

# Islam and Muslim Societies

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### REVIEW ARTICLES

#### Review of the Literature on the Islam-Democracy

#### Compatibility Theme: 1990-2009

Tauseef Ahmed Parray

The relationship between 'Islam' (and its concepts and institutions of *Shura*, *Khilafah*, *Ijma*, and *Ijtihad*) - and 'Democracy' (its principles/notions, positive features and values) is, undoubtedly, one of the most pressing issues facing the Muslim world today. The principles of elected rulers, consultative bodies, accountability, tolerance, justice, equality, freedom, human rights and the rule of law are not alien or new to Islam but are embedded in the very primary sources of Islam (Islamic *Shari'ah*) – the *Qur'an* and the *Sunnah* of Prophet .

Islamic resurgence and democratization are two of the most important developments of the 20<sup>th</sup> century that have gained an impetus from the final decades. Within these two developments, the question of the relationship between Islam and democracy - the compatibility and co-existence of the teachings of Islam with the principles of democracy – an issue that has now highly intensified – is a theme that is hotly debated, defined, and discussed by the diversity of voices - facing the Muslim world today. There is a misconception (among various scholars, both Muslims and non-Muslims) that Islam and democracy are incompatible institutions. On the other hand, there are a growing number of Muslim intellectuals that have called for a pluralist democracy or at least for

# Islam and Muslim Societies

## - a social science journal

some of its basic elements. Basing upon the *Qur'an* and *Sunnah* there are ample interpretations that had been fully developed by those who wish to promote the ideals of democracy and human rights in the Muslim world. Majority of the “Muslim Democrats” (those who argue that Islam and democracy are compatible) of both Muslim and non-Muslim countries - both in the past and in the present - adhere to democratic principles based upon the interpretations of the *Qur'an*.

### **Defining the Scope of Islam-Democracy debate: A Survey of the Literature**

From the early 20th century many scholars explored the prospectus of establishing an “Islamic democracy”. For example, in the Indian sub-continent, Mawlana Abul Kalam Azad (d.1958) and Muhammad Iqbal (d.1938), were writing and arguing for democratization of Islam. Azad argued that the “Islamic democracy” - based on the interpretation of *Shura*, and its practice during Prophetic and pious caliphate period - is the real picture of democratic system of government.<sup>1</sup>

Like all contemporary Muslim democrats, Iqbal too recognized the importance of *Ijtihad* and argued for its democratization and institutionalization in a proper legislative assembly thereby bridging the theoretical gap between divine and popular sovereignty. Iqbal used the term “*spiritual democracy*”. A strong advocate of freedom, individuality, equality, and brotherhood, all of which are necessary ingredients of liberal democracy, he stressed equality and brotherhood and thus concluded that democracy was Islam’s most important political ideal.<sup>2</sup>

*Some Important Works on Islam-democracy Relationship – 1990-2009*

# Islam and Muslim Societies

## - a social science journal

### *Islam and Democracy: Fear of the Modern World, Fatima Mernissi (1992)*

In this book, Fatima Mernissi, a Moroccan author, draws back on her personal experiences, not only as a Muslim but also as a woman, to explain why democracy has not caught on in the Arab countries and what are the prospects for the future? Throughout the major part of her book, she demonstrates how the Islamic community is chained up by a set of fears that it would have to overcome to establish democracy. The analysis is brilliant and gives religious, philosophical and historical reasons to the incapacity of the Islamic world to put in action a real democracy.<sup>3</sup>

### *Islam and Democracy, John L. Esposito & John O. Voll (1996)*

The book examines the relationship between Islam and Democracy in particular, between the global trend of democratization and the rise of what is often called Islamic fundamentalism or Islamism or political Islam. While they will not go so far as to say that Islamism is always a boon to democracy they labor to refute the common Western view. Esposito and Voll, in this book, say much on the positive side, that is, they argue in favor of compatibility between Islam and democracy. They claim that democracy and Islamic resurgence have become complementary forces in many countries.

Islam and Democracy explores the Islamic sources (beliefs and institutions) relevant to the current debate over greater political participation and democratization. Esposito and Voll use six case studies - Algeria, Egypt, Iran, Malaysia, Pakistan, and Sudan - to look at the diversity of Muslim experiences and experiments. These case studies prove that despite commonalities,

# Islam and Muslim Societies

## - a social science journal

differing national contexts and identities give rise to a multiplicity of agendas and strategies. This broad spectrum of case studies, reflecting the multifaceted relationship of Islam and Democracy, provides important insight into the powerful forces of religious resurgence and democratization which will inevitably impact global politics in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.<sup>4</sup>

The book's depth of analysis regarding the complex and dynamic relationships between Islamic resurgence and democratization is essential to any understanding of the transformation of Islamic societies in the current global context.

