplays the creedal and ideological elements that traditionally have been part of the legitimation of the caliphate or the imamate and instead conceives it mostly as a "security device" that preserves the *umma* from external threats and guarantees internal peace and stability. Although, in principle, Bin Bayyah acknowledges that Muslim political global unity is an admirable goal, especially when it is achieved voluntarily, like in the case of the UAE or the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC).[22] However, in his discourse Muslims' global political unity remains an ideal, at least on the level of formal discourse, rather than an active principle of personal and collective moral action. The idea of Muslim unity under a unified government of some sort as a collective aspiration of the Muslim *umma* that informs their actions and moral horizons is not present in Bin Bayyah's discourse. On the contrary, he considers any contemporary active endeavor to achieve political unity under an Islamic state utopian, dangerous, and the cause of current wars and bloodshed in the Muslim world.

Bin Bayyah's portrayal of every present Muslim majority state as an Islamic state serves as a powerful discursive strategy to counter the Islamist discourse on the need to establish a caliphate or an Islamic state. In Bin Bayyah's discourse, the Islamic state is already in existence in the form of a number of independent Islamic nation-states. Hence, the Arab Spring Islamists' calls for the need to overthrow what in their view are presented as Arab authoritarian political regimes in the name of an Islamic democratic state or a possible future caliphate are misplaced and dangerous. Instead, what is required is the recognition of the validity of the present political order in the Muslim world and the suggestion of some socio-political reforms that supposedly will bring it more into line with the objectives of Shariʿa. Bin Bayyah's modernist and historicizing approach towards the caliphate serves as an instrument for opening the door to the legitimation, on religious and *fiqh al-wāqiʿ* grounds, of the present political order in the Muslim World. Ultimately, *taḥqīq al-manāṭ* and *fiqh al-wāqiʿ* are mobilized to justify the present *status quo* in the Muslim World and counter any transformative or idealist tendency that calls for the re-organization of the present political order in the Muslim World in line with the ideals of the caliphate or the Islamic state. For these reasons, Bin Bayyah's discourse on political change has been officially endorsed by the UAE and other countries of the counter-revolutionary front to religiously delegitimize the Islamist jurisprudence of revolution and subdue political dissidents.

The Charter of Medina, Islam, and Citizenship

The endorsement of the nation-state as an Islamic model of governance required Bin Bayyah to explicate the nature of the political order and social arrangements for his model of an Islamic nation-state. In this context, Bin Bayyah presents inclusive citizenship, based on a shared constitution, as the central framework for how he conceives an Islamic state's structure. He acknowledges that the notion of citizenship is a modern idea; nevertheless, he argues that modern developments have elevated citizenship to "a universally accepted norm" and "a universal

fact."[23] For Bin Bayyah, the normativity of citizenship stems from two sets of accords. The first is international, i.e., the Charter of the United Nations and its Amendments, and the second is local, i.e., national constitutions. These two accords constitute the dictates of our context and determine the form of any modern Islamic political order.[24] Bin Bayyah describes citizenship as "a link or voluntary association contracted in the context of a nation governed by the constitution."[25] In this model of state formation, it is not shared ethnicity, history, or religion that binds individuals together in a society, but rather "a constitution, shared values, and a system of laws that outline the responsibilities and rights of its citizens."[26]

To provide religious legitimation for the framework of contractual citizenship within the framework of a nation-state, Bin Bayyah presents the Charter of Medina as the perfect model for an Islamic contractual citizenship. From January 25-27, 2016, Bin Bayyah helped organize an International Conference in Marrakesh, Morocco, on "The Rights of Religious Minorities in Predominantly Muslim Majority Communities: Legal Framework, and a Call to Action." The conference was jointly sponsored by the Ministry of Endowment and Islamic Affairs of the Kingdom of Morocco and FPPMS. The result of the conference was the Marrakesh Declaration that, according to the organizers, provided the theorization of an Islamic constitutional contractual citizenship based on the Charter of Medina as a framework that guarantees the rights of religious minorities in modern Muslim societies.[27]

According to Bin Bayyah, the traditional *dhimma* system that centered on religious identities and hierarchies is at odds with modern forms of constitutional citizenship as they are manifested in modern multicultural and multi-religious societies. He presents the Charter of Medina as "an example of contractual citizenship governed by a treaty or constitution."[28] For him, the Charter of Medina represented a contractual citizenship model where various segments of society came together as equals in the name of shared principles and cooperated for the sake of the common good of society. In this way, "every segment of the society was equal to the other segments, and equity was established among them whenever possible. It thus left no place for a philosophy of subjects and

sovereign."[29] Some of the salient features that, according to Bin Bayyah, make the Charter of Medina particularly suitable for a modern Islamic form of contractual citizenship is that the Charter of Medina represents 1) a voluntary agreement reached without war; 2) it does not contain a concept of minority or majority; 3) it recognizes religious freedom and equal rights for each community regardless of their faith; 4) it paves the foundation for a multi-cultural, multi-religious society in which individual enjoy equal rights and responsibilities and consider themselves part of a single nation; 5) it establishes equal rights and responsibilities for all the segments of society; 6) the conferral of rights and duties is not based on religious allegiances or identities but by virtue of residing in the same land.[30]

Therefore, for Bin Bayyah, modern reality renders the Charter of Medina "the best model to serve as a sound basis for contractual citizenship in Muslim societies. It is the optimal model for us to choose because the values it embodies concur with those of the times."[31] He laments the fact that despite its importance, the Charter of Medina, "which affirms freedom of religion and the unity of the nation in a multi-religious domain, is scarcely studied at all, despite its huge importance."[32] In the classical Islamic normative tradition, the Charter of Medina has remained for the most part a dead letter. Classical jurists considered it as an early and typical treaty or truce between the Prophet and other religious communities. Instead, they concentrated their efforts on the study and elaboration of the *dhimma* system based on religious allegiance, *jizya*, and the subordination of non-Muslims to the Muslim state.[33] Bin Bayyah contends that this neglect of the Charter of Medina has resulted in a departure from the original and authentic Islamic paradigm of state formation that it embodies. For Bin Bayyah, the establishment and dominance of the *dhimma* system have been the result of specific historical circumstances that originated in the latter part of the life of the Prophet and were dominant throughout Islamic history, which made the state of fighting and wars between Muslims and other religious communities the norm of state political organization.[34]

The historicization of the textual foundation for the *dhimma* system allows Bin Bayyah to contest the present validity of the entire juridical

corpus of the *dhimma* system. Instead, he advocates for the Charter of Medina as the originally intended framework for the nature and structure of the Islamic state. Suddenly, the injunctions pertaining to the *dhimma* system are transformed from being among the fixed matters (*thawābit*) of the legal tradition to the changing (*mutaghayyirāt*) ones. In a departure from the prevailing order in the Islamic normative tradition, the Charter of Medina now supersedes, specifies, and updates the principles inherent in the *dhimma* system, reversing the traditional hierarchy. Naturally, Bin Bayyah justifies this hermeneutical maneuver entirely on the premise of *fiqh al-wāqiʿ* and the presumed need to adjust the Islamic vision of the state and religious minorities in accordance with modern secular and liberal discourse. According to Bin Bayyah, the exceptional state of affairs that prevailed throughout Islamic history led to the development of legal frameworks and historical practices that significantly differ from those of our current era. By contrast, the Charter of Medina embodies the originally intended state of affairs of the Lawgiver, wherein individuals enjoy equal rights and duties and are free to choose their religion. Therefore, "the contemporary cultural context provides Muslims with an ideal opportunity to put forward this charter as an authentic model for citizenship."[35]

Paradoxically, within this context, modernity is depicted as the unique historical juncture where the intended original Islamic paradigm on the state and society can finally find realization. It is modernity, with its nation-state and constitutional citizenship model that brings Islamic juridical thought out of its exceptional state of affairs. This stance towards modernity seems to be at odds with Bin Bayyah's own juridical discourse, which posits that the disruptions brought about by modernity require Islamic law to operate in an emergency or exceptional mode. Thus, he emphasizes the legal framework of necessity, *maṣlaḥa*, the objectives of the Shariʿa, *fiqh al-wāqiʿ*, and facilitation as central elements of modern juridical discourse.[36] This position also appears to diverge from the prevailing neo-traditionalist approach, commonly associated with Bin Bayyah, which views modernity as a rupture with the pristine and authentic Islamic metaphysical dimensions and a departure from the true principles of revelation.

Bin Bayyah presents his concept of Islamic inclusive citizenship as both a precursor to, and in alignment with, Habermas' theory of constitutional patriotism.[37] He asserts that Habermas' notion of constitutional patriotism is "very, very close to the traditional Islamic law because it is based on a contract."[38] Habermas formulated the idea of constitutional patriotism in postwar West Germany, suggesting that in post-secular and multicultural modern nation-states, individual and national identities should no longer be rooted in religious or quasi-sacred grounds, such as the *patria*. Instead, loyalty should be directed toward the constitution and its universal norms. In this way, in a properly disenchanted world, "Religious legitimacy is—or ought to be—abandoned alongside traditionalism and other apparently transcendent sources of authority."[39] In Habermas' constitutional patriotism, "Attachment and loyalty to the constitution thus replaces attachment to a particular national identity as a binding element and source of motivation for citizens."[40] In these post-conventional and post-national forms of identities, conventional forms of morality (religious or national) are not formally negated but are decentered and reinterpreted in light of the constitutional universal values. According to Habermas, the realization of constitutional patriotism necessitates a democratic setting, which he believes can only occur within the polity of a nation-state as the only historical political framework in which large-scale democracies have appeared and prospered in modern times. In other words, as many critics have suggested, in the post-modern context, constitutional patriotism has become a form of civil religion, "that is, broadly speaking, a form of collective self-worship in the extreme case, or at least an ideology that makes citizens venerate their constitution and their civic myths as quasi transcendent objects."[41]

In accordance with Habermas' approach, Bin Bayyah contends that an intrinsic feature of modern reality is the fact that in the modern world, loyalties to a political order "are no longer exclusively religious but have instead become complex, often associated with complex and distinct and yet intertwined factors."[42] He further asserts that Muslim citizenship "does not go back to any tribal affiliation, it doesn't go to color. Even religion, it does not go to religion."[43] According to Bin Bayyah, the classical understanding of the political system based on religious loyalty

is outdated and problematic in our current age. Nowadays, statehood is no longer derived solely from religious affiliation; instead, it is based on factors such as the constitution, shared values, and the system of laws. The role that religious allegiance once played in defining the nation (*umma*) has been replaced by citizenship, which is grounded in religious pluralism and constitutional values. As Anjum highlights in the context of Rashid Ghannoushi's similar presentation of an Islamic nation-state, in this perspective, "The *umma* is now a national, secular *umma*: the residents of the state are part of it, whereas those believers who do not live within its boundaries have no rights or politically meaningful ties."[44]

In this endorsement of citizenship in liberal terms by Bin Bayyah, religious identity is dethroned from the central place it once held in pre-modern Islam as the principal element of political legitimation and belonging. Religious loyalty assumes the new, albeit reduced and subservient, role of reinforcing national identity or nationalism.[45] In a presupposed pluralistic Islamic nation-state political order, citizenship—not religion—forms the primary source of rights and duties. Rather than being defined by faith, Bin Bayyah argues that adherence to a set of shared values based on human nature, innate natural rights, and agreed-upon rational principles (all confirmed by the Shariʿa), become the only valid framework for state formation and political identity. In this way, Bin Bayyah criticizes the Islamist call for establishing an Islamic state solely on confessional grounds as parochial and fundamentalist. Instead of serving as an essential element for rights and justice, religious identity becomes a tool in the hand of the nation-state to forge and reinforce the citizen's loyalty to its political system.

Following Habermas, Bin Bayyah presents constitutional values as universal norms shared by all humanity, open to acknowledgment and subscription by any community member or religious affiliation. While religious loyalty may hold a paramount place in individuals' personal lives, Bin Bayyah states that it cannot assert itself or claim exclusivity in the public sphere. Although not dismissed outright, in Bin Bayyah's discourse religious differences are typically viewed as detrimental to constitutional citizenship. He portrays the convergence of all religious or ideological groups in a society around a set of shared constitutional

values, represented and guaranteed by the state, as the sole valid approach for a contemporary Islamic political system.

Bin Bayyah utilizes the concept of inclusive Islamic citizenship to illustrate the legitimacy of the nation-state model for Islam. In his discourse on citizenship, the state ensures the constitutional order and upholds shared values. Through the nation-state, the disparities among religious communities constituting society are transformed into positive elements and platforms for cooperation. The nation-state ensures a secular or neutral public sphere, where various comprehensive religious doctrines present in society can contribute to the public discourse by providing insights from their ethical and scriptural teachings. In this way, a neutral public sphere becomes central to the flourishing and fulfillment of religious communities. This conceptualization resembles John Rawl's thesis on the role of religion in the public sphere.[46] In fact, Bin Bayyah identifies his own approach with Rawls. Following a concise summary of Rawls' position on the role of religion in the public sphere, Bin Bayyah asserts, "This is the methodology that we follow in the Abu Dhabi Declaration of Peace and other documents on tolerance. We translated therein the language of religion into the language of the public discourse, or the language of civil life and the law."[47] In this regard, Bin Bayyah states that one of the challenges for modern Islamic political discourse is to translate the language of religion into "the language of what Habermas calls the public space, that is, the language of civil life and law."[48]

Here Bin Bayyah seems to endorse Rawls' proviso and Habermas' reading of it. According to this perspective, reasonable comprehensive religious doctrines may present their reasoning in the public sphere "provided that in due course proper political reasons—and not reasons given solely by comprehensive doctrines—are presented that are sufficient to support whatever the comprehensive doctrines are said to support."[49] This liberal stance of the participation of religion in the public sphere assumes that religious communities "accept not only the separation of church and state but also the restrictive definition of the public use of reason."[50] As Habermas explains, "The assumption of a common human reason forms the basis of justification for a secular state that no longer

depends on religious legitimation. And this, in turn, makes the separation of state and church possible at the institutional level in the first place."[51] In his discourse on the topic, Bin Bayyah seems unaware of the many critiques leveled against the proviso, and the difficulties that it poses for the Islamic worldview by requiring that worldview to justify itself by way of appeals to secular public reason.[52]

In this way, the necessity for a religiously colored yet neutral or secular public sphere becomes a condition for inclusive citizenship. As a matter of fact, Bin Bayyah argues that secularism is characterized by a set of principal values that should be considered positively by the Islamic discourse in the modern context. Among them, he lists 1) respect for convictions; 2) neutrality towards religious beliefs; 3) the acknowledgment of individual and collective human rights and the state's protection of them; 4) the rights of disagreement, diversity, and change on matters characteristic to individuals and groups; 5) the right of appeal to courts of natural law to secure rights and place obligations on individuals.[53] Bin Bayyah asserts that these secular principles align with Islam. He takes for granted secularism's self-description of neutrality towards religion. He defends it against Muslim critics who argue that, in practice, secularism interferes in the public sphere and controls religion by continually redefining it in accordance with the aims of the secular state. Responding to this line of thought, Bin Bayyah argues that such cases constitute "a deviation from the basic meaning of secularism."[54] In his view, all groups in society should "hold on to secularism as a means of liberation that springs from personal contentment and is not subject to a single comprehensive trend that wishes to impose its particular understanding based on personal prejudices."[55] Commenting on this quote from Bin Bayyah, March aptly observed, "here we have a quite unmistakable endorsement of secularism and citizenship on liberal terms… that is asserted to be compatible with Islamic commitments."[56]

Although unacknowledged, in his presentation of the Charter of Medina as a model of constitutional citizenship in the context of a multi-religious society and a legitimation for the territorial nation-state, Bin Bayyah is heavily indebted to reformist figures like Muhammad S. El-Awa, Fahmy Huwaydi, Yusuf al-Qaradawi, and Rashid Ghannoushi.[57]

Likewise, his interpretation of the Charter of Medina suffers from the same predetermined agenda, inconsistencies, and anachronisms as that of his predecessors.[58]

Scholars have debated whether the Charter of Medina constitutes a single document or a compilation of separate documents.[59] Similar discussions have arisen regarding the composition date of the text and with whom the Charter was concluded. While some scholars date the composition to the first year of the Hijra, immediately after the Prophet's arrival in Medina and before the start of friction between the Muslims and Jews of Medina, others have suggested the second year of the Hijra as the probable date for the composition of the Charter of Medina, i.e., after the Battle of Badr and the start of the conflict between the Muslims and the Jews of Medina.[60] Based on an *isnād* analysis of the few available oral transmissions and other historical considerations on the matter, Anjum argues that the Charter of Medina was most likely put down in its written form after the Battle of Badr and probably immediately after the killing of Kaʿb ibn al-Ashraf at the beginning of the third year of the Hijra.[61] This seems to call into question Bin Bayyah's assertion that the Charter of Medina was a voluntary agreement reached without war.

Another set of similar discussions have arisen regarding the nature of the Charter of Medina. As we mentioned earlier, in contemporary Islamic thought the Charter of Medina has usually been understood as a constitution and presented as a precursor to modern forms of constitutionalism. This view contrasts sharply with the way the Charter has been understood in premodern Islam. Al-Shafiʿi contextualizes the Charter as a *dhimma* truce, akin to those established by the Prophet in the later phases of his life. The exception is that, at this early stage, other religious communities were not obligated to pay the *jizya* to Muslim authorities but were required to contribute financially and militarily to common defense (see article 24).[62] This portrayal of the Charter by al-Shafiʿi is representative of the ways it has been understood in premodern Islamic scholarship. As Emon explains, medieval scholars like Ibn Khaldun considered the Charter as examples of a *sulḥ* or *mawādaʿa,* which suggest "that they did not consider the Constitution to be anything more than a truce between the Prophet and the various tribes in Medina, whether

Arab or Jewish."[63] As Lecker explains, these two terms should be rendered as "a non-belligerency treaty for a certain period of time," or "a temporary cessation of warfare by agreement between the belligerents."[64] This view is also shared by many contemporary Western scholars.[65] Emon contends that interpreting the Charter in constitutional terms "seems to go beyond what the context of the text and its constructed historical legacy supports."[66] In his view, the fact that in contemporary Islamic thought the text of the Charter has been mostly interpreted in constitutionalist terms "have more to do with twentieth century politics in the Muslim world than with anything inherent in the text."[67]

The indication of these points is also apparent upon a cursory examination of the Charter's text itself. The first two articles of the Charter define the *umma* in terms of common faith and jihad against the enemies of Islam. Muslims are described as one *umma* to the exclusion of all others. As Anjum observes, "In this context, *umma* could only mean a community defined by belief in and support of the Prophet Muhammad's mission."[68] It is on this confessional basis that the rest of the Charter proceeds to elaborate upon Muslims' relations with other religious communities present in Medina (i.e., the Jews and the idolaters). Within the Charter of Medina, the Prophet's authority was derived from his status as the Prophet of God and the divine mission bestowed to him by God rather than from any authority granted to an appointed leader within a pluralistic political framework. The central tenet defining the Prophet's political authority was his divine mission, with the status of other religious communities contingent upon their stance vis-à-vis his claim to prophethood.

Moreover, at its core, the Medinan polity constituted a political system established and presided over by the Prophet. Its purpose was to serve as a platform for advancing his divine mission, ensuring socio-political and religious unity for his *umma* including establishing peaceful coexistence with non-Muslim religious communities in Medina. The Muslim *umma* constituted the original and normative political unity of the Medinan polity. As stated in article 16 of the Charter, other religious communities were allowed to join Muslims as clients in order to enjoy aid and parity of favor. However, these non-Muslim communities did

not participate on equal terms in the governance of Medina. They lacked the ability to negotiate the terms of the Prophet's claim to authority or the policies he devised to advance his religious mission in Medina. As Anjum observes, "The Jews and the polytheists included in the Kitāb did not elect or want him as their leader, nor could they vote him out, change his mission, or even side with their own co-religionists against him."[69] Throughout, the Prophet was involved in extensive efforts to invite the non-Muslim religious communities of Medina to Islam. The Medinan revelation reflects these missionary efforts and contains abundant criticism of the religious and political stances of the Jews, idol worshipers, or other political dissidents (i.e., the hypocrites) of Medina. The revelation warns them with consequences in both worlds for their refusal to accept the Prophet and join the Muslim *umma*. All of the above is difficult to square with the idea of a faith-independent citizenship and constitutional-based pluralistic political order.

A careful examination of the Charter of Medina reveals that, contrary to the interpretation of the Charter endorsed by Bin Bayyah and other contemporary reformists, not all religious communities enjoyed equal political rights. For instance, article 14 of the Charter stipulates that "no believer shall be killed for an unbeliever." Bin Bayyah conveniently refrains from commenting or interpreting this clause, which appears to discriminate among members of different religious communities on religious grounds. Furthermore, while the Charter of Medina portrays Muslims as one *umma* allowing them to operate as one political and religious unit against its enemies, article 20 prohibits the polytheists (*mushrik*) from conceiving of themselves as one *umma* and cooperating or expressing solidarity with their co-religionists, i.e., the Meccan polytheist. This restriction extends to the Jews of Medina, who are required to side with the Prophet and the Muslims against their co-religionists in the event of a treaty breach. As Anjum has pointed out, even the perspective that views the Charter of Medina as establishing a confederation or commonwealth system, where different *umma*s unite against common enemies (i.e., the idol worshipers of Mecca), fails to acknowledge that the Meccans were enemies of Muslims, not of the Medinan Jews or idol worshipers. The foreign policy of the Prophet was entirely dedicated to

his divine mission, and Jews or other non-Muslim communities had no say or equal rights in determining its course.[70]

The presentation of the Charter of Medina as a precursor and model of contractual citizenship based on a constitution within the framework of a nation-state requires demands, from Bin Bayyah, a great deal of anachronisms and hermeneutical maneuvers that unjustifiably stretch its text beyond its original meaning and historical setting. In its proper context, the Charter of Medina reflects an early policy of the Prophet that encapsulates, in its essence, some of the main features of the Islamic political order and the place of religious communities within it. Most of these features found their way into the final form of the revealed law, represented in the *dhimma* system. At the same time, other elements became abrogated or were further elaborated into the more robust and developed *dhimma* system. However, the key elements regarding religious minorities, which are important for Bin Bayyah's discourse, like the preference for peace over war, tolerance of the non-Muslim religious communities, respect for their freedom of religion, and the right to organize their life according to their religious principles, were also preserved in the *dhimma* system. The mature Islamic legal discourse on *ahl al-dhimma* is no less generous than that reflected in the Charter of Medina. Contrasting the Charter of Medina with the *dhimma* system and favoring the former over the latter by historicizing the rulings regarding the *ahl al-dhimma* is decidedly ahistorical. It does not do justice to the continuity of the Prophetic governance, and flies in the face of the scriptural sources and the historical circumstances of the life of the Prophet. This brings us back to al-Shafiʿi's depiction of the Charter of Medina as a truce similar to that known in the later stage of the Prophet's life, with the only exception being that non-Muslim communities were not required to pay the *jizya*. This description seems to accurately depict the historical nature of the Charter and situate it in its proper historical context. Attempts to reconcile the Charter of Medina with modern notions of constitutional citizenship or present it as a precursor to such modern conceptualizations are undeniably anachronistic.

Nevertheless, the principal difference between Bin Bayyah's interpretation of the Charter of Medina and other reformist figures that preceded

him is that Bin Bayyah does not invoke the Charter of Medina to justify a liberal democratic form of government or a national constitutional democracy. Since the 1990s, Bin Bayyah has consistently maintained a critical stance towards democracy, asserting that "democracy should not become a religion."[71] He has portrayed the central role given to the majority in democracy in hegemonic terms as "the tyranny of the majority." For Bin Bayyah, the slogan of democracy opens the door "for the evils of partisan bigotry," and the existence of a multi-party system becomes a danger to the stability of society.[72]

In the aftermath of the Arab Spring, Bin Bayyah intensified his anti-democratic stance, contending that in Muslim societies lacking common ground and a democratic tradition, "democracy will turn to be a source of constant dispute and disorder."[73] Therefore, any unqualified call for democracy in the Muslim world is "essentially a call for war."[74] Instead, Bin Bayyah presents the classic Islamic system based on consultation (*shūra*) and allegiance (*bayʿa*) as of a higher order of justice than democracy. Unlike democracy, he asserts that *shūra* is reconciliatory, non-competitive, and non-hegemonic, enabling individuals *qua* individuals to contribute to political decision-making through consultation and sincere private advice to the rulers. Bin Bayyah, however, famously couples this discourse with a strong political quietist position, where any form of dissent or public criticism towards the rulers is deemed prohibited, limiting criticism to private and non-binding sincere advice.[75]

As we saw, for Habermas, liberal democracies are constitutive elements that render possible constitutional patriotism. According to him, the latter necessitates and takes place only in a large-scale democratic setting. While Bin Bayyah formally adopts Habermas' constitutional patriotism, he simultaneously presents a discourse contradicting essential features of a democratic liberal order. Instead, he constructs his theory of inclusive citizenship based on the classical Islamic understanding of consultation and allegiance, which were integral elements of a political order where individuals were conceived as subjects not citizens. Bin Bayyah's inclusive citizenship lacks elaboration on the nature and limits of the ruler's sovereignty, adhering to the classical Islamic interpretation that grants the ruler seemingly unlimited sovereignty except

in cases of manifest disbelief. Individuals are denied the right to publicly protest, criticize, or hold rulers accountable, with their only avenue for participation in public governance being through consultation and non-binding advice to rulers.

This approach allows Bin Bayyah to argue that establishing constitutional citizenship within the framework of a non-democratic nation-state does not require a modern constitutional form of democracy. Therefore, he contends that political regimes in the Muslim World are equally or perhaps even better equipped to implement the vision of inclusive citizenship embedded in the Charter of Medina. This perspective allows him to present countries like the UAE as the embodiment of Islamic inclusive citizenship. In the context of his discussion on religious freedom and citizenship, Bin Bayyah states that "we must praise the policies of the United Arab Emirates that serve to support the foundations of positive citizenship, tolerance, and human fraternity."[76] In overly romanticized tones, he presents the reality within the UAE as that of the progressive unfolding of all the essential dimensions of inclusive citizenship as embedded in the Charter of Medina. In this context, he claims that in the UAE,

> *The reality of positive citizenship is enhanced every day through creative initiatives that improve the quality of inclusive citizenship and contribute to the advancement of the social contract between the state and its subjects and the promotion of loyalty and belonging to one's homeland. It also improves the quality of global citizenship through good governance and selfless care offered by the state to all of its residents, regardless of their background and religion.*[77]

Bin Bayyah's approach towards inclusive citizenship and his interpretation of the Charter of Medina should be understood within the anti-Islamist political context of the post-Arab Spring period. It represents his attempt to delegitimize the Islamist call for political change in the Muslim World. In his perspective, the Islamist interpretation of the Charter of Medina as a model for an Islamic constitutional democracy and their call for a change in the present authoritarian political order in Muslim societies is misguided and dangerous. According to Bin Bayyah,

the present political order in many Muslim societies is more than capable of providing all the elements of inclusive citizenship embedded in the Charter of Medina. He argues that the situation requires only internal reform, without disrupting the present political order, to better implement the essential elements of inclusive citizenship.

Moderate Islam, Religious Tolerance, and the Global Alliance of Virtues

In Bin Bayyah's post-Arab Spring writings, the discourse on global alliances, interfaith dialogue, and religious pluralism have been an important element of his stance against Islamic terrorism (i.e., ISIS) and political Islamism (i.e., the Muslim Brotherhood). During this period, Bin Bayyah has increasingly advocated for the formation of a global alliance between representatives of the Abrahamic faiths and other members of the human family as the only remedy to the current civilizational crisis. In this approach, humanity is portrayed as being on "a ship that is on the verge of being stranded."[78] Therefore, it is the duty of each member or community of the human family to work together to find solutions to the problems facing the modern world. In this context, Muslims are portrayed as one actor among others and their equal in the effort to provide the ethical principles and worldview necessary for the progress and stability of humanity. This multi-faith perspective on global action has allowed Bin Bayyah to decenter the Islamist emphasis on the necessity of Islam and the *ummatic* perspective as the only answer to the present political problems in the Muslim World and the current global civilizational crisis. The multi-faith approach under which Muslims are requested to conceive their *ummatic* global action becomes, for Bin Bayyah, a distinguished element of "moderate Islam." Therefore, any religious perspective that does not adhere to this new conceptualization and insists on approaching the *ummatic* global action solely in terms of the primacy of Islam and its worldview is considered fundamentalist and against global peace.

The multi-faith perspective on global action revolves around acknowledging and accepting the principle of religious tolerance and pluralism.

Bin Bayyah addressed this topic in the fifth and sixth Assemblies of the Abu Dhabi Forum for Peace in 2018 and 2019, respectively. On both occasions, he presented a framework speech where he elaborated his vision of a global alliance, interfaith dialogue, and religious tolerance. In these public speeches, Bin Bayyah advocates, at least formally, the full endorsement of religious tolerance and pluralism. He also emphasized the need for historically revisiting, in the name of *fiqh al-wāqiʿ*, all the classical Islamic rulings pertaining to *ahl al-dhimma* and Muslim relations with non-Muslims that do not fit the modern context. In his 2018 framework speech entitled "Alliance of Virtue: An Opportunity for Global Peace," Bin Bayyah calls for the creation of "a moral alliance between the three religions of the Abrahamic family… and by the participation of all those who love goodness and benevolence from among the members of the great human family."[79] He was the most prominent promoter of the Charter for the New Alliance of Virtue. As expected, Bin Bayyah justifies the need for this global moral alliance on *fiqh al-wāqiʿ* groundings. As we mentioned at the beginning of our essay, Bin Bayyah identifies the culture of freedom, religious pluralism, and tolerance as inherent features of modern reality. For him, nowadays, inter-religious cooperation is guided by a wholly different logic than before and is subject to international agreements and treaties.[80]

In order to establish an Islamic framework accommodating religious pluralism and fostering new interfaith cooperation, Bin Bayyah invokes the pre-Islamic Alliance of Virtue (*ḥilf al-fuḍūl*), which historically referred to the alliance where various pre-Islamic Arab tribes came together and pledged to assist and cooperate with one another to protect the weak and the oppressed against injustice, in the name of goodness and righteousness.[81] The Prophet later affirmed the validity of this historical alliance. For Bin Bayyah, a unique feature of this historical alliance is that "it was not founded on shared religious, tribal or ethnic affiliations, but rather on universal values and freedom."[82] Building on this historical precedent, Bin Bayyah advocates for the formation of a New Alliance of Virtue among members of the Abrahamic religions and people of goodwill. This alliance, contrary to being rooted in religious affiliations, should be based on shared human values such as human

dignity, freedom, justice, tolerance, peace, and solidarity. According to Bin Bayyah, the necessity for such an alliance arises from an awareness of the present civilizational failure and the existence of shared human values.[83]

Bin Bayyah argues that the modern civilizational failure has alerted people of sound intellects "to the inability of the modern civilizational model in which all of humanity is engaged to realize its hopes of prosperity and stability."[84] Thus, he proposes the establishment of a united front comprising people of faith who, united by shared aims and goals, can address contemporary issues, combat religious extremism, and resolve religious conflicts and wars. Central to Bin Bayyah's conceptualization of the New Alliance of Virtue is the idea of shared values among people of faith and the broader human community more generally, which he categorizes on three levels: the level of a single religion, Abrahamic religions, and humanity. At the level of the specific, Bin Bayyah emphasizes the value of faith as it is encapsulated in the Islamic notion of the five protected necessities — religion, life, intellect, personal property, and family — as a shared feature among Abrahamic laws and requirements.[85] On a more general level, Bin Bayyah asserts that Muslims share with the rest of humanity all the universal values innate in human nature, which form the source of innate natural rights granted to all human beings by virtue of their existence.[86] He believes that these shared values, on which the New Alliance of Virtues is based, "can guide the world and offer solutions to society's most challenging problems."[87]

The values championed by the New Alliance of Virtue include human dignity, freedom, justice, tolerance, peace, mercy, solidarity, and inclusive citizenship. Bin Bayyah identifies human dignity as the foremost and most crucial shared value, one that "transcend the vicissitudes of time, the determinants of space, and the tendencies of human beings."[88] He disassociates human dignity from any faith-based dignity. In his view, human dignity exists "prior to faith-based dignity both in conception and existence."[89] It is for this reason that, according to Bin Bayyah, "Islam places a strong emphasis regarding the holistic conception of the other on the unity of species, equality in human dignity, the search for cultivating commonalities."[90] Therefore, differentiations between humans

should not be based on purely confessional grounds but only on goodness (*khayr*), piety and God-consciousness (*taqwa*). In support of this approach, Bin Bayyah quotes a statement from the Prophet, asserting that no Arab or white person holds precedence over a non-Arab or black person, and vice versa, "except through piety and God-consciousness." Here, Bin Bayyah divests piety and God-consciousness (*taqwa*) from the requirement of adherence to Islam and the Shariʿa. Instead, the notions of goodness and God-consciousness are stripped of their metaphysical requirements to include not only Muslims but any person (religious or not) of goodwill and virtue, "no matter how much the theological or philosophical foundations on which each side is based might differ."[91]

As we can see, in Bin Bayyah's discourse, the presumed shared values between the Abrahamic religions and humanity at large become a kind of meta-ethic or meta-religion around which the role and function of religion in the world is conceptualized. However, his discourse on the presupposed shared human values remains oddly abstract. It isolates these values from their tradition-specific understanding, and then prioritizes the abstract way of understanding them over the ways in which they have been understood and manifested historically in the traditions and narratives of each particular religion. Following the virtue ethics approach of MacIntyre and Hauerwas, one might then ask, "Whose Justice and Which Peace?" is Bin Bayyah intending?[92] Nonetheless, Bin Bayyah seems unaware of the virtue ethics approach, and presents current Western ethical discourse as a battle between postmodernism and the Kantian categorical imperative approach.[93] On more than one occasion, Bin Bayyah identifies Islamic ethics with the Kantian categorical imperative approach. For Bin Bayyah, Kant's moral absolutism is "supported by the heavenly religions."[94] However, his understanding of Kant's ethical discourse does not seem to go beyond a general and popular understanding of it, and he seems to have access to Kant's thought only through secondary sources.[95]

Martino Diez correctly observes that the Charter of the New Alliance of Virtue reflects an implicit shift towards a natural law perspective, whereby the appeal to revelation is not necessary for the establishment of social peace and common values. On the contrary, the values in

question are established and legitimized based on natural law or innate natural rights.[96] In fact, some of the rabbis that participated in the Forum drew a parallel between the New Alliance of Virtue approach and the Noahic Covenant, which in Judaism has constituted the central paradigm of the relationship between Jews and non-Jews.[97] In this Muʿtazilite-like approach, the function of revelation consists of the confirmation of existing values that are already grounded in human nature and known outright by the intellect.

This hermeneutical shift resembles the process that gave rise to modern secular culture in Europe, where in the mid-seventeen century, amid prolonged religious wars, European thinkers formulated the idea that, in order to restore social peace, the unity of the social order should no longer be based on religious unity but rather on the universality of human nature. This marked the emergence of natural law and morality as central to maintaining social order, signaling the birth of modern secular culture. The shift from religion as the foundation of unity of the social order, to human nature implied that in order to restore social peace, religious doctrines had to be somewhat marginalized to make space for the presupposed universal and rationally accessible values grounded in innate human nature.[98]

Seeking religious validation for his multi-faith perspective on global action, Bin Bayyah refers to a well-known hadith in which the Prophet likens those upholding God's limits to individuals as sitting at the deck of a ship and stopping the people of the galley, i.e., those who trespass God's limits, from piercing a hole in the hull of the ship.[99] Bin Bayyah conceives his proposal of a New Alliance of Virtue as the "finest conceptual and procedural embodiment of the metaphor of the ship's passengers."[100] For him, this hadith shows that "humanity is now on board a single ship which is on the verge of sinking, and it is the moral obligation of people of values to restrain those who want to pierce holes in the ship."[101] The metaphor of the ship underlines the unity of human destiny, urging people of virtue to address the civilizational crisis through solidarity, cooperation, common love, and compassion. In this way, the New Alliance of Virtue can become the cause of a new beginning, "the occasion for a new start, and an opportunity for the

birth of a new human being with a new vision of the world that is based on virtue."[102]

In the Islamic tradition, there has been a consensus that in this hadith, the people in the upper deck refer to Muslims who honor God's limits (*ḥudūd*) and the necessity for the Muslim *umma* to command the right and forbid the wrong. Whereas the people in the galley represent the disbelievers or sinful Muslims who trespass God's limits.[103] However, in Bin Bayyah's interpretation, the duty of the Muslim *umma* to command the right and forbid the wrong is transformed into the generic call to humanity and people of virtue to promote good and prevent harm. The people sitting on the deck are the people of virtue (of any faith or philosophical orientation). They are all equally called upon to take action and prevent the ship from sinking. The framework that would dictate the success of this operation is the shared values that unite humanity. Islam is one actor, on par with others, in this common endeavor to find a solution to modern problems. Proposals constructed on narrow identities or confessional bases are considered insufficient, ineffective, parochial, and detrimental to global peace. This shift from a confessional religious perspective to a humanistic one constitutes one of Bin Bayyah's main discursive strategies in grounding his vision for a global Alliance of Virtue.

Bin Bayyah contends that the foundation of the New Alliance of Virtue lies in the acknowledgment and embrace of tolerance and religious pluralism. According to him, both the Marakesh Declaration (grounded on the Charter of Medina) and the New Alliance of Virtue (inspired by the *ḥilf al-fuḍūl*) offer the necessary Islamic justifications for tolerance and religious pluralism.[104] He asserts that the moral and legal obligation to embrace tolerance and religious freedom "is imposed upon us by our values and our times."[105] Bin Bayyah critiques scholars who still adhere to the traditional *dhimma* system stating that, "Sadly, many of us still live as if we were in the Middle Ages, with its social stratification and segregation, ignoring the present realities of cosmopolitan interaction and coexistence."[106] In Bin Bayyah's perspective, religious freedom and tolerance should be regarded as a religious duty in the modern context. Tolerance should carve out the conceptual space for

fostering positive religious pluralism based on shared values of common human origin and human commonalities. It is through tolerance that the negative effects of differences in beliefs can be neutralized or mitigated. According to this view, Muslims "must accept diversity as a positive manifestation of beauty in existence."[107] Here, we can notice a significant departure from the classic Islamic conceptualization of religious diversity as merely a component of the ontological or existential will of God (*al-irāda al-kawniyya*) to its recognition as a constitutive element of His deontological or normative will (*al-irāda al-sharaʿīyya*).

Numerous critical observers, particularly those with a human rights background, have lamented the fact that despite their claim both the Marrakesh Declaration and the Charter of the New Alliance of Virtue have fallen short of unequivocally and explicitly endorsing religious pluralism.[108] The same is noticeable, also, in Bin Bayyah's discourse on the topic. Despite invoking Qur'an 2:256 to argue against the compulsion of religion or belief in Islam, he notably omits any discussion of apostasy, a pivotal aspect concerning religious pluralism. In his pre-Arab Spring writings, Bin Bayyah aligns himself with the classical Islamic stance on apostasy, maintaining that "Even though the Islamic principles is that 'There is no compulsion in religion,' nevertheless apostasy from Islam is not permitted."[109] He critiqued efforts by figures like Taha Jabir al-Alwani and other reformists who revisited the classical Islamic position on apostasy.[110]

By contrast, in his post-Arab Spring writings, Bin Bayyah has remained silent on the matter of apostasy. Additionally, his discourse lacks an explicit exploration of the relationship between the state and religion in a religiously pluralistic society. Apart from a generic statement that the state needs to guarantee freedom of religion, Bin Bayyah does not address the issue of the state's neutrality towards religion as a precondition for a full endorsement of religious pluralism. Beyond declaring the need to respect every religion in the public sphere, Bin Bayyah does not explicitly advocate for the equality of all religions in the public domain — a crucial aspect of the modern understanding of religious pluralism. Furthermore, Bin Bayyah appears to blur the distinction between religious tolerance and religious pluralism in his

discourse. He relies on an expanded interpretation of classical Islamic rulings on religious tolerance, such as recognizing the rights of people of other faiths to practice, build places of worship, and be secure from persecution and insult, as evidence supporting his stance on religious pluralism.[111]

Nevertheless, Bin Bayyah argues that modern reality and *fiqh al-wāqiʿ* considerations require the broadening of the concept of tolerance beyond mere acceptance of the other towards "mutual recognition and assistance."[112] Again, it is the common destiny of humanity and other shared values that form the basis for mutual recognition. Returning to the metaphor of the ship, Bin Bayyah presents people of faith as being in the same ship, united in their journey and destination. In this way, "there is no survival for one without the survival of the other, no redemption for a nation without the redemption for the other, and no deliverance of one religion without the deliverance of all others."[113] Thus, the envisioned new social contract for the New Alliance of Virtue requires moving from the framework of shared existence (*wujūd mushtarak*), which dominated the pre-modern Islamic thought, to that of shared conscience (*wijdān mushtarak*).[114] Encapsulating the heart of his multi-faith approach towards religions' global action, Bin Bayyah states "By getting to know each other, the narrowness of the "I" is transcended into the openness of "Us". We thus move from the fragmentation of minorities and narrow identities to the unity of the whole as one community, of the great society of humanity."[115]

For Bin Bayyah, a meta-ethical and meta-religious perspective, rooted in shared values among people of faith and humanity in general, allows for the transcendence of the presupposed narrowness of the confessional identities towards the conceptualization of religions' global action as one unified body or global human community. Muslims and Islam, in this context, become one contributing factor among others and on par with them in providing solutions to modern problems. While recognizing the truth claims of each religion, any Islamic supersessionist discourse based on strictly Islamic terms is viewed negatively and considered an obstacle to global peace. In this way, the Islamist slogan "Islam is the solution"[116] seems to have been replaced by the motto "The shared values

of humanity are the solution." Any call for the application of the Shariʿa as the only base for political change and the establishment of global justice and rights is perceived as too confessional and narrow. Instead, the adherence to some common generic values, presumably shared by all the Abrahamic religions and humanity more broadly is portrayed as the only solution to modern problems and global peace. In this way, the mobilization of interfaith discourse serves as a powerful tool to counter political Islam and its call for political change in the name of Islam and the Shariʿa. The interfaith dimension is invoked to neutralize the appeal of the Islamist discourse to political change and portray it as parochial, dangerous, and a door to religious extremism.

In the aftermath of the Arab Spring's war of narratives, Bin Bayyah's discourse on religious pluralism and tolerance, coupled with his vision for a global alliance of religions against extremism, aligns with the UAE's soft power politics aimed at combating Islamism and positioning itself as a beacon of moderation in the world. Paradoxically, the present Arab regimes are framed as the guarantors and protectors of shared values and the guardians of interfaith efforts for global peace. In this context, any attempt to challenge the present status quo in the name of Islam or the Shariʿa is perceived as a threat to global social peace and humanity's efforts to fight extremism and find a solution to the modern civilizational crisis. Bin Bayyah's discourse on tolerance and religious pluralism serves as an important framework to ultimately counter the Islamist pro-revolutionary front.

In fact, Bin Bayyah's view on tolerance and moderation has been officially endorsed and utilized for soft power projection by the Muslim states of the post-Arab Spring counter-revolutionary camp to counter the pro-Arab Spring revolutionary discourse of the Islamists.[117] The rhetoric of moderation, interfaith dialogue, and religious tolerance allows the Muslim states of the counter-revolutionary camp to present themselves as the natural interlocutors of the West against political Islam, whose ideology is often conflated in the official discourse with terrorism and jihadism. In recent years, countries of the counter-revolution camp have been actively exporting worldwide the discourse on tolerance and moderation, outlined by Bin Bayyah, in the attempt to counter any other

Islamic discourse that does not align with their official position on the matter.

To conclude, Bin Bayyah fully endorses the legitimacy of the nation-state together with the essential features of modernity and rejects the present validity of the necessity for an *ummatic* global integration in the form of a supra-national Islamic political order represented by the caliphate. His discourse is anti-idealist in nature. It does not contemplate the possibility of transcending the nation-state framework and the modern liberal order in favor of a possible alternative Islamic global political vision. In this anti-utopic approach, any project of global *ummatic* integration that would result in a supra-national Islamic global government in the form of a modern caliphate is considered unfeasible and harmful. Grounding his political vision in the Charter of Medina, he advocates for a liberal, religiously pluralistic, citizenship-based constitutional order and challenging, in the name of *fiqh al-wāqiʿ*, the traditional *dhimma* system. Ultimately, he falls short in grounding, in a historically coherent and meaningful way, the main features of a national liberal constitutional order on the precedent of the Charter of Medina.

The shared values among the Abrahamic religions and humanity at large constitute the conceptual axis around which Bin Bayyah conceptualizes global Muslim action. In his multi-faith perspective, these shared values constitute a sort of meta-religious and meta-ethical perspective that allows Muslims to contribute, together and on par with other religions, to the problems that afflict the modern world. The multi-faith perspective becomes a hallmark of "moderate Islam." In this perspective, the Islamist call for re-establishing the Islamic caliphate or applying the Shariʿa in Muslim societies as the only solution to modern problems is portrayed as inadequate, insufficient, and parochial. Any *ummatic* global action that does not ground itself in an interfaith perspective toward the shared values ingrained in human nature and established by reason is considered fundamentalist and an enemy of global peace. This discursive shift from the purely Islamic framework to a multi-religious one whereby Islam becomes an equal member of a united front of religions has constituted one of Bin Bayyah's important

strategies to counter the Islamist's pro-revolutionary discourse. His post-Arab Spring discourse has been officially endorsed by the counter-revolutionary camp, in the attempt to counter and eliminate any Islamist pro-revolutionary religious discourse based on *ummatic* solidarity and global political integration in the quest for rights and justice in Muslims societies.

Endnotes

I would like to express my gratitude to Usaama al-Azami and the anonymous reviewers at *AJIS* for helping improve this article at various stages of its development. Any errors in this article are entirely my responsibility.

1 Among the various important positions held by Bin Bayyah over the years have been: member of the International Islamic Fiqh Academy, Jeddah; Vice President of the International Union of Muslim Scholars, Qatar and more recently President of the Forum for Promoting Peace in Muslim Societies, Abu Dhabi. For more on Bin Bayyah's biography, see https://www.peacems.com/peacemagazine/about-us/board-of-trustees/members/he-sheikh-abdullah-bin-bai/

2 Usaama al-Azami, "'Abdullāh bin Bayyah and the Arab Revolutions: Counter-revolutionary Neo-traditionalism's Ideological Struggle against Islamism," *The Muslim World* 109, (July 2019), 343.

3 Abdullah Hamid Ali, "'Neo-Traditionalism' Vs 'Traditionalism'," Accessed, October 1, 2022, https://lamppostedu.org/neo-traditionalism-vs-traditionalism-shaykh-abdullah-bin-hamid-ali.

4 See Mark Sedgwick, "The Modernity of Neo-Traditionalist Islam," in *Muslim Subjectivities in Global Modernity*, ed. Dietrich Jung and Kristine Sinclair (Leiden: Brill, 2020), 121-147 and David H. Warren, *Rivals in the Gulf: Yusuf al-Qaradawi, Abdullah Bin Bayyah, and the Qatar-UAE Contest Over the Arab Spring and the Gulf Crisis* (London and New York: Routledge, 2021).

5 Abdallah Bin Bayyah, *The Exercise of Islamic Juristic Reasoning by Ascertaining the Ratio Legis: The Jurisprudence of Contemporary and Future Contexts* (Abu Dhabi: Tabah Foundation, 2015), 2. For more on Bin Bayyah's emphasis on renewal (*tajdīd*) and its methodology see Abdullah Bin Bayyah, *The Nation State in Muslim Societies, from the Third Assembly of the Forum for Promoting Peace in Muslim Societies Abu Dhabi, 18–19 December 2016*, trans. Habib Bewley (Abu Dhabi, UAE: Forum for Promoting Peace, 2019), 9-13; *Fatāwa Fikriyya*, (Jeddah, Dār al-Andalus al-Khaḍrāʾ, 2000), 88-104; *Itharāt tajdīdiyya fī ḥuqūl al-uṣūl* (Riyād: Dār al-Ujūh & Dār al-Tajdīd, 2013), 12-22. For Bin Bayyah's conceptualization of renewal in Islamic legal methodology see Rezart Beka, "Maqāṣid and the Renewal of Islamic Legal Theory in ʿAbdullah Bin Bayyah's Discourse," *American Journal of Islam and Society*, No. 38, 3-4, (2022):104-145.

6 Abdullah Bin Bayyah, *The Path of Peace: A Vision for a Peaceful World. The Collective Speeches of Shaykh Abdallah Bin Bayyah* (Abu Dhabi: Abu Dhabi Forum For Peace, 2022), 154, 245.

7 Bin Bayyah, *Tanbīh al-Murājaʿ*, 181.

8 Bin Bayyah, *The Nation State*, 25-26.

9 Bin Bayyah, *The Nation State*, 28.

10 Bin Bayyah, *The Nation State*, 27.

11 Abdullah Bin Bayyah, "This is not the Path to Paradise: Response to ISIS," Abu Dhabi, September 14, 2014, accessed September 30, 2022, http://binbayyah.net/english/fatwa-response-to-isis/.

12 Bin Bayyah, *The Nation State*, 26.

13 Bin Bayyah, *The Nation State*, 21.

14 Bin Bayyah, *The Nation State*, 29.

15 Bin Bayyah, *The Nation State*, 21.

16 Bin Bayyah, *Fatāwa Fikriyya*, 17-43

17 Bin Bayyah, *The Exercise of Islamic Juristic Reasoning*, 54.

18 Bin Bayyah, *The Nation State*, 19. See also, Abdallah Bin Bayyah, *Sināʿat al-fatwā wa-fiqh al-aqalliyyāt* (Beirut: Dār al-Minhāj, 2008), 280-281.

19 Bin Bayyah, *The Nation State*, 29.

20 Bin Bayyah, *The Nation State*, 34.

21 Bin Bayyah, *The Nation State*, 35.

22 Bin Bayyah, *The Nation State*, 34

23 Bin Bayyah, *The Path*, 153 and 160, respectively.

24 Bin Bayyah, *The Path*, 153.

25 Bin Bayyah, *The Path*, 239.

26 Bin Bayyah, *The Path*, 153.

27 For more on the Marrakesh conference and the Marrakesh Declaration see, https://www.marrakeshdeclaration.org/.

28 Bin Bayyah, *The Path*, 149.

29 Bin Bayyah, *The Path*, 155.

30 For more on these elements see, Bin Bayyah, *The Path*, 148-155.

31 Bin Bayyah, *The Path, 154*

32 Bin Bayyah, *The Nation State*, 19.

33 For the relative non-importance of the Charter of Medina in the classic Islamic legal and political discourse see, Anver Emon, "Reflections on the Constitution of Medina: An Essay on Methodology and Ideology in Islamic Legal History," *UCLA Journal of Islamic and Near Eastern Law* 1, no. 1 (Fall/Winter 2001-2002): 127-129.

34 Bin Bayyah, *The Nation State*, 19.

35 Bin Bayyah, *The Nation State*, 20.

36 See, Bin Bayyah, *Ṣināʿat al-fatwā.*

37 Bin Bayyah, *The Path*, 153-154. Regarding Habermas' idea of constitutional patriotism see, Dafydd Huw Rees, "Constitutional Patriotism," in *The Cambridge Habermas Lexicon*, ed. Amy Allen and Eduardo Mendieta (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2019), 66-69; Jan-Werner Müller, *Constitutional Patriotism* (Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2007); Vito Breda, "Constitutional Patriotism," in *Handbook of Patriotism*, ed. Mitja Sardoč (Cham, Springer, 2020), 179-193; Predrag Zenović, "Constitutional patriotism in the context of Habermas's political philosophy," *Prolegomena* 20, No.1 (2021): 119-136; Jan-Werner Müller, "A general theory of constitutional patriotism," *International Journal of Constitutional Law* 6, No 1, (2008): 72–95; David Abraham, "Constitutional patriotism, citizenship, and belonging," *International Journal of Constitutional Law* 6, No. 1, (January 2008): 137–152.

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40 Rees, "Constitutional Patriotism," 66.

41 Müller, *Constitutional Patriotism*, 75.

42 Bin Bayyah, *The Path*, 160.

43 Bin Bayyah in "A Conversation with Shaykh Abdallah Bin Bayyah."

44 Ovamir Anjum, "Best-laid Schemes: How the Sahifa of Medina Discourse became an Instrument of Modern Arab Authoritarianism," forthcoming article.

45 Bin Bayyah, *The Path*, 242-243; *Alliance of Virtue: An Opportunity for Global Peace* (Abu Dhabi: Forum for Promoting Peace, 2019), 16.

46 See John Rawls, *A Theory of Justice*, 2nd edition (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Belknapp Press, 1999).

47 Bin Bayyah, *The Path*, 243.

48 Bin Bayyah, *The Path*, 162, 243.

49 John Rawls, "The Idea of Public Reason Revisited," *The University of Chicago Law Review* 64 (1997): 783f. Jürgen Habermas, "Religion in the Public Sphere," *European Journal of Philosophy* 14, No. 1 (2006):1-25

50 Habermas, "Religion," 6.

51 Habermas, "Religion," 4.

52 For some of the critiques of the proviso and Rawls's response to them see, James Gordon Finlayson, "No Proviso: Habermas on Rawls, Religion and Public Reason," *European Journal of Political Theory 20, No. 3*: 443–464. For the difficulties that the liberal proviso poses for the religious worldview see, Joseph Kaminski, *Islam, Liberalism and Ontology: A Critical Re-evaluation* (London and New York: Routledge, 2021), 113-139.

53 Bin Bayyah, *Sināʿat al-fatwā*, 305.

54 Bin Bayyah, *Sināʿat al-fatwā*, 305.

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57 For more on the conceptualization of the Charter of Medina by these reformist figures see, Muhammad S. El-Awa, *On the Political System of the Islamic State* (Indianapolis: American Trust Publications, 1980); Rashid Ghannoushi, *al-Muwāṭana: naḥwa taʾṣīl li-mafāhīm muʿāṣira* (Tunis: Dār al-Ṣaḥwa, 2016); Fahmy Huwaydi, *Muwātinūn la Dhimmiyyūn: Mawqiʿ Ghayr al-Muslimīn fī Mujtamaʿ al-Muslimīn*, 4th ed. (Cairo: Dār al-Shurūq, 2005; Yūsuf al-Qaraḍāwī, *al-Waṭan wa-l-muwāṭana fī ḍaw al-uṣūl al-ʿaqadiyya wa-l-maqāṣid al-sharʿiyya* (2010). For more on the reformist interpretation of the Charter of Medina see, Ovamir Anjum, "The 'Constitution' of Medina: Translation, Commentary, and Meaning Today," Yaqeen Institute for Islamic Research, 4 Feb 2021, https://yaqeeninstitute.org/read/paper/the-constitution-of-medina-translation-commentary-and-meaning-today and "Conjuring Sovereignty: How the "Constitution" of Medina became an Instrument of Modern Arab Authoritarianism" forthcoming article.

58 In the following analysis of the Charter of Medina we are indebted to Ovamir Anjum's "The 'Constitution' of Medina," and "Conjuring Sovereignty."

59 For a general overview of the different opinions see, Michael Lecker, *The "Constitution of Medina": Muḥammad's First Legal Document* (Princeton, New Jersey: The Darwin Press, 2004), 183-191; R. Stephen Humphreys, *Islamic History: A Framework for Inquiry*, revised edition (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1991), 92-98.

60 For the various dating of the document see Lecker, *The "Constitution of Medina*," 182 and Anjum, "The "Constitution" of Medina."

61 Anjum, "The "Constitution" of Medina."

62 Muḥammad b. Idrīs al-Shāfiʿī, *al-Umm*, 8 vols. (Beirut: Dār al-Maʿrifa, 1990), 4:222. Quoted in Anjum "The 'Constitution' of Medina."

63 Emon, "Reflections," 129.

64 Lecker, The "Constitution of Medina," 205. For a broader discussion on the meaning of these two terms, see Lecker, *ibid*, 204-205.

65 See, R. B. Serjeant, "The 'Constitution of Medina,'" *Islamic Quarterly* no. 8 (1964): 3–16; idem, "The Sunnah Jāmiʿa, Pacts with the Yathrib Jews, and the Tahrim of Yathrib: Analysis and Translation of the Documents Comprised in the So-called 'Constitution of Medina,'" *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* 41 (1978): 1–41; Paul Lawrence Rose, "Muhammad, The Jews and the Constitution of Medina: Retrieving the historical Kernel," *Der Islam* 86, no. 1 (2011): 19

66 Emon, *"Reflections,"* 129.

67 Emon, *"Reflections,"* 133.

68 Anjum, "The 'Constitution' of Medina."

69 Anjum, "The 'Constitution' of Medina."

70 Anjum, "Conjuring Sovereignty."

71 For the appearance of this statement in Bin Bayyah's works, see Bin Bayyah, *In Pursuit of Peace: Framework Speech for the Forum for Promoting Peace in Muslim Societies: Abu Dhabi, 9-10 March, 2014* , trans. Tarek El Gawhary, (Abu Dhabi, UAE: Forum for Promoting Peace, 2014), 22; *Fatāwa*, 30; *Hiwār ḥawla ḥuqūq al-insān fī al-islām* (Riyadh, Obëikan, 2006), 92.

72 Bin Bayyah, *Ḥiwār*, 90; *Fatāwa*, 29.

73 Bin Bayyah, *Ḥiwār*, 89; *Fatāwa*, 29.

74 Bin Bayyah, *In Pursuit*, 22. In this regard, in his book *The Culture of Terrorism*, Bin Bayyah says, "A pretense of democracy in an immature and undeveloped environment could actually open the door to terrorism in its worst form." Dr. ʿAbd Allāh Bin el-Sheikh Mahfūẓ al-Bayyah, *The Culture of Terrorism: Tenets and Treatments*, Trans. Hamza Yusuf (n.p., Sandala and the Forum for Promoting Peace in Muslims Societies, 2014), 22.

75 Abdullah al-Shaykh al-Maḥfūz Walad Bayyah, *Khitāb al-amnī fī al-Islām wa thaqāfat al-tasāmuḥ wa al-waʾām* (Riyadh, Al-Akādīmiyya Nāyaf al-Arabiyya lī al-ʿulūm al-amniyya, 1999), 39-42; *In Pursuit*, 17, 22-23; *Tanbīh al-Marājaʿ*, 240-246.

76 Bin Bayyah, *The Path*, 241.

77 Bin Bayyah, *The Path*, 251.

78 Bin Bayyah, *The Path*, 235.

79 Shaykh Abdallah Bin Bayyah, Alliance of Virtue: An Opportunity for Global Peace (Abu Dhabi: Forum for Promoting Peace, 2019), 9.

80 Bin Bayyah, The Path 197.

81 For more on *Ḥilf al-Fuḍūl* see, Pellat, Ch., "Ḥilf al-Fuḍūl", in *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, Second Edition, Edited by: P. Bearman, Th. Bianquis, C.E. Bosworth, E. van Donzel, W.P. Heinrichs. First published online: 2012. Consulted online on 25 April 2023 https://referenceworks.brillonline.com/entries/encyclopaedia-of-islam-2/hilf-al-fudul-SIM_2865?s.num=36&s.start=20.

82 Bin Bayyah, *The Path*, 196-197.

83 Bin Bayyah, *The New Alliance of Virtue*, 10.

84 Bin Bayyah, *The New Alliance of Virtue*, 10.

85 Bin Bayyah, *The Path*, 220.

86 Bin Bayyah, *The Path*, 220. On this level, Bin Bayyah lists the values of human dignity, freedom, justice, tolerance, peace, mercy, solidarity, and inclusive citizenship.

87 Bin Bayyah, *The Path*, 233.

88 Bin Bayyah, *The New Alliance of Virtue*, 14.

89 Bin Bayyah, *The New Alliance of Virtue*, 13.

90 Bin Bayyah, *The New Alliance of Virtue*, 13.

91 Bin Bayyah, *The Path*, 203.

92 See A. Maclntyre, *Whose Justice? Which Rationality*? (London: Duckworth, 1988); S. Hauerwas, *A Community of Character. Towards a Constructive Christian Social Ethic* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1981).

93 Bin Bayyah, *Global Peace*, 16-17

94 Bin Bayyah, *Global Peace*, 17; *Alliance of Virtue*, 14.

95 The only source that Bin Bayyah quotes with regard to Kant's philosophical discourse is ʿAṭayāt Abū Al-Saʿūd, *Kant wa al-Salām al-Islamī*. See, Bin Bayyah, *In Pursuit*, 9.

96 Martin Diaz, "The Alliance of Virtue: Towards an Islamic Natural Law?", 30/03/2020.

97 Diaz, "The Alliance of Virtue." For more on the Noahide Covenant see, David Novak, *The Image of the Non-Jew in Judaism* (New York and Toronto: Edward Mellen Press, 1983). Some Jewish thinkers have compared the Noahic Covenant approach with the natural law. See, Nahum Rakover, "Law and the Noahides: Law as a Universal Value (Jerusalem: The Library of Jewish Law, 1998).

98 For a brief account of these developments, see Wolfhart Pannenberg, *Christianity in a Secularized World* (Crossroad, New York, 1989).

99 For Bin Bayyah's elaboration on the hadith and its relationship with the New Alliance of Virtue see, Bin Bayyah, *The Path*, 228-235.

100 Bin Bayyah, *The Path*, 233.

101 Bin Bayyah, *The New Alliance of Virtue*, 15.

102 Bin Bayyah, *The Path*, 234.

103 For the classic interpretation of this hadith see, Muḥammad Anwar al-Kashmīrī, *Fayḍ al-bārī sharḥ ṣaḥīḥ al-bukhārī*, ed. Aḥmad Azzu Inayah, 4th volume (Beirut: Dār al-Iḥyāʾ al-Turāth al-ʿArabī, 2000), 431-432; Shihāb al-Dīn al-Qasṭalānī, *Irshād al-sārī lī sharḥ ṣaḥīḥ al-bukhārī*, ed. Muḥammad ʿAbd al-Azīz al-Khālidī, 6th volume (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-ʿIlmiyya, 1996), 145-146.

104 In fact, the sixth Assembly of the Abu Dhabi Forum for Peace, in 2019, was dedicated to the topic of tolerance and religious freedom.

105 Bin Bayyah, *The Path*, 214.

106 Bin Bayyah, *The Path*, 214.

107 Bin Bayyah, *The Path*, 213.

108 Diaz, "The Alliance of Virtue,"; Ahmed Salisu Garba, "The Prospects and Problems of the Marrakesh Declaration on the Rights of Religious Minorities in Muslim Majority Communities," *The Review of Faith & International Affairs* 16, No. 4 (2018): 47-59 and Vebjørn L Horsfjord, "The Marrakesh Declaration on Rights of Religious Minorities: Opportunity or Dead End?" *Nordic Journal of Human Rights* 36, No. 2:151-166

109 Bin Bayyah, *Hiwār*, 173.

110 See, Abdullah Bin Bayyah, "Taʿlīqʿala al-kitāb: Ishqaliyyāt al-ridda wa al-murtadīn li al-ʿalāmat Ṭāha al-ʿUlwānī", accessed May 1, 2023, https://binbayyah.net/arabic/archives/400.

111 Bin Bayyah, *The Path*, 213-214.

112 Bin Bayyah, *The Path*, 216.

113 Bin Bayyah, *The Path*, 216.

114 Bin Bayyah, *Alliance of Virtue*, 204.

115 Bin Bayyah, *The Path*, 216.

116 Islam as the solution is an important feature of the Islamist discourse. In the 1970s, al-Qaraḍāwī started the series, "The Inevitability of the Islamic Solution" (*Ḥatmiyyat al-ḥal al-Islāmī*). In this context, he wrote the book *Al-Ḥal al-Islāmī: Farīḍā wa ḍarūra* (Beirut: Mu'assasa al-Risāla, 1974)

117 For more on the use of use of tolerance and "moderate Islam" as a religious soft power by the counter-revolutionary camp, see Baycar, Hamdullah, and Mehmet Rakipoglu, "The United Arab Emirates' Religious Soft Power through Ulema and Organizations," *Religions* 13 (2022): 646; John Fahy, "The international politics of tolerance in the Persian Gulf," *Religion, State & Society* 46, No. 4 (August, 2018): 311-327; Panos Kourgiotis, "'Moderate Islam' Made in the United Arab Emirates: Public Diplomacy and the Politics of Containment" *Religions* 11, no. 1: 43. Stéphane Lacroix, "The United Arab Emirates: When Religious Tolerance Serves Political Intolerance," Site du Centre de Recherches Internationales (CERI) de Sciences Po, March 21st 2019; Last accessed, 15th September 2022; https://www.sciencespo.fr/ceri/en/content/united-arab-emirates-when-religious-tolerance-serves-political-intolerance.html.; Dhiya Boubtane, "From soft power to sharp power? The United Arab Emirates' religious policy and the promotion of a moderate Islam," Site du Centre de Recherches Internationales (CERI) de Sciences Po, Spring, 2021. Last accessed September, 21, 2022, https://www.sciencespo.fr/kuwait-program/wp-content/uploads/2021/11/sciencespo-kuwait-program-2021-boutane-dhiya.pdf.

An Egyptian Ethicist: Muḥammad ʿAbd Allāh Drāz (1894-1958) and His Qurʾān-Based Moral Theory

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Abstract

The sources shaping a moral theory range from "reason" to "societal command" to "religious texts." The prominence and relationship between these sources is contingent upon the ethicists' approaches and inquiries. Although Kant's proposition of "pure reason" as a source of moral obligation marks a significant turning point in the field of ethics, scholars like Søren Aabye Kierkegaard argue for a divine command law of ethics, where religious texts become an inevitable source complementing individual ethical choices. This essay explores the intersection of religious texts and reasoning—the fusion between heteronomy and autonomy as sources of morality. It analyzes Muḥammad ʿAbd Allāh Drāz's "Moral Obligation" as a categorical imperative within moral theories and his incorporation of Western scholars such as Immanuel Kant and Henri Bergson into his work, among others. The discussion features a significant episode of Muslim intellectual engagement with Western scholarship and its impact on understanding morality in the Qurʾān. The study shows that Drāz's *La Morale du Koran* adapts certain Western ethical theories and reinterprets specific Qurʾanic passages, creating a new synthesis: an integration of knowledge.

Keywords: Muḥammad ʿAbd Allāh Drāz, Egypt, Occidentalism, Qurʾān, Moral Obligation, Immanuel Kant, Religious Hermeneutics, Heteronomy, Dianomy, Autonomy, Integration of Knowledge

Introduction*

This article sheds light on the life and work of Muḥammad ʿAbd Allāh Drāz (1894-1958), a twentieth-century Egyptian ethicist and graduate of the College de France and Sorbonne University. It focuses on his influential work, *La Morale du Koran*. Specifically, the essay discusses Drāz's exploration of "Moral Obligation" in the theoretical section of his book *La Morale du Koran* in the light of recent studies and comparative

ethics models. It discusses the author's worldview and underscores the significance of his contributions to Muslim ethics, providing a summary of the primary chapters in the theoretical section. The article draws comparisons between Drāz's concept of "moral obligation" and Western philosophers and ethicists, including Immanuel Kant (d. 1804), Frédéric Rauh (d. 1907), and Drāz's research mentor, Henri Bergson (d. 1941). The article argues that Drāz proposes dianomy—a duality of divine and individual reasoning as sources of morality, influenced by Western scholars' moral philosophy, with a claim that the Qurʾān supports their findings. Simultaneously, Drāz underscores the necessity of a transcendental source of morality. His intellectual work exemplifies the intersection between traditional Islamic studies and Western scholarship. Drāz's *La Morale du Koran*, widely cited in Islamic ethics, is a "fusion of horizons," i.e., an adaptation of Western ethical theories and a reinterpretation of specific Qurʾanic passages and Islamic literature, resulting in a sophisticated synthesis.

Drāz's Intellectual Life

On November 8, 1894, Drāz was born into a religious family renowned as "the house of scholars" in Mahalat Dyadī.[1] Following the local tradition among educated elites, he mastered Arabic literacy skills, memorized the entire Qurʾān, and grasped various recitation styles (qirāʾāt) by the age of 10.[2] In 1912, Drāz graduated from the al-Azhar Institute in Alexandria, where his father, ʿAbd Allāh (d. 1932), served as the principal. Subsequently, he earned a degree in Religious Studies from al-Azhar University in 1916.[3] Between 1916 and 1919, Drāz attended night language schools to learn French and actively participated in political movements under the leadership of the Egyptian revolutionary statesman Saʿd Zaghlūl (d. 1927).[4]

Following his graduation from al-Azhar University, Drāz commenced his career as an instructor in various educational institutions. Initially, he served as a teacher at the al-Azhar Institute in Alexandria. Between 1928 and 1936, Drāz continued his teaching role at al-Azhar University until he was dispatched by both al-Azhar and King Fuad I (r. 1922-1936)

to pursue a doctoral degree at Sorbonne University in France. In 1939, rather than immediately enrolling in a graduate program, Drāz opted to join the College de France and Sorbonne University as an undergraduate student. He studied logic, sociology, psychology, ethics, and philosophy during this period.[5]

Upon his return to Egypt in 1948, Drāz, a year later, was elected as a member of the senior scholar's Council of al-Azhar (*Hayʾat Kibār al-ʿUlamāʾ*). Additionally, he assumed the role of a lecturer at Fuad I University (present-day Cairo University), where he served as a professor of philosophy and Qurʾanic studies in the Department of Arabic Language within the College of Sciences (*Dār al-ʿUlūm*). After the Egyptian revolution on July 23, 1952, Drāz was nominated to be the Grand Imām of al-Azhar, the highest position in Egypt's largest Islamic institution. However, he declined the position.[6]

Drāz's epistemological religious background and educational training equipped him to utilize both textual and rational evidence in his scholarly pursuits. Influenced by the 20th-century revolutionary thinker Muḥammad ʿAbduh (d. 1905) and his notable student Rashīd Riḍā (d. 1935), Drāz, though not a direct student of ʿAbduh, embraced a reformist and revivalist approach, advocating for the re-interpretation of religious texts (*ijtihād*).[7] He wrote extensively on comparative religions, Islamic ethics, and Qurʾanic studies in both Arabic and French, producing four books and numerous articles including:

1 ***Initiation Au Koran: Exposé Historique, Analytique Et Comparatif* (Introduction to the Qurʾān: Historical, Analytical, and Comparative Presentation):** An introduction to the Qurʾān, outlining its structure and principles. Initially written in French, this work served as one of Drāz's two theses defended on December 15, 1947, at the University of Paris. It was later translated into Arabic and summarized, and eventually translated into English.