### *Islam, democracy, and the State in North Africa, John Pierre Entelis (1997)*

This book - a collection of essays - makes a major contribution to our efforts to understand, and so competently interact with, the forces of political, economic, and social change in states where Islamic ideals form a vibrant component of the culture. It discusses Islam and politics, human rights, aspects of political economy, and the international dimension of prospects for democratization in Islamic North African states. All chapters advance useful arguments based on solid research.

In the late 1980s, misguided economic policies, bureaucratic mismanagement, political corruption, and cultural alienation combined to create a popular demand for change in Algeria, Morocco, and Tunisia. It seemed for a time that a new and more open politics would transform the region. Instead, authoritarian states mobilized to repress the populist opposition led by politicized Islamist movements. Analyzing developments over the last two decades from the perspectives of

# Islam and Muslim Societies

## - a social science journal

political culture and political economy, many leading scholars provide insights into the region's continuing political crisis.<sup>5</sup>

### *Liberal Islam: A Source Book, Charles Kurzman (1998)*

Charles Kurzman in this book (an anthology) presents the translated work of 33 Muslims concerned with the separation of church and state, democracy, the condition of women, the rights of minorities, freedom of thought, and the future of human progress. This important book makes available (for the first time in English) a selection of writings from Muslim thinkers engaged with the issues of global modernity. It provides an access to the alternative voices of 20th-century Muslim intellectual life. The breadth and sophistication of this collection make it the indispensable sourcebook for anyone concerned with modern Islamic reflections on democracy, politics, and religion.

It provides an interesting collection of writings by Muslims on the compatibility of Islam and democratic government. He includes, M. Natsir who was writing in 1955 in Indonesia and was advocating democracy; Humayun Kabir who in 1968 was making a case for religious pluralism; S.M. Zafar who in 1980 wrote about Islam and a popular parliament in Pakistan; Mahdi Bazargan, an Iranian who argued the compatibility of religion and liberty in 1983; and Ali Bulac, a Turkish thinker who also argued that the Compact of Medina established the Prophetic precedence for the Constitutional basis of an Islamic polity.<sup>6</sup>

# Islam and Muslim Societies

## - a social science journal

*Democracy, the rule of law and Islam, Eugene Cotran, Adel Omar Sherif (1999)*

This book brings together the work of comparative law (written by legal scholars and practitioners) by looking at Islamic and Egyptian law and their relationship to the issues of democracy, the principle of the rule of law, and human rights by Cotran and Sherif – former an English Circuit Judge and Chairman of the Centre of Islamic and Middle Eastern Law at the U. of London and later a Judge and Commissioner Counselor for the Supreme Constitutional Court of Egypt - to identify and assess areas of common interest. As violence diminishes in favor of negotiation and compromise, all issues covered by the ongoing discussions will be determined by emerging rule of law. The book contains original contributions from an experienced team of Palestinian and Israeli lawyers and scholars in the field and covers a range of strategic issues, including history and law, key international treaties, the domestic dimensions of the peace process, water arrangements, economic issues, and the legal institutions which are being created and must adapt to the new scene. An important feature of the book is that it succeeds in showing that the traditional opposition of Israeli and Arab views may be giving way to a common informed reflection on modes of coexistence primarily determined by law.

In the first half (Part I: *The International, Regional and Egyptian Context*), the papers look at judicial independence, judicial review, human rights, and democracy in international, regional, and Egyptian contexts. The second group of contributions (Part II: *Freedom of Religion and Islam*) examines broader questions of Islam and law, including freedom of religion and belief as internationally protected rights, the relationship of human rights in Islam and United Nations

# Islam and Muslim Societies

## - a social science journal

instruments, the human rights situation for Saudi Arabian women, and Islamic constitutionalism in theory and practice. The contributors include Raja Shehadeh, Ruth Gavison, Eyal Benvenisti, Eugene Cotran, David Kretzmer, Anis Al-Qasem, Celia Fassberg, Sharif Elmusa, Mahmud El Jaafari, Eran Feitelson, Ruth Levush, and Mona Rishmawi. Divided into 2 parts, the book consists of 7 sections (and 29 chapters). Part I consists of 4 sections viz., Judicial Independence, Judicial Review and Other Remedies; Human Rights, Democracy and the Rule of Law; Judicial Experiments from Egypt; Democracy and Development. Part II consists of 3 sections: Freedom of Religion; Human Rights and Islam; and Constitutionalism and Islam as a Source of Legislation.<sup>7</sup>