2 ***La Morale du Koran* (The Morality of the Qurʾān):** Drāz's masterpiece on morality in the Qurʾān and his second thesis, defended at Sorbonne University in 1947. A detailed analysis of this monograph will be provided below.

3 ***Al-Dīn: Buḥūth mumahidah li-dirāsat tārīkh al-adyān* (The Religion: Introductory Studies to the History of Religions):** This textbook was compiled after three years of teaching "History of Religions" at Cairo University. It discusses the concept of religion, its origin, function, and impact on human lives. The four studies include: "Defining Religion," "The Relationship between Religion, Culture, and Ethics," "Religiosity and its Instinctive Origin," and "The Origin of Divine Theology."

4 ***Al-Nabaʾ al-ʿaẓīm: Naẓarāt jadīdah fī al-Qurʾān al-Karīm* (The Great News: New Perspectives on the Noble Qurʾān):** Here, Drāz explores the Qurʾanic sciences. The first part addresses the definition of the Qurʾān, its titles, and the imitability of alternation (*taḥrīf*). The second part discusses the sources of the Qurʾān and its divine nature.

Drāz's articles cover diverse themes and topics, ranging from ethics, worship, and Islamic law to theology. The titles include: "The Origin of Islam," "Usury in Islamic Law," "The Principles of International Law in Islam," "Islamic Perspective on Fighting," "Acts of Worship: Prayer, Almsgiving, Fasting, and Pilgrimage," "Between Idealism and Realism," "Responsibility in Islam," "Al-Azhar: The Old and New University," and "Thoughts on the Principles of Philosophy and Ethics."

In addition to his written contributions, Drāz delivered numerous public speeches, primarily focusing on Qurʾanic exegesis and ethics. These speeches were broadcast on Egyptian national TV and radio programs. It is worth noting that Drāz's chapter titled "The Origin of Islam" was included by Keith W. Morgan for publication in his volume *Islam: The Straight Path as Interpreted by Muslims*.[8]

Drāz engaged with international intellectual and political occurrences through his scholarly endeavors. For example, in response to the publication of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR), Drāz wrote a paper titled "Le Droit International Public Et L'Islam," wherein he conducted a comparative analysis between the Declaration of Human Rights articles and Qurʾanic principles. Drāz observed that the United Nations was established to protect the rights of "the strong."[9] The remainder of the article presented Qurʾān-based human rights principles.

This essay gained a widespread readership and received reviews from both academics and politicians. In a letter to Drāz, M. Albert Gibran, the United Nations commissioner in Libya in 1951, expressed, "I found in your essay a point of departure towards a new practical step, which is establishing an organization akin to a permanent international court whose decisions are inspired by the principles that you deduced from the revealed scripture."[10]

In his final intellectual contribution, titled "Mawqif al-Islam min al-Adyān al-Ukhrá wa ʿAlāqatuh bihā" (the Islamic Position towards Other Religions and Their Relationship), Drāz defines Islam as a monotheistic message of peace emphasizing the interconnectedness of the Muhammadan, Mosaic, and Christian faiths. According to Drāz, this interconnectedness unfolds in two stages:

1 The Elementary Stage**:** Muslims are urged to respect and believe in all scriptures and apostles equally without distinctions. The Qurʾān teaches that every scripture confirms the books revealed before (Q. 5:46-48).

2 The Secondary Stage: The later scripture complements and modifies the previous ones. Jesus, for instance, confirmed the Torah and legalized certain dietary rules forbidden for the Israelites (Q. 3:50). Similarly, Muḥammad legalized and prohibited certain rules from previous scriptures for Muslims (Q. 7:157). Drāz asserts that these changes were not indicative of the incompleteness or imprudence of the previous scriptures but were necessitated by the changing contexts in which they were to be applied.

Drāz uses the metaphor of three physicians examining a child in three stages (Moses, Jesus, and Muḥammad) to discuss the relationship between Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. Each physician, corresponding to a stage, prescribed nutrition suitable for the child's development. In the initial stage, the first physician limited the baby's nutrition to milk. In the subsequent stage, the second physician introduced some solid food alongside milk, and in the final stage, the third physician permitted the child to consume complete and healthy meals. While their prescriptions differed, all physicians agreed on the fundamental

principle that all meals should be clean and healthy regardless of the child's stage.[11]

Drāz wrote *La Morale du Koran* during challenging times, a period that likely influenced his worldview. Accompanied by his wife and ten children, he embarked on his studies in France, facing the complexities of family life alongside academic endeavors. World War II added an extra layer of difficulty as his family became divided between two cities. The younger children resided with their mother in Seine et Oise, which Drāz considered safer and quieter than Paris. Meanwhile, Drāz and the elder children stayed in the capital, close to the libraries of Sorbonne and College de France and in close proximity to his mentors. In a meeting with Drāz's eldest son, I inquired about why his father decided to divide the family. He explained that his father adhered to the English saying, "Do not put all your eggs in one basket."[12] Despite the wartime challenges, the Egyptian embassy in France presented Drāz with an opportunity to return to Egypt via Switzerland and Turkey. However, he persevered and completed his studies, disregarding the potential dangers. Unfortunately, the consequences of the war still reached Drāz. On July 8, 1944, his residence in Seine et Oise suffered partial damage by Allied bombing, resulting in injuries to his wife.[13]

Yūsuf al-Qaraḍāwī (d. 2022), a highly influential Muslim thinker, wrote a brief biography of his teacher, Drāz, wherein he highlights the distinct nature of his approach and provides an overview of his intellectual contributions. Al-Qaraḍāwī describes Drāz as one of the encyclopedic scholars capable of integrating religious sciences with contemporary culture. He writes,

> *Muḥammad ʿAbd Allāh Drāz stood out as one of the encyclopedic scholars, skilled at harmonizing religious sciences with contemporary culture. He is proficient in French and Arabic and holds degrees from both al-Azhar and Sorbonne, (ibn al-Azhar wa ibn al-Sorbonne). His studies at the Sorbonne did not compromise his deep-rooted Azharī background. Drāz is among the few who maintained the tradition of wearing al-Azhar attire even upon returning from studying abroad.*[14]

The description "ibn al-Azhar wa ibn al-Sorbonne" shows Drāz's unique status as an individual who acquired knowledge in two distinct academic settings yet integrated both benefits. Al-Qaraḍāwī's statements imply that, unlike some scholars who studied in the West and experienced noticeable changes in their personality, lifestyle, or scholarship, Drāz remained consistent.

Al-Qaraḍāwī concludes his brief biography of Drāz by recounting his personal visits to Drāz's home in Heliopolis, Cairo, expressing his intention to study with him in private sessions frequently.[15] Although Drāz agreed to this arrangement, they never had another meeting, as Drāz passed away suddenly after presenting a paper at the International Conference on Religion in Lahore, Pakistan. Drāz died on January 1958 and was buried in Egypt.[16]

La Morale du Koran

La Morale du Koran represents Drāz's meticulous effort to engage Western scholarship and modern theories on morality in dialogue with the interpretation of Islamic literature, particularly the Qurʾān. This monograph holds significance as one of the most influential works on Muslim ethics in the twentieth century. Originally written in French, it has been translated into Arabic and then English.[17] To broaden its accessibility, Basma ʿAbd al-Ghaffār edited the monograph, removing Drāz's comparative model and presenting a condensed version of his sophisticated hermeneutics.[18]

The translated work gained popularity upon its introduction to an Arab readership, receiving widespread acknowledgment in contemporary Arabic scholarship on Muslim ethics. It continues to be frequently cited in scholarly discussions and intellectual gatherings. For instance, during the "Al-Azhar International Conference on Renovation of Islamic Thought" held on January 27-28, 2020, in a public intellectual debate between the Grand Imām of al-Azhar, Aḥmad al-Ṭayib, and the President of Cairo University, Muḥammad ʿUthmān al-Khusht, the latter recommended Drāz's work on morality as an exemplary contribution to the renewal of Islamic religious discourse.

La Morale du Koran is divided into two main parts: theoretical and practical. The practical section explores individual, familial, societal, communal, and religious aspects of morality. Drāz, in this section, reorganizes and indexes Qurʾanic verses related to virtue ethics, adopting a holistic approach that considers the text in its entirety rather than analyzing it chapter by chapter. This approach stands in contrast to earlier works by Muslim scholars like Abū Ḥāmid al-Ghazzālī's *Ǧawāhir al-Qurʿān* (The Jewelry of the Qurʾān), Abū Bakr al-Jaṣṣāṣ al-Ḥanafī's *Aḥkām al-Qurʾān* (The Rules of the Qurʾān), and Abū Bakr ibn al-ʿArabī al-Mālikī's *Aḥkām al-Qurʾān* (The Rules of the Qurʾān).

While al-Ghazzālī categorizes the Qurʾanic passages into verses (763 verses) that discuss knowledge (*maʿrifah*) and others (741 verses) that discuss behavior (*sulūk*), which he termed the jewelry of the Qurʾān, Drāz focuses his research on morality. Unlike previous works that approached ethics from legal, theoretical, or theological perspectives, Drāz emphasizes morality as the core of his investigation. In contrast to earlier works where clear connections between discussed verses are challenging to discern, Drāz organizes Qurʾanic verses thematically to highlight their relationships. The overarching themes of this indexing center on moral and ethical behavior, along with the rules and regulations of Islamic law.

The theoretical part of *La Morale du Koran* is organized into five chapters, each considered by Drāz as an essential component of his moral theory. These chapters are: "Obligation" (the focus of this essay), "Responsibility," "Sanction," "Intention and Inclinations," and "Effort." Drāz employs these chapter titles as a typology for comparing his Qurʾān-based moral theory to other theories of morality, as demonstrated below.

In the first chapter, titled "Obligation," Drāz emphasizes that obligation is the central principle of any moral theory. Obligation constitutes responsibility, and without it, humans lose the concept of justice. He states, "For, without obligation, there is no responsibility, and without responsibility, there can be no return to justice."[19] According to Drāz, moral action arises from the individual's commitment to oneself and society, a necessity that everyone should observe.[20] He highlights that throughout the text, the Qurʾān refers to the concept of moral necessity using multiple terms such as imperative (*amr*), prescription (*kitābah*),

and duty (*farīḍah*). However, Drāz notes that each term should be interpreted within its context, as these terms do not exclusively refer to moral obligation.

In the second chapter, titled "Responsibility," Drāz asserts that responsibility is integral to moral obligation. He discusses the characteristics and prerequisites of responsibility from religious, ethical, and social perspectives.[21] According to Drāz, responsibility involves committing oneself to an authority, which could be the self, another individual, or a higher authority. The motivation for responsibility can proceed from the inner or outer self—be it personal religious commitment or societal constraints. Drāz interprets the Qurʾanic verse, "Believers, do not betray God and the Messenger, or knowingly betray [other people's] trust in you" (Q. 8:27), as a foundational text for understanding human responsibility.[22] Using this verse, he argues that every responsibility could be considered moral responsibility when approved of by people. Similarly, outer responsibilities become internal commitments if accepted by individuals. For instance, when a person decides to donate to an organization, the act becomes a personal commitment. Drāz stresses that withholding pledged money for donation is considered unethical according to the Qurʾanic principle, "Honor your pledges: you will be questioned about your pledges" (Q. 17:34). Drāz emphasizes that moral responsibility should be an intentional and individual duty with the requirements known to the person before making a commitment. Actions lacking clear motivation are, in Drāz's view, acts without responsibility.[23]

In the third chapter, titled "Sanction," Drāz explores the consequences of moral responsibility, highlighting the notions of reward and punishment. He categorizes the outcomes of an individual's actions into three dimensions: ethical, legal, and divine. The ethical consequences, as defined by Drāz, include the positive or negative emotions that individuals experience following their actions. In instances of wrongdoing, a sense of "remorse and penance" typically develops.[24] Drāz asserts that engaging in ritual practices can enhance ethical behavior. For instance, prayer guards against evil and indecencies (Q. 29:45), charity purifies the soul (Q. 9:103), and fasting serves as a means to attain piety (Q. 2:183).[25]

The legal sanctions, according to Drāz, pertain to the penal laws in Islam, designed to punish immoral behaviors during one's lifetime.[26]

Divine compensations, as described in the Qurʾān, manifest through providence or damnation, parallel to the Bible. Drāz illustrates this concept by referencing biblical commandments, covenants, and the accompanying rewards or punishments associated with divine decrees. For instance, in the Book of Leviticus, the passage "Reward for Obedience" states, "If you follow my decrees and are careful to obey my commands, I will send you rain in its season, and the ground will yield its crops and the trees their fruit…" (Leviticus 26:3-5).[27] Drāz contends that the Qurʾān underscores both worldly and hereafter rewards, aligning with the analogous concept of Divine reward found in the Bible.[28]

In the fourth chapter, titled "Intention and Inclinations," Drāz defines intention as the movement of an individual's will to carry out a specific behavior. He classifies the relationship between action and intention into four cases:

1. Action without intention: This constitutes an invalid moral act.
2. Incomplete action with incomplete intention: This is considered incomplete, whether leaning towards goodness or badness.
3. Good action and good intentions: This signifies complete morality.
4. Good intention without action: This stands in contrast to the first case.

Nevertheless, the intention is a prerequisite for the validity of any action; it holds the same value as the action itself.[29] In the fifth chapter, titled "Effort," Drāz explores the correlation between actions and motivation. He contends that an intended action accompanied by effort differs from a mundane action, which is an act of self-determination. Moral theory focuses on the effort driven by "reason," such as the exertion expected of an individual to repel evil actions, marking the initial step toward ethical conduct. The second phase involves creative effort, wherein individuals must choose their actions thoughtfully. This innovative effort encompasses three types: "good choice," "better choice," and "the best choice." Drāz emphasizes that while the first level agrees with the

Qurʾān, the other two are optional, though individuals are encouraged to pursue them. Furthermore, he draws a distinction between two types of effort: non-physical effort, which involves the decision to avoid evil, and physical effort, which requires tangible endeavors to engage in positive actions.[30]

Drāz uses the titles of the theoretical section's chapters to outline the comparative model. When a concept aligns with a contemporary, medievalist, or ancient philosopher, Drāz provides a thorough discussion of it. While he does not directly compare his entire theory to another comprehensive one, he selectively draws upon various works deemed relevant to the overarching argument. Drāz adopts a comparative method reminiscent of the typology scheme found in David Little and Sumner Twiss's book, *Comparative Religious Ethics: A New Method.* Like Little and Twiss, Drāz acknowledges the significant distinction and intricate relationship between religion and morality.[31]

La Morale du Koran poses questions about how the Qurʾān portrays ethical life, and provides an overview of theoretical and practical ethical theories outlined in certain Qurʾanic passages. Despite Drāz's intention to expound on morality in the Qurʾān without reference to Greek philosophy and interdisciplinary sciences, he relies on Islamic secondary sources and ancient as well as modern philosophical works, as I demonstrate below.

Moral Obligation[32]

The source of morality revolves around the ethicist's approach and the area of interest. Nevertheless, three prominent approaches can be identified as addressing "moral obligation": divine, social, or rational sources. Kant's theory, considered a crucial turn in ethics, introduces the concept of "autonomy" to the philosophy of ethics. His discussion of "pure reason" necessitates the rejection of all forms of moral realism, advocating for the self-legislating moral subject. According to Kant, a philosophical framework grounded in experience is referred to as empirical; when its principles are abstract and precede experience, then it is pure reasoning.[33] In critiquing Kant's theory, Georg Wilhelm Friedrich

Hegel (d. 1831) presents a distinct source of moral obligation, namely the social command account, which views duty as stemming from constraints imposed by others, echoing David Hume's empiricism.[34] On the other hand, Søren Aabye Kierkegaard (d. 1855) proposes a resolution by returning to the divine command theory that Kant had previously rejected, asserting it as the rightful foundation. As argued by Robert Stern, we encounter a dialectical circle of positions. Despite the merits and drawbacks inherent in each of the theories proposed by Kant, Hegel, and Kierkegaard, these theories continue to be focal points in ethical discussions among scholars.[35]

Scholars continue to debate the source of moral obligation. Like Kierkegaard, C. Stephen Evans, in his book *God and Moral Obligation*, advocates for the traditional perspective that grounds morality in God, asserting that a divine command theory is more plausible than alternative philosophical views. Evans contends that moral obligation is rooted in divine commands, and God communicates these commands to humans through conscience.[36] In contrast, in his article "Could Morality Have a Source," Chris Heathwood argues against the existence of a source for morality or moral facts. He challenges moral realists who posit ungrounded moral truths and suggests that some argue for God as the source of morality. Heathwood notes that these theories, including God as the source, represent a form of conservatism. His concern is not epistemological but metaphysical. He does not deny the existence of sources but questions the validity of inferring the source of morality and argues that not all moral truths need a source.[37]

In his discussion of the sources of moral obligation, Drāz introduces the Qurʾān as a divine text that complements what philosophers have achieved through intuition and observation. Drāz contends that an understanding of moral obligation emerges from the characteristics and general principles embedded in the Qurʾanic text. According to him, the divine law of the Qurʾān is founded on three key principles.

The first principle, pertaining to rules in the Qurʾān, is "the possibility of the action." Applicability serves as a prerequisite for both Qurʾanic rules and moral obligations. Drāz emphasizes that no moral obligation exists if the required action is unattainable. Numerous passages in the

Qurʾān address this issue, such as "God does not charge a soul except [according to] what He has given it" (Q. 65:7) and "No person is charged with more than their capacity" (Q. 2:233). From these passages, Drāz suggests that the inability to carry out a command renders it void until circumstances change.

The second Qurʾanic principle is the applicability of the command. This rule emphasizes that any ethical or religious obligation in the Qurʾān should be reasonable and applicable. Drāz asserts that if a command is unattainable, it should not be considered obligatory. He provides examples where the Qurʾān aims not to overburden its followers with rules, citing passages such as "God intends for you ease and does not intend for you hardship" (Q. 2:185), "He has chosen you and has not placed upon you in the religion any difficulty" (Q. 22:78), and "And God wants to lighten for you [your difficulties], and humankind was created weak" (Q. 4:28). Drāz further provides instances from the Qurʾān where the rule of religious obligation is altered, postponed, or annulled. For instance, in the religious dietary law, if a person cannot find anything lawful to eat except for carrion, blood, or the flesh of swine, which are generally prohibited, all forbidden types of food are permitted (Q. 5:3). In specific situations, the rule might be adjusted, such as reducing the number of four-unit prayers by half during a journey (Q. 4:101), or postponed, as seen when sick individuals are exempted from fasting during Ramadan (Q. 2:184). Additionally, the rule might be substituted with another action, as is the case when water is unavailable for ritual ablution, and dust can be used symbolically as a replacement for water (Q. 5:6). Drāz argues that these examples of divine commands highlight the core principle of applicability in divine legislation.

The third principle is gradualism—the Qurʾanic strategy of progressively implementing divine commands. Drāz highlights a notable example of this approach in the Qurʾān: the prohibition of alcoholic fermented drinks. The discussion on intoxicants is covered in four verses, with the final one imposing a complete ban on their consumption. The preceding three phases were designed to prepare the Muslim community to accept the ultimate prohibition.[38] Drāz contends that this gradualism principle also applies to the moral codes outlined in the Qurʾān. He

bases his argument on the overarching observation that the Qurʾanic revelation unfolded over twenty-three years, occurring in two distinct periods—Mecca and Medina, as referenced in the Qurʾān (Q. 17:104). Therefore, he asserts that time and context are crucial considerations when applying any Qurʾanic command or rule.

Furthermore, Drāz discusses the characteristics of the locus of obligation—the human being. According to Drāz, humans are relational subjects, meaning that the human self is defined through multiple relations to others, including biographical, natural, personal, familial, social, humanitarian, and transcendental connections. The development of these aspects of the self as a cohesive unit is essential for moral sensibility. Therefore, all these facets of the self should be harmonized and cultivated to construct the "perfect human." Drāz emphasizes, "Humans should develop all values of the self together without any exception."[39] He highlights that these multiple relations find expression in the Qurʾanic concept of moral obligation, including obligations towards the divine and obligations towards the self, the family, and guests.

An important aspect of Drāz's theory is the assertion that humans are not inherently sinful. According to Drāz, the Qurʾān does not portray human beings as intrinsically evil, nor does it depict them as creatures whose behavior cannot be rectified. On the contrary, the Qurʾān presents humans as inherently perfect beings, stating, "We have certainly created humankind in the best of stature" (Q. 95:4). However, those who fail to engage in virtuous deeds deviate from this original state of perfection and are characterized as thoughtless and mentally unstable: "Indeed, humankind was created anxious, when evil touches him, impatient, and when good touches him, withholding [of it], except the observers of prayer" (Q. 70:19-22). As virtuous deeds uplift humans, misconduct leads them to "the lowest of the low" (Q. 95:5). The Qurʾān suggests that failure is an attribute of those individuals whose "hearts with which they do not understand, they have eyes with which they do not see, and they have ears with which they do not hear. Those are like livestock; rather, they are more astray. It is they who are heedless" (Q. 7:179). In this context, humans possess the freedom to choose their behavior. However, education enhances intellectual faculties and refines human choices, while

ignorance degrades them: "He has succeeded who purifies it, and he has failed who instills it [with corruption]" (Q. 91:9-10).

While Drāz supports human free will and reasoning in selecting moral behavior, he raises doubts about people's ability to differentiate between right and wrong without divine guidance. He discusses particular inquiries that have been the focus for early schools of theology (*kalām*) regarding human reason, such as whether individuals can rely solely on their reason to discern right from wrong. In the absence or rejection of religious texts, can individuals trust their reason to define goodness and evil, and does their understanding align with scriptural definitions? Drāz highlights that this remains an ongoing theological debate within Muslim traditions. For instance, defenders of reason, such as the Muʿtazilah,[40] and the Shīʿah,[41] argue that humans bear the responsibility for using their reason to define goodness and evil. On the contrary, the Ashʿarīyyah[42] deny the ability to ascertain moral obligations without revelation, while the Maturīdīyyah[43] adopt a middle position between the Muʿtazilah and the Ashʿarīyyah. They posit that reason can only recognize essential moral obligations. Drāz contends that the proponents of reason in Islam are inaccurate because there is a natural continuous growth in our intellectual capacities, typically influenced by the level of education. He contends that our reason can only provide a general definition of goodness and evil for essential obligations due to the possibility of illusions, disagreements, and errors in our choices.

Whether the Qurʾān provides comprehensive definitions of goodness and evil, Drāz argues that it offers general guidance for acquiring moral values, yet human reason complements the scripture through interpretation. For instance, "Indeed, God orders justice and good conduct and giving to relatives and forbids immorality and bad conduct and oppression. He admonishes you that perhaps you will be reminded" (Q. 16:90), "Not equal are the evil and the good, although the abundance of evil might impress you" (Q. 5:100), "O children of Adam, We have bestowed upon you clothing to conceal your private parts and as adornment. But the clothing of righteousness - that is best" (Q. 7:26), "Whoever has been given wisdom has certainly been given much good" (Q. 2:269), and

"Indeed, God does not order immorality" (Q. 7:28). The definitions of the moral concepts in these passages rely on human faculties.

Drāz asserts that the moral obligation presented in the Qurʾān is comprehensive and timeless, and meant to be applicable to every individual irrespective of time or circumstance. Unlike objective binding legal rules, moral law encourages ethical behavior but does not coerce individuals into upholding it. It is an ideal obligation that imposes itself upon human consciousness. Drāz supports this argument by citing a few passages that illustrate that the Qurʾān allows people to decline its commands regarding faith and morality: "…but those who turn away - We have not sent you over them as a guardian" (Q. 4:60), "There shall be no compulsion in [acceptance of] the religion. The right course has become clear from the wrong" (Q. 2:256), and "Then, [O Muhammad], would you compel the people so that they become believers?" (Q. 10:99).[44]

It is important that Drāz intentionally conflates religious obligation with moral obligation. In his examination of the characteristics of the Qurʾanic principles of obligation above, he utilizes examples of religious obligations that may not necessarily align with moral ones. Instances such as reducing the number of prayer units while traveling, postponing the fasting days due to sickness, or consuming carrion out of necessity reflect divine laws rather than moral ones. While these passages do not explicitly address morality, they generally depict the nature of obligation in the Qurʾanic text, which is also applicable to morality.

Furthermore, some of the examples presented by Drāz may appear out of context, but their underlying meaning remains valid. Drāz transcends the contexts of certain Qurʾanic passages so that he could provide a moral theory that is universally applicable to individuals regardless of time or circumstances. For example, Drāz supports the concept of freedom of religion by referencing specific passages from the Qurʾān, such as Q. 4:60, Q. 2:256, and Q. 10:99, which emphasize the permission for individuals to decline the Qurʾanic commands related to faith and morality. While these examples may be contextual or allegorical, Drāz uses them to highlight a broader principle of moral obligation that transcend specific situations to provide a timeless and comprehensive ethical framework.

Drāz and Modern Philosophers

Drāz compares his theory primarily to those of Kant, Rauh, and Bergson. Of these philosophers, Drāz emphasizes Kant, considering his work the most crucial influence. Throughout his work, Drāz extensively engages with Kant's theories and incorporates many of Kant's philosophical concepts into his own. Drāz argues that the Qurʾanic moral theory agrees with Kant's propositions as outlined in the *Critique of Practical Reason*.[45] According to Drāz, the Qurʾān shares the same viewpoint as Kant, asserting that humans possess the ability to discern between goodness and evil and are inherently endowed with moral insight.[46] Like Kant, Drāz posits that humans simultaneously act as rulers and subjects. He perceives moral obligation as autonomy and freedom of choice without the intervention of any higher authority. Drāz contends that autonomy distinguishes humans from animals because God honored human beings and elevated them above many other creatures by bestowing them with reason.[47]

However, Drāz diverges from Kant by asserting that human reason alone cannot recognize human obligations, as this recognition is a task that unfolds through acquired knowledge over time.[48] To address this limitation in Kant's theory, Drāz observes that an additional source beyond the rational is necessary. One should turn to divine authority instead of relying solely on pure reason. It is important to note that this is not a separation of sources; both divine authority and human autonomy should be viewed as one source, as the origins of morality stem from autonomous preferences and consciousness. This is because divine command complements pure instinctual reason.[49] In Drāz's perspective, adherents of a divine message benefit from two interconnected sources of knowledge—divine and reason—each complementing the other.[50] Furthermore, Drāz disagrees with Kant's definition of obligation, which neglects any empirical characteristics. Kant reduces moral obligation as an abstract notion suitable to all wills, divine or human. Kant's definition, captured as "toute action dont la maxime peut sans absurdité être universalisée"[51] (any action whose maxim can be universalized without any absurdity), overlooks the ethical deontology of Jeremy Bentham

(d. 1832). Bentham's ethical theory suggests that actions "are morally right if they tend to promote happiness or pleasure and morally wrong if they tend to promote unhappiness or pain."[52]

Additionally, Drāz argues that Kant confuses two distinct phases of rationalization: the moment when reason contemplates universalized maxims and the moment when this moral law is to be applied. In other words, Kant mixes up "obligation" with the "intention" of morals and morality.[53] Moreover, Drāz identifies another weakness in Kant's theory concerning the universalized obligation. He argues that variation exists in the degrees of obligation, as obligations vary in significance when dealing with different relationships, such as parents, managers, spouses, or children. Therefore, the obligation is not universally applicable but relatively universal, and Drāz suggests that relativism is implied within universalism. While Drāz acknowledges the need for a general supreme ethical type, he criticizes Kant's moral theory for lacking consistency when comparing the details of moral obligation. Some obligations appear more significant than others, and Kant's theory seems inconsistent with other moral obligations. Drāz provides an example of this inconsistency by highlighting potential conflicts between values such as "justice" and "mercy." In the case of a conflict, if the principle of "justice" as a moral obligation impedes the concept of "mercy," the latter, being another moral obligation, requires more tolerance and forgiveness than the former. Drāz asserts that, although Kant may have drawn from Christian ethical principles, Christian morality, which commands the love of enemies, is better than Kantianism as it promotes a more comprehensive, universalized moral duty.[54]

Moreover, Drāz's moral theory engages with that of Bergson,[55] outlined in *The Two Sources of Morality and Religion*. Bergson observes that moral obligation emerges from society and the impetus of love rather than pure reason. He states,

> *The duality itself merges into a unity, for "social pressure" and "impetus of love" are but two complementary aspects of life, normally intent on preserving, generally, the social form which was characteristic of the human species from the beginning, but, exceptionally, capable of transfiguring it.*[56]

Bergson contends that not all ethicists fully grasp this dual origin of society, but they do perceive aspects of it. While society holds more significance than the individual due to our relational nature, defined by our relations to others, these others collectively constitute society. However, according to Bergson, morality is a "throwing out of gear of the relations between the social and the individual self."[57]

The role of religion, according to Bergson's proposition, is not as significant as the role of society. Bergson asserts that religion fulfills a social role, even when it serves as the motivation behind social commands. He states,

> *Whether religion be interpreted in one way or another, whether it be social in essence or by accident, one thing is certain, that it has always played a social role. [...] it varies with time and place, but in societies such as our own, the first effect of religion is to sustain and reinforce the claims of society.*[58]

Bergson highlights the association of morality with religion, emphasizing that the latter serves as the motivating force behind ethical behavior.[59] However, Bergson diverges from viewing the essence of moral obligation as a product of reason or the categorical imperative proposed by Kant. Instead, he envisions obligation as "weighing on the will like a habit, each obligation dragging behind it the accumulated mass of the others, and utilizing thus for the pressure it is exerting the weight of the whole."[60] According to Bergson, these categorical imperatives are shaped by society rather than reason. He argues that since the existence of society, it imposes constraints on its members, and these constraints constitute obligations. However, Bergson underscores that society is not self-explanatory but is formed by a comprehensive set of innate tendencies inherent in individuals.[61]

According to Drāz, Bergson claims that the morality of the commoners emerges from social forces, while the ethics of the elite stem from the impetus of love that influences the individual's behavior. Instead of being subjected to social forces, elite individuals attract society toward ideal behavior. In essence, a person is either forced by

natural needs or drawn by the impetus of love without being able to compare, evaluate, and choose moral behavior.[62] Drāz disagrees with Bergson's argument, contending that if moral obligation originates from biological needs, it ceases to be true morality, let alone that love contradicts obligation. He highlights the Qurʾān's stance against two adversaries of morality: following personal desires without rationalization and blindly imitating others. To support his argument, Drāz quotes relevant passages from the Qurʾān, such as, "Do not follow [your own] desire, as it will lead you astray" (Q. 38:26), "So follow not [personal] inclination, lest you not be just" (Q. 4:135), and "Indeed, we found our fathers upon a religion, and we are in their footsteps [rightly] guided" (Q. 43:22).[63]

Additionally, Drāz challenges Rauh's[64] proposition on morality, which is rooted in Hume's theory. According to Rauh, "the moral value" doesn't exist within our individual nature; rather, it is an invention beyond human capacity, Superman, conceived as a higher ideal type. Drāz contends that while Rauh acknowledges the concept of moral obligation, he argues that individuals establish principles and rules based on experience. To refute Rauh's theory, Drāz asserts that the definition of the moral code lies in the "ideal higher type," and it is implausible for the code to emerge from experience. Therefore, stating that experience is the source of morality becomes self-contradictory.[65] Drāz observes that both Kant's and Rauh's theories, representing rationalism and empiricism, emphasize different facets of reality. Idealism, realism, rationalism, and empiricism do not inherently contradict each other; each theory focuses on a distinct aspect of human knowledge.

According to Drāz, the Qurʾān agrees with both approaches in their fundamental essence. He grounds his argument on the Qurʾanic statement, "Be conscious of God as much as you can" (Q. 64:16). The verse does not advocate unrestrained actions based on momentary inspiration, nor does it prescribe a fixed rule like Kant's. Instead, Drāz argues for an attentiveness to divine authority while relying on the experiential aspect of life. Thus, the two ends of the thread meet, the pursuit of the ideal higher type and the acknowledgment of human autonomy. It is submission to the law alongside individual autonomous choices. In other

words, Drāz observes that individuals decide when and how to apply the moral law.[66]

Drāz identifies two practical antinomies within philosophers' concept of moral obligation. The first antinomy is that of "unity and diversity." According to Drāz, if morality is regarded as a science, its moral law should be universal and necessary to regulate human behavior, not particular and contingent. However, given the diversity and changeability of human life, we are left with two propositions. The first proposal posits that the science of morality provides an unchanging and universal model of ethical behavior, while the second model allows for variations and modifications in moral law. Hence, one approach entails viewing humanity as a single type adhering to a uniform set of rules and ethics, which, according to Drāz, exists only in the imagination of the moralist. Alternatively, one may consider humanity diverse and irreducible to singular actions, leading to the conclusion that there is no single rule or law of science. This is the first challenge of universal moral theory.

The second antinomy is "authority and liberty." The term obligation presupposes the existence of two wills: the legislator, who commands and upholds authority, and the subject, who acts and defends the freedom to act. On the one hand, if the authority of the legislator imposes rules on the subject, the subject passively submits to them and applies them blindly, turning moral law into natural law. On the other hand, if the subject is granted complete freedom, then "obligation" transforms into "advice," which individuals may choose to accept or reject based on their judgment.[67]

In his argument about diversity and difference in society, Drāz provides an example of a chess game. Each piece should follow a certain rule for its movement (the rule represents the rule of the legislator); while following the rule willingly (autonomous choice), the player should be creative in playing. Social networks require specific behavior in a certain way, but individuals have the freedom to choose their actions within these boundaries. Drāz points out that no philosophy can provide us with such harmony between the lawgiver and the individual except by way of religious ethics.[68]

Additionally, Drāz asserts that morality is intrinsic to human nature. Everyone can differentiate between goodness and evil, right and wrong. However, this instinctive moral code is incomplete not because of different customs, traditions, and societal impacts on people, but because the application of ethics faces another greater challenge. If our cognition depends primarily on instinct as a source for ethical behavior, it sometimes fails to present, for all circumstances, a general theory or rule that everyone accepts. After reaching a certain level of ethical conduct, people disagree on what counts as ethical, and it is left to speculation. Therefore, divine intervention is necessary to complete the instinct of pure knowledge and help minimize the disagreements among people; in other words, to guide people to a general theory of ethical behavior.