### ***Islam and democracy* Ali Reza Abootalebi (2000)**

*Islam and Democracy* ( originally the Ph.D. dissertation, University of Arizona, 1993) - dealing with the pertinent issues of democracy, state-society relations, civil society, and Islam in developing countries - attempts to integrate the recent literature on civil society in the Middle East with the mainstream political science debate on democracy. This study makes use of political science theory and methodology as well as an area-study approach to draw conclusions on the prospects for democratization in developing countries in general. The study further challenges explanations of prospects for the democratization of state grounded on the cultural traits of each society, arguing that culture becomes an important factor in the struggle for democracy only when it contributes to either concentration or dispersion of social, economic, and political resources.<sup>8</sup>

# Islam and Muslim Societies

## - a social science journal

*Islam, democracy and religious modernism in Iran, 1953-2000: from Bāzargān to Saroush,*  
**Forough Jahanbakhsh (2001)**

This book discusses the general problematic of Islam and democracy and the ideas of certain Iranian religious modernists on the issue. Examining the development of religious intellectualism in post-revolutionary Iran, Forough Jahanbakhsh - Assistant Professor of Islamic Studies at Queen's University, Canada – in this work presents Abdolkarim Soroush's novel approach to this pertinent topic.

The present work intends to examine the contribution of the re-emergence of religion to the problematic of the compatibility of Islam and democracy within the time period 1953–2000 in Iran. This has been accomplished through an examination of the ideas of seven prominent figures that have shaped the religio-political thought and discourse of the pre- and post-revolutionary eras in Iran: Mahdī Bāzargān, Ali Shari'ati and Abdolkarim Soroush, S. Maḥmūd Ṭāliqānī, Murtaḍā Muṭahharī, Muḥammad Ḥusayn Ṭabāṭabā'ī and Ruhollah Khomeini. This study seeks to examine whether the contemporary religio-political thinkers of Iran, in the course of their anti-tyrannical campaign, made any attempt at the theoretical level to reconcile Islam and democracy. It asks the following questions, among others: Have the nature and the outcome of their efforts been different from what their predecessors achieved in this respect at the time of the constitutional revolution? How have they understood and attempted to conceptualize the notion of democracy? On what cognitive as well as normative basis have they structured their arguments?

# Islam and Muslim Societies

## - a social science journal

The first chapter provides a brief exposition of certain fundamental issues that have to be discussed in any consideration of democracy. The second chapter deals with the problematic of these issues in an Islamic context. It discusses those elements that Muslim thinkers usually refer to as democratic norms in Islam and upon which almost all of them have built their argument for the compatibility or incompatibility of Islam and democracy. Chapter three discusses the rise of Shi'ite religious modernism and the re-emergence of religious forces in Iranian politics in the second half of this century. This chapter provides the relevant context for the religio-political discourse of the individuals whose ideas are discussed in the fourth chapter. The last chapter examines the development of a trend of religious intellectualism in post-revolutionary Iran which aims at certain religious reforms entailing important political consequences. This latter trend not only challenges the religio-political establishment of present-day Iran, which is after all a product of the Islamic ideology of the 1960s and 1970s, but it also presents a significantly different discourse in general and a different approach to the issue of religious democratic government in particular. It does this to the extent that one might regard it, in the Shi'ite context, as the second serious attempt after Nā'īnī to reconcile Islam and democracy on its deepest theoretical levels. In the broader context of Islamic modernism, it presents a paradigm shift in Muslim thinkers' discourse.

The main concern of the study is the theoretical dimension of the problematic of Islam and democracy. It shows, among other things, that the democratic aspect of the theory of government presented by these seven figures has been as important for most of them as its religious aspect.<sup>9</sup>

# Islam and Muslim Societies

## - a social science journal

*Egypt, Islam, and Democracy: Critical Essays, With a New Postscript, Saad Eddin Ibrahim*  
(2002)

These essays by one of Egypt's most influential intellectuals – Saad Eddin Ibrahim, a professor of sociology at the American University in Cairo, and is co-editor with Nicholas S. Hopkins of *Arab Society: Class, Gender, Power, and Development* - provide a fascinating perspective on the political, religious, economic, and social issues of contemporary Egypt. Written over a period of fifteen years, the essays cover a range of topics including civil society and the prospects for democratization in Egypt and the region, the urban sociology of Cairo, the development of Egypt's landed bourgeoisie, structural adjustment and the processes of economic liberalization, and the complexities of ethnic conflicts and minorities in the Arab world.

A number of essays address different aspects of Islamic activism in Egypt: the formation, membership, and activities of activist groups and their philosophies, political and social roles, and ideological relations with the West. Written at various points in the modern history of Islamic activism, democratic reform, and economic and social liberalization, these essays reflect the processes of change and continuity in the sociopolitical development of present-day Egypt, while a new postscript written by the author in 2001 brings the story into perspective at the beginning of the twenty-first century.<sup>10</sup>

*Islam and Democracy in the Middle East, (ed.s) Larry Diamond, Marc F. Plattner, and Daniel Brumberg* (2003)

# Islam and Muslim Societies

## - a social science journal

A collection of essays published over the years in *Journal of Democracy* - founded in 1990, the *Journal of Democracy* is an influential quarterly journal which focuses on analyzing democratic regimes and movements around the world. The Journal is a branch of the International Forum for Democratic Studies at the National Endowment for Democracy, and is published by The Johns Hopkins University Press - , it provides a comprehensive assessment of the origins and staying power of Middle East autocracies, as well as a sober account of the struggles of state reformers and opposition forces to promote civil liberties, competitive elections, and a pluralistic vision of Islam. The compilation includes the insights of some 25 leading Western and Middle Eastern scholars; the book highlights the dualistic and often contradictory nature of political liberalization. As the case studies of Morocco, Algeria, Egypt, Jordan, Kuwait, Qatar, and Yemen suggest, political liberalization—as managed by the state—not only opens new spaces for debate and criticism, but is also used as a deliberate tactic to avoid genuine democratization. While acknowledging the enduring attraction of radical Islam throughout the Arab world, the concluding chapters carefully assess the recent efforts of Muslim civil society activists and intellectuals to promote a liberal Islamic alternative. Their struggles to affirm the compatibility of Islam and pluralistic democracy face daunting challenges, not least of which are the persistent efforts of many Arab rulers to limit the influence of all advocates of democracy, secular or religious.<sup>11</sup>

### ***The End of Democracy*, Abid Ullah Jan (2003)**

A thought-provoking, persuasive and conclusive work, *The End of Democracy* points towards the solution(s) for the problems caused by the failure of secular democracy. Democracy has failed

# Islam and Muslim Societies

## - a social science journal

and it has been used and abused, particularly following 9/11. Democracy has been undermined by a minority ruling elite to curtail civil liberties and mislead the public at home, whilst waging wars of domination abroad. The author – who is a political analyst and development specialist - argues that since the positive aspects of democracy are part of Islam, thereby undermining the case that Islam is incompatible with democracy; it will be Islam that will ultimately challenge and triumph over liberal democracy as we know it.<sup>12</sup>

Although Jan, who sees Islamism and democracy in a “zero-sum-game” and has already, announced the “demise of democracy” and the triumph of Islamism, acknowledges that the positive qualities/features of democracy are included within Islam. Divided into 6 chapters, the book argues (among others) that democracy is not a challenge for Islam, but rather Islam has become a challenge to the “most exploited concept of democracy” (p.67)

### ***Islam and Democracy: The Failure of Dialogue in Algeria, Frederic Volpi (2003)***

It examines the process of democratic reform in Muslim countries, the problems it throws up and the cultural ideas and practices that prevail. Concentrating in particular on Algeria, and using extensive on-the-ground research, Frederic Volpi offers a unique insight into the political history of the Algerian conflict and raises serious questions about the relationship between Islam and democracy on an international level. Addressing the problem of the radicalization of political Islam in the region, he suggests possible solutions to the security and foreign policy dilemmas linked to international terrorism.

# Islam and Muslim Societies

## - a social science journal

Looking in particular at the role of oil resources, which give Algeria great international geo-strategic and economic importance, Volpi explores Algeria's political transition -- a story which continues to have immense potential significance for other non-democratic Muslim countries. Volpi presents early and mid-twentieth-century North African scholars' reinterpretations of the Islamic creed that activated the emergence of anti-secularist movements in the Maghreb as a point of departure for his historical narrative of the Algerian conflict.

One of the book's high points is Volpi's discussion of the military's internal power struggle and of the FIS' internal dynamics (chapters 4 and 5, respectively). He shows that the internal rivalries between some of the principal military officers spilled over into the political arena, a development that made for periodic leadership changes and determined the fate of Algeria's troubled transition. On balance, the book is very informative and is written in a beautiful prose style.<sup>13</sup>

### ***Islam and the Challenge of Democracy, Khaled Abou El Fadl (2004)***

The book – basically a long article by El Fadl with brief responses from a number of scholars - engages the reader in a rich discourse on the challenges of democracy in contemporary Islam. The collection begins with a lead essay by Khaled Abou El Fadl, who argues that democracy, especially a constitutional democracy that protects basic individual rights, is the form of government best suited to promoting a set of social and political values central to Islam. It is followed by eleven others from internationally respected specialists in democracy and religion. They address, challenge, and

# Islam and Muslim Societies

## - a social science journal

engage Abou El Fadl's work. The contributors include John Esposito, Mohammad Fadel, Noah Feldman, Nader Hashemi, Bernard Haykel, Muqtedar Khan, Saba Mahmood, David Novak, William Quandt, Kevin Reinhart, and Jeremy Waldron. It not only educates readers about the central issues involved in the quest to develop Islamic democracies, it provides its own substantive contributions to that discourse and debate.<sup>14</sup>