Although Drāz differentiates between the Qurʾān and philosophy in terms of their sources and methodology, he argues that they are not different in their objectives.[69] He contends that both philosophy and religion[70] aim to solve the problems of the world and provide a wise way and moral code to live an ethical life. Such positive knowledge that we receive from scholars is nonbinding, but it addresses the pure reason people are already born with. This knowledge is supposed to address our consciousness and present an exemplar for us. This is because it establishes a law of morality that convinces people to uphold it without forcing them. This is different from the law of nature that forces people to accept certain rules, even if they are not convinced by them. Therefore, moral obligation depends primarily upon the "value" that we obtain from "an exemplar." And "reason" and "revelation" are two alternatives and are considered the main source of "moral obligation."[71]

Drāz does not consider the moral theory of the Qurʾān to be religious in the sense that there is a divine authority dictating morality, for which compensation is only in the hereafter. Instead, authority is entrusted to two forces: the moral conscience and the social force. These two authorities require everyone to prevent evil and oppression in society. It is also not religious in the sense that its motivation is fear and hope (i.e., fear of God's damnation and hope for God's mercy). It is not a higher authority that decrees for people what to do without any rationalization.

The religious element represented by the lawgiver could be understood as the aspect that guarantees the successful application of the law, as an organizing force for human life, or as an explication of the unknown matters that pure reason cannot know by itself.

Drāz notes that the religious and moral aspects do not overlap, nor do they define one another. Divine command does not become a moral obligation except with our consent because "the first obligation is to believe that there is an obligation."[72] In other words, one must receive from inside the order to obey a higher commander. The religious element and moral element are a response to two higher authorities; one focusing on "the being," and the other focusing on destiny/fate. The former represents the complete being, the truth, and right in its essence, which is knowledge and love, whereas the latter represents the complete action, which is morality.[73] Pure reason and society complement morality in the Qurʾān because many moral obligations are left to be determined by humanity based on given circumstances and human capability. The human conscience is always an active part of the determination process of moral obligation.[74]

The tension between autonomy and heteronomy is a challenge facing any work on ethics that utilizes dual sources. In her book *Creative Conformity: The Feminist Politics of U.S. Catholic and Iranian Shīʿī Women*, Elizabeth M. Bucar provides compelling interpretations of female Shiʿite Muslims' understandings of religion. She observes that Iranian women demonstrated creative conformity between what they were asked to do by religious authorities and their interpretation of these commands in religious texts. Bucar introduces the concept of "dianomy" to understand a moral theory with dual sources. She states: "I propose the neologism 'dianomy,' meaning dual sources of the moral law, to account for a moral agency that relies neither exclusively on the self nor exclusively on religious traditions as a source of moral authority."[75] Perhaps Drāz's proposal implies a form of "dianomy" between the sources of morality, representing a "creative conformity" between empiricism and rationalism, between heteronomy and autonomy. This concept helps in gaining a deeper understanding of his Qurʾān-based moral theory that harmonizes empiricism, rationalism, and religion.

Conclusion

In his work, Drāz makes important assertions that neither abstract concepts nor empirical knowledge alone are sufficient to guide free, autonomous ethical choices. He suggests that morality has been inherent in human character since creation, enabling individuals to intuitively discern good from evil and appreciate aesthetics from ugliness. However, he argues that moral theory is incomplete without divine intervention, emphasizing the need for revelation to enhance intuitive knowledge. Drāz underscores the importance of both practical and theoretical knowledge, asserting that an exclusive reliance on either side results in an incomplete theory of morality.

Drāz recognizes the significance of philosophy in tackling human issues. He acknowledges that the Qurʾān is not a philosophical work in the sense of yielding identical outcomes or adhering to the philosophical methodologies of epistemology. It lacks a philosophical method structured around a logical scheme involving definition, classification, evidence, criticism, and solutions. However, the Qurʾān serves as a source addressing fundamental questions related to existence, its origin, and its culmination. It addresses ethical behavior and the pathways to happiness. This acknowledgment does not negate the Qurʾān's religious nature; rather, it highlights that philosophy and religion aim to answer the fundamental questions that occupy human minds.

Drāz's theory does not primarily depend on the Qurʾān as the exclusive source; instead, it is an amalgamation of philosophy, social sciences, and religious texts. His proposal emerges as a synthesis of his exploration of empiricism and rationalism. While Drāz critiques Kant's reliance on "pure reason" as the sole source of morality and finds Rauh's theory of social forces and empirical experiences lacking, he observes that reason, social command, and religious texts collectively form the essential components of a comprehensive moral theory. Drawing from Kant's ethical theory and supplementing it with insights from Rauh's empirical studies, he further introduces a divine source to enrich the ethical foundation.

Drāz successfully incorporated various philosophical, rational, and empirical concepts, rendering his theory an outcome of interdisciplinary

efforts. He seamlessly integrates these moral theories into his approach, drawing not only from the exegeses of the Qurʾān and jurists of Islamic law but also from the works of theologians and philosophers whose ideas he critiques. Aaron Stalnaker states that borrowing from external sources is particularly useful for comparative studies, facilitating the comparison process and fostering similarities between distant cultures. He suggests that successful borrowing occurs when motivated by the challenges inherent in formative practices, prompting the need for explanation and justification.[76] Engaging in comparative ethics enhances the likelihood of borrowing from diverse cultural networks, aiding in the gradual reduction of cultural differences or, at the very least, making them more comprehensible.

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Endnotes

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1 A small city in the district of Dusūq, in the Governorate of Kafr al-Shaykh, a place that was famous for religious education.

2 Memorizing the Qurʾān remains an integral component of the al-Azhar educational system to this day. In the past, students typically attended local schools in their villages, known as kuttāb, where they focused on learning Arabic and memorizing the Qurʾān. Drāz, however, had a different experience. His father chose to send him to a private tutor who played a crucial role in facilitating his early memorization of the Qurʾān compared to his peers.

3 Despite the existence of Azharī institutes, the foundational stage of education retained similarities to the pre-modern system, as illustrated by Richard Bulliet. Cf. Richard W. Bulliet, "The Age Structure of Medieval Islamic Education." In *Studia Islamica*, 1983: 105–117.

4 This occurred amid the Egyptian Revolution of 1919, a nationwide revolt against the British mandate in Egypt and Sudan; Cf. Aḥmad Muṣṭafá Faḍlīyyah, *Al-ʿAllāmah Muḥammad ʿAbd Allāh Drāz*, (Cairo: Maktabat al-īmān, 2010), pp. 37-45.

5 In 1936, Muḥammad Muṣṭafá al-Marāghī (d. 1945), the Grand Imām of al-Azhar, organized a delegation known as the Fuʾad I delegation, sending several scholars to study in Europe. Among them were ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz al-Marāghī and Maḥmūd Ḥubullāh, who were tasked with studying History and Philosophy in France. Drāz, along with ʿAbd al-Raḥmān Tāj, Muḥammad Muḥammadayn al-Fahhām, ʿAfīfī ʿAbd al-Fattāh, and ʿAbd al-Ḥalīm Maḥmūd, were sent to France to pursue studies in comparative religion. Muḥammad Kāmil al-Fiqī, *Al-Azhar wa atharuh fī al-nahḍah al-adabīyah al-ḥadīthah*, (Cairo: Al-Maṭbaʿah al-minbarīyah bi-al-azhar al-sharīf, 1956), vol. 2, p. 80.

6 In a meeting with Drāz's eldest son, Muḥsin, I inquired about why his father refused to assume the Grand Imām's position. Muḥsin explained that his father declined the role out of concern that he might not be able to preserve al-Azhar's institutional religious freedom. Drāz feared potential intervention by the Cabinet of Egypt in al-Azhar's affairs, prompting his decision. This information was obtained through a personal interview in Cairo in June 2022. Cf. Faḍlīyyah, *Muḥammad ʿAbd Allāh Drāz*, pp. 17-18.

7 Faḍlīyyah, *Al-ʿAllāmah*, pp. 89-91.

8 Kenneth W. Morgan, *Islam, the Straight Path: Islam Interpreted by Muslims*, (New York: Ronald Press Co., 1958), pp. 3-41.

9 ʿAbd al-ʿAẓīm al-Maṭʿanī, "Fikr al-ʿamāliqah: Mabāḍʾ al-qānūn al-dawlī wa-al-Islām." *In Muḥammad ʿAbd Allāh Drāz: drāsāt wa buḥūth bi qalam talāmizatih wa muʿāṣirīh*, (Cairo: Dār al-qalam li-al-nashr wa-al-tawzīʿ, 2007), p. 31.

10 Al-Maṭʿanī, Fikr al-ʿamāliqah, p. 33.

11 I retrieved a copy of this paper from Drāz's son, Muḥsin, in Cairo in June 2022.

12 This information was obtained by interviewing Drāz's eldest son, Muḥsin, in Cairo in June 2022.

13 Faḍlīyyah, *Muḥammad ʿAbd Allāh Drāz*, p. 15-16.

14 Yūsuf al-Qaraḍāwī, "Muḥammad ʿAbd Allāh Drāz, al-ʿalim al-ʿallāmah, al-baḥr al-fahāmah," in *Muḥammad ʿAbd Allāh Drāz: Dirāsāt wa buḥūth bi Qalam talāmizatih wa muʿāṣirīh* (Cairo: Dār al-qalam li'l-nashr wa'l-tawzīʿ, 2007), 21.

15 Al-Qaraḍāwī, "Muḥammad ʿAbd Allāh Drāz," p. 24.

16 Faḍlīyyah, *Muḥammad ʿAbd Allāh Drāz*, p. 18.

17 M. A. Drāz, *The Moral World of the Qurʾan by M. A. Draz*, translated by Danielle Robinson and Rebecca Masterton, (London: I.B. Tauris, 2008).

18 Basma I. Abdelgafar, *Morality in the Qurʾan: The Greater Good of Humanity*, (Malaysia: Islamic Book Trust, 2018).

19 Drāz, *The Moral World of the Qurʾān*, p. 13.

20 Muḥammad ʿAbd Allāh Drāz, *Dustūr al-akhlāq fī al-Qurʾān: Dirāsah muqāranah lil-akhlāq al-naẓarīya fī al-Qurʿān: mulḥaq bihā taṣnīf lil-āyāt al-mukhtāra allatī tukawin al-dastūr al-kāmil lil-akhlāq al-ʿamalīya*, edited by Al-Sayyid Muḥammad Badawī, translated by ʿAbd al-Ṣabūr Shāhīn, (Beirut: Muʾassasat al-risāla, 1974), p. 22.

21 Drāz, *Dustūr al-akhlāq*, pp. 136-137.

22 Drāz, *Dustūr al-akhlāq*, pp. 141-142. All the translations of the Qurʾanic verses are sourced from https://quran.com.

23 Drāz, *Dustūr al-akhlāq*, pp. 163-171.

24 Drāz, *Dustūr al-akhlāq*, pp. 245-250

25 Drāz, *Dustūr al-akhlāq*, pp. 258-259

26 Drāz, *Dustūr al-akhlāq*, p. 261.

27 Other examples that Drāz cited from the Hebrew Bible in this category are: (Deuteronomy, 5: 25; 7:12-16; 11:13; 12:5-6; 15:9), (Genesis, 3:3; 4:11-12; 9:1; 22:16-17; 27:28-29; 35:11-12), and (Exodus, 23: 25-27, 15; 13); from the Gospels, (John, 19 and 21), (Mark, 10, 21), (Luke, 12:29-34), (1 Timothy 6:17-19), and (1 John 2: 15-25) See Drāz, *Dustūr al-akhlāq*, pp. 277-282.

28 Drāz, *Dustūr al-akhlāq*, 282; Cf., (Q. 4:11, 12, 24, and 66), Drāz categorizes all the verses in the Qurʾān that mention rewards or punishments and organizes them into a chart. Drāz, *Dustūr al-akhlāq*, pp. 401-402.

29 Drāz, *Dustūr al-akhlāq*, pp. 424-470.

30 Drāz, *Dustūr al-akhlāq*, pp. 585-587.

31 Little and Twiss argue, "It is hard to see how one can trace relationships between two concepts, particularly concepts as complex as religion and morality." David Little and Sumner B. Twiss, *Comparative Religious Ethics,* (New York: Harper & Row, 1978), p. 6.

32 Drāz, *Dustūr al-akhlāq*, pp. 19-134.

33 Kant states, "Philosophy based on experience is said to be empirical; but if its doctrines are abstract and prior, it is said to be pure. Pure and merely formal philosophy is then called logic, but logic becomes metaphysics when it is focused on definite metal objects. This is the origin of the idea that there are two kinds of metaphysics, the metaphysic of nature and the metaphysic of morals. Physics, for example, is both empirical and theoretical, and so is ethics; but the empirical part of ethics should be called *practical anthropology*, while its theory is properly called *morals*." Immanuel Kant, and R. Bernard Blakney, *An Immanuel Kant Reader*, ed. 1st, (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1960), p. 166.

34 David Hume, *An Enquiry Concerning the Principles of Morals,* (Chicago: Open Court Pub.), 1946.

35 Stern states: "For Kierkegaard, however, because Hegel's solution to the problem of moral obligation was intended to avoid any Kantian tension between duty and inclination, this meant that the social command account could not treat morality as asking too much of us as individuals; it thus threatened to render our moral lives… by reducing the moral demand." Robert Stern, *Understanding Moral Obligation: Kant, Hegel, Kierkegaard*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), pp. 1-3.

36 C. Stephen Evans, *God and moral obligation*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), p. 25.

37 Chris Heathwood, "Could Morality Have a Source?" In *Journal of Ethics & Social Philosophy* 6, no. 2 (n.d.) pp. 2-3.

38 The Qurʾanic verses that discuss wine are: (Q. 2: 219; 4: 43; 16:67; and 5: 90-91)

39 Drāz, *Dustūr al-akhlāq*, p. 27.

40 Muʿtazilah are a theological school that can be traced back to its founder Wāṣil ibn Aṭāʾ (699-749). They are defenders of reason in Islam and, in the 8th century, were the first to use the Hellenistic philosophy to drive their dogmatic points. They give preference to reason over revelation. Editors of Encyclopedia Britannica, "Muʿtazilah."

41 The Shīʿah were a political group that supported the fourth Caliph of Muhammad, ʿAlī ibn Abī Talib, and later they supported ʿAlī's descendants. This group developed a religious and theological movement different from Sunni Islam and has important sects to which the term Shīʿism is applied. Newman, "Shīʿī," in *Encyclopedia Britannica.*

42 Ashʿarīyyah is a theological school that supports the use of reason and speculative theology to defend the faith. It was founded by Abū al-Hassan al-Ashʿarī in the

10th century. Britannica, T. Editors of Encyclopedia, "Ashʿarīyyah," Encyclopedia Britannica, (October 21, 2009), https://www.britannica.com/topic/Ashariyyah, accessed on 3/16/2023.

43 Maturīdīyyah is a school of theology founded in the 10th century by Abū Mansur al-Maturīdī (d.944). They are very similar to the Ashʿarīyah, but they rely on the Qurʾān without reasoning or free interpretation; Britannica, T. Editors of Encyclopedia, "Māturīdīyyah," (Encyclopedia Britannica, April 3, 2020), https://www.britannica.com/topic/Maturidiyah, accessed on 3/16/2023.

44 Drāz, *Dustūr al-akhlāq*, pp. 22-26.

45 Drāz, *Dustūr al-akhlāq*, p. 26.

46 The Qurʾān states, "And [by] the soul and He who proportioned it; And inspired it [with discernment of] its wickedness and its righteousness" (Q. 91:7-8); "Rather, human, against himself, will be a witness" (Q. 75:14); "Have We not made for him two eyes? And a tongue and two lips? And have shown him the two ways?" (Q. 90: 8-10); Drāz, *Dustūr al-akhlāq*, p. 27.

47 The Qurʾān states, "And We have certainly honored the children of Adam and carried them on land and sea and provided for them of the good things and preferred them over much of what We have created, with [definite] preference" (Q. 17:70).

48 Drāz, *Dustūr al-akhlāq*, p. 33

49 Drāz, *Dustūr al-akhlāq*, p. 117.

50 Drāz, *Dustūr al-akhlāq*, p. 36.

51 Drāz, *Dustūr al-akhlāq*, p. 98.

52 J. P. Plamenatz and Duignan Brian, "Jeremy Bentham." Encyclopedia Britannica, February 11, 2023. https://www.britannica.com/biography/Jeremy-Bentham accessed on 3/16/2023.

53 Drāz, *Dustūr al-akhlāq*, p. 111.

54 Drāz, *Dustūr al-akhlāq*, p. 115.

55 Bergson argues that there are two types of Morality: closed, whose religion is static, and open, whose religion is dynamic. Leonard Lawlor and Valentine Moulard-Leonard, "Henri Bergson," in *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, edited by Edward N. Zalta, September 21, 2021, https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/win2022/entries/bergson, accessed on 3/16/2023.

56 Henri Bergson, *The Two Sources of Morality and Religion*, translated by Brereton R. Ashley, Audra C., & W. Horsfall Carter, (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1935), p. 87.

57 Bergson, *The two sources of morality and religion*, p. 9.

58 Bergson, *The two sources of morality and religion*, p. 5.

59 Bergson, *The two sources of morality and religion*, p. 89.

60 Bergson, *The two sources of morality and religion*, p. 16-17.

61 Bergson, *The two sources of morality and religion*, p. 91.

62 Drāz, *Dustūr al-akhlāq*, pp. 23-24.

63 Drāz, *Dustūr al-akhlāq*, p. 25.

64 Rauh wrote *L' Expérience Morale* (1890) and *Essai sur le fondement Métaphysique de la morale* (1903).

65 Drāz, *Dustūr al-akhlāq*, pp. 118-123.

66 Drāz, *Dustūr al-akhlāq*, p. 127.

67 Drāz, *La morale du Koran*, pp. 68-69; Drāz, *Dustūr al-akhlāq*, pp. 98-98.

68 Drāz, *Dustūr al-akhlāq*, pp. 131-34.

69 In his work "The Incoherence of the Incoherence," Ibn Rushd argues that all prophets are genius philosophers and, conversely, philosophers are the heirs of the prophets. This assertion is grounded in his broader argument that philosophy and religion are not contradictory but, in fact, complementary to each other. Ibn Rushd, *Averroes' Tahafut Al-Tahafut* (*The Incoherence of the Incoherence*), translated by Simon Van Den Bergh, (London: Oxford University Press, 1954), p. 359.

70 He refers to religion in the general sense; he does not mean Islam alone, as indicated in his footnote on page 14. Drāz, *Dustūr al-akhlāq*, p. 14.

71 Drāz, *Dustūr al-akhlāq*, pp. 14-15.

72 Drāz, *Dustūr al-akhlāq*, p. 678.

73 Drāz, *Dustūr al-akhlāq*, p. 679.

74 Drāz, *Dustūr al-akhlāq*, p. 679.

75 Elizabeth Bucar, *Creative Conformity: The Feminist Politics of U.S. Catholic and Iranian Shi'i Women*, (Washington D.C.: Georgetown University Press, 2011), p. 1.

76 Aaron Stalnaker, *Overcoming our evil: human nature and spiritual exercises in Xunzi and Augustine* (Washington, D.C.: Georgetown University Press, 2006), pp. 296-297.

The Other Legitimate Game in Town? Understanding Public Support for the Caliphate in the Islamic World

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Abstract

In recent years, essentialist claims about the incompatibility of democracy and Islam have been swept away by public opinion research revealing that democracy is widely supported in the Islamic world. However, while this literature has demonstrated the popularity of democracy over authoritarianism, we argue that it misses a key piece of the puzzle by not examining Muslim public support for an alternative model of government: the Caliphate system. After outlining three different visions of the Caliphate in Islamic political thought – an autocratic view, a democratic view, and an instrumentalist or "good governance" view – we analyze how it is conceptualized today by its supporters with existing and original surveys conducted in several Islamic countries. We first engage with an existing cross-national survey conducted in several Muslim-majority countries

that include Egypt, Indonesia, and Pakistan in order to investigate the sources of public support for the Caliphate, broadly speaking. We then move on to our own original, nationally representative survey conducted in Pakistan to analyze more deeply the political institutions and dimensions most associated with the Caliphate and democracy. Our results suggest that, like democracy, the Caliphate is understood by its supporters primarily in instrumental terms, as a vehicle for effective systems of welfare and justice rather than as a specific institutional configuration or simply as a means for policing public modesty and morality.

Keywords: Caliphate, Public Opinion, Good Governance, Islam, Democracy, Pakistan

"Caliphate talk" generally provokes a profound sense of fear and anxiety in the West where caliphates are often seen as synonymous with totalitarian theocracy and are viewed as the polar opposite of democracy. As Ovamir Anjum (2019, 4) aptly notes: "A word loaded like no other, "caliphate" summons deep memories and desires for some and ominous fears for others." Illustrating some of those *ominous fears for others* that Anjum was alluding to, in a typical statement made in 2006, then-President George W. Bush forewarned fearful Americans that Al Qaeda planned "to establish a violent political utopia across the Middle East, which they call a Caliphate – where all would be ruled according to their

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hateful ideology."[1] Bush, in fact, used the term 'Caliphate' at least fifteen different times that year, with four uses of the term in one speech alone (Al-Rasheed, Kersten, and Shterin 2012). More recently, Sebastian Gorka (2016, 357), one of Donald Trump's former Deputy Assistants warned that "the Caliphate is not just some idea of crazed extremists hiding out in remote parts of Central or South Asia; it was a real entity." In this context, supporting or calling for the Caliphate can lead to serious political consequences: it has been used to identify individuals or organizations

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as extremist in the West, and frayed fragile Islamist-secularist coalitions in the Middle East.

Yet, despite the continued support for the Caliphate in the Muslim world – and the political consequences of how it is widely understood in the West – scholars have yet to examine what the Caliphate actually *means* to Muslim-majority populations (Isani 2018; Isani 2021). Existing public opinion research on regime type preferences in Muslim-majority nations focuses overwhelmingly on support for democracy and authoritarianism (Tessler 2002; Tessler and Gao 2005; Jamal and Tessler 2008; Fish 2011). While this has given us some important insights, it leaves a number of key questions about the Caliphate unanswered. In particular, how popular is the Caliphate as a political alternative? And, more importantly, what is its scope and how is it conceptualized by those who endorse it? Despite the importance of understanding which political models command legitimacy around the world, there has been no attempt to answer these questions in the vast literature on Islamic public opinion.

This paper attempts to fill these lacunae. To do so, we first briefly outline three simplified different potential visions of the Caliphate: an autocratic view, a democratic view, and an instrumentalist or "good governance" view. In so doing, we draw from the ideas of influential modern Islamic political theorists and activists that reflect certain key aspects of each of the three outlined visions. Then, to examine which of these different visions have been "absorbed" by Muslims today, we analyze the appeal and meaning of the Caliphate as a political alternative with existing and original public opinion surveys. We start with an existing cross-national survey conducted by the Program on International Policy Attitudes (PIPA) at the University of Maryland in several Muslim-majority countries – Egypt, Indonesia, and Pakistan – to investigate the sources of public support for the Caliphate, broadly speaking. We then move to an original nationally representative survey fielded in Pakistan to analyze more deeply the political institutions and dimensions most associated with the Caliphate and democracy.

The picture that emerges from these analyses is that the Caliphate system is not seen by its advocates chiefly as an expansive Islamic

autocracy or democracy. Rather, we find that the Caliphate is valued in instrumental-material terms, as a model that can deliver inclusive and effective welfare and justice systems throughout societies. In this sense, it may actually be perceived quite similarly to democracy, which is widely understood in instrumental or output-oriented ways in some of the same societies (Jamal and Tessler 2008).

From the Islamic "Democratic Deficit" to a Hegemony of Democratic Support

During the 1990s and into the early 2000s, research on support for different political models within the Muslim world was deeply shaped by the idea of an Islamic "democratic deficit." Since the end of the Cold War, the Muslim world has drawn attention as the portion of the world most resistant to democratization (Huntington 1991; Karatnycky 2002). Unsurprisingly, many observers during this time linked a lack of democracy to cultural or religious factors, particularly the role of Islam. These writers saw in Islam a rigid and ritualistic submission to divine authority – and even violence and intolerance toward alternative worldviews – that was incompatible with the ideas of pluralism and diversity needed in liberal democracy (Kedourie 1994; Choueiri 1996). This perspective implies that democracy is relatively absent inside the Muslim world because Muslim populations – owing to their distinct "political tradition" – do not value or want it.

This democratic deficit generally persists after controlling for a number of obvious socioeconomic confounders (Fish 2002; Donno and Russett 2004; Pryor 2007). While years of careful research into factors such as oil wealth (e.g., Ross 2001) has made some progress in explaining the gap, the academic discussion "leaves us with, at best, fragments of explanations for the link between Islam and authoritarianism" (Fish 2011, 249). The notion of an Islamic democratic deficit has thus, in one form or another, gained prominence as one of the top puzzles in political development in the post-Cold War era.

In contrast to the 1990s, a surge of recent public opinion survey data has demonstrated quite clearly that democracy enjoys wide support

in Muslim-majority countries (Robbins 2015; Tessler 2015; Ciftci 2019; Ciftci 2022). Both academic survey projects like the World Values Survey and Global Barometer Surveys as well as regular polling by firms like Pew and Gallup show that support for democracy and related institutions in Muslim-majority countries often tops 80% of the population.[2] Moreover, analyses of these surveys show that this democratic support does not strongly relate to religious factors, cutting across different degrees of Islamic religiosity and Islamic ideology (Tessler 2002; Tessler and Gao 2005; Jamal and Tessler 2008; Ciftci 2010; Tessler 2010; Fish 2011; Ciftci 2019). While attitudes may vary on the precise "flavor" of democracy that is ideal, the central conclusion of this body of work is that Muslim-majority populations want representative forms of government just as much if not more than their non-Muslim counterparts. This image was only reinforced by the events of what has come to be known as the Arab Spring, when massive pro-democracy protests materialized across the Middle East, ousting entrenched autocrats in several countries.

But is democracy truly the only political model that enjoys substantial legitimacy within the Islamic world? It is worth stressing here that it is fully possible for individuals to prefer multiple alternatives to the status quo. For example, in the first wave of the Arab Barometer Surveys, fielded in 2006-07, the percentage of respondents agreeing that a democratic political system was a "good" or "very good" way of governing their country was 90% (*n=7,323*). In contrast, the percentage agreeing that a strong nondemocratic leader was good or very good was just 14%. These numbers support the conventional wisdom of democratic hegemony described above. However, when asked their views on being ruled by a group of experts who make important decisions for the country as appropriate, 70% said this was good or very good. Even more surprisingly, when asked about a model that is a combination of all three choices under one strong leader, 53% said this was also good or very good. Similar results can be found in subsequent waves of Arab Barometer Surveys as well. Why, despite broad support for democracy, do these populations show a marked openness to technocratic and even personalistic rule? Whatever their reasons, this aptly illustrates how

widespread endorsement of one political model – like democracy – does not mean it is the *only* one that enjoys mass popularity or legitimacy in a specific context. In other words, the answers that we have may be limited by the questions that we have asked, and by the choices that we have offered.

Support for the Caliphate System as a Political Alternative

The concept of "the Caliphate" is hardly fixed. This flexibility however has contributed to its enduring relevance despite the fact that it was abolished 100 years ago (Kennedy 2016). The term on its own does not really tell us much about any specific political behavior(s). As Erik Skare (2021, 10) recently points out:

> *Just like the declared aim of a "better world" tells us very little about the political preferences of western political parties, Islamist slogans such as "establishing the Caliphate" are too vague to tell us anything about the expected political behaviour of a group in the short- or mid-term.*

For the purposes of this article, we are grounding our understanding of *the Caliphate* in one overriding axiom that was articulated by Hugh Kennedy (2016, 1), namely, that the Caliphate – regardless of its scope and more specific institutional form – "is about the just ordering of Muslim society according to the will of God." The Caliphate, in the words of 20th century theologian and revivalist Muḥammad Rashīd Riḍā (1988 [1922], 66; cited in March 2019, 44–45) could be understood as "the focal point of unity, the source of legislation [*ishtirāʿ*], the path to order, and the guarantor of the execution of rulings and laws" for the Muslim *Umma*. Beyond this, we will let our data and analysis drive our understanding of what type of political model that actually entails in the minds of Muslims today.

To date, only a handful of surveys have ever asked about opinions of the Caliphate as a political model. Figure 1 shows all of these surveys, with the relevant question and its percentage of support or agreement

by country-year. As can be seen, these surveys cover six Muslim countries or territories – Kuwait, Egypt, Palestine, Indonesia, Pakistan, and Morocco – across a 20-year timespan. In addition, they phrase the concept in various ways, from an "Islamic Caliphate system" to an "Islamic Caliph state" to simply "a/the Caliphate." The figures show the level of support for each item only among Muslim respondents, as this is the primary population of interest.

The first batch of surveys that included questions about the Caliphate was fielded by Mark Tessler in the Arab world in the 1980s and 90s. In these surveys, citizens in Kuwait and Egypt in 1988 were asked whether they saw "the Islamic Caliphate system as a model for government in the Arab world today." In Kuwait, 68% said they thought it was "suitable" or "very suitable," while in Egypt the number was only 49%. Yet these surveys likely offer conservative estimates, as they were only given to small, urban, and relatively well educated "convenience samples" in Kuwait City (*n=292*) and in Cairo (*n=300*), respectively. Meanwhile, a larger, probability-based survey in Palestine in 1995 asked respondents whether they supported "the establishment of an Islamic Caliph state." In this case, a relatively narrow majority of 56% said they did (*n=1,184*).

The other major batch of surveys with questions on the Caliphate was carried out by the University of Maryland's Program on International Policy Attitudes (PIPA) in several key Islamic countries in the mid-2000s, in particular, Morocco, Egypt, Indonesia, and Pakistan in 2006-07, as well as Egypt, Indonesia, and Pakistan in 2008. In both waves, citizens were asked whether they endorsed unifying "all Islamic countries into a single Islamic state or Caliphate." As seen in Figure 1, support in this case was considerable: the percentage answering "agree" or "strongly agree" was 77% in Morocco, 77% and 77% in Egypt, 59% and 52% in Indonesia, and 85% and 88% in Pakistan. This equates to an overall average of 74% support across all seven cases (*n=7,227*). Meanwhile, PIPA also asked additional questions about the Caliphate in 2008, notably whether it is a "better system of government than [the] country's present system." This elicited 67% support in Egypt and 59% in Pakistan, although only 48% in Indonesia. Interestingly, Indonesia is the only stable democracy among the countries, suggesting that the Caliphate may hold the strongest

appeal for populations living under authoritarianism, though 48% of Indonesians do say they prefer it to their democracy.

Thus, despite their differences, these questions largely garner a healthy majority of support, with an average of 66% across the 13 cases (and a majority in 11 of the 13). This suggests that the Caliphate maintains substantial appeal as a political model in Sunni Muslim countries. Moreover, they likely provide a conservative glimpse of the Caliphate's appeal, due to public fear of openly endorsing what may be perceived as "Islamist" goals by authoritarian governments. Nevertheless, popular support does range from 48% in 2008 Indonesia to 88% in 2008 Pakistan, reminding us that – as with support for democracy or any other model – it is heavily influenced by context.

It is important to point out here that, in the wake of the Arab Spring, there is some evidence that support for political Islam has declined (Hashemi 2021; Kurzman and Türkoğlu 2015). For example, 2019 Arab Barometer survey data showed a marked decline in public trust in Islamist parties in Algeria, Egypt, Tunisia, Jordan, Iraq, and Libya.[3] Yet, a couple of points must be made about this trend. First, while the Arab Spring experience may have significantly affected attitudes in the Arab world, the Arab world is not synonymous with the Muslim world. Second, we must differentiate between attitudes toward specific political actors and attitudes toward broader political models or ideas. For example, while trust in Islamist parties appears to have dipped in the past decade, the same surveys also reveal that, except for Libya, the erosion of trust in *religious leaders* has been far less significant. Thus, it is not clear what the changes we have observed mean for support for a broader political idea like the Caliphate. Ultimately, while the changes wrought by the Arab Spring are noteworthy, we do not believe they have fundamentally altered the importance of investigating enduring questions about religion and politics in the Muslim world. Finally, as this article is being written, the 2023 Israeli war on Hamas in Gaza remains hot. While one can only guess at this point what the outcomes of this latest Israeli war on Gaza will be, there is reason to believe, at least in the short term, there likely will be some attitudinal shifts amongst Muslims regarding

the desirability of the current geopolitical order anchored in the modern nation-state. The outcome of this conflict may result in more Muslims rejecting the modern nation-state and instead embracing a Caliphate-based alternative.

Table 1. Existing Survey Questions on Support for the Caliphate

Dataset	Question/ Statement	Country	Year	Support
Carnegie Middle East Governance and Islam Dataset	**M602F:** *Do you consider the Islamic Caliphate system as a model for government in the Arab world today?*	Kuwait	1988	**68%**
		Egypt	1988	**49%**
	M602F: *I support the establishment of an Islamic Caliph state*	Palestine	1995	**56%**
Program on International Policy Attitudes (PIPA) Muslim Public Opinion Datasets	**Q24-S57:** *(What do you personally feel about these goals?) To unify all Islamic countries into a single Islamic state or Caliphate*	Morocco	2006	**77%**
		Egypt	2007	**77%**
			2008	**77%**
		Indonesia	2007	**59%**
			2008	**52%**
		Pakistan	2007	**85%**
			2008	**88%**
	Q56-S94: *The Caliphate is a better system of government than my country's present system*	Egypt	2008	**67%**

Three Potential Understandings of the Caliphate

This portrait of significant, if variable, support for the Caliphate raises some critical questions. Most pressingly, how is the Caliphate understood by those endorsing it? Is it seen as a repressive and expansionist autocracy? A full-blown Muslim democracy? Or maybe something entirely distinct, and not well represented by the existing vocabulary? Another important issue to consider is related to the Caliphate's scope; do Muslims today understand the Caliphate primarily as a political system concerning the organization of domestic politics or do they understand it in a more universal and international sense? Having a better understanding of the answer to these questions can help us have a more robust understanding of what kind of political discourse Muslims really want, such as, is it one dominated by domestic concerns or is it one whose focus is broader? Our limited understanding of these issues has been recognized by other scholars too. Reza Pankhurst (2012, 226) for example noted that PIPA's findings only "raise questions about what the respondents understood by 'Caliphate', democracy', and '*Sharia*'."[4] We aim to explore these questions – particularly the meaning of the Caliphate system – empirically for the first time.

Before diving into our empirical analysis, we would like to clarify that the 'Caliphate system' is not the same as the idea of an 'Islamic state.' In part, this has to do with the power of political language. From 'democracy' to 'socialism' to 'Islamism,' specific political concepts can have powerful effects by evoking sets of ideas, images, events, and actors closely associated with them (Finlayson 2004; Isani and Silverman 2016). The Caliphate is a term imbued with meaning for many Muslims today, conjuring up images of specific historical figures (e.g., Caliph Umar), experiences (e.g., Islam's rapid expansion), and institutions (e.g., a robust welfare state) for many believers above and beyond the more generic term 'Islamic state.' In the words of Mona Hassan (2016, 13): "For many Muslims, the caliphate even constituted a symbol of Islam itself, one deeply embedded in a rich intellectual and cultural discourse that could readily evoke a sense of the wider community's glory, righteousness, and esteem." Indeed, the enduring

use of the Caliphate idea in contemporary political discourse both by Islamist political actors to mobilize their supporters and by Western foreign policy hawks to scare their citizens attests to its independent force and meaning to multiple audiences. Below, we lay out three simplified alternate visions of a potential contemporary Caliphate that can be ascertained from recent Islamic political thought: (1) an autocratic vision that prioritizes obedience and loyalty, (2) a democratic vision that prioritizes elections and representation, and (3) a technocratic or 'good governance' vision that prioritizes institutional functionality and justice.

An Autocratic Caliphate

In recent times, different efforts at theorizing – and in some cases, even implementing – the Caliphate have emerged. Groups like *Ḥizb ut-Taḥrīr* (HT) and *ad-Dawla al-Islāmiyya fī ʿl-ʿIrāq wa-sh-Shām* (ISIS) have posited expansionist, top-down models that prioritize obedience and loyalty to a centralized authority figure. The reference to these two particular groups does not aim to imply that both share the same apocalyptic and violent vision; rather the comparison is being made in the sense that both prioritize literalist interpretations of key religious texts and place a premium on centralized charismatic authority. For both groups, strong, centralized leadership and obedience must come before good governance and welfare states. While the latter are desirable within both models, an institutional core characterized by centralized authoritarian leadership is a necessary prerequisite for Islamic government.

HT is a pan-Islamist political movement which has pushed for the restoration of a Caliphate since the early 1950s. It has attracted a significant following in Indonesia, Uzbekistan, and the UK, though it has limited traction in the Middle East where it originated. It regularly hosts conferences, workshops, and study groups to further build its network (Cesari 2013). It was founded in 1952 by the charismatic Jerusalem based Islamic scholar Taqi al-Din al-Nabhani (d. 1398/1977). Al-Nabhani saw the Caliphate as the only way for Muslims to restore their dignity following the abolition of the Caliphate in 1924.

HT's model is highly centralized and what can only be described as autocratic. Notably, according to Article 37 of HT's 'Draft Constitution of the Khalifah State' that appears at the end of Nabhani's collected work, *The Islamic State* (1998, 247), "The *Khalifah* has the absolute right to conduct the affairs of the citizens according to his opinion and *Ijtihad* [independent reasoning]. He is allowed to adopt from the *Mubah* [Islamically permissible or neutral] actions what is needed to conduct the affairs of the State." Articles 34 and 35 (1998, 246) note that: "The Ummah has the authority to appoint the Khaleefah [Caliph] but she has no right to dismiss him after he has legitimately attained the ba'iah [oath of allegiance] of contracting," and "The Khaleefah is the State. He possesses all the powers and function of the State." Sovereignty – both in theory and in practice – clearly lies solely within the figure of the Caliph.

It should be noted that Nabhani's model did call for a consultative assembly in which Muslims and non-Muslims alike would be allowed to vote and even hold office, but in practice the consultative assembly is meant to do little more than rubber-stamp decisions by the Caliph. It did not have independent legislative power, rather its role was to offer "its opinion on the ruler's policies [and] legislation," though it was allowed to "dismiss certain appointees of the ruler" (Commins 1991, 207). However, this assembly does not appear to have the power to remove the Caliph – this power only rests with the Supreme Court. HT's consultative assembly model lacked the ability to adequately check and balance executive power and in this regard is actually quite similar to the post–1979 Iranian model of governance.

Another key Caliphate revival movement in modern times that has advocated for a deeply autocratic vision is ISIS. The brutality of ISIS's rule is common knowledge. According to Jones, et al. (2017, 3), it rose to power in the midst of chaos "by exploiting local grievances, amassing considerable wealth, doling out aid, coopting or coercing competing extremist movements, seizing territory, and employing extreme violence to control captive populations." ISIS's first Caliph, Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi, ruled with an iron fist until his demise in October 2019, and his successors leadership style thus far have not been much different. ISIS's

expansive propaganda apparatus emphasized state-building, violence, and obedience (Jacoby 2019). Absolute loyalty to ISIS and its Caliph were mandatory, and any individuals residing within ISIS's dominion that went against the Caliph were promptly reprimanded or killed. Nonetheless, despite popular misconceptions about the world's most widely recognized transnational Islamist movement, ISIS was not just about anarchy and chaos. Rather it sought to create a highly *legalistic* Caliphate (March and Revkin 2015). It did not aim to arbitrarily apply 'Islamic justice,' even though in practice that is precisely what it ended up doing.

A Democratic Caliphate

An alternative vision to the autocratic Caliphate is one that prioritizes some type of *Islamic democracy* rooted in a robust and multi-level notion of sovereignty. Shortly prior to the abolition of the Caliphate in 1924, Muslim intellectuals such as Mehmed Seyyid Çelebizade (d. 1343/1925) – often referred to as Seyyid Bey – were writing on what is required of a Caliphate in the 20th century (Hassan 2016). Sayyid Bey supported the abolition of the Ottoman Caliphate, but unlike the Kemalists that followed him, he sought to root the new Turkish Republic in Islamic values. His main contention was that the "TGNA [Turkish Grand National Assembly] was the best Islamic form of rule according to his reinterpretation of the [Islamic] sources, and that the Caliphate should be reinterpreted in the light of the current political events" (Guida 2008, 286). When offering his own articulation of what a modern Caliphate ought to look like, Seyyid Bey differentiated between legitimate and illegitimate Caliphates, noting that the former held elections (*intihab*) and were willingly recognized by the community (*biat*) while the latter assumed power through force (*tegallüb ve istila*) rather than democratic means. For Sayyid Bey, the Caliphate must be both a democratic and representative institution.

In the thought of Seyyid Bey, we can see the intersection of Caliphate thinking with what today would be understood as Islamic democracy. The notion of Islamic democracy remains a hotly debated topic

amongst contemporary scholars. Collins and Owen (2012, 501) contend that "Islamic democracy is distinct from political Islam, but is also likely to be an illiberal form of democracy," arguing based on empirical research about religiosity and regime type preferences in Azerbaijan and Kyrgyzstan that *Islamic democracy* can be said to be "a regime based on some fundamental democratic institutions (e.g., elections and accountability) [that allows for] illiberal religious influence on the constitution and laws at the expense of state religious neutrality and some core liberal principles and individual rights." Islamic democracy – at least as understood by Central Asian Muslims who support it – therefore ought to be considered as quite distinct from liberal democracy.

This trend is also represented by Mawlana Abul A'la Mawdudi (d. 1399/1979), the founder of *Jamaat-i-Islami* (JI). While Mawdudi embodies conservative Islamic orthodoxy to some, if one digs deeply into his body of work, one can find the possibilities for genuine Islamic, albeit illiberal, democratic governance so long as certain preconditions are met. Mawdudi based his vision of the Caliphate on the principle of *ḥākimiyya*, which holds that ultimate sovereignty belongs only to Allah. With this in mind, he then derived the aforementioned idea of *Khilāfat Allāh*: that all humans are "viceregents," or representatives, of Allah on Earth (Mawdudi 1967, 40). The Caliph in that sense is a *Caliph among Caliphs*, who must apply the law of Allah, the Shariʿa. So long as he fulfills this duty, he may be selected by any procedure, including full democratic elections, which Mawdudi labeled "popular viceregency" (Singh 2000, 132). Moreover, Mawdudi advocated a substantial separation of powers between the leader and other branches of government, with an elected legislature and independent judges balancing the chief executive. He took separation of powers far more seriously than autocratically minded groups like HT, devoting substantial attention to how it could be achieved. Thus, Mawdudi (1976, 159, 161) worked hard to infuse democratic institutions (if not values) into the Caliphate model, attempting to offer a vision of "theo-democracy" or "democratic Caliphate" to the Muslim masses.

An Instrumentalist Caliphate or a Caliphate of Good Governance

A third iteration of the Caliphate is what one may term an instrumentalist or good governance model that is anchored in providing justice and the Islamic idea of *iḥsān* which can be understood as excellence in both deed and action. *Iḥsān* is also related to "benevolence toward people or graciousness in individuals' dealings with others, [which] is a central aspect of Islamic social justice" (Ciftci 2022, 8). *Iḥsān* – specifically in governance and political leadership – underwrites the good governance Caliphal model.

Concerns with *iḥsān* can be found in the ideas of the great *Shāfiʿī* jurist al-Mawardi (d. 450/1058) (cited in Anjum 2019, 32) who argued that the Caliph is "the successor of the Prophet who protects the religion and manages and governs worldly affairs of the community by it." The Caliph however is not a Prophet himself nor is he some unassailable sage or guru; functional institutions and *iḥsān* in leadership are paramount for al-Mawardi. He outlined ten matters of public affairs that were binding upon the Caliph, all of which were related to worldly administrative competencies, such as "ensur[ing] the employment of trustworthy persons and the appointment of worthy counsellors capable of undertaking those tasks delegated to them and of safeguarding monies made over them" (Al-Mawardi 1996, 28). There is nothing here about the necessity of the Caliph being the most pious member of the *umma* or most knowledgeable scholar; the Caliph is viewed in instrumental terms as a competent leader who upholds the Shariʿa.

In more recent times, the 'good governance' approach to the Caliphate can perhaps best be seen in the thought of Hassan al-Banna (d. 1386/1949) who, like al-Mawardi, also believed that the Caliphate was an obligation incumbent upon Muslims. Al-Banna (2006) took seriously the importance of a just economic system within Islam and had his own ten principles – all related to good governance – that noted the Caliphate's obligation to maximize the benefits of natural resources, provide social security, protect property rights and private ownership, and ensure *ḥalāl* monetary dealings by the state. All of the things discussed by al-Banna

relate to the notion of *iḥsān* in leadership which his Caliphal model hinges upon.

While al-Banna (2006) did support democratic political representation to some extent – for example, advocating for the community's active engagement in the country's political processes through *shūrā* or consultation – he was nonetheless very critical of political parties, believing that it was possible to have a well governed state that was governed by one party. Al-Banna himself saw political parties as divisive and argued against them, contending that they ought to be "dissolved and amalgamated in one popular organization 'working for the good of the nation on the basis of Islam'" (Al-Abdin 1989, 229). Thus, while his democratic credentials were highly suspect, he did foreground in his conception of the Caliphate quite clearly a good governance framework that aimed at providing social and economic justice to the people.

Under a good governance model, the Caliphate is viewed and valued neither as a true Islamic democracy, nor a restrictive and expansionist theocracy that alone can abolish un-Islamic practices by sheer will. Instead, this model conceptualizes the Caliphate more so within domestic rather than (though not necessarily exclusive of) transnational political terms as a vessel for the provision of broad public goods, including a swift and effective justice system and an inclusive welfare state for ordinary Muslims. In fact, this approach to the Caliphate can be found throughout the history of Islamic political thought, specifically from medieval "Sunni realists" like al-Mawardi who were flexible with regard to the Caliphate's institutional form – even if the Caliph himself was flawed – so long as it protected and provided for the marginalized Muslim masses as well as in the writings of al-Ghazali (d. 505/1111) who talked about the Caliphate's importance in upholding the *maqāṣid al-sharīʿa* or the higher purposes of the Shariʿa and protecting the *maṣlaḥa* or public welfare.

Such flexibility regarding the Caliph's personal character can actually be found much earlier, perhaps most notably in an explanation given by the final Rashidun Caliph, ʿAli ibn Abi Talib (d. 40/661) (referenced in Anjum 2019, 31) where he tells a to group of radicals within his own army that, "People must have leadership (*imāra*), be it pious or impious." When

pressed by his army as to why they ought to still obey an impious ruler, he responds by saying: "By it [the Caliph, even if imperfect] *ḥudūd* are established, public streets are protected, *jihād* is made against the enemy, and the spoils are divided" (referenced in Anjum 2019, 31). Here we can see a very instrumentalist understanding of the Caliphate articulated by one of its most prominent historical figures. Imam ʿAli's point was that, while it is obviously preferable to have a pious Caliph, even an impious Caliph could still successfully *do the job*, so to speak, so long as they upheld public order and appropriately presided over worldly public affairs. The institution of the Caliphate's success ultimately lies in having someone lead it who is capable of implementing good governing practices.

Modern-day Islamic parties have also made efforts to wed contemporary good governance practices with the ideals of Islamic governance. Ziad Munson's (2001) and Steven Brooke's (2019) critically important works note how that the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt's success over the years was rooted in the welfare services that it provided to diverse communities. Similarly, the AKP Party's earlier success in Türkiye was due to its work and popular slogan of bringing welfare and justice to the people (Kaminski 2017). In more recent times, Pakistan's still-popular former Prime Minister, Imran Khan, had similar priorities, noting that his "objective was to make Pakistan an Islamic welfare state on the model of Riyasat e Madina".[5] Many scholars have regarded the second Rashidun Caliph, ʿUmar ibn al-Khattab, as being the first ruler to have created a universal welfare state in a Muslim-majority society (or even in the world). Even though he himself lived an extremely simple life, his taxation and guaranteed income policies provided a universal social safety net (Chapra 1980; Crone 2005). It is this successful welfare model that al-Mawdudi (1992) was also inspired by when he described good governance as a "beacon on a hill."

Of the three visions we have outlined above, we expect this instrumental good governance model to have the strongest association with the Caliphate in the minds of most ordinary Muslims. Indeed, the knowledge of most believing Muslims of the charitable behavior of the early Rashidun Caliphs, the endorsement of such a model by a variety of influential Islamic thinkers and activists, and perhaps most importantly,

the active efforts by a range of modern Islamist parties and organizations to implement these instrumentalist ideas – from helping the poor to dispensing equal justice – as a key part of their governance projects, should make this vision the most central to popular conceptions of what an idealized Caliphate system would actually entail.

Deriving Hypotheses about Support for the Caliphate:

Drawing on the elite conceptions analyzed above, we can broadly outline several different hypotheses about the factors associated with popular support for the Caliphate. First, as we argued above, the Caliphate is often framed by Islamic thinkers, activists, and parties as a vehicle for the effective distribution of broad material benefits across society. Thus, we should expect those who value the provision of such public goods to be more likely to support the Caliphate. This leads to the following hypothesis, which tests our main argument:

> *Hypothesis 1: Those who want government to focus on providing broad public goods, such as inclusive welfare states or effective criminal justice systems, are more likely to support the Caliphate.*

In contrast, we also outlined other visions of the Caliphate that have been propagated by Islamic elites. One such vision was of an autocratic and repressive Caliphate. Following this logic, we can derive two expectations. First, we expect that those who want to impose and enforce their religious views on society will back the Caliphate. This leads to the following hypothesis:

> *Hypothesis 2a: Those who want government to focus on restricting public morality, such as banning the consumption of alcohol and enforcing the veil, are more likely to support the Caliphate.*

Second, based on the autocratic-repressive view of the Caliphate, we also expect that those who hold authoritarian predispositions and attitudes will back the Caliphate. One key indicator of such attitudes is

an emphasis on obedience as a virtue (Mallinas, Crawford, and Frimer 2019); in fact, obedience is often one of several measures used in psychological scales of authoritarianism. This leads to the following hypothesis:

Hypothesis 2b: Those who value obedience to authority and the law highly are more likely to support the Caliphate.

Support for the Caliphate may also be associated with a number of other factors. First and foremost, it should be closely bound up with support for the full application of the Shariʿa. The idea of fully applying the Shariʿa as the law of the land remains popular in much of the Muslim world. Recent surveys indicate that over 70% of the population in places like Malaysia, Iraq, Morocco, Egypt, Jordan, Pakistan, and Indonesia, and Bangladesh support this objective.[6] In fact, as stressed by modern Islamic thinkers, this is the Caliphate's main objective and even its *raison d'etre* (Gibb 1962; Pankhurst 2012). This leads us to the third hypothesis:

Hypothesis 3: Those who wish to see the strict application of the Shariʿa are more likely to support the Caliphate.

Of course, support for the Caliphate is not divorced from debates about the contemporary world order. In fact, modern ideas about the Caliphate like those of al-Mawdudi were developed in the colonial and post-colonial periods and were thus strongly shaped by a desire to reestablish Muslim authority and autonomy, particularly vis-à-vis the West. And while the Caliphate idea has been invoked by a range of contemporary Islamic thinkers and groups, that list includes prominent militant organizations such as Al Qaeda and ISIS, which have been explicitly anti-Western in their political outlook. In this sense, we should expect that support for the Caliphate is associated with unfavorable views of the West and of Western presence in the Muslim world in particular.

Hypothesis 4: Those who hold more negative or hostile views of the West and its presence in the Muslim world are more likely to support the Caliphate.

Examining Mass Conceptions of the Caliphate:

To test these hypotheses, we utilized the existing survey data discussed above. In particular, we use the second wave of the PIPA surveys fielded in Pakistan, Egypt, and Indonesia in 2008. We rely on these surveys for two key reasons. First, the PIPA surveys offer a larger sample size, wider case selection, and more representative sample than the Tessler surveys mentioned above (which, as noted, were mostly convenience samples in Arab cities). While it would be impossible to encapsulate the entirety of Muslim public opinion in any one group of surveys, PIPA does at least provide a large, systematic, and diverse snapshot of several major Muslim-majority countries, and thus a nice starting point for analysis.[7] Second, the second wave of the PIPA surveys contains three different questions about support for the Caliphate, whereas the first wave only includes the single question about mass support for the aim of "[unifying] all Islamic countries into a single Islamic state or Caliphate." This is significant because the latter question is probably least useful, as it includes an "Islamic unity" frame *in addition to* the "Caliphate" frame that is the central focus of our analysis. It may thus be measuring support for the political or even religious unity of the *umma,* independent of support for the Caliphate system as a political model per se. While this question is still informative, we have decided to focus on the 2008 surveys as they offer the most relevant battery of questions about the Caliphate model.

To measure public support for the Caliphate, we use two different questions from the 2008 PIPA surveys: (1) whether the Caliphate is "a better system of government than [the] country's present system," and (2) whether "all governments would be better if they were ruled under the Caliphate." This gives us two different dependent variables, helping guard against overreliance on any one specific question wording. The two questions also correspond roughly to items commonly used to measure popular support for democracy.[8]

We use a number of questions from the survey to capture our hypotheses. To represent the main argument, we use items from a series of questions about the meaning of Shari^ca, which is not a simple concept

that has one single meaning for all Muslims. Rather, as shown elsewhere, it can have many interpretations, from inclusive welfare systems to restrictive dress codes (Fair, Littman, and Nugent 2018). In the PIPA surveys, people were asked to rate the importance within Shariʿa of (1) "providing welfare to the poor," (2) "policing moral behavior," (3) "applying traditional punishments for crimes, such as stoning adulterers," and (4) "policing women's dress." We treat the first and, to some extent, the third questions as more about material provision (H1), and the second and fourth questions as more explicitly tied to moral regulation (H2a).[9]

Meanwhile, the other variables are straightforward. To measure respondents' obedience to authority (H2b), we use a question which asks them whether they think "people should obey the law even if it goes against what they think is right." To measure pure support for applying the Shariʿa independent of its interpretation (H3), we use a question about whether respondents want to "require a strict application of *Shariʿa law* in every Islamic country." To capture opinion about the West and its influence (H4), we use items about whether respondents want to "keep Western values out of Islamic countries" and "push the U.S. to remove its bases and its military forces from all Islamic countries." We also control for the respondent's sect or school of Islam (Shiʿi, Wahhabi, Salafi, Deobandi, Sufi, other) as the Caliphate may appeal more to some communities in the faith more than others. Finally, we add country fixed effects as well as standard demographic covariates such as age, gender, education, and income. The models are all estimated with logistic regression and include only Muslim respondents, as this is the main population of interest.[10]

Table 2. Predictors of Support for the Caliphate in Egypt, Indonesia, and Pakistan[11]

	(M1) Caliphate Better Than My Government (PIPA 2007-08)	(M2) Caliphate Better Than All Governments (PIPA 2007-08)
Attitudes		
Apply *Shariʿa* Law	0.52***	0.53***
	(0.08)	(0.08)
Shariʿa as Welfare	0.29**	0.31**
	(0.12)	(0.13)
Shariʿa as Morality Police	-0.02	0.03
	(0.14)	(0.14)
Shariʿa as *Ḥudūd*	0.58**	0.35
	(0.26)	(0.26)
Shariʿa as Women's Dress	0.12	0.16
	(0.11)	(0.11)
Obedience to Authority	0.05	0.05
	(0.04)	(0.04)
Reject Western Values	0.23	-0.07
	(0.35)	(0.36)
Remove U.S. Presence	-0.05	0.01
	(0.12)	(0.12)
Controls		
Age	-0.35	-0.32
	(0.40)	(0.39)
Gender	0.94**	-0.03
	(0.43)	(0.37)
Education	-2.37***	-1.88***
	(0.59)	(0.53)
Income	-0.35	-0.32
	(0.40)	(0.39)

	(M1) Caliphate Better Than My Government (PIPA 2007-08)	(M2) Caliphate Better Than All Governments (PIPA 2007-08)
Country Fixed Effects		
Indonesia	-0.06	-0.55***
	(0.20)	(0.19)
Pakistan	-0.32	0.15
	(0.23)	(0.23)
Constant	-1.81***	-2.33***
	(0.59)	(0.60)
Observations	1,316	1,302

The results are shown in Table 2. As can be seen, one of the strongest predictors of popular support for the Caliphate is support for the application of the Shariʿa throughout the Muslim world, underscoring the close link between these ideas (H3). Yet we also see differences in support for the Caliphate based on people's interpretation of Shariʿa. Support for the Caliphate is significantly greater in both models among those who view providing for the poor (*welfare*) as a key feature of Shariʿa, and significantly greater in the first model among those who view applying punishments mandated and fixed by God (*ḥudūd*) as key. By contrast, it is not significantly greater among those who perceive policing moral behavior or restricting women's dress as key facets. The Shariʿa envisioned by supporters of the Caliphate thus appears to be about providing effective welfare and justice systems – largely instrumental considerations – more than legislating modesty and morality, providing support for H1 (and not H2a).

As for the other variables, there is little impact for the obedience measure used to capture authoritarianism. Thus, there is no support for the autocratic-repressive vision of the Caliphate in our results, as its supporters are not more likely to want to impose their religious views on others via morality policing (H2a) or to hold authoritarian attitudes

(H2b). Meanwhile, the desire to keep Western values out of – and remove U.S. troops and bases from – the Muslim world (H4) somewhat surprisingly has little impact on popular support for the Caliphate, in contrast to H3. This does not mean that there is no geopolitical and civilizational element to its appeal, but it does suggest that Muslim populations may be looking inward as much as outward when considering the Caliphate as a model. Finally, in terms of demographic covariates, support for the Caliphate is significantly lower among Shiʿa, Sufis, and Wahhabis, higher among the uneducated, and lower in the second model in Indonesia than Egypt or Pakistan.

Original Survey Instrument

These analyses, however, do not directly analyze how the Caliphate is understood. In fact, they only measure the political values, identities, and preferences of its supporters and assume that their understanding of the Caliphate is consistent with them. In order to gain more direct leverage on these matters, we fielded an original survey with questions about the Caliphate and democracy in Pakistan.

While the choice of any single country presents inevitable challenges and tradeoffs, there are some rather apparent reasons why Pakistan is a worthwhile case to focus on for research like this. First, as Fair, Littman, and Nugent (2018, 430) contend, due to Pakistan's unique demographics and history, it is an excellent case to study in order to better "understand the ties between conceptualizations of shariʿa governance and political preferences with respect to democracy and Islamist violence in Muslim countries." Second, Pakistan is a large and influential country of 200 million Muslims often noted for the tremendous diversity of its Islamic traditions (Shiʿa and Sunni, Orthodox and Sufi), reflecting deep infiltration by different branches of Islam from throughout the Islamic world (Fuchs 2019; Reetz 2009). Finally, Pakistan's complex relationship between democracy and political Islam make it of particular interest to investigate. It is important to remember that under British rule, it was the modernists – not traditionalists or the *ʿulamāʾ* – who were the most influential and powerful. As a result, in the words of Muhammad Qasim

Zaman (2018, 7), from Pakistan's inception, it would be the modernists who would go on to define "what position Islam would have in the Pakistani constitution, how and on what terms the madrasas would be reformed or Sufi shrines brought under state regulation, what shariʿa based laws would be enacted, and within what boundaries they would have effect." In other words, the people of Pakistan have experience with both procedural democratic and Islamic political ideals for a long time, thus better positioning them to competently evaluate the merits of each when conceptualizing politics.

Conducted by the Pakistani Institute for Public Opinion Research (IPOR) in 2014, the survey was administered to a multistage stratified random sample of 1,000 adult subjects drawn from all four major provinces of Pakistan "proper" (Punjab, Sindh, Balochistan, and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa). In the survey, the respondents were first asked about their support for each of the following ways of governing Pakistan: (1) "a democratic political system (public freedom, equal political and civil rights, balance of power, accountability and transparency)," (2) "a strong non-democratic leader that does not bother with parliament and elections," (3) "having a council of experts make decisions about what is best for the country," and (4) "a Caliphate system on the model of the Rightly Guided Caliphs." The list used was adapted from the second wave of the Arab Barometer (Q517), with the addition of the Caliphate system for our purposes. In this context, the Caliphate was the most popular political model, with 84% of the respondents rating it as a good or very good way of governing Pakistan. Meanwhile, that figure was 73% for democracy, 56% for technocracy, and only 27% for authoritarianism. Thus, as in the existing surveys, democracy and the Caliphate were the most popular forms of government. Moreover, simple correlations indicate that support for the Caliphate is positively and significantly related to support for democracy, suggesting that they may not be seen as oppositional at the mass level.

Additionally, the respondents were asked to rate the two most important components of democracy and the Caliphate, selecting from the following list of options: (1) "the chance to choose the government in elections," (2) "the freedom to criticize the government," (3) "relatively narrow gap between rich and poor," (4) "basic items (food, housing,

clothing) for everyone," (5) "political stability," (6) "fair and swift justice system," (7) "application of *Shari'a law*," and (8) "other." This list was also adapted from a question about the features of democracy included in the second wave of the Arab Barometer (Q515), with the latter three items added in this survey. The question allowed us to – for the first time – directly investigate the perceived areas of convergence and of divergence between the two systems. Following the primary argument, we would expect that the Caliphate will be viewed first and foremost in terms of its ability to provide broad material benefits throughout society, including effective systems of social welfare (4) and criminal justice (6).

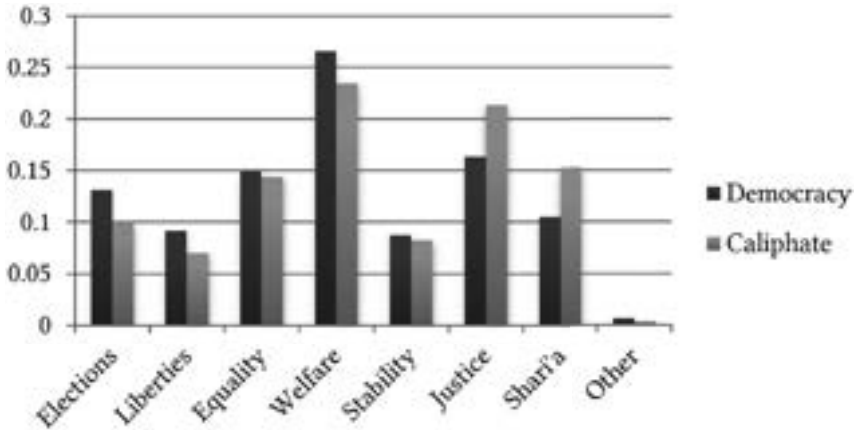

Figure 1. Pakistani Perceptions of the Two Most Important Features of Caliphate and Democracy

The results are summarized in Figure 1. The figure indicates the proportion of times each feature was chosen out of the total number of selections (combining both first and second place "votes"). As can be seen, the figure highlights several crucial distinctions between the perceived characteristics of democracy and the Caliphate. We calculate the significance of these gaps using t-tests for a difference in proportions. Doing so shows that democracy is seen significantly more in terms of the opportunity to select the government through elections ($p=0.002$)

as well as the freedom to criticize it ($p=0.011$). Moreover, democracy is also more linked to the provision of basic welfare throughout society ($p=0.026$). In contrast, the Caliphate is more closely connected to efficient and effective dispensation of criminal justice ($p=0.0001$) as well as the promulgation and application of the Shariʿa ($p=0.0001$), which, as already discussed, is a complex and multifaceted construct itself. Overall, then, we can see an increased emphasis on democratic procedures and privileges under democracy, in contrast to a greater emphasis on a justice-based implementation of the Shariʿa in the Caliphate system.

However, focusing exclusively on these disparities masks the similarity in the distributions. In fact, the two features that are viewed as most important in each system are the instrumentalist attributes of an inclusive welfare state and an effective justice system. On the other hand, the more normative characteristics of elections (and, particularly, liberties) are clearly seen as second-order considerations in both models, despite their relatively higher association with democracy. Indeed, this parallels some of the core insights gleaned from the public opinion literature on support for democracy examined earlier. For example, as concluded by Jamal and Tessler (2008, 99), results from the second wave of the Arab Barometer show that "economic issues are central to the way that many Arab citizens think about governance and, accordingly, that many men and women probably have an instrumental conception of democracy." Our analysis shows that this holds true for the Caliphate as well: while there is some perceived space for elections and liberties, it is chiefly understood as an instrumental vehicle for the inclusive and effective delivery of social welfare and criminal justice programs.

Conclusion

The nation-state model has not been particularly kind to Muslims over the last century (Laurence 2021; Hallaq 2016; Kaminski 2022). Significant levels of support for the Caliphate system among Muslims therefore ought not be surprising when considering the state of affairs in which much of the Muslim world today finds itself. To date however, few scholars have focused on how the Caliphate is actually conceptualized

by contemporary Muslims in practice: is it perceived as a totalitarian theocracy, Islamic democracy, or something entirely distinct? To investigate, we first surveyed some of the more influential elite visions of the Caliphate system throughout Islamic history. While this only yielded a broad overview of several of the most prominent elite visions, it highlighted not only the concept's tremendous diversity but also some of the key autocratic, democratic, and technocratic models that have been promulgated and linked to the Caliphate by influential Islamic thinkers. This brings into sharp focus the building blocks of several different conceptualizations of the Caliphate, leading us to examine which ones have been "absorbed" by Muslim populations today.

Our first set of findings suggest that support for the Caliphate is intimately connected to popular support for the implementation of the Shariʿa, but that the nature of the Shariʿa envisioned in a Caliphate centers around providing broad and efficient systems of welfare and justice as opposed to policing public modesty and morality. This understanding of the Shariʿa parallels Brandon Kendhammer's (2016) earlier empirical research on Nigeria which showed how the local Muslim population there commonly perceives of the Shariʿa as the vehicle that will help unify the Muslim population behind a single religious identity, root out its problems of elite corruption and underdevelopment, and facilitate in better overall governance. It also parallels Fair, Littman, and Nugent's (2018, 460) findings on public perceptions of the Shariʿa and Islamic government in Pakistan that showed how most people there understood as Islamic government, though not necessarily a Caliphate, as one that "implements shariʿa by providing services and security for its citizens" which they go on to argue "is associated with increased support for democratic values."[12] Our findings also suggests that blind obedience to authority and opposition to the West are not influential in shaping the political attitudes of most Caliphate supporters. This suggests that, in line with our "good governance" model's assumptions, those who support the Caliphate are not necessarily motivated by its internationalist ends.

We then turned to an original survey conducted in Pakistan in 2014 to compare the two systems more deeply and directly. In this survey, we asked respondents to not only rate their support for the Caliphate and

democracy, but also to select the two characteristics most important to each system. The results of this method show that, despite some key differences, there is substantial convergence in public conceptions of the two models. Indeed, in both cases, the more normative considerations of elections, freedoms, and economic equality took a "back seat" to the more instrumentalist qualities of well-functioning systems of welfare and justice.

Our results thus resonate with Lars Berger's (2019, 316) recent findings that support for following the Shariʿa "should not be understood as support for an [autocratic] Islamist political programme, but rather an expression of support for an instrument that is seen as facilitating ethical conduct or a just social and political order which reflects Islamic values more generally." This has some important implications for our understanding of support for democracy and its competitors in the Islamic world. First, it illustrates the diversity of Caliphate conceptions in the Muslim world today and demonstrates that most ordinary Muslims do not view the Caliphate as either a repressive autocracy or a liberal democracy, but something compatible with a range of institutional forms. Second, it shows that the Caliphate, like democracy, is widely valued in instrumental terms as a vehicle for the broad social welfare and justice long lacking across the Islamic world. Third, it shows those who support the Caliphate are not necessarily driven by utopian or decolonial/counter-hegemonic motivations; rather their support for the Caliphate is anchored more so in what possibilities it provides for domestic economic and administrative improvements.

For pro-democracy activists, this is a double-edged sword. On one hand, stressing the congruence between democracy and the Caliphate might aid democracy promotion efforts in the Muslim world by endowing them with indigenous democratic legitimacy. Similarly, it might also help diminish the fear that the term incites in the West, which only fuels the focus on stability over reform in foreign policy toward Muslim countries. Yet, this similarity also suggests that the status of democracy as the "only legitimate game in town" within the Islamic world is not unalterably secure. If democracy delivers only descent into war and chaos – as it has in in the Arab Spring – the appeal of other models perceived as capable of meeting the fundamental needs of Muslim-majority populations, like the Caliphate, will only continue to grow.

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Endnotes

1 "President Discusses Global War on Terror," *Office of the Press Secretary, The White House*, September 5, 2006.

2 In the World Values Survey, for example, the average percentage of respondents across Muslim-majority countries saying that democracy is a "very good" or "fairly good" way of governing their country is 89.3%. The figure is 88.7% across non-Muslim-majority countries.

3 "Arabs are Losing Faith in Religious Parties and Leaders" Arab Barometer, December 5, 2019. Accessed January 15, 2022 at: https://www.arabbarometer.org/2019/12/arabs-are-losing-faith-in-religious-parties-and-leaders/

4 Moreover, just looking at topline levels of support for the Caliphate assumes that its meaning is fixed and constant in existing surveys. We move away from this assumption by "looking under the hood" and probing what the Caliphate means through the beliefs of its supporters and direct questions about its characteristics in several different countries and contexts.

5 "Making Pakistan an Islamic welfare state is a top objective: PM Khan," *Pakistan Today* [online], April 9, 2022. Accessed: December 28, 2023, at: https://www.pakistantoday.com.pk/2022/04/09/making-pakistan-an-islamic-welfare-state-is-top-objective-pm-khan/

6 See, "The World's Muslims: Religion, Politics and Society." Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life, April 30, 2013, Question 79a. Accessed December 28, 2023 at: https://www.pewresearch.org/religion/2013/04/30/the-worlds-muslims-religion-politics-society-overview/

7 These three countries contained 28.4% of the world's Muslim population in 2010, according to Pew data. Available at http://www.pewforum.org/2015/04/02/muslims/pf_15-04-02_projectionstables74/.

8 Indeed, they parallel some of the agree/disagree statements often used to measure support for democracy, such as "democracy is a good way of governing my country," and "democracy is better than any other form of government."

9 We ran a factor analysis with the four different Shariʿa components to assess the validity of this division. We found that without rotation the variables loaded onto two separate factors as anticipated (e.g., the first and third variables on one factor, and the second and fourth on the other). We checked for multicollinearity with Spearman's rank correlation matrix, and we found no evidence of substantial multicollinearity between the variables.

10 The results are substantively similar with ordinary least squares (OLS) and probit models, suggesting that they are not just artifacts of model selection. The results are also substantively similar with robust standard errors.