***When Islam and Democracy Meet - Muslims in Europe and in the United States, Jocelyne Cesari (2004)***

Jocelyne Cesari's - Visiting Professor in Anthropology and Religious Studies at Harvard University and Senior Research Fellow at the National Center for Scientific Research in Paris - wide-ranging and thoughtful exploration of important issues concerning Muslims and non-Muslims and their relationships to each other compares the patterns developing in Europe and America. Special strengths of the book include Cesari's discussion of the secularization of individual Islamic practices and of Islamic institutions in the contrasting settings.

Exploring the woefully neglected reality of Islam as a major cultural and religious facet of American and European politics and societies, Cesari examines how Muslims in the West are challenging the notion of an inevitable clash or confrontation. Comparing the interaction of Muslims with their new countries, this book addresses the implications of increased Islamic visibility, violent clashes, beneficial cooperation, and questions within the Muslim community about their role and the role of Islam in democratic states. Pursuing a holistic approach to Muslims as a new minority within western democracy, Cesari provides important insights. The author, who

# Islam and Muslim Societies

## - a social science journal

has consulted several respected Islamic scholars, pursues a holistic approach to Muslims as a new minority within western democracy and provides important insights.<sup>15</sup>

### *Modernization, Democracy, and Islam, Shireen Hunter, Huma Malik, 2005*

Addresses the multifaceted causes of the slow progress in the Muslim world of both modernization and democratization, and suggests remedies grounded in a keen awareness of the challenges facing both Islam and the West. A book with the tripartite title Modernization, Democracy, and Islam covers all these bases. The quality articles treat such diverse subjects as the econometric dimension, the role of the military, comparisons between the Middle East and Latin America, and gender inequality.

The Islamic world has a poor record in terms of modernization and democracy. However, the source of this situation is not religion – Islam - but rather factors including colonialism, international economic and trading systems, and the role of the military, among others. The distinguished scholars contributing to this volume identify key factors - some intrinsic to the Muslim world, and some external - that contribute to Islam's current predicament. Contrary to much prevailing thought and opinion, Islam is neither anti-democratic nor inherently anti-modernization. Islam itself, as this book shows, is not the root cause of the malaise of the Islamic world.<sup>16</sup>

This is an excellent compilation of articles written by some of the top professors in the field. In this book 7 of the 19 articles collected here use both "modernization" and "democracy" (or

# Islam and Muslim Societies

## - a social science journal

"democratization") in their title, and one entire section of five articles is entitled "Factors Influencing Modernization and the Development of Democracy."

*Islamic Democratic Discourse: Theory, Debates and Philosophical Perspectives* (Ed.) M.A. Muqtedar Khan (2006)

*Islamic Democratic Discourse* - a wide-ranging set of essays - explores the multi-faceted relationship between Islam and democracy. Each essayist's unique viewpoint on contemporary Islam provides insight into Islamic political thought and its connection to Western democracy.

*Islamic Democratic Discourse* attempts to accelerate the development of the gradually emerging philosophical and theological discourse on Islamic democratic theory. This wide-ranging set of essays explores the multi-faceted relationship between Islam and democracy. Making a systematic effort to link contemporary Muslim ideas on Islam and democracy with classical Islamic theories and profound theological concepts and issues, it opens new avenues to seriously build authentic Islamic theory/theories of democracy.

The book comprises of Eleven (11) Papers, divided into three sections, viz: *Classical Perspectives on Islam and Politics* (3 Chapters) - places a thorough analysis of the pace of democratic discourse in Islamic history. Such key terms as *Sharri'ah, Fiqh, Ijtihad, uli 'l-Amr*, an understanding of which are requisite to any finer comprehension of the historical and existing debates, are clearly brought out; *Regional Debates on Islam and Democracy* (4 Chapters) - includes three (3) area study papers: one on Malaysia, another on Turkey and the third on Sudan, examining diverse Muslim

# Islam and Muslim Societies

## - a social science journal

political theories; and *Global Discourse on Islam and Democracy* (4 Chapters) - analyses the place of democratic discourse in Islamic history with emphasis on its relevance/significance to our times.

The Editor, M.A. Muqtedar Khan—a Political Scientist [an Assistant Professor in the Department of Political Science and International Relations], with expertise in Political Philosophy, Islamic Political Thought and International Relations—examines how Muslim thinkers have and are trying to formulate systems for good and ethical self-governance and the necessity, therein, for political discourse. The debates in these essays, which span a wide range of subjects and periods, are held together by a common principle: political discourse has a long standing in the Muslim world.