11 Source: PIPA 2007-08 data. Own calculations. Logistical regression models estimated with country-fixed effects, with Egypt as the comparison category, fixed effects for sectarian belonging (not shown), and clustered (robust) standard errors. Standard errors in parentheses. * = significant at the 0.1 level; ** = significant at the 0.05 level; *** = significant at the 0.01 level.

12 On the other hand, Fair, Littman, and Nugent (2018, 460) found that conceptualizations of "an Islamic government as one that implements shari'a by imposing hudud punishments (physical punishments such as whipping, stoning, cutting off hands, etc.) and restricting women's public roles is associated with increased support for militancy."

The Reparative Work of the Imagination: Yemen, ʻAfiya, and Politics of the *Umma*

ASHWAK HAUTER

Abstract

This paper explores the psychic implications of nation-state politics on Yemenis and the necessity of repair and restorative justice. It examines some burgeoning work by artists and filmmakers that work on the image of the Yemeni as a reaction to the mental health crisis, ongoing war, and dispossession. For many of my interlocutors, the exploration and reimagining of Yemeni history, identity, and their place within a larger *umma* beyond nation-state formation becomes a necessary act of repair—and a precondition toward broader political aspirations. The essay

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traces the works of art by two Yemeni artists that meditate on the conditions of community, trust, and individual and communal wellbeing in relation to the Muslim *umma*. In turn, it considers how an *ummatic* aspiration is mediated by local political histories, but also the difficult psychic work necessary to articulate this aspiration amid cultural desolation.

Introduction

The short film "The Long Run" revolves around a young boy being sent by his mother to fetch some bread for lunch. As the camera trails behind him, it moves audiences through the corridors of Ibb's historic old city as the boy attends noon (*dhuhr*) prayer, passes by a funeral procession, and plays marbles with his friends. These mundane scenes of collective life offer viewers a series of visual meditations on ethics, communal affinity, Islamic rituals, piety, divine trust (*amana*), counsel (*nasiha*), and hospitality, reverberating throughout the tower-homes built of rammed earth and mud. The movie culminates with a story that an elder recounts to the young boy as he accompanies him home: a parable of an oppressive man who, having overburdened his donkey, eventually kills it. The unstated referents of the allegorical story are the forms of collective life just depicted, which (so the film implies) have been depleted and undermined by an oppressive, indifferent political leadership.

I had met Yousef, the young Yemeni filmmaker behind the short film, for the first time in 2013 when we were both attending a meeting of the American Association for Yemeni Professionals and Scientists in

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Berkeley, California. Now in his late twenties and having graduated from UCLA's Film school, Yousef had recently traveled to Yemen after losing his job as an assistant writing on a Netflix show. We met at the farmer's market in Los Angeles, a month after he returned from Yemen to discuss raising funds for future film projects. Reticent to speak about his own faith, he nonetheless noted to me that during this last trip to Yemen he was struck by how refuge in the Islamic tradition was one of the few things sustaining people's mental health and wellbeing. As he put it, it seemed a strange paradox how thickly enmeshed and co-identified the Islamic tradition and Yemen are, yet how little this seemed to materialize in either curiosity about, or affinity for, Yemenis from the *umma* (the broader Islamic community).

The tension Yousef gestured to, what he viewed as a paradox, was deeply familiar to me. I myself am a Yemeni-American scholar and researcher, raised between Yemen, Brooklyn, and California. Having conducted extensive predissertation fieldwork in Yemen spanning the years 2009-2013, I was forced by the ongoing conflict there to work outside the country, primarily in Saudi Arabia but also Jordan, during my doctoral fieldwork in 2016-2017, during which time I worked closely with many diasporic Yemeni interlocutors. They repeatedly pointed out to me how Muslims from around the globe flock to Yemen to immerse themselves in historical sites and social forms they experience as most proximate to the early roots of their faith. To them, Yemen is figured (within the *umma* and beyond it) as a contemporary embodiment of religious history. However, this historical binding of Yemen and Islam never led most Muslims visitors to envision Yemen as an extension of the *umma* that requires attentiveness and contemporary political, economic, and social commitments. Instead, Yemen's severe humanitarian crisis and rampant corruption are read merely as problems of the country's political economy, tribal structure, anti-modernist visions, and failure to centralize governance—in other words, its seeming inability to function well as a nation-state. Crucially, the myriad ways in which many Yemenis resist the violence and oppression of neoliberal policies and Western secularization are rarely salient in this way of framing its current distress. As a result, an image of the Yemeni as a conservative

beggar with a premodern soul serves to explain its current stasis. That very image of impoverishment forecloses Yemenis' membership within (and so their ability to make claims upon) the larger Muslim *umma*.

This essay delves into the productive function of the "work of culture" (Obeyesekere 1990), the symbolic transformation or sublimation of affects (depressive and painful), amidst the war and conflict in Yemen. I illustrate how, for many of my interlocutors, the exploration and reimagining of Yemeni history, identity, and their place within a larger *umma* and history beyond nation-state formation becomes a necessary act of repair—and a precondition toward broader political aspirations. This demonstrates not only the deep ways an *ummatic* aspiration is mediated by local political histories, but also the difficult psychic work necessary to articulate this aspiration from within the midst of cultural desolation. First, I note how concerns around wartime mental health and illness have turned Yemeni youth toward art, storytelling, and prophetic medicine. This decided shift illustrates the salience of a discourse on the importance of the imagination and the law to the soul, envisioning new epistemological approaches to psychotherapeutic models. Second, I explore the impact of geopolitics on psychic wellbeing (*'afiya*) and the way discourses on the state of the soul emerge. I end the essay by presenting works by two artists (Yousef and Eman) which examine the role of art, storytelling, and history in the work of the imagination and the fortitude of the soul. This examination of *'afiya* and its multiple dimensions allows us to understand the reparative work of the imagination: re-imagining the Yemeni, the revival of a rich heritage, and the reverberation of a tradition.

On Methods: Reimagining Muslim Scholarship

In recent years, ethnographers working with Muslim practitioners have increasingly acknowledged how centering a non-secular epistemology and framework is necessary to any attempt to write from within the tradition, whether it be about Muslim cosmologies, aspirations and commitment to the *umma*, or moral subjectivity. A consequent centering of divine oneness in turn informs ethnographic explorations of

how Muslims relate to questions as varied as *ʿafiya* (well-being), charity, emerging neoliberal policies, migration, psychic and spiritual wellbeing, humanitarianism, self-cultivation and purification, and stewardship of the world (Asad 2009; Hirschkind, 2006; Iqbal, 2025; Mahmood 2011; Messick 1996; Mittermaier 2019; Pandolfo 2018). This methodological and theoretical corrective is often confused in media and academic debates alike for acceding to Islamist propositions (Hamdy, 2012). However, Talal Asad (2015, 212) asks what "politics not focused on the sovereign territorial state might look like" rather than giving primacy to a framework that would position religious versus secular states. Asad argues that considering "nonhierarchical domains of normativity open up the possibility of a very different kind of politics—and policies—that would always have to address numerous overlapping bodies and territories". He cites *al-amr bi-l-maʿrūf* (enjoining good) as an example of a tradition that might "form an orientation of mutual care of the self, based on the principle of friendship (and therefore of responsibility to and between friends) not on the legal principle of citizenship". In interrogating the impact of global geopolitical structures on psychic-well-being, I build on this intervention as well as the above-mentioned emerging anthropological turn in exploring sociopolitical structures from an Islamic perspective.

My ethnographic writing is attentive to the ways Muslims engage and negotiate institutional spaces, textual and conceptual histories and philosophies, affinal relationships, and the poetics and prose of Islamic concepts in everyday practices. It follows a number of anthropological works that aim to explore how Islamic cosmology produces relationalities between humans and God, other humans, animals, nature, and the *umma* (Rahman 2009, Izutsu 2002). These relationalities mediate socio-economic and political commitments that are theologically infused and go beyond the mere assertion of a Muslim polity. I explore these relationalities amongst Yemenis attempting to secure both individual and communal *ʿafiya* amidst the congoing conflict.

The conflict in Yemen (in which the United States military is involved) has to date taken over 100,0000 lives, devastated infrastructure, forced migration, and exacerbated suffering caused by an ongoing famine. It has displaced many Yemenis desiring and yearning to continue their

studies, crafts, and careers, forcing them to find opportunities elsewhere. Crucially, the war also threatens to obliterate the country's historical landmarks, architectural heritage, and cultural memory. My broader research agenda (Hauter 2020) focused on ethico-religious practices, medicine, and the role of communal and individual health in securing *ʿafiya* (psychological, physical, and spiritual wellbeing) in Yemen. To be clear, and in contrast to *sihha*, which denotes a more limited notion of physical health, *ʿafiya* is fundamentally a theological concept, especially as paradigmatically employed in the supplication to God, made by both patients and physicians, for pardon and wellbeing. Within hospital settings, for example, the prayer "O God, I ask You for forgiveness and well-being in this world and in the Hereafter" (*allahumma inni as'aluka l-ʿafwa wa-l-ʿafiyah fi-l-dunya wa-l-akhirah*), is frequently circulated among patients, their families, and visitors (Hauter 2023a). Amongst my interlocutors, an illness is not seen as an atomistic/individual experience but viewed as relational. *ʿAfiya* itself is about relationality—a relation to oneself, soul, desire, psyche, history, family, community, and God. As seen in the examples detailed in this paper, art is one site for an emerging meditation on *ʿafiya* and its conditions.

Based on twenty-four months of multi-sited field research in Sanaʿa, Yemen, and with Yemeni refugees and migrants in Amman, Jordan, and Jeddah, Saudi Arabia, my earlier work explored my interlocutors' ideas of health and illness, as they have been inflected and intensified by the war in Yemen. In these three sites, I gave particular attention to the theological concept of *ʿafiya* as it shapes the way ordinary people articulate their demands for medical care: from the doctors at the forefront of the 2011-2012 uprising in Sanaʿa calling for *islah* (reform), to physicians and imams working with refugees and migrants in Amman and Jeddah, to clinical trials of Prophetic Medicine in Jeddah. Broadening the focus from the medical clinic to wider society, this essay now begins to examine the psycho-spiritual effects of geopolitics on the psyche/soul within the Yemeni diasporas (Jordan, Saudi Arabia, United States) at the margins of war.

On the one hand, certain psychologists and psychiatrists view the tribal structure of Yemeni society as stunting individual progress and

wellbeing. On the other hand, psychologists have turned to art and storytelling to treat both children and adults alike with post-traumatic stress disorders, depression, and depersonalization, exploring various prescriptions for psychic wellbeing. This turn toward art, history, and storytelling may in fact have followed trends manifested during the Arab Spring, when Yemeni youth turned to poetry, folklore, and filmmaking in order to reimagine both their past, present, and future as part of the *umma*. In doing so, these young people reconstructed the image of the Yemeni as part of a collective whole, one that is bound up with Islamic cosmology. Here, I want to emphasize that being in community requires attention to one's placement, one's ability to envision engagements with others, reciprocation, hospitality, and a shared vision, all of which allow individuals to both locate themselves and trust in the potential exchange with others.

Yemen, '*Afiya,* and the *Umma*

Yousef concluded our first interview at the Los Angeles Market by relaying stories about Yemenis' refusal to embrace Arab nationalism. He recalled various claims of why the Egyptian military intervention in Yemen during Gamal Abdel-Nasser's rule had been a failure (Dawisha 1975). Scholars note that the Egyptian army had supported the Yemeni Revolution of 1962 against the ruling Imam Ahmed and his royalist followers; its entrance into Yemen during this conflict was part due to Saudi Arabia's support for the remaining royalists, and its departure was mainly due to what they considered as Yemen's inefficiency. When President Nasser returned to Cairo after visiting Yemen in 1964, he is said to have remarked to John Badeau, the American ambassador: "You would not believe what goes on in Sana'a. Half of the Ministers never go to their offices, and the other half don't know what to do when they get there. Additionally, he was able to witness for himself when he was in Sana'a the near disintegration of the Republican leadership and their almost daily public bickering and quarrels" (Dawisha 1975, 55). Scholars observed that "the Egyptians considered the Yemen to be a backward and medieval country" (Dawisha 1975, 48). President Nasser considered

Yemen to be "Egypt's Vietnam" in the problems it posed to his agenda, as he noticed the corruption and quarrels of the political factions, and after the supposed gaining momentum of the royalists, who he feared were backed by Saudi Arabia. This image of Yemeni backwardness and anti-modernity proved highly durable.

Many Yemenis tell a different tale of what ultimately drove the Egyptian Army out. Yousef began, "Yemenis have never been captivated by the idea of Arab nationalism because of the customs that bind the community, that secure it and which ensure safety and honor between the people." His uncle and father would narrate tales of how the Yemeni population grew suspicious of the Egyptian armed forces when women were harassed in public and rumors of rape and physical violence exercised upon Yemeni women began to spread from Sanaʿa to the villages. In response, tribesmen began kidnapping officers and revolting against the Egyptian army. The Egyptian government deemed these actions to be politically motivated, but according to Yemenis such kidnappings occurred because of the army's moral corruption, which contravened Yemeni ethical commitments (which surpass and supersede national identity, local tribal affiliations, and political divisions). Yousef emphasized that the corruption and transgressions that the Egyptian Army brought into the community emboldened the insularity of Yemenis – the sense that they must cleave to customs and traditions for the *ʿafiya* of the community, against and above nation-state politics. To be clear, the *umma* here envisioned by Yousef lies beyond identity politics (Egypt vs. Yemen, or even Egypt and Yemen together under advancing the broader cause of Arab nationalism), for the question of *ʿafiya* was not simply levelled to secure one particular political affiliation or another. Instead, the question of *ʿafiya* here showcases how psycho-spiritual wellbeing cuts through political categories and claims of socio-economic and political equality. In fact, many of my interlocutors long for and recall "aspects of an early community-centered political vision" (Anjum 2012, 61-62).

Yousef explained that this longing is nothing new. Yemenis have always been cast out of the *umma*. To explain, he brought me back to the seventh century: "When the leadership came together to decide on the Caliphate after the Prophet died, Saʿd ibn ʿUbadah ibn Dulaym al-Ansari,

the leader of the Yemeni tribe…nominated himself for leadership of the Muslim community. Both ʻUmar Ibn al-Khattab and Abu Bakr went to him and said we are the rulers and you are the advisors." The tradition in Sahih al-Bukhari narrated the following event following the Prophet's death:

> *The people wept loudly, and the Ansar were assembled with Saʻd bin ʻUbada in the shed of Bani Saiʻda. They said (to the emigrants). "There should be one Amir (ruler) from us and one from you." Then Abu Bakr, ʻUmar bin Al-Khattab and Abu ʻUbaida bin Al-Jarrah went to them. ʻUmar wanted to speak but Abu Bakr stopped him. ʻUmar later on used to say, "By Allah, I intended only to say something that appealed to me and I was afraid that Abu Bakr would not speak so well. Then Abu Bakr spoke and his speech was very eloquent. He said in his statement, "We are the rulers and you (the Ansar) are the ministers (i.e., advisers)," Hubab bin Al-Mundhir said, "No, by Allah we won't accept this. But there must be a ruler from us and a ruler from you." Abu Bakr said, "No, we will be the rulers and you will be the ministers, for they (i.e., the Quraish) are the best family amongst the Arabs and of best origin. So you should elect either ʻUmar or Abu ʻUbaida bin Al-Jarrah as your ruler." ʻUmar said (to Abu Bakr), "No but we elect you, for you are our chief and the best amongst us and the most beloved of all of us to Allah's Messenger (ﷺ)." So ʻUmar took Abu Bakr's hand and gave the pledge of allegiance and the people too gave the pledge of allegiance to Abu Bakr. Someone said, "You have killed Sad bin ʻUbada." ʻUmar said, "Allah has killed him." (Sahih al-Bukhari Book 62, Hadith 19).*

According to Yousef, Yemenis have always been considered the soldiers of the *umma*. "They fight for the *umma* but they are continually cast out." Although the hadith reads "ministers" rather than "soldiers," I want to underscore the significance of how a historical wound felt by Yemenis and transmitted across generations in this moment becomes available to explain a twentieth-century phenomenon (i.e., the excluding

of Yemen from the modernizing projects and aspirations of pan-Arab nationalism). This is noteworthy for reflection because it precisely reifies the projected bordering of regional affiliations within the *umma*. This conjunction invites further examination of how imaginaries about what and who makes up the *umma*, in their historically specific variation, are just as integral to the future and possibility of a cohesive *umma* as the institutions built to bridge its fracturing into diverse nation-states. Yemen is a particularly significant site for interrogating this due to its arguably exceptional status within the Muslim geopolitical imaginary, it simultaneously symbolically represents both an originary source and a space of exception. This paradox generates artistic and filmic responses amongst the Yemeni diaspora, which offer a starting point for exploring efforts at repair.

The markers by which one is located, evaluated, and enter into exchange with others depends on institutional, state, and other markers that depend on borders rather than exceed them. How does one engage in community when the ways one is instructed to engage with others are not reflected in the available societal infrastructures?

Yousef, like many other Yemenis I spoke with in the diaspora, spoke about the inhospitality of other regions. He mentioned that when his father, an accomplished novelist, was competing for a literary award his travels were impeded as the Gulf War broke out: tensions between Yemen and the Gulf countries intensified as the government aligned with Saddam Hussein and Yemenis were both expelled from the Gulf states and their movement was rendered illegal. I, too, found myself facing barriers to my mobility during the current conflict in Yemen. Katiba, a Yemeni woman from *Mahweet* holding Jordanian citizenship, who I met alongside her husband while sitting in the office of the president of the Yemeni diaspora center in Amman, laughed when I facetiously said, "Well, it would have been better if there was air to breathe." The woman responded:

"I know how you feel. We're here trying to figure out when the airport will open so we can return to Taiz, even though we were staying with my father's family who are Jordanian. I love my husband's family in Yemen. They live by the natural disposition (*fitra*). We are one. Here,

there's no hospitality, generosity (*karama*), softness (*teeba*). The souls (*al-nufus*) here in Jordan are different. I would rather sit under flying missiles and shards than live amidst spite (*hagd*) and jealousy (*hasad*). My soul is constricted (*mu'tadiqah*) here."

I asked Katiba whether she found Yemenis in Jordan to keep company. She replied, "How can I receive or invite people when I myself am a guest here?"

Other Yemeni interlocutors I met during my fieldwork stressed that they would not request medical service, help, or aid in Jordan or Saudi Arabia for fear of being rebuffed. Meanwhile their position across my field sites was increasingly precarious. In Jordan and Saudi Arabia they shared stories of being sprayed by water hoses and swindled out of housing. Their marginal position as migrants and refugees was determined by the socio-political structures of the nation-state. At the same time, they noted how Yemen was a refuge for others who came there seeking Islamic scholarly learning, immersion in the Arabic language, and community within the coveted institutions of Tarim, Ibb, and Sanaʿa. This generated a paradox in which Yemen was at once identified with community, hospitality, and tradition while Yemenis were being denigrated and excluded from modern political and social relations. Beyond merely a psychic problem of identification (idealization), many of my interlocutors noted that this paradox affected their ability to traverse borders and inhabit social institutions in neighboring countries. This inability to request aid or to rely on others was prompted by a fear of the fraying of the *umma* (Hauter 2023)—for which being rebuffed would be a confirmation that the Muslim community has in fact dissolved and that tradition is no more.

To combat this fear and elaborate on this paradox, Yousef and other Yemeni artists meditate on the conditions of community, trust, and individual and communal wellbeing. Yousef's latest project, which was commissioned by the International Bank of Yemen, emphasizes the practice of *amana* that is integral to hospitality and reciprocity within Yemeni society. When Yousef was commissioned to highlight a new wire transfer system provided by the bank (one that could rival Moneygram, Western Union, or even Venmo), he explored that tradition of *amana* within Yemeni society. Although the bank thought that drawing on

amana was an unorthodox strategy for marketing a wire transfer service, Yousef stressed the need to draw on the tradition in order to rebuild trust amongst Yemenis in institutions at time of political factionalism and widespread misgovernance.

Yousef's commercial begins with a family sending a package to a bride who is a member of their extended kin. The package travels from person to person, by bus, by cab, and up an unpaved village road. Each courier holds it tightly in order to deliver it as intended. The commercial ends by noting the many ways an *amana* can still be delivered amidst new and shifting technologies. When I asked Yousef about his inspiration for the commercial, he noted the richness of Yemeni ethico-religious practices that maintain the fabric of society despite repetitions of war and instability. He stressed that invoking *amana* was a way to generate faith in the banking sector at a time of political instability, division in governance between the previous government and the Houthis, and inflation. More importantly, Yousef stressed that his own Islamic faith was waning considering everything that has happened. For him, focusing on *amana* highlighted the mundane within Yemeni society that echoes the ethical structures that maintain the social fabric of the community and the persisting refuge in the Islamic tradition.

Yousef proceeded to note the absence of police in the public streets of Yemen, indicating that the mediation and negotiation of safety and security was still relegated to traditional customs of *amana* and family honor and dignity. Neighborhood disputes are often resolved informally or through a local imam or, and at times through the Shari'a courts. Such practices of informal mediation and negotiation, which can be traced back to earlier Muslim societies, are now viewed by other Muslims as evidence of historical stagnation. Here, the image of Yemen and the image of the *umma*'s historical socio-political structures are both debased and become interlinked as anti-modern.

The Image of the Yemeni, Mental health, and the *Umma*

While Yemeni artists have found funding and support in the name of preserving their heritage, much of the discourses surrounding their work

are linked to larger questions of their positionality within a larger history and *umma*. In the following, I explore the works of another artist to show how she links these works of culture to the expansion of the soul/self through a meditation on history, heritage, and the preservation of tradition. I then demonstrate the importance of the imagination to psychic well-being by locating these debates within both the Islamic philosophical and medical tradition as well as contemporary psychoanalysis.

The artist I explore in this section is Eman, who I met and interviewed via Zoom in April 2023. Eman's drawings, a curious mix of abstraction and concreteness in their visual style, immediately drew my attention. A Yemeni woman in her twenties, Eman's university began to cancel more and more of her classes after the breakout of the Yemeni conflict in 2013. In response, Eman began accompanying other artists and photographers who were looking to document life in Yemen in the aftermath of the Arab Spring. They soon ran into trouble with the Houthi regime, which attempted to monitor the image of Yemen and the Yemenis during their takeover of various regions outside of the capital. Facing bombing campaigns from the ten regional countries allied against the Houthi regime on one hand, and a Houthi crackdown on Yemeni youth artists and photographers on the other, Eman set aside her photographic pursuits and began to look to pursue her university studies abroad. One of her only options was to apply to a university in Delhi, India, as it only required tuition of $600 per semester (Saudi Arabia and other neighboring countries required more than $5000 for foreigners to study). In Delhi, Eman studied German literature and language in order to increase her chances of undertaking further graduate studies abroad.

When the Covid-19 pandemic hit Eman found herself in India with an expired visa, unable to return to Yemen due to closed borders and increasing tensions resultant from the ongoing conflict. Many Yemenis within the country itself were landlocked already from the war. Alone in a hostel, witnessing most other foreign nationals return to their home countries to be with their families, Eman began to draw to pass the time. Despite having no experience in this medium and never having considered art as a career, she explained that she drew in an attempt to keep her looming depression at bay. The drawing soothed her aches. There

she was, a Yemeni woman unable to return home or to figure out her next steps. She stated that her self/soul had become weary (*nafs ta'bana*). When her visa expired, she couchsurfed with friends and schoolmates. She continued to draw. She began to visit exhibitions as pandemic restrictions began to lift but was unable to rent accommodation and never disclosed to her family her illegal status in Delhi. At an exhibition she met some German art students who vowed to help her to raise money through her art in order to secure funds to travel to Germany and pursue graduate studies or art school. At this point, Eman began to draw passionately as a way to see her statelessness, as well as her malaise and longing.

Eman's story, for now, has a happy ending. One of her German friends found her a venue to exhibit her work and she sold all her artwork. She thereafter renewed her visa and applied for a German student visa. She has been pursuing art school in Berlin for the last year.

Although Eman faced hardships ranging from houselessness to being undocumented to constricting psychic pain, her art exemplifies how she saw herself and other resilient Yemeni women, expressing their role in society and their courage. Her art does not portray impoverishment, but rather exudes complexity and plentitude. In our conversation over Zoom, I asked her to discuss two pieces from her collection.

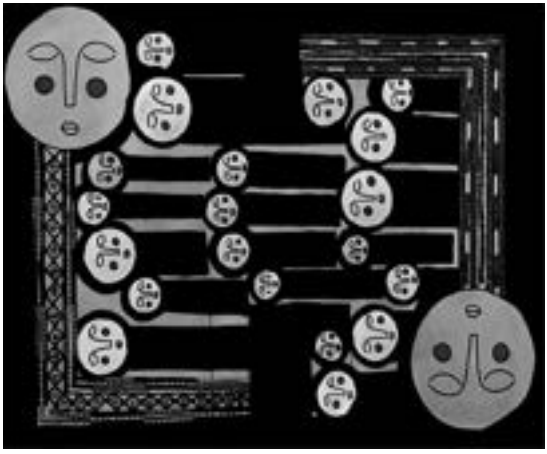

Figure 1. Alifya and I

Figure 2. "The Maze in our Life in a Picture"

The first of these two pieces, *Alifya and I* (Figure 1), is a collaboration between Eman and a Yemeni photographer, Alifya, who grew up in Amsterdam. The two Yemeni women it depicts are dressed in Sabri weaving fabric reminiscent of Eman's hometown of Taiz, which is now destroyed due to the conflict. The two women yearn for their homeland and heritage. As Eman explained, she and Alifya "both are from Yemen. Alifya was born in the Netherlands and I migrated out of Yemen. The one thing that bonds us together was our longing. From that moment of the conflict, I could not return and she could not visit. She wanted to travel and visit and learn more about Yemen but could not because of the conflict." She continued to describe their creation:

"The painting begins with the two extenuated women. One woman traverses from my side to Alfiya: she is actually our feelings (*shu'ur*). I try to illuminate to Alfiya (within my capacity) things about Yemen

and to draw her near to what was. Through my pathways, I attempt to demonstrate the traditions for her. Through this painting I attempt to translate the emotions from my perspective to Alfiya."

Eman explains that her work sought to elevate the position of the Yemeni woman, her place in Yemeni society, but is also shaped by how the Yemeni woman is viewed from neighboring countries (as inactive and invisible in community, culture, and the sciences).

The second piece was composed of various miniature figures in cubes. From the inscriptions of Himyarite script to the ruling of Sabean empire by Queen Saba, it dignifies and elevates the role of Yemeni women through the expression of height within the art piece. The Yemeni women sit in squares alongside other symbolic materials that enrich Yemen. Cubes contain the Jambiyya (dagger), the trees of Socotra, superimposing gendered images that invoke histories often elided.

Eman described her inspiration for the painting as recalling images which she suspended:

> *"I combined everything that reminds me of Yemen and that I am attached to. Images that remain in my memory. The first row contains the maswan fabric, then the Yemeni dagger, then my grandma, then the throne of Bilqis, then the houses of Old Sana'a. I attempted to bring together these images that I am attached to or suspended by (muta'alliqa bih) in one image."*

From the remnants of powerful Yemeni women rulers to historic architecture and familial intimacy, Eman etches the richness of Yemen's heritage onto the canvas and in her imagination. She details the ways these images burst in her memory and massage her aches, illuminating their echo despite her dispossession from her homeland and its absence outside of Yemen.

When I asked Eman if the abaya and the hijab juxtaposed alongside the mosque in the cubed figures entwine the relationship between Islam and Yemeni and membership within the *umma*, she replied in a matter-of-fact manner: "I feel that Yemen is a country in the world that is an

Arab country, a Muslim country, one of the guards of the faith (*hiras al-iman*)."

Eman's continued to elaborate that her art depicts not only the status of Yemeni women in Yemeni society but also their increasing role in society and the family after the war. It combats their isolation and invisibility and emphasizes resilience within their traditions. There is a therapeutic aspect to her work, which addresses not only her own (individual) depression but also a wider (communal) despair. She explained that in many countries the witnessing of women's roles after wars is recorded and recalled in history and yet Yemeni women's contributions are silenced. I asked her whether this was a global phenomenon or particular to Yemen. Eman noted that Yemeni families do not want to portray women as being in need, viewing it as undignified, deprived symbolically by appealing to the imagination. "My family did not care if I drew," she said; they had asked that she refrain from publicizing her work on social media which would further strengthen the already circulating image of Yemeni impoverishment or lack.

Eman's family was concerned about reputation but also, more deeply, about having to appeal to the other's projection of Yemeni impoverishment. The fact that the Yemeni's elevated position must be sought through art (and that recognition of communal relations was not something that could be taken for granted) only highlighted their common despair about Yemen. Eman and her family shared an understanding that the Yemeni's place within the *umma* must be demonstrated. For her family, however, this elicited a kind of psychic resistance; in the resistance to articulating demands for recognition, the historical wound becomes visible. More broadly, how it is that an image that fuels the imagination (Yemeni deprivation) can also impact the productive relation to the other? The deprivation that Yemenis already feel is congealed in their concern for the circulation of counter-images (of Yemeni resilience and tradition), which itself speaks to their position within the larger *umma*. Whereas some of the artists I worked with felt it necessary to address this position, their families often worried about furthering the historical wound of this deprivation by doing so. These families share the same historical sense of Yemeni abjection, but they worry that addressing

it would only reinforce and consolidate it. As such, the figure of the abject was not a position prone to transformation or revolution (Kristeva 2009) as Yemenis' yearning for collective *'afiya* is bound to *ummatic* aspirations.

The Image of the Yemeni

Drawing on medieval Islamic philosophy and Lacanian psychoanalysis (which itself draws heavily on medieval psychologies of the soul), I now briefly turn to an exploration of how imagination is integral to the impact that the *umma* has on the image of the self. My exploration of the two traditions is in part due to echoes in their theorizations of the psyche, soul, and the importance of the imagination. Most importantly, Lacanian psychoanalysis has benefited from, and is indebted to, developments of theories of the imagination and the psyche, and their impact on the productive function of desire, love, image, and fantasy in medieval Islamic philosophy (Hauter, 2023B; Copjec 2016; Lacan 2011). These overlapping theories prove instructive in exploring how imagination is necessary to the question of belonging (as ethnographically elaborated in the work of Yemeni filmmakers and artists today). This is not merely a question of idealization or fantasy. Rather, this inquiry proceeds at the level of what Ibn Sina considers the intention and estimative faculty. One must be able to anticipate the reciprocity of the other to understand the impact of journeying on with others as well as their projected imaginaries of one's shared—if unequal—place within the *umma*. My interlocutors deploy concepts and theories from within the Islamic traditions of the self/soul and fuse them with modern psychology and prophetic medical regimens (Hauter 2023a). To begin to ask about the proper relationship of the study of the soul to psycho-therapeutic models, as envisioned by my Yemeni Muslim interlocutors, I focus on the importance of the image and imaginary to the self/soul, *umma*, and belonging. In this way, we move closer to envisioning new epistemological approaches toward contemporary Muslim reckonings with abjection and denigration.

As outlined in Ibn Sina's psychology, the imaginary is an internal faculty that processes human knowledge but can also be inverted to

cause delusions. Through the external senses, individuals' perceptions and sensations serve as conduits for human knowledge of material things. These processes involve the activity of the external and inner senses that work through the functions of bodily organs to receive impressions and abstractions of "individual forms present in matter" (Rahman 1952, 19). As these sense impressions coalesce in the common sense (*hiss mushtarak*), producing a unified experience of (for example) warm and edible bread, they are transmitted to the imagination. In the retentive imagination, the bread's brownness, roundness, and fluffiness is separated from its direct sensible materiality through segmentation by way of abstraction. The estimative faculty receives the connotational attributes or intentions such as taste, time, and space directly received by the inner soul, while memory retains them. The retentive imagination stores the segmented images that will be utilized by the compositive imagination, a faculty that "combines and separates giving rise to fantastical images" (McGinnis 115). These segmented images are used by the estimative faculty in animals, but by the cognitive faculty in humans when they are employed by the intellect (McGinnis 115). However, when a soul is weak it is easily distracted from intellection, and its grip on the imagination is released.

When the soul is neither weak nor strong, it puts the compositive imagination to work, inhibiting the imagination from imposing illusionary images on the common sense and overpowering the senses. As Ibn Sina states, "Fear diverts the soul from hunger; appetite hinders it from anger, and anger from fear. The cause in all these cases is the same, namely, the complete absorption of the soul in one thing" (Rahman 1952, 55). However, when the imagination takes hold of the soul, Ibn Sina argues that the former unites with the formative faculty to transmit an 'imaginal form' to the common sense. Therefore, the risk of madness entails the free rein of the imagination projecting images that those at risk of madness experience as real (Davidson 1992). This risk emerged in my fieldwork as a fear of *kasr al-nafs* (breaking of the soul), as when my interlocutors forwent asking for medical care or assistance in Muslim countries abroad due to anticipating being rebuffed (Hauter 2023a).

In Lacanian psychoanalysis, the imaginary emerges as an order that is necessary for the structure of the ego. Lacan writes, "the imaginary structuration of the ego forms around the specular image of the body itself, of the image of the other" (1991:95). This means that a subject is necessarily alienated from himself, for he is essentially a split subject. As an infant first utilizes their mother's body to feel mobile, the subject goes on to build imaginary egos to feel whole. However, these egos are mere decoys or alter-egos. Yet the subject requires "a guide beyond the imaginary, on the level of the symbolic plane… This guide governing the subject is the ego-ideal" (1991:41). The symbolic plane for Lacan is within the realm of the law and sets the ground for the imaginary. Hence the image of the individual is impacted by the work of the imagination, desire, and expansion from within the symbolic. It is therefore not surprising that my interlocutors turn to works of art, echoing *ummatic* aspirations, to respond to the impoverished image of the Yemeni, as the abject is corrosive to social relations and to dignity. The abject as conceived by Kristeva (2024) as transformative in its point to the fragility of the law and the breakdown between self and other is inadequate, as it imagines religion as a mere question of belief, like many psychoanalysts, rather than a tradition with symbolic value (Hauter 2023b). More importantly, Kristeva values humanism and reflection, which she affords the Judeo-Christian traditions and withholds from Islam. Her text is replete with Islamophobic rhetoric in which she considers Islam as devoid of theo-ology and critical thinking as it possessed what she considers a juridical pact between creator and believer (88). Not only does Kristeva dismiss Islam as containing "terrifying and terroristic undercurrents" which leads to an impossible encounter, she fails to consider how in the Islamic tradition the law becomes a ground for the honing and cultivation of the imagination (Kristeva 2009: 88). The developments in Ibn Sina and al-Ghazali's work on the soul/psyche illustrate how the imagination and its potentiality for practices of reflection, abstraction, meditation, and contemplation produced the necessary conditions for reworking the psyche, desire, and phantasmic potentialities.