It argues that the Muslim world today is the most diverse in the forms of political systems it employs. It has traditional monarchies, constitutional monarchies, dictatorships, secular democracies, Islamic republic's and some liberal democracies. In his paper, 'The Politics, Theory and Philosophy of Islamic Democracy' (pp. 149–171), Muqtedar Khan makes a discussion on the Politics—Islamic as well as Western—behind the discourse of Islam and democracy, emphasizing that the discourse is composed of two distinct debates: one is “political” and the second is “Quasi – theological, or in a sense concerns the political theology of Islam” (p. 151). In general, it explores the politics that underpins the theoretical discourse on Islam and democracy and then proceeds to evaluate the relative merits of philosophy, theology and jurisprudence in developing an authentic Islamic discourse on democracy.<sup>17</sup>

The book on the whole is a good attempt to bring forth the analysis of the democratic discourse in Islam in legal, historical and philosophical aspects as well as on regional and global

# Islam and Muslim Societies

## - a social science journal

level. The book also highlights the vitality democratic discourse in intellectual and civilizational setup of Muslim Ummah.

*The New Voices of Islam: Reforming Politics and Modernity-A Reader* (Ed.) Mehran Kamrava (2006)

*The New Voices of Islam* – a compilation of the writings of thirteen (13) most active and influential reformist thinkers/intellectuals belonging to the global diversity of Muslim thinking, from North Africa to South East Asia, Europe to America (all alive today) , contributing to the discourse of Islam and modernity significantly in one way or another – introduces the reader to the concerns and issues of religion, politics and the public space , in a word to ‘Islam and modernity’ across the Muslim world, revealing richness as well as the limitations of these new attempts to synthesize Islam and modernity.

The book consists of fourteen (14) chapters, out of which only three chapters are related to Islam-democracy theme. They include: ‘A Comparative Approach to Islam and Democracy’ (ch.4, pp.99-104) by Fethullah Gulen, examining the multi-faceted and complex relationship between Islam and democracy while placing Islam in a comparative and historical context; ‘The Divine Text and Pluralism in Muslim Societies’ (ch.7, pp.143-151) by Muhammad Shahrour, arguing that Shura or consultation is one of the core principles of Muslim belief with regard to democracy and pluralism; and finally ‘Reason, Freedom and Democracy in Islam’ (ch.14, pp.243-262) by

# Islam and Muslim Societies

## - a social science journal

Abdolkarim Saroush, offering a detailed discussion of the basic philosophical compatibility between Islamic rationality freedom and democracy.<sup>18</sup>

### *Islam Vs Democracy, Mahmoud Ismaeilian (2006)*

In this book, M. Ismaeilian addresses the pertinent question of whether Islam in general, and the Islamic party as a political force in Iran in particular, can offer freedom, democracy and a measure of equality to people living under its laws. He also considers the mentality peculiar to Islamic governments, offers a brief history of events leading up to the current world situation, and examines the constitutional state of democracy in Iran and certain other Islamic nations. The book begins with a look at 'the tragedy which gave birth to Islamic thinking's' and goes on to look at the replacement of one set of moral values by another, and shifts in social and individual consciousness. Many of Ismaeilian's ideas are philosophically interesting and valid: he asserts that 'human thought seems to lag behind the realities of the world around it', and views fundamentalist Islam through a socialist lens, claiming that is 'based on a very outdated socio-economical relationships of middle ages' - that is, a feudal-type one.

By observing certain Islamic states in a distinctly political light, the author highlights the conservative aspects of fundamentalism that aim to preserve the status quo by proclaiming it as God's will: in Iran, he writes, the Islamic state assumes that the economically influential elements of society are meant to be blessed by the creator and therefore any complaints by the workers would be considered blasphemy. In a strongly-worded critique of Iran's records, he asks pointedly why a

# Islam and Muslim Societies

## - a social science journal

religion claiming to have human interests at heart has claimed so many lives, and charts the uneasy and finally unworkable relationship between fundamentalist Islam and democracy.<sup>19</sup>

### ***Democracy in Islam*, Sayed Khatab and Gary D. Bouma (2007)**

Challenging the view of Islamic extremists and critics of Islam, *Democracy in Islam* explores the very topical issue of Islam's compatibility with democracy. It examines: principles of Islam's political theory and the notion of democracy therein; the notion of democracy in medieval and modern Muslim thought; Islam and human rights; and, the contribution of Islamic legal ideas to European legal philosophy and law. The book addresses the pressing need for a systematic show of an Islamic politics of human rights and democracy grounded in the Qur'an. The West wonders about Islam and human rights, and its own ability to incorporate Muslim minority communities. Many Muslims also seek to find within Islam, support source for democratic governance and human rights.

Based on Islam's authoritative sources, this book speaks about the global ferment of Islam-democracy relation by demonstrating that the political agendas promoting democracy and human values can be grounded in the *Qur'an* and the life of the Prophet. By exposing on Islamic politics of human rights and democracy grounded in the *Qur'an*, it demonstrates Islam's compatibility with liberal democracy and its values in the realm of government and law, with special focus on what is already established concerning the political and sociological propensities upon which the democratic attitude towards the self – and the attitude towards the other – are based and regarding the assets

# Islam and Muslim Societies

## - a social science journal

upon which the democratic system in any society depends. Particular topics covered include: principles of Islam's political theory and the notion of democracy therein; the notion of jihad and its qualification; Islam and human rights; the value and contribution of Islamic legal ideas to European legal philosophy and law. This concise and comprehensive study offers a balanced understanding of the debated issue of democracy and Islam in modern world.

The Book covers a wide range of themes and relates them to the main theme: Islam's compatibility with democracy. But there are four topics which are given particular attention. They are: (a) The Principles of Islam's Political theory and the Notion of democracy therein; (b) The Value and Contribution of Islamic Legal Ideas to European legal Philosophy and Law; (c) Islam and Human Rights; and (d) The Notion of Jihad and its Qualifications.<sup>20</sup>

The book – a concise and very comprehensive study - offers a balanced understanding of the debated issue of Islam and Democracy – the most debated issue of the modern times. This book, on the whole, is a good attempt to bring forth the analysis of the compatibility of Islam with Democracy in legal, philosophical and historical perspectives.

### ***Democracy in Muslim Societies: The Asian Experience (Ed.) Zoya Hasan (2007)***

*Democracy in Muslim Societies* – a study of six Asian countries, overwhelmingly Muslim in terms of population: Pakistan, Bangladesh, Iran, Turkey, Indonesia and Malaysia, and the process of democratization therein – seeks to discuss the impulses at work in Muslim societies and the dynamics of social forces shaping opinion and actions. It explores the character of the political

# Islam and Muslim Societies

## - a social science journal

transformation and democratic transition as well as assesses the extent of actual democratization in these six countries. Ultimately, this book concludes that there is no fundamental incompatibility between Islam and democracy in the Asian Muslim societies/countries.

The '6' chapters (in this book) are six country study papers contributing to dwell on the democratic discourse and its outcome in these countries – attempting to understand the process of democratization by looking to Asian societies to grasp the varieties of Muslim politics and multiple paths undertaken in the quest for democracy – from Turkey in the West to Indonesia in the East of Asia.<sup>21</sup>

*Democracy in Muslim Societies* attempts to bring forth the Asian experience of democracy revealing that there is no fundamental incompatibility between Islam and democracy in the Asian Muslim societies/countries. And at the same time, the book reveals the fact that a single model of democracy cannot work across these six countries as each country has a different history and has tread on a different path in the search for democracy.

### ***Islam and democracy: what is the real question? Asef Bayat (2007)***

Is Islam compatible with democracy? The text examines one of the most frequently-asked and yet misguided questions. Democratic ethos should not and cannot be deduced from some essence of religions supposedly inscribed in the scriptures. Rather, they are the outcome of political struggles that push Islam toward democratic or authoritarian directions.

# Islam and Muslim Societies

## - a social science journal

Asef Bayat offers a new approach to examine Islam and democracy arguing how the social struggles of diverse Muslim populations, those with different interests and orientation, render Islam to embrace democratic ideas or authoritarian disposition. "Islamism" and "post-Islamism" are discussed as representing two contrasting movements which have taken Islam into different, authoritarian and inclusive, political directions.<sup>22</sup>

*Islam, Secularism, and Liberal Democracy: Toward a Democratic Theory for Muslim Societies*, Nader Hashemi (2009)

*Islam, Secularism, and Liberal Democracy* analyzes the theoretical relationship between religion and democracy, specifically Islam's relationship with liberal democracy. It discusses the relationship between Islam, Muslim-majority societies (viz., Iran, Turkey, and Indonesia), and liberal democracy in a way that advances theory and practice regarding their relations and this relationship is the immediate focus of this study, and the conclusions have a much broader applicability in illuminating the theoretical relationship between religion, secularism, and democracy in general, and in contributing to the development of a liberal-democratic theory for Muslim societies in particular.

*Islam, Secularism, and Liberal Democracy* argues for a rethinking of democratic theory so that it incorporates the variable of religion in the development of liberal democracy. In the process, it proves that an indigenous theory of Muslim secularism is not only possible, but is a necessary requirement for the advancement of liberal democracy in Muslim societies.

# Islam and Muslim Societies

## - a social science journal

The author's primary methodological approach is historical and comparative. Drawing on insights and lessons from western political theory and history, he examines the relationship between liberal-democratic development and religion both theoretically and in the context of the Muslim world. The three countries mentioned above are presented as case studies as a means to reinforce the theoretical claims.<sup>23</sup>

In a nutshell, this probing study shows how empty are the essentialist clichés that cast Islam as an obstacle to democracy. It offers a rich reflection on the proper definition of secularism for our time; and an insightful discussion of Islamic responses to secularism, both negative and positive. This book is a contribution to the global debate.

*Islam, Democracy and Dialogue in Turkey: Deliberating in Divided Societies*, **Bora Kanra**  
(2009)

Most theorists of deliberative democracy treat deliberation as a procedure in decision-making. This approach neglects an important phase oriented not so much to decision-making but to social learning and understandings. Combining deliberative theory with research from social psychology, Bora Kanra - an ARC Australian Postdoctoral Fellow at the Australian National University, Australia - has developed an innovative critique and synthesis by allocating social learning its own formal sphere. For deliberative democracy to produce better outcomes, decision-making needs to be reinforced by opportunities for social learning. Stressing the importance of the

# Islam and Muslim Societies

## - a social science journal

development of democratic dialogue in divided societies, Kanra tests his claims of a new deliberative framework by analyzing interaction between Islamic and secular discourses in the Turkish public sphere. This in-depth analysis of converging and diverging political beliefs and traditions between seculars and Islamists emphasizes the importance of social learning in a sharply divided society. A groundbreaking and illuminating insight into the prospects for democratic development in Turkey, *Islam, Democracy and Dialogue in Turkey* reveals an emerging dynamic in Turkish politics representing a new opening in political practice.

Kanra argues that deliberative processes can help build convergences during the opinion formation stage in complex and strongly divided societies. This book is in real sense a successful integration of empirical and theoretical research.<sup>24</sup>

### ***Reformist Voices of Islam: Mediating Islam and Modernity, Shireen T. Hunter, 2009***

Islamic radicalism has commanded attention in recent years, to the neglect of more moderate voices and trends. This volume introduces the current generation of reformist thinkers and activists and the intellectual traditions they carry on. Regionally focused chapters cover Iran, the Arab East, the Maghreb, South Asia, Indonesia, Malaysia, Turkey, Europe, and North America. The book traces the roots of reformist thinking both in the Islamic tradition and as a response to the challenges of modernity, and identifies commonalities, comparisons, vulnerabilities, and trends of the modernizing movements.

# Islam and Muslim Societies

## - a social science journal

In recent years, Islamic fundamentalist, revolutionary, and jihadist movements have overshadowed more moderate and reformist voices and trends within Islam. This compelling volume introduces the current generation of reformist thinkers and activists, the intellectual traditions they carry on, and the reasons for the failure of reformist movements to sustain broad support in the Islamic world today. The editor's introductory chapter traces the roots of reformist thinking both in Islamic tradition and as a response to the challenge of modernity for Muslims struggling to reconcile the requirements of modernization with their cultural and religious values, while as the concluding chapter identifies commonalities, comparisons, and trends in the modernizing movements.

In this book, Shireen Hunter has thoughtfully and skillfully assembled a group of scholars who demonstrate that the latest currents in Islamic reformism in a number of countries and regions are important instruments of change today. This nuanced and comparative study illuminates the ways in which reformers have reacted to both the adverse effects of modernization and the grand prescriptions some Muslim intellectuals and activists have confidently presented. It also documents the divergence of viewpoints on such signal issues as women's rights and the place of Islamic law.

Richly informative, nuanced, and well written, this book will surprise all those who see Islam as an ultra-conservative, monolithic, and extremist religion since it gives evidence of a robust and global reformist discourse among Muslims that rationally seeks to reconcile Islam with democracy and the rule of law. For Muslim readers, it is comforting to read that Islam, properly

# Islam and Muslim Societies

## - a social science journal

understood against its pristine earliest sources, allows such modernization without jeopardizing Muslim identity.<sup>25</sup>

In a nutshell, ambitiously global in its scope, it brings together writings by well-known Islamic scholars and activists, each of who provides a broad survey of 'reformist' Muslim voices in the part of the world that they are most familiar with. For those eager to hear 'progressive' Muslim voices on a whole host of issues of contemporary import (and strategic interest), this thoroughly engaging and immaculately-researched book simply cannot afford to be missed.

### ***Islam and Democratization in Asia, Shiping Hua (2009)***

Is Islam compatible with democratization in the context of Asian cultures? This is the central question that this collection of essay by Shilpa Hua - Professor of Political Science and Director of the Center for Asian Democracy at the University of Louisville - seeks to answer. To address these important issues, a series of books have been published, most of them dealing with the relationship between Islam, Muslims, and democratization with a sub-region in Asia, such as Islam