For Imam Abu Hamid al-Ghazali, alternately, the relationship between imagination and desire is anchored through the heart and

the law as such. Al-Ghazali notes that as man takes in images, the effect of the image "is transmitted to the heart, so that there is represented in it the real nature of things that have entered into sensation and imagination" (2010, 56-57). Moreover, the world has "four degrees of existence:" the world as it is preserved in the tablet by God; the real (*haqiqa)* existence as it presents itself to man; its existence within the imagination of man as he takes in the images; and the imagination's existence within the intellectual order (2010, 57-58). Some of the knowledge within the order is immaterial and some is corporeal. Therefore, there is a bridge (*sila*) between revelatory knowledge within the preserved tablet and corporeal knowledge that is transposed onto the imagination and intellect. Within this liminal space there is a veil and its disclosure is dependent upon the aspirant's purity of heart and closeness to the divine. The closer one is to the divine, the closer one is to the real (*haqiqa*) and knowledge as it is revealed. As one engages in constant remembrance of God, seeks knowledge of God, and purifies the heart, knowledge will come to him from one of the doors of revelation.

These persistent discussions in Islamic philosophy, medicine, and mystical traditions regarding the imagination focus on its role in desire, the heart, and entwinement with the law. Both Eman and Yousef provide us with works of art that reflect a work of culture attempting to transform painful memories by strengthening the fortitude of the soul through the imagination amidst the circulating abject image of the Yemeni reified by the corrosive socio-political material reality that implicates a largely indifferent *umma*. As we trace with Eman, her immobility during the Covid-19 Pandemic in Delhi took a toll on her *nafs* (self/soul) as she felt bombarded and suspended by images of the richness of her culture, Islamic tradition, and identity that combat the reality of being rejected and dispossessed geopolitically and spiritually. She felt revived when she captured these suspended images in a medium that paved the way for her to imagine possibilities for desire beyond what her current political status afforded her. Likewise, the allegories, parables, and immersion in the richness of Yemen's philosophical and spiritual traditions rectify the abject image of the Yemeni globally and within the *umma*. This focus

on the imagination to revive the soul and its desire and resist stasis echoes explorations within Islamic philosophy and ethical tradition on the power of the imagination and the role of the law. Most importantly, the imagination in these theories demonstrates its necessity in the individual's physical and spiritual health.

Conclusion

When I mentioned to both Yousef and Eman my intentions to write about their work, they were genuinely delighted. Although I expressed my appreciation of their talent and relayed my own beginning to think through the impact of their work, they exuded deep humility in their attempts to hone their crafts. My insistence on recognizing the fruitfulness of their work is necessitated by the urgency to highlight Yemeni voices often unregistered and unheard, which is itself part of the symptom as these voices are often muted, elided, or historical completely overlooked. In turn, a body of the *umma*, who historically entered it through a simple invitation by the Prophet, with a rich sustaining culture lacks circulation and inclusion.

The protagonist in Yousef's short film the Long Run, a rare medium in Yemen, encircles the small neighborhood, disciplined in the main pillars of Islam and the cultivation of ethical virtues through communal practice and personal arbitration by fellow Yemenis. Ahmed is guided on the importance of prayer by a neighbor and the etiquette of tending to the elderly in exchange for life altering lessons on fortifying the soul and resisting oppressions by a local wiseman. Yousef's scenes paint the ways Islamic concepts are taught, shared, and enshrined in Yemeni lives and architecture and sustain individual and communal *ʿafiya* through oral traditions. Eman's paintings emboss Yemeni fabrics, witness the history of powerful women, and create pathways for those like her longing for memory work to recognize its history. The artwork comes to envelop us within its medium through symbols and allegories to reignite the imagination serving as a witness to resistance of stasis and foreclosure with regards to Yemen, Yemenis, their desire and its potentiality, and the larger *umma* it envisions for its *ʿafiya*.

Yousef's films are windows into the philosophical richness of everyday ethical engagements in Yemen that do not correspond to western socio-political normative frameworks and the reverberating oral history shared amongst its people that are meant to serve Yemenis themselves while resisting the abject Yemen figure projected by others as deprived of culture and capacity for willful engagements. Eman's art on the other hand began as works of culture attempting to sublimate the affective despair she and others felt that then bears witness to the echoes of longing that is deeply felt by Yemeni youth. Her generation faces similar conditions of malaise given the possibility of the obliteration of culture, memory, and their material reality and the impossibility of access to and archive of the tradition.

These works of art by Yousef and Eman come to then stand as archives and elaboration of a yearning and demand for recognition, community, and inclusivity to an *umma*, both serving as a medium for individual capacity to inhabit a dignified image and its capacious resistance. These works of art as a work of culture take seriously the viability and reality of the *umma* itself and conditions of its constitution. They now attempt to circulate within by circulating throughout the *umma*.

This production of art at a time of culture desolation demonstrates the importance of the reparative work of the imagination and the importance of psychic wellbeing in securing both individual and *ummatic 'afiya*. As medieval Islamic philosophers demonstrate the role of imagination on the fortitude of the soul and illustrates the importance of the law as serving as a ground for the individual, these works of art also conduct considerable work of culture for the artists, Yemenis, and its audience.

Therefore, alongside securing the socio-economic and political conditions of the Muslim community across borders, difficult psychic work is necessary to articulating larger political *ummatic* aspirations. Solidarity amongst Muslims is predicated on being able to anticipate exchange, reciprocation, and hospitality that links individuals to a larger *umma* (Hauter 2023a). The hadith that often circulates invoking the *umma* as one body, whereby a defective body part ails the entire body, is predicated on a particular understanding of the individual soul/psyche and

selfhood that is not atomistic or autonomous from others, nature, and other beings. Membership within the *umma* requires that one be able to locate themselves, envisioned within the Muslim body, but also be locatable by others.

Repair at the level of the imagination requires taking seriously psycho-therapeutical models that attend to the form and structure of the self/soul conceived and renewed by Islamic scholarship. Therefore, this psychic work requires a reformulation of epistemologies in medical-psychological sciences, but also investment in community centers and artistic endeavors that cultivate material projects articulating such concepts and practices. An *ummatic* orientation will shift scholarship on selfhood (with an emphasis on mental health) to include Islamic writings on the psychology of the soul. What may be borrowed and melded into current theories, practices, and psychotherapeutic models? What type of institutional investments can put into practice these theoretical innovations? The role of work of art and work of culture in restoring individual and communal *'afiya* illustrates both the reparative power of the imagination in reviving the *nafs* (soul/self/psyche) and the necessary inclusion of theories on the imagination, the law, and its importance for desire itself by Ibn Sina and al-Ghazali to read contemporary abjection and *ummatic* aspirations.

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REVIEW ESSAY

The Warrior Prophet: Muhammad and War

SWANSEA: CLARITAS BOOKS, 2023, 582 PAGES.

JOEL HAYWARD

Joel Hayward's *The Warrior Prophet: Muhammad and War* (Claritas Books, 2022; I only have access to the Kindle version) is an important recent addition to the English language Sira literature. The book, erudite and amply referenced throughout, investigates the Prophet Muhammad's motives for waging jihad against Mecca after his flight to what became Medina. Professor Hayward, a specialist in military history, sets out to explain the well-established facts of the Prophet's martial career: In his ten-year stay in Medina, the Prophet sent out some 80 expeditions, himself leading some 27 of them, of which about 9 saw significant combat. These campaigns led to his conquest of Mecca and the rest of Arabia, culminating in numerous encounters with the Arab tribes allied to the Roman Empire in Syria. A challenge for historians has been that whereas the Qurʾan, Hadith, and the Sira materials—the three early sources for Hayward's history—furnish a great variety of microscopic detail about these battles, the events are so interlocked that an observer trying to isolate a clear and sufficient motive for the initiation of hostilities against Mecca faces a challenge. Hayward's book is an attempt to answer that challenge.

Hayward convincingly argues, on the one hand, against depicting the Prophet as acting merely in defense, as many modern Muslim authors

do, and, on the other, against his depiction as an aggressive warlord instrumentalizing religion for the sake of booty as many hostile authors do. His own conclusion, however, leaves a lot to be desired, as I argue below. Hayward shines as a military historian, evaluating and correcting the factual claims and apologetic approaches of both modern and occasionally premodern authors, but falters significantly in key moments while interpreting historical texts and addressing religious and theoretical questions, and hence, ultimately, in offering a compelling answer to the central problem of the study.

The book is divided into three main sections. The first lays out the theoretical claim, entitled "Raiding as a Norm: The Best Explanation for the Initiation of Warfare." The second and the bulkiest section tries to substantiate its thesis through an account of the Prophet's battles, aptly titled "Pitches Battles and Attacks on Settlements." Finally, the third delves into "Muhammad's war with the Jews."

In the following, I evaluate the thesis of the book by focusing on its framework and conclusions, thus documenting my critiques of this otherwise rich and bold work. In the interest of space, I limit myself to substantiating my critique of the main thesis and avoid delving into an extensive critique of the methodological problems that seemed to underlie it. It bears noting, in this vein, that Hayward's treatment of early and classical Islamic sources on the Sira, the greatest source of detailed insight and expert knowledge in my view, is inconsistent and lacking. He dismisses them as driven by religious and hagiographic interests, as "theologians and jurists," in contrast to his own secular, professional approach (26-7). Any serious student of Islamic intellectual history is aware of the meticulous detail in which every act of the Prophet was studied in different fields, as well as the enormous amount of fabrication around his life, and given the variety of perspectives and interests involved, no sweeping judgment holds for all of them. Furthermore, since the Prophet was unquestionably the role model in the premodern period and the Muslims a confident elite, authors had no obvious reason to feel that they had to play up or down his engagement in military action. Complex biases are inevitable in storytelling, of course, and recent academic scholarship, which does not make its way into

Hayward's discussion, has produced vast literature debating such points. Finally, whereas Hayward does a good job critiquing certain popular hagiographies of the Prophet, the bulk of academic writing on the subject in the Arabic and English languages is left out.

The first section offers a refreshing and compelling critique of a number of fashionable trends in modern Sira writing by both Muslim and non-Muslim writers. Muslim authors tend to portray the Prophet's warfare as primarily defensive and for peacekeeping purposes. Uncritical, apologetic summaries of the early sources such as Ibn Hisham and Al-Waqidi, ignore recent scholarship, and attribute anachronistic actions to the Prophet, such as claiming that he founded a modern state and modern bureaucracy with its specialized departments ("department of finance" etc.), notions which Hayward handily dispels. Popular non-Muslim Western authors fare even worse, as they too are often anachronistic, unaware of or unconcerned with primary sources, and build a narrative based on popular prejudices.

Contemporary popular religious biographies of the Prophet especially come in for sustained criticism. In its desire to impute perfection to the Prophet, the widely read *The Sealed Nectar* often makes anachronistic observations and unsubstantiated claims intended as praise. It claims, for instance, that the Prophet won every battle he fought (this would be hard to square with the Battle of Uḥud and the Siege of Ṭā'if), never felt fear, and never invoked God's curse against his opponents, thus effacing his historical personality as amply recorded in the early sources. Such narratives, furthermore, tend to detach him from his pre-Islamic Arabian context, thus obscuring his true challenges and achievement. For instance, it is implied that he immediately took control upon arriving in Yathrib and established a state. Hayward observes, correctly in my view, that in reality Medina was not even a unified city with a meaningful political authority until some five years after the Prophet's hijra.

On the key question of why the raids began, Hayward finds most modern Muslim accounts apologetic and unpersuasive. One common account has it that the raids "were not military campaigns," but rather, "political campaigns, or simply religious excursions." Meanwhile, Mubarakpuri makes the "fanciful" claim that they "were survey patrols

delegated to explore the geopolitical features of the roads… and building alliances with the tribes nearby" (43-4). This apologetic narrative is in Hayward's view the victim of a modern belief that violence is only ever legitimate in the case of self-defense. On the same grounds, Hayward rejects Juan Cole's radically revisionist account which is dismissive of the three early sources (the Qurʾan, Hadith, Sira), yet also arbitrarily uses them to string together a fantastical narrative, painting a picture of the Prophet as a pacifist, declaring his expeditions as "exploratory journeys" in "search for rural allies" (44). A more common apologist account, however, is exemplified by Reza Aslan's work, which claims that "perhaps the most important innovation in the doctrine of jihad was its outright prohibition of all but strictly defensive wars… Badr became the first opportunity for Muḥammad to put the theory of jihad into practice… Muḥammad refused to fight until attacked" (174). This account ignores the series of events in which it was the Muslims' activity that prompted the Quraysh to attack.

The least bad explanation among modern Muslim apologists, in Hayward's view, seems to be that these raids aimed to recover the property the immigrants had lost when they were driven out of Mecca. He rejects this argument partially on the basis that the Prophet never justified the raids in this way. Instead, the relevant reports in Ibn Hisham, Waqidi and Ibn Saʿd have it that before the Battle of Badr the Prophet simply stated, "This caravan of the Quraysh holds their wealth, and perhaps Allah will grant it to you as plunder."

Of the popular accounts, the only one that Hayward finds reasonable is Martin Lings': "God had declared war on Quraysh… [the Prophet] was obliged to attack them by every means in his power… until they submitted to the Divine Will… But for the moment there could be no question of anything but raids" (44). Hayward does not make much of this sole quote from Lings on the matter, failing to note that there is surprisingly enough here to contradict his own explanation, to which we now turn.

"Raiding as a Norm"

Hayward's own explanation for the raids that inaugurated the Prophet's jihad is surprisingly simple. It is captured by the title of the first section

of the book: raiding was the norm in Arabia, hence morally neutral, like taking a trip to the grocery store, plain and simple.

Finding no explanation for raiding in the Qurʾan and Hadith and unsatisfied by modern apologetics, by process of elimination, Hayward arrives at the following argument: "The answer seems to lie in the acceptability, indeed esteem, attached to raiding throughout Arabian society. Far from being seen as an extraordinary activity… raiding was very much an ordinary part of the fabric of society" (58). Hayward insists that the Muslims' passion for booty was indisputable and not in any way deemed immoral. As he says, "Muhammed very rationally chose raiding—which was certainly not then understood as immoral—as a means of advancing goals because it brought significant benefits, conformed to seventh-century norms and usefully fulfilled various societal expectations" (40). Indeed, for "[a]ny community that wanted to expand its influence and improve its living standards, the raids made a lot of sense" (41).

Hayward repeats this claim throughout the text but rarely questions its implications. This innovative but in the final analysis entirely unsupported assertion remains unharmed in his journey through a vast array of sources premodern and modern, for anyone who disagrees (and nearly everyone does) is deemed apologetic and hagiographic. This works for Muslim scholars, but hardly for others not particularly interested in saving the Prophet's image, as we shall note. Hayward's own explanation, however, too has an ideological tendency, which is to prove that the Prophet was not engaged in religious violence, but rather moved purely by the secular concern of helping his penniless followers survive. In the following, we call into question this tortured thesis.

Was raiding the norm?

Raiding, presumably involving taking a tribe's property and killing for the purpose, was morally neutral, even honorable in pre-Islamic Arabia. This key idea on which Hayward's edifice is built is contradicted by the spite the Arabs felt for the highway robbery of tribes like Banū Ghifār

(including the Prophet's own surprise at Abū Dharr's interest in Islam, given his dishonorable tribe). Hayward's claim that "raiding was a norm" in Arabia cannot be established without reference to the central question of alliance and hostility between tribes. Raiding, although commonplace in pre-Islamic Arabia, is a less useful way to understand the dynamics of the Arab tribes than an anarchic system of intricate alliances and rivalries akin to the modern realist model of International Relations. Such a system has great powers or hegemons (like the Quraysh) as well as some rogue tribes (like the Banū Ghifār). But since our concern is the Prophet's conduct, who departed from the Arabian norms on any number of issues, we will set this question aside and hone in on the Prophet's own conduct of war.

There is no evidence that the Prophet raided without prior hostility

If the Prophet considered raiding perfectly normal according to the presumed Arab custom, one would be able to produce instances in which the Prophet raided a caravan solely for the sake of the loot. Hayward himself notes that no such instance has been recorded. He notes that the Prophet's raiding had been "directed solely against the caravans of the Quraysh," with the exception of one punitive campaign against a man who had raided Muslims (53-4). If raiding were a normal affair as Hayward claims, why would the Prophet raid and provoke the single most formidable power in Arabia rather than going after smaller tribes that could not retaliate?

Hayward's thesis seems to heavily rely on an "argument from silence," arguing that the sources do not give the motive for the raids because they were widely understood in the Prophet's society. For instance, he writes "It (a previously quoted hadith) seems to assume that the purpose of raiding was widely understood and did not therefore need to be stated" (55). While this may be true of the hadith evidence provided by Hayward, it is not the case for the Qurʾan.

The Qur'an gives a clear casus belli: injustice and religious obstruction

Hayward mentions the relevant Qurʾanic verses stating the casus belli, the cause of war, but fails to appreciate how it directly contradicts his own conclusion. Verse 22:39 in Sura al-Ḥajj permits Muslims to fight the Meccans who had wronged them for their pure monotheism, and 2:217 in al-Baqara gives even more detailed reasons for the Muslims' right to fight. In both verses, two types of reasons for war are given: ***injustice,*** which even a non-believer could understand, and obstruction of the *religious mission*, and relatedly, access to the Holy Mosque. The next verse in Sura al-Ḥajj states that the Quraysh would continue to fight the Muslims until they would turn them away from their religion. In other words, even in the absence of an immediate threat the Quraysh still presented a long-term existential threat.

What is surprising is that Hayward lists these verses but does not consider them drivers of the Prophet's war against the Meccans. Hayward suggests in passing that this earlier persecution of Muslims in Mecca, mentioned repeatedly in the Qurʾan as the reason for initiating jihad, should be somehow dismissed as the real explanation for the raiding activity because, he claims, the persecution no longer continued after the migration: "With Muḥammad and his cadre now in Medina, there was no longer any active Quraysh armed pressure upon it. There were certainly no Quraysh attacks. There was not even ongoing persecution of Muslims…" These verses, Hayward further claims, justified attacks "not against the Quraysh themselves, but against their vulnerable caravans" (56). These claims are misleading and overwrought: the Medinan Qurʾan continues to speak of the persecution of the weak Muslims in Mecca throughout (4:75; 4:97-8), persecution evidenced by Abū Jandal on the occasion of Ḥudaybiyya. Nor is there any reason to think that permission was given only to attack the caravans rather than make jihad against the Quraysh in retaliation for its wrongs and its opposition to Islam.

Furthermore, Hayward contends that the casus belli given in these verses cannot be called "defensive, at least not in the ordinarily understood meaning of the word" (55), since there was no army marching on

Medina. This is correct, but irrelevant to his case, for whether or not we call it defensive, this casus belli has nothing to do with raiding as a norm or raiding as an economic activity, and everything to do with punishing the Meccans and taking control of the Sacred Mosque in order to establish the monotheistic message that the Prophet preached.

The author's singular focus on raiding is also puzzling given in an article published four years prior to the work in hand, he noted commenting on the aforementioned verse from Sura al-Hajj (22:39) that such verses "reveal very clearly that Allah's permission to undertake armed combat was not for offensive war, but *self-defence* and *self-preservation* when attacked or oppressed."[1] Raiding, in contrast, is as offensive a type of warfare as one can imagine. The author's view seems to have notably evolved in the current volume, namely, that the Prophet's raids that led to Badr were offensive, driven by desire for booty rather than self-defense. Neither view, as far as I can see, seems to interpret the given evidence accurately.

Booty as motive is explicitly condemned by the Qur'an

Another difficulty with the idea of raiding as the Prophet's justification is that worldly possessions are explicitly and repeatedly deprecated as a motive for jihad in the Qurʾan, seen as a weakness among some of the believers, and associated with hypocrisy (3:152). Hadith reports record numerous warnings of the Prophet against those who fight for spoils, glory, and the like.[2]

One corollary of Hayward's claim, which he states explicitly, is that the Prophet intended to engage only in economic warfare against the Quraysh. This flies in the face of the Qurʾan's explicit statements to the contrary, but also casts doubt on the Prophet's leadership—did the idea of the Quraysh's counteroffensive never cross his otherwise exceptionally strategic and perspicuous mind? Given that the Quraysh were completely dependent on trade, raiding their caravans was bound to invite a major confrontation, as happened at Badr. Centering his newfangled thesis, Hayward is forced to create a narrative of the Sira in which pragmatic warfare has replaced the Prophet's professed divine mission.

Better explanations

The author, to his credit, does acknowledge and dismiss several competing accounts of why the Prophet went to war. Unfortunately, a survey of those accounts does not do his account any favors.

Hayward dismisses M. Watt's conclusion, in *Muhammad at Medina*, that the raids were the result of "a deliberate intention on Muḥammad's part to provoke the Meccans" (quoted at p. 53). The reason Hayward gives is at best speculative: the Prophet could not have intended this because the Muslims were far outnumbered at this time. Watt's suggestion is supported by the Qurʾan, which strongly suggested the promise of total victory for Allah's messengers and that God will bring the Prophet back to Mecca (from verses such as 28:85, the subtext of Suras like Yūsuf and the many tellings of the story of Moses, and the many warnings that the unbelieving leaders of the Quraysh will be subdued, the Prophet could easily infer an expectation to return to Mecca). Watt's own view, on the very pages that Hayward cites, is far more nuanced and based on a careful reading of the Qurʾanic passages: "Clearly, the Muslims regarded their political and military activities as taking place within a religious setting."[3]

In response to the apologist argument that the raids were only conducted in self-defense, the German orientalist Tilman Nagel writes in his book *Muhammad's Mission:* "Nowhere in the historical reports or in the Koran is there any indication that Muhammad's first military expeditions were meant to defend Medina against Quraysh attacks." So far, Hayward would be in agreement. But he parts ways with Nagel's explanation, which he quotes without much engagement in a footnote:

> *[The raids] were part of a pre-planned, determined effort, first of all, to cut off Quraysh's commercial traffic to the north, to reduce Mecca's income, and finally, as will become clear in the following chapters, to gain control over the Kaaba and thereby to achieve the objective that he had already pointed to in Sura 7. (Quoted at p. 467)*

Nagel has clearly based his explanation on a careful reading of the Qurʾan. This explanation is more persuasive than Hayward's by all

accounts, and is in agreement with Lings' and Watt's views, to name just the few authorities that Hayward invokes.

Relatedly, Hayward takes the pagan Arabs' acceptance of the Prophet's actions as normal and comprehensive as evidence for his case. He writes that the raids "cannot have been entirely outrageous… otherwise we would have records in the earliest sources of complaints or mocking about that very point by the non-Muslim clans in Medina, or even by the Meccans" (59).

But a more compelling explanation is already available to us. When the Prophet fled Mecca, there was a bounty on his head. One Western biographer notes the significance of this fact: "In the old Arab law, the Hijra did not merely signify rupture with his native town, but was equivalent to a sort of declaration of war against it. The Meccan guild were under no misapprehension [about this old Arab law]."[4] By putting a bounty on the Prophet's head, the Quraysh had started a feud. The Prophet's hostile actions against Mecca, therefore, while extremely bold and courageous, would have been entirely comprehensible to the Arabs. The only protection in Arabia was the tribe, and someone exiled from a tribe needed to find another tribe, and the Prophet did precisely that by creating the "supertribe" of his followers, as documented in the Qurʾan and in the Ṣaḥīfa of Medina. The Meccans had not retracted the call to assassinate the Prophet, and Hadith and Sira reports confirm that the Meccans initiated correspondence with the pagan Arabs who were displeased with the Prophet's arrival but had expediently embraced a Muslim identity, the hypocrites. These correspondences the Prophet intercepted and neutralized.[5] Hayward waxes lyrical about the Arab tradition of "blood-feuds" that us moderns cannot possibly comprehend (e.g., 151-189), and yet fails to note how this condition would have created a state of war between the Meccans and the Muslims fleeing Mecca such that the latter's attack on the Meccan caravans would be seen as a daring but expected step.

Hayward's insistence on raiding as the Prophet's goal casts a shadow over his interpretation of the rest of the Medinan Sira. Accordingly, his conclusion bears the same stamp: "in the years after Badr, Muḥammad fought mainly defensive and preemptive battles against non-Muslims

primarily for existential reasons, as well as certain offensive campaigns for demonstrable societally beneficial reasons" (62).

In Hayward's story, the Prophet unintentionally provoked the Meccans for economic reasons, but then went on to wage a successful war against them for "existential" and "societally beneficial" reasons. Regardless of whether he intended this result, his series of misreadings depict the Prophet as an Arab chieftain who was driven by largely secu-lar, pragmatic concerns; one who was benevolent, courageous, and wise, but also at times rather short-sighted, undertaking raiding campaigns without a sense of political consequences, let alone moral compunction. Nearly every syllable of this conclusion is called into question by the very sources that the author has employed.

Notwithstanding my disagreement with the thesis of the book, it is an erudite and insightful work written by a Western Muslim military historian who has wrestled with a vast array of sources. As a text that I have eagerly read and assigned in my graduate course, this monograph is sure to reawaken the much-needed interest in the military and political dimensions of the Sira.

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Endnotes

1 Joel Hayward, "Justice, Jihad, and Duty: The Qur'anic Concept of Armed Conflict", *Islam and Civilizational Renewal*, Vol. 9, No. 3 (July 2018), pp. 267-303: 282.

2 E.g. Bukhari 3126 and Muslim 1904; Muslim 1905.

3 M. Watt, *Muhammad at Madina* (Oxford University Press, 1956), 4-5.

4 Henri Lammens, *Islam: Beliefs and Institutions* (Routledge, 2008 [orig. 1929]), p. 27.

5 See Ovamir Anjum, "The 'Constitution' of Medina: Translation, Commentary, and Meaning Today," *Yaqeen Institute*, 4 Feb. 2021, https://yaqeeninstitute.org/read/paper/the-constitution-of-medina-translation-commentary-and-meaning-today fn. 37, 47.

BOOK REVIEWS

Response to Zainab Bint Younus' Review of *Women and Gender in the Qur'an*

OXFORD: OXFORD UNIVERSITY PRESS, 2020, 232 PAGES.

CELENE IBRAHIM

I thank AJIS for recently reviewing my monograph *Women and Gender in the Qur'an* (Oxford University Press, 2020) and thank Zainab Bint Younus of MuslimMatters.org for taking the time to review the work. I must, however, take issue with the reviewer's line of critique.

As an academic exercise, *Women and Gender in the Qur'an* offers a reading of the scripture that investigates intra-textual coherence through philological and structural methods. To miss this point is to miss the theoretical foundation of the project. The book does not purport to analyze hadith corpuses or the tafsīr tradition writ large, and I do not attempt to systematically analyze other early Muslim representations of female figures. In constructing a book-length work, a scholar must discern how to narrow the source material to an appropriate scope. In seeing that no previous scholar had produced an intra-textual reading that examines all Qur'anic verses involving female figures, this is where I contributed. The justifications for my scope and methodological focus are included in the book but are unfortunately not presented clearly in the review.

An attuned audience for the book must clearly understand these

premises and the genre within which I write in order to evaluate the books theoretical and methodological merits. It is not that I am unaware of certain oral traditions or confessional interpretations; I situate many of these popular traditions and interpretive choices outside of the scope of the project at hand for explicit reasons that I discuss in various places in the book. In short, *Women and Gender in the Qur'an* explores Qur'anic intertextuality—not the subsequent history of interpretation and not the vast corpus of oral traditions through which verses can also be understood. Readers seeking analysis of female figures in hadith and in other oral and premodern exegetical traditions can turn elsewhere.

As many AJIS readers will recognize, in addition to the Qur'an itself, materials related to Qur'anic female figures are found in exegesis, hadith collections, biographical literatures, early legal treatises, and Muslim chronicles. These include the writings of Ibn Isḥāq (d. ca. 150/767–8), as synthesized in the work of Ibn Hishām (d. ca. 218/833–4), as well as in other biographical works such as the *Ṭabaqāt* (Generations) of Ibn Saʿd (d. 230/845) that includes extensive entries on the Prophet Muḥammad's contemporaries, including women who are alluded to in the Qur'an. Later works, including those by al-Wāḥidī (d. 468/1075) and al-Suyūṭi (d. 911/1505), advance the *asbāb al-nuzūl*, or "occasions of revelation" genre. Relevant material is also found in early Muslim chronicles, such as that transmitted by Maʿmar Ibn Rāshid (d. 153/770). Systematically studying mentions of female figures in these works is an important avenue for scholarship, but it is much too large of a corpus to fit within a book that has already an ambitious scope.

Though I offer readings of the Qur'an that focus on intra-textual resonances, this does not mean that I advocate for a Qur'an-only approach, as the reviewer suggests. In fact, in my broader work, I call for an interdisciplinary approach to Qur'anic hermeneutics that is integrative of a variety of methods including rigorous philological, grammatical, rhetorical, and structural analyses that are in conversation with histories of interpretation. I call for interpretation that is attentive to the sociological and affective dimensions of Qurʿanic discourse and the emotive impacts of Qurʿanic rhetoric. I insist that the moral and pious imperatives that

emerge from scholar's engagements with Qurʿanic discourse are needed to illuminate pressing social issues. I call for confessional scholars to engage with academic theories on text, embodiment, and phenomenology. This is far from a Qur'an-only approach.[1]

As an academic in the field of Qur'anic studies, I approach the wider Islamic intellectual tradition with the goal of contributing perspective and nuance. I do not, in fact, merely reproduce exegesis in the style of premodern confessional works. I do not treat premodern exegetes as my interlocuters. Those men were interlocuters for each other, and my interlocuters are contemporary academics in Qur'anic studies, and particularly those who are also doing constructive hermeneutical work. When writing as a contemporary researcher, I do not understand myself as bound to the precise methodologies of any popular medieval exegete nor any specific premodern school of theological thought. Premodern scholars' methodologies have merits, but my book focuses on the entire cast of Qur'anic female personalities and draws out subtle intra-textual connections involving this subset of verses, a task in which premodern exegetes were not especially invested to any great degree. My methodologies have led to new insights that are not found within pre-existing works.

It bears further emphasis that as a research project, my work is not uncritically bound to any specific inherited authority structure within the Islamic intellectual tradition. Thus, when I observe that Qur'anic prose does not mention any "women" in Paradise, I mean that quite plainly and precisely. I am not making an ontological claim about the existence of women or somatically female beings in Paradise. When I observe that Qur'anic prose does not explicitly detail any sex act occurring in Paradise, this is an observation that could be refuted with a verse that details a sex act occurring in any one of the Qur'anic depictions of Paradise—except that there are none, which is my point.

Though I recognize—and even explicitly hope—that confessionally oriented readers may find value in the book, I present myself as a researcher, not a preacher. From this perspective, the question of sex in paradise is less interesting to me from an ontological perspective and more interesting from a heuristic one: Why does the Qur'an *not*

mention "women" in paradise? Why does the Qur'an *not* depict sexual intercourse in its sensual depictions of paradise? Even though I am a Muslim-identifying academic, when I make a straightforward observation about what the Qur'an does or does not explicitly depict, this should not be read as a theological position. If I take a theological position in my work, I will discuss it as such. I have not, in my published work to date, articulated a claim about the existence of sex in paradise. For the record, I hope it exists.

Women and Gender in the Qur'an undoubtedly occupies a space of liminality. As such, it will likely neither be fully embraced by those with secularized expectations nor fully embraced by those who are lodged within a particular strand of an inherited tradition. I describe myself as a "tentative *mufassira*" to reclaim a space for contemporary scholars—and female-identifying academics in particular—to engage constructively with the intellectual tradition.[2] Nowhere does *Women and Gender in the Qur'an* claim to be a work examining the full extent of Islamic creedal thought (*ʿaqīda*) on female figures. That is simply not the aim of this book.[3]

Intertextual methodologies were my starting point for probing Qur'anic female figures; I saw untapped potential to emphasize dimensions of Qur'anic coherence through highlighting its discourses involving sex and gender. I am pleased by the myriad ways in which scholars across the globe are engaging with and building upon insights found in the book, and I welcome further critiques. The field of Qur'anic studies today is especially vibrant and rightfully inclusive of varied methodologies; this is particularly true of the sub-field of women and gender studies.[4] I fully recognize that when studied in tandem with other early Islamic sources, including hadith, early biographical literature, and Muslim chronicles, the Qur'an offers windows into late antiquity and the social forces driving the movement of Islamic ideas across the Arabian Peninsula and, ultimately, to other shores. In fact, I end the book calling for more studies that systematically engage adjacent corpuses, including hadith and tafsīr.

I thank AJIS once again for reviewing the work and Zainab Bint Younus for engaging with it. The review puts forth many astute

observations about the book. Yet, in weighing in on questions concerning the book's methodology, the review falls short in communicating essential parameters of the research.[5]

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Endnotes

1 See discussions of *tafsīr tawḥidī* in Celene Ibrahim, "Of Poets and Jesters: Methodologies and Reception Politics in Qur'anic Studies," *Journal of Feminist Studies in Religion* 39, no. 2 (2023): 79–81.

2 Celene Ibrahim, "The Tentative *Mufassira*," *Feminist Studies in Religion* 37, no. 2 (2021): 213–19.

3 For my work on *ʿaqīda*, see Celene Ibrahim, *Islam and Monotheism* (Cambridge University Press, 2022), a concise academic primer on the divine nature and attributes.

4 Readers can appreciate the breadth of promising new methodological work in the latest issue of "Gender-Attuned Research in Qur'anic Studies: A Roundtable on Influential Methodologies and Promising New Directions," *Feminist Studies in Religion* 39, no. 2 (2023): 57–102.

5 A dozen other academic publications have reviewed the book. Among them, Nimet Şaker, a Qur'anic studies scholar with a specialization in women and gender on the faculty of *Humboldt-Universität,* offers a detailed and especially accurate review that discusses my research methodology and conclusions at length in *Die Welt Des Islams* 63, no. 3(2023): 367–71. For critical discussions on the merits of each chapter's methodology, see contributions by Qur'anic studies specialists Aayah Musa (chapter 1), Martin Nguyen (chapter 2), Hadia Mubarak (chapter 3), and Rahel Fischbach (chapter 4) in *Feminist Studies in Religion* 37, no. 2 (2021): 191–212.

Muslims of the Heartland: How Syrian Immigrants Made a Home in the American Midwest

NEW YORK: NEW YORK UNIVERSITY PRESS, 2022 , 249 PAGES.

EDWARD E . CURTIS IV

The American Midwest is not a region typically associated with racial and religious diversity. This is in part because, in popular narratives about the US, urban coastal cities are diverse and small towns in "Middle America" are monolithically white and Christian. When ethnic and religious heterogeneity is acknowledged, it is seen as a new historical development based on mid-twentieth and twenty-first century immigration patterns. Muslims, perceived as quintessential outsiders, are perceived as recent and unwelcome interlopers in the religious fabric of America. Edward E. Curtis IV's *Muslims of the Heartland: How Syrian Immigrants Made a Home in the American Midwest* calls our attention to both the inaccuracy of these assumptions, and the factors that contribute to these inaccuracies in the first place. Based on archival research, Curtis weaves together vivid portraits of the deep roots that Arab Muslim immigrants have in the Midwest, dating back to the beginning of the twentieth century. By uncovering these erased narratives of Muslims in the Midwest, Curtis

provides readers with a powerful corrective to commonplace assumptions about immigration history in the United States.

The Muslims of the heartland refers to the Ottoman-era immigrants hailing from Greater Syria, which includes modern-day Syria, Lebanon, Jordan, and Palestine, who settled in cities and in rural regions of the American Midwest. While many of these Ottoman-era immigrants were Christians who were escaping persecution, a sizeable portion were also Muslim. The book is divided chronologically into two sections: 1900 to WWI and the 1920s to WWII. Geographically, it spans Muslim communities from North and South Dakota and Iowa to Michigan and Indiana. Curtis presents portraits of these Muslim Midwesterners that are analogous to white settlers of the Midwest in the early twentieth century: they were homesteaders on dispossessed indigenous land that had been sanctioned for settlement by the federal government through the Dawes Act of 1887. While stating that these Muslims were simply seeking better lives for themselves after becoming victims of their circumstances back home, Curtis writes "like other settler myths, their [Syrian] pioneer stories established how hard they worked to put down roots in America, to become native to America by participating in the most American of things, the settlement and cultivation of Indigenous peoples' land" (p. 23). By drawing out these parallels between Syrian Muslim settlers and European Christian settlers that dominate most historical narratives of the region, Curtis shows us that this book does not seek to *rewrite* Midwestern history, but rather to situate Syrian Muslims into a familiar one.

In addition to homesteading, Syrian migrants across the Midwest were also industrial workers and peddlers; they started businesses and fought in the US military. They retained their culture and customs through building religious and cultural institutions and through establishing specialty ethnic grocery stores, even as they also became "American." Indeed, Curtis shows that ethnic-religious congregations actually served as a "vehicle of assimilation" for Syrian Muslims as they were centers of community across sectarian and religious traditions (p. 12). These community centers enabled Syrian Muslims to put down roots in America while preserving their own ethnic traditions. The role of these religious

congregations to facilitate Syrian communities' establishing roots in America is interesting to consider in light of xenophobic assumptions that Islam is antithetical to American values. The notion that assimilation did not have to entail the relinquishing of religious traditions and local customs was well illustrated in an example where a local Cedar Rapids newspaper includes respectful and informative coverage of Ramadan. This same paper also featured Levantine cuisine alongside Jewish and Italian delicacies in an article about the importance of retaining ethnic recipes and dishes, which can eventually become incorporated into the American palate (pp. 70-75).

Instances of positive news coverage, however, does not indicate that Syrian immigrants did not face anti-Muslim discrimination. Indeed, Curtis offers readers portraits of conflict—sometimes violent—between Christian and Muslim Syrians. He reminds us that in the early twentieth century, citizenship was legally tied to whiteness, and Muslims routinely faced Islamophobia on the individual and structural levels. Whiteness was more readily accessible to Levantine Christians, who often made the case for their own whiteness by positioning themselves against their Muslim counterparts. In these narratives of anti-Muslim discrimination, Curtis offers a new approach to thinking about US Islamophobia that is rooted in social histories, adding to the existing literature that examines legal discrimination and citizenship cases. In so doing, *Muslims of the Heartland* offers readers a nuanced portrait of anti-Muslim sentiment in the twentieth century that reveals that patterns of discrimination were not uniform across the board and differed across region and time period. For example, whereas Muslims in Cedar Rapids were accepted as white, those in Michigan City were legally discriminated against in the public sphere before World War I.

For Curtis, the project of uncovering the erased histories of Syrian Muslims in the Midwest is both a professional and personal pursuit. As one of the pioneering scholars of Islam in America, Curtis' prolific academic oeuvre has been in the service of telling Muslim histories and establishing an accurate historical record. This broader thread is woven throughout *Muslims of the Heartland* as well. Yet, it stands out in one distinct way in its narrations of these family histories because it is

also his own family history. A native of Southern Illinois, Curtis begins the book with a story about his maternal grandmother, who was not Muslim but likely descended from Muslim ancestors who immigrated from Ottoman Syria. He draws on his own family accounts to further illuminate and reconstruct the lives of a select number of individuals and communities.

By offering readers these rich individual narratives, Curtis sheds light on some of the ways that these stories came to be obscured in the first place. For example, Joe Hassan Chamie, a Syrian Muslim from Sioux Falls, fought in WWI, and died after being wounded in battle in 1918. However, he is buried underneath a cross in an American cemetery in France. The US military did not recognize Muslims at the time, and therefore service members were all buried underneath a cross unless they were Jewish. Given that joining the military offered Syrian Muslims a pathway to American citizenship, Chamie was one of many Muslims whose sacrifices to the United States were written out of history. Reflecting on the erasure of Chamie's Muslim identity, Curtis writes, "We Midwesterners have become invisible to ourselves. To rediscover the diversity of our origins, we must adopt the mindset of an archaeologist…we must assume that the evidence of our shared past is hidden in plain sight, right beneath our feet, in the heartland" (p. 42). Muslim invisibility in the military shifted by WWII, when fallen Muslim soldiers were accurately identified through proper Islamic rituals.

Other notable narratives that Curtis brings to the surface are those of Syrian Muslim women who played significant public roles in institution building and communal life. Readers learn about renowned activist Aliya Ogdie Hassan, from Sioux Falls, whose personal biographies are preserved at the Smithsonian. Hassan worked through the Great Depression, was married and divorced, and worked with Malcolm X. In Cedar Rapids, there were several women leaders such as Fatima Igram, Negebe Sheronick, and Hasibe Aossey who organized the women in their community to raise funds to build a mosque. These women raised their children, worked in their local businesses, and even partook in public Qur'an recitation at the mosque (p. 152). In other words, Syrian

Muslim women were key players in the preservation of their religious and ethnic traditions.

Muslims of the Heartland will appeal to both students and scholars of religion, American Studies, Middle East Studies, and ethnic studies—and would work well in a range of course syllabi. At the same time, as Curtis notes in his introduction, the book is intentionally written in accessible language and would also be appealing for crossover audiences who are interested in broadening their understanding of Midwestern American history and American immigration in the first half of the twentieth century. For this reason, it could also be adopted for use in secondary education as a part of a US history curriculum. *Muslims of the Heartland* offers readers a powerful corrective to the assumptions that dominate commonplace narratives about the Midwest as a region that is monolithically white and Christian. Moreover, not only does Curtis deftly situate Syrian Muslims within American Midwestern history, but he also shows us the complexity of Muslim life throughout the region. In this way, the book reads as a refreshing celebration of Muslim and Arab heritage and culture in America, as opposed to a plea for Muslim acceptance in a xenophobic climate that is hostile to immigrants.

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Perilous Intimacies: Debating Hindu-Muslim Friendship After Empire

NEW YORK: COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY PRESS, 2023, 360 PAGES.

SHERALI TAREEN

The subtitle of the book under review suggests that it deals with modern relationships between Hindus and Muslims in India, but the scope of the book is actually much wider. It deals with the general question of the various Muslim views of the relationship between Muslims and adherents of other civilizations and religions, ranging from the 9th century al-ʿĀmirī and the 11th century al-Bīrūnī, to the 18th century Mirzā Maẓhar Jān-i Jānān and thinkers of the 19th and 20th centuries, including such luminaries as Abū al-Kalām Āzād, Aḥmad Rizā Khān, Sayyid Aḥmad Khān and several Deobandī scholars.

One of the great virtues of the book is the author's use of the sources, some of them rarely mentioned in scholarly literature and certainly not to this extent and in such detail. In an academic culture in which various "narratives" have taken the pride of place, it is most welcome to have a work which is replete with theory, but also surveys and analyzes a substantial amount of hitherto unknown source material. The book is also another proof of the great variety of Muslim tradition which enables Muslim scholars to find Islamic justification for their modern

world views and policies, even if these are contradictory to each other. Because of its rich content – much of it unknown – the book deserves a detailed review.

Perilous intimacies is divided into six chapters, preceded by an extensive introduction (pp. 1-34) and followed by an epilogue (pp. 253-272). The introduction starts with analyzing the concept of friendship and includes also a semantic analysis of the Arabic root *w-l-y*, some derivatives of which carry two meanings: friendship and sovereignty. But its main purpose is to introduce the reader to the theory which the author uses in order to analyze the conditions in which Muslims found themselves after they lost political sovereignty and replaced it with feelings of superiority based on ritual distinctiveness (pp. 9-10). An additional purpose of the introduction is to introduce the reader to the intellectuals whose thought is analyzed in the following chapters and prepare them for the detailed analysis included therein.

The first chapter is devoted to a detailed consideration of the thought of Mirzā Maẓhar Jān-i Jānān (d. 1781) and his description ("translation" in the author's parlance) of Hinduism for the Muslim audience. Tareen correctly describes Jān-i Jānān's description of Hinduism as a "remarkably sympathetic and charitable," considering pre-Islamic Hinduism as a "normatively coherent monotheistic tradition." At the same time he advanced "a triumphalist Muslim narrative by maintaining Islam's superiority over Hinduism." He was able to do this by asserting that Islam abrogated all previous religions and therefore he categorized Hindus who lived after the emergence of Islam – but did not embrace it – as unbelievers (p. 39). It is noteworthy that similar views concerning Jews and Christians are attributed in classical *fiqh* works to some early Muslim jurists. According to these views, Islam abrogated Judaism and Christianity and it is not legitimate to convert to these two religions after the coming of Islam. According to some views, Jews and Christian who joined these religions late are not even eligible for *dhimmī* status.[1]

The second chapter (pp. 79-114) includes a detailed survey and discussion of the Shāhjānpūr debate which was conducted in 1875 and 1876 and brought together Christian missionaries as well as Muslim and Hindu scholars. The debate was called "A conference on knowing God"

(*Maila-yi Khudā shināsī*), which Tareen understands – because of the polemical nature of the event – as "deciding the (true) God." The debate consisted of attacks of one religion on the other: Nānawtwī accused Christianity of attributing divinity to Jesus who was a human being, asserted that this is an impossible "combination of opposites" (*ijtimāʿ al-ḍiddayn*) and maintained that "Muslims are the true Christians of today"; Danayand Saraswati, the Hindu scholar and founder of the Ārya Samāj, accused the Muslims of committing idolatry when they pray in the direction of the Kaʿba and defamed the Prophet Muḥammad, while Father Scott saw in the decrease of crime in India under British rule a proof of Christian superiority. There is also an extensive discussion of what Tareen call "the miracle wars", in which each protagonist tries to establish which religion can present "the most miraculous miracles." It is somewhat surprising that the Muslim side did not mention the "inimitability of the Qurʾān" (*iʿjāz al-Qurʾān*) which was the most important miracle proving the truth of Islam in classical Muslim theology.

The third chapter (pp. 115-152) – entitled "Friendship and sovereign fantasies" – deals with the *khilāfat* movement and the controversy which it engendered between two important Muslim thinkers, Abū al-Kalām Āzād and Aḥmad Rizā Khān Barēlwī. Āzād declared India *dār al-ḥarb,* urging the Muslims to migrate from it if they can. He wholeheartedly supported the Ottoman caliphate, maintained that Muslims who do not submit to it are beyond the pale of Islam and gave full support to Gandhi's non-cooperation movement. He found support for his position in Qurʾān 60:8-9[2] which allows friendship with non-Muslims who do not fight the Muslims and do not expel them from their homes. In his view, the Hindus belong to this category because they never fought the Muslims for religious reasons. The British, on the other hand, fight the Ottoman caliphate and have designs to colonize the Arabian Peninsula; they are therefore clearly in a state of belligerency against the Muslims and must not be befriended or supported. One may add here that this attitude is comparable to the "united nationalism" (*muttaḥida qawmiyyat*) theory of Ḥusayn Aḥmad Madanī and the *Jamʿiyyat-i ʿulamāʾ-i Hind* which explained the advantages which Indian Muslims would enjoy in a united India, opposed the creation of Pakistan and maintained – more generally

– that Muslims may politically belong to one nation with non-Muslims while keeping their religious identity intact.[3]

Aḥmad Rizā Khān Barēlwī adopted an opposite position. Similarly to Āzād, he also found Qurʾānic support for his opposition to the *khilāfat* and the non-cooperation movement.[4] According to Tareen, he was "doggedly critical of any hint of inter religious intimacy…" (p. 139) Yet in contradistinction to Āzād, who called for severing all connections with the British and called even not to accept financial aid for Muslim religious institutions (p. 115), Rizā Khān made a distinction between *muwālāt,* translated by Tareen as "friendship/intimacy" which is forbidden, and "mere pragmatic relations" (*mujarrad-i muʿāmalāt*) which are permissible. Accepting financial aid belongs in his view to the second category (p. 141). He castigates Āzād for proffering an excessively wide interpretation of Qurʾān 60:8, asserts that Hindus cannot be considered as those who do not fight against Islam because they murdered Muslims on the cow sacrifice issue (pp. 141-142). In Rizā Khān's view, the non-cooperation movement, the declaration that India is *dār al-ḥarb* and the consequent call to Muslims to emigrate to Afghanistan – an area ruled by Muslims – was designed by Gandhi to rob the Muslims of their positions of influence in India and to enable the Hindus to take these positions over. (p. 143).

Chapter Four, entitled "The cow and the caliphate" (pp. 153-188), is a survey of the diverse Muslim views on cow sacrifice. Scholars attached to the Khilāfat movement, such as Āzād and ʿAbd al-Bārī, urged Muslims to refrain from cow slaughter in order not to offend Hindu sensibilities. They argued that cow slaughter in Islam is permissible but not obligatory; refraining from it would therefore not be an infringement of an Islamic commandment. At the other end of the spectrum stood Aḥmad Rizā Khān who opined that cow slaughter is in India is a symbol of Muslim distinctiveness and therefore must not be abandoned. In his view, its abandonment under Hindu pressure would be a humiliation for Islam.

Chapter Five (pp. 189-219) is a wide ranging survey of the complexities engendered by the *ḥadīth* forbidding imitation of other communities by Muslims as well as the divergent Muslim views on the issue. The modern protagonists in this chapter are Sayyid Aḥmad Khān of Aligarh, Rashīd Aḥmad Gangōhī and Muḥammad Ṭayyib al-Qāsimī of Deoband.

There is also a discussion of the *lā tashabbahū* tradition in classical *ḥadīth,* in Ibn Taymiyya and in Shāh ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz.[5] The discussion makes it clear that the *tashabbuh* issue has particular significance for the Muslim minority in South Asia where there are pressures to participate in the celebration of Hindu festivals. In the British period a new issue appeared on the stage and elicited contradictory responses: imitation of European customs. This reviewer would not include here the injunction to imitate the Prophet's customs and the Ṣūfī usages of *tashabbuh* (p. 191): these are completely different from the issues discussed in the rest of the chapter. Several of the issues related to imitation of others are taken up again in Chapter Six (pp. 220-252) in which Sayyid Aḥmad Khān and Muḥammad Ṭayyib al-Qāsimī are the main disputants.

II

Having surveyed the main contents of the book, I wish to engage with some of the theories employed by the author for his analysis. In numerous places of the book under review, Tareen maintains that in modern times "we imagine world religions as competing clubs with clearly defined texts, beliefs, and practices, each possessing its own distinct history." He attributes the development of this conception to "the political project of colonialism." (p. 35; cf. p.45) This general statement notwithstanding, he mentions in his work a number of Muslim thinkers who preceded Western colonialism, but also maintained that there is a sharp distinction between Islam and other religions. He mentions the 9th century scholar Abū al-Ḥasan al-ʿĀmirī whose *al-Iʿlām bi-manāqib al-islām* ("Proclamation of Islamic virtues") he considers "close to the modern genre of 'comparative religion'" (p. 13).[6] He also mentions Abū Rayḥān al-Bīrūnī (d. 1050) who drew a sharp distinction between Islam and Hinduism and asserted that "we believe in nothing that they believe and *vice versa.*" Tareen observes that this seems "remarkably similar to the colonial mentality toward Indian religions that came to the forefront some eight centuries later…" (pp. 46-47). The Andalusī scholar Ibn Ḥazm (d. 1064) and his *al-Faṣl fī al-milal wa al-ahwāʾ wa al-niḥal* could have been mentioned here also. The author adduces also an analysis of *Ḥujjat*

al-Hind[7], a 17th (?) century tract by ʿUmar Miḥrābī which contains a scathing criticism of Hindu traditions (pp. 55-57). About the 18th century Indian Muslim thinker Mirzā Maẓhar Jān-i Jānān (d. 1781) the author says that there is similitude between the "reifying tendencies" in his thought and the British colonial representations of Hinduism, though his political project was significantly different (pp. 75-76).

It is not difficult to expand Tareen's examples of pre-colonial examples of sharp distinctions between Islam and other religions. It seems appropriate to start with Qurʾān 109 which denies any possibility of interaction between Islam and the polytheists of Arabia, asserts the distinctiveness of the Prophet's faith and concludes with "To you your religion and to me mine." There are many Qurʾānic verses which express the idea of Islamic distinctiveness in different formulations. Toshihiko Izutsu has provided an extensive analysis of the belief – unbelief dichotomy in the Qurʾānic context.[8] Albrecht Noth has convincingly argued that part of the "Conditions of ʿUmar" (*al-shurūṭ al-ʿumariyya*) were designed to differentiate between non-Muslims and Muslims in their outward appearance rather than discriminate against the non-Muslims.[9] Muslim literature speaks also about hierarchy between the various religions.[10] And Wilfred Cantwell Smith has analyzed the ways in which adherents of various religions call their respective faiths and found that the case of Islam is special: in contradistinction to other religions – the names of which were given to them by outsiders – God himself determined that Islam will be the name of this religion. Muslims were conscious from the very beginning of their history of the multiplicity of religions as well as of their own distinctiveness. They also use the noun *dīn* and its plural *adyān* in the sense of modern "religion."[11] More recently, Jeffry R. Halverson has written a reasoned and convincing article criticizing the widespread notion of the colonial invention of "religion" as far as the Islamic tradition is concerned.[12]

It is therefore difficult to agree with the author who speaks about "a new conceptual object called religion." (p. 109). This concept has existed in the Muslim tradition since the earliest stages of its development. The prevalent idea of the distinctiveness of Islam does not mean that there were no Muslim thinkers who looked for common ground with other

religions. Indeed, Tareen himself devoted a rich section to al-Gardīzī (11th century), Amīr Khusraw (d. 1325) and Dārā Shukōh (d. 1659) (pp. 49-52).

As I mentioned above, Chapter Two of the book under review is devoted to the Shājahānpūr debate. The author correctly says that the idea of inter-religious polemics was not "a colonial invention" (pp. 109-110). Yet Tareen maintains a few pages later that the debate could not have taken place in the form which it took "prior to the colonial moment in India" (p. 112). I wonder whether the Shājahānpūr debate is substantially different from the religious debates in the Mughul Emperor Akbar's court.[13] And it is also well known that medieval history is replete with Jewish-Muslim and Christian-Muslim controversies.[14]

SherAli Tareen repeatedly asserts that the sharp distinction between religions is a colonial phenomenon. Nevertheless, he adduces plenty of examples of pre-colonial thinkers whose ideas were similar, even identical, with what he calls "the colonial discourse of world religions" (p. 35). One may be allowed to wonder: if there is such a substantial number of pre-colonial Muslim thinkers who expressed such views - why should we call the whole phenomenon "colonial"?

For these reasons, I have reservations about the pervasive use of the "post-colonial" theory in the book. In my view, the theory employed by Tareen runs contrary to a substantial part of the material adduced by him and diverts the reader's attention away from the important material which he collected, analyzed and brought into focus. However, these reservations do not outweigh the book's outstanding contribution in surveying and analyzing a very substantial amount of hitherto unknown material. The author deserves to be congratulated for providing the scholars of modern Muslim India with a treasure trove in which he surveyed and analyzed an important aspect of modern Indian Muslim history and thought.

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Endnotes

1 See Yohanan Friedmann, *Tolerance and Coercion in Islam: Interfaith Relations in the Muslim Tradition* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), pp. 23, 60.

2 "God forbids you not, as regards those who have not fought you in religion's cause, nor expelled you from you habitations, that you should be kindly to them and act justly towards them; surely God loves the just…" Translation by Arthur J. Arberry, *The Koran interpreted.*

3 See Yohanan Friedmann, "The attitude of the Jamʿiyyat al-ʿulamā-ʾi Hind to the Indian national movement and to the establishment of Pakistan." A*sian and African Studies* 7 (1971), pp. 157-180, and Barbara D. Metcalf, Ḥusain Aḥmad Madanī: *The jihād for Islam and India's Freedom.* (Oxford: Oneworld, 2009). More generally, see Ali Usman Qasmi and Megan Eaton Robb, eds., *Muslims against the Muslim League: Critiques of the Idea of Pakistan* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017).

4 See Qurʾān 5:51, "O believers, take not Jews and Christians as friends; they are friends of each other. Whoever of you makes them his friends, is one of them…"

5 The classical material on the issue was surveyed and analyzed in M. J. Kister "Do not assimilate yourselves…": *lā tashabbahū*; with an Appendix by Menahem Kister." *Jerusalem Studies in Arabic and Islam 12* (1989), pp. 321-371 (reprinted in M.J. Kister, *Concepts and Ideas at the Dawn of Islam* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 1997 no. VI).

6 For a brief analysis of al-ʿĀmirī's thought and a partial translation of the *al-Iʿlām*, see Franz Rosenthal, "State and religion according to Abū al-Ḥasan al-Āmirī," in *Islamic Quarterly 3* (1956), pp. 42-52.

7 The author translates this as "Proof of India," but a more appropriate translation would be "Refutation of India." For this meaning of *ḥujja*, see Lane, *Arabic-English Lexicon*, s.v.

8 See Toshihiko Izutsu, *Ethico-religious Concepts in the Qurʾān* (Montreal: McGill University Press: 1966), pp. 119-155 and passim.

9 Albrecht Noth, "Abgrenzungsprobleme zwischen Muslimen und nicht-Muslimen: Die "Bedingungen ʿUmars (*aš-šurūṭ al-ʿumariyya*)" unter einem anderen Aspekt gelesen," *Jerusalem Studies in Arabic and Islam 9* (1987), pp. 290-315. English translation in Robert Hoyland, ed., *Muslims and Others in Early Islamic Society* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2004), pp. 103-124.

10 See Friedmann, *Tolerance and Coercion*, pp. 38-39.

11 Wilfred Cantwell Smith, *The Meaning and End of Religion* (New York: Macmillan, 1963), pp. 75-108, especially pp. 75-77.

12 Jeffry R. Halverson, "Religion before the academy: Jonathan Z. Smith, Eurocentrism, and Muslim demarcations of religion," *The Journal of Religion* 104 (2024), pp. 26-44.

13 See André Wink, *Akbar* (Oxford: Oneworld, 2009), pp. 97-99; Derryl N. MacLean, "Real men and false men at the court of Akbar: The *Majālis* of Shaykh Muṣṭafā Gujarātī," in David Gilmartin and Bruce Lawrence, eds., *Beyond Turk and Hindu: Rethinking Religious Identities in Islamicate South Asia* (Gainsville: University Press of Florida, 2000), pp. 199-215.

14 Much information on this can be gleaned from Jacques Waardenburg, ed., *Muslim Perceptions of other Religions* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999) and from Camilla Adang and Sabine Schmidtke, *Muslim Perceptions and Receptions of the Bible: Texts and Studies* (Atlanta: Lockwood Press, 2019).

Islamic Architecture: A World History

LONDON: THAMES AND HUDSON, 2023, 335 PAGES.

ERIC BROUG

Contemporary scholarship about the architecture of the Islamic world continues to expand with new explorations beyond the 'canon' of high-profile historical examples typically included in surveys. Recent publications now include studies of lesser-known buildings, new thematic lenses and studies of contemporary buildings designed for and by Muslims.

Eric Broug's past publications focussed on Islamic geometric patterns, which emphasized a practical understanding with step-by-step design guides, stemming from his own work and interests as a geometric artist. In 2013, his densely insightful and instructive *Islamic Geometric Design*[1] progressed from the work-book model he had previously published and included beautiful photographs of details from historical mosques and Islamic buildings from around the world. Broug framed this work in an innovative manner by choosing to centre on the process of creating various geometric 'star' families with images and diagram guides for drawing each star pattern. In *Islamic Geometric Design*, Broug professed that his approach would focus on 'my own experience as an artist, designer and researcher. It is, I believe, the most likely way in which craftsmen over many centuries created geometric compositions' (p.12) rather than the

historical, cultural or political significance of the buildings examined. Given the title of the book, and the instructive quality, this was a wholly reasonable and effective approach. I enjoyed Broug's previous work as both a researcher, designer and educator and I was curious to see what *Islamic Architecture: A World History* would hold. How much 'history' would be included in a book that covered the world, and would there be new insights regarding (geometric) design?

In *Islamic Architecture: A World History,* Broug has curated a collection of images of buildings constructed either in the name of Islam, or buildings influenced by Islamic design, from around the globe. The book is organized regionally with intentionally juxtaposed examples from the 'canon' of history alongside lesser known and new buildings as well as buildings that do not have an 'Islamic' purpose but have utilized 'Islamic' decorative motifs. The images are large, full-colour and focus mostly on the exterior with some interior images. No architectural plans, drawings or diagrams of geometric design are included. The accompanying text is minimal and oftentimes focuses on a brief description rather than any kind of comparative arc either within the region or thematically.

The contents of the book include: a brief introduction, six regional sections (Eastern Mediterranean and Gulf Region, Iraq, Iran and South Asia, Turkey and Central Asia, Africa; Asia Pacific, Europe and the Americas), and two brief sections on 'Women in Islamic Architecture' and 'A Waqf'. It is not clear how the countries in each regional section are ordered – they are not ordered by any chronology or alphabetically by name (and why some countries are in the region they are, for example, why is 'Egypt' located in the 'Eastern Mediterranean and Gulf region' chapter and not in 'Africa'?). Instead, Broug puts the emphasis on highlighting interesting or unusual motifs in design and is 'guided by beauty, visual interested and relevance' (p.7), especially surface embellishment.

In the 'Introduction' Broug notes that there are over three million mosques in the world and discusses the choice for the title of the book to include the phrase 'Islamic Architecture' which has been critiqued by scholars as a monolithic a term.[2] Broug notes that 'Architecture from Muslim Societies' would be more appropriate but does not disclose why 'Islamic Architecture' was chosen. Broug gives some personal insight

regarding his academic journey in the field of Islamic visual culture and his intention in 'casting his net wide' by including examples from all over the globe – this is the most promising aspect of the book – to include side by side the known and the unknown.

In the chapters that form the main body of the book, Chapters 1-6, are each fronted by a short, three-page text, while the rest of each chapter is dominated by large photographs with detailed captions. The chapters can be read quickly as visual essays that intentionally situate prominent historical examples next to contemporary explorations next to remote small projects. This is an unusual way to compose such a broad subject and one where the reader is required to engage with the materials in a primarily visual manner to create their own connections as to the curation and inferred meaning in the ordering of the buildings.

Each chapter opens with a stunning detailed photograph, and the resplendent 8th century Great Mosque of Damascus begins Chapter 1: 'Eastern Mediterranean and Gulf Region' which includes examples from Jordan, United Arab Emirates, Saudi Arabia, Egypt, Syria, Lebanon, Palestine/Israel, Qatar, Bahrain, Oman, Kuwait and Yemen. Alternating between stunning images of surface elaboration to overall façade compositions the chapter sets the tone for the unusual curation of examples in the book. The Great Mosque of Damascus is followed by the visually complex 21st century *musallah* (prayer room) designed by Zaha Hadid in Riyadh. Similarly, the examples from this region highlight historical and contemporary buildings with Islamic visual motifs including, as would be expected: mosques, madrasas and mausoleums, but also historical palaces, citadels, and small remote contemporary prayer halls. The 14th century Mamluk madrasa of Sultan Hassan in Egypt is featured in the same chapter with small Yemini mosques and mausoleums, the Al Aqsa Mosque in Jerusalem, the Louvre Museum in the UAE designed by Jean Nouval, and the Museum of Islamic Art in Qatar by IM Pei. It is interesting to contemplate the region in such a total manner and witness the juxtaposition of such a range of buildings that would fall under the umbrella of 'Islamic architecture'.

An image from the striking Vakil Mosque in Shiraz, Iran (18th century) opens Chapter 2: 'Iraq, Iran and South Asia' with examples from

Iraq, Iran, India, Pakistan, Bangladesh and Sri Lanka. The complex brick facades of the Safavid era are situated with Great Seljuk, Ilkhanid, Abbasid, Qajar, Delhi Sultanate, amd Mughal buildings alongside the 20th century Al Shaheed (the Martyr) monument in Baghdad, the Tehran City theatre and the Prayer hall at the National Parliament house in Dhaka, Bangladesh by Louis Kahn.

The 15th century Timurid ornate interior of Aksaray mausoleum in Samarkand opens Chapter 3: 'Turkey and Central Asia' which includes examples from Turkey, North Macedonia, Uzbekistan, Afghanistan, Turkmenistan, Azerbaijan, Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan, and Kazakhstan. A 21st century mosque in Kazakhstan is followed by a range of 13th century buildings from Turkey: tombs, a mosque/hospital, a caravanserai, madrasas, a citadel and mosques from many smaller cities followed prominent and remote examples in Turkey from the 15th-21st centuries. The chapter continues with early-to-late examples of mausoleums, madrasas, mosques as well as a palace, a synagogue, and a jamatkhana (Ismaili prayer house) from the remaining countries in the region.

A night-lit image of the 12th century Kutubiyya mosque in Marrakech opens Chapter 4: 'Africa' which includes examples from Morocco, Tunisia, Algeria, Libya, Mali, Niger, Sudan, Ethiopia, Somalia, Kenya, Tanzania, Comoros, Senegal, Ivory Coast, Burkina Faso, Ghana, Benin and Nigeria. The brief three-page essay is juxtaposed with a 13/14th century mosque from Mauritania and an extraordinary 21th century mosque from Ethiopia constructed from what appears to be tied-stick bundles. The images in the chapter then follow the ordering of 11th-18th century examples of gates, madrasas, tombs, mausoleums, a small zawiya (religious educational institution) from Morocco followed by a similar range of examples from the 9th -17th centuries from Tunisia, and a range of very remote and vernacular structures to prominent institutions from the remaining African countries noted in this chapter including the 13th century earthen great mosque of Djenne in Mali and the beautifully sensitive 21st century Hikma mosque in Dandaji, Niger designed by Mariam Kamara and Yasaman Esmaili. Many of the undated small structures included in this chapter from western, eastern and central Africa are extraordinary in their shapes, materials and contemporary use and would easily warrant further in-depth study.

A dramatic image of the 16th century Minaret Mosque in Java opens Chapter 5: 'Asia Pacific' that includes examples from Indonesia, Cambodia, Philippines, Malaysia, Myanmar, Thailand, Singapore, Brunei, Japan, Australia and China. The short chapter essay contains images of a compelling 17th century of woven bamboo and palm thatch mosque from Indonesia and a 16th century Uyghur mosque in China. Like in the previous chapter, there are some very interesting images of rarely documented buildings including an underground 18th century mosque in Indonesia and several unusual modern and neo-historicist 20th and 21st century mosques in Indonesia, Philippines, Malaysia, Thailand, Singapore and Brunei. Also included are the 20th century 'Cigar room' in Japan (in 'Moorish revival'), and two 21st century mosques in Australia. The chapter concludes with 14th, 17th and 18th century mosques from China.

The iconic interior of the 8th century Great Mosque of Cordoba opens Chapter 6: 'Europe and the Americas' with building examples from Spain, Portugal, Italy, Russia, Czech Republic, Ukraine, France, The Netherlands, Germany, Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Poland, Wales, England, Scotland, Sweden, Denmark, USA, Canada, Cuba, Chile and Ecuador. This is a vast pooling of geographic areas, and may be attributed to the fact that these regions have a more recent history of Muslim construction. However, there are certainly enough examples from each of the three continents to have warranted a separate chapter for each. As a result, there is only one example from Canada, seven from the US (including four secular buildings that appropriate Islamic motifs) and four from Central and South America. The majority of examples in this chapter are from Europe. In an alternating order of historical and contemporary as well as 'Islamic' and non-Islamic, the chapter includes examples of historical mosques from Spain (12th-14th century), Bosnia Herzegovina (15th-16th century) and 18th century Poland. Several historical churches are featured from Portugal, Italy and Russia (10th-19th century) and a synagogue from the Ukraine with all its feature elements inspired or influenced by Islamic design. 20th and 21st century mosques from Italy, Russia, England, Scotland, Sweden, Denmark are featured in succession but without any insight regarding their ordering or decorative approaches.

I have reordered the examples to expedite this review, however, interspersed between the previously noted buildings are many secular spaces that appropriate Islamic design motives, including the Dunkirk Baths in France, a Tobacco factory in Dresden, Germany, and an 'Arab room' at Cardiff Castle in Wales. The system of curation of examples in this book with achronological and/or programmatic juxtaposition is more apparently fragmented in this chapter, without even the tenuous regional/continental connection, the reader is left with only the brief image captions that make the need for a narrative arc even more obvious.

An image of a woman praying in the 14th century Friday Mosque of Yazd in Iran opens the seven-page section: 'Women in Islamic Architecture' which only covers, briefly, a summary of historical women who have patronized landmark buildings for Islamic purposes such as mosques. No mention is made regarding the role women have played in modern and contemporary mosques as patrons or designers, and no mention is made regarding access and separated spaces for women in historical and contemporary mosques – surprising given the opening image and generalized title of the chapter.

The book closes with a two-page 'A Waqf' section that outlines the phenomena of dedicating personal funds that are legally dedicated to a public entity to ensure the maintenance and longevity of Islamic budlings. This definition is followed by a Glossary, List of Islamic dynasties, Bibliography, Picture credits and an Index.

As a scholar of the subject, I did enjoy seeing a glimpse of some underrepresented buildings built by/for Muslims – but I was left wanting more: images (of each building), drawings (architectural and diagrams), and informative text. I was also hoping to read any insight Broug might have had regarding the curation of the examples regionally. A thought that crossed my mind was the experience of simultaneity of 'Islamic Architecture' that people in each region might experience: for example, in some historic cities one might walk through a 16th century madrasa, to a humble mud brick tomb and to an Avant guard contemporary mosque in the course of a day. In this way I started to imagine a thread connecting the radically different and achronological ordering of buildings in the book. This reading could open larger discourses on what the debated

term 'Islamic architecture' really means – an issue Broug flagged in the first chapter but never addressed again. The large format of the book, minimal text and focus on beautiful images make this book accessible and attractive to the lay reader curious about buildings in or related to the Islamic world. That the photographs were not taken by the author, but openly sourced from around the world enriched (and greatly expedited) the creation of the book but also held back any potential insight that would have been gained had the author himself, or a collaborator, taken all of the photographs. The thread of connections between the buildings, either visually or experientially, might have become a part of the text of the book in a very interesting way, especially as a conclusion or concluding section which the book lacked, having abruptly ended with the brief section on women's patronage of historic mosques. Broug's earlier work *Islamic Geometric Design* was and is one of the most insightful books I have read regarding the creation and understanding of Islamic visual culture and it would have been wonderful to see some of that discourse continued in this book.

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Endnotes

1 *Islamic Geometric Design* written by Eric Broug; - see review in AJIS Vol. 33. 2015. no.2

2 "The very terms used to describe the architecture of the Muslim world also stem from the colonial period, when orientalist scholars became interested in the buildings of non-western cultures. One may cite the fact that the phrase 'Islamic architecture' continues to be used in a world where it would seem strange to speak of 'Christian architecture'." Frishman, Martin and H-U Khan. *The Mosque History, Architectural Development and Regional Diversity*. London: Thames and Hudson, 1994. P.11.

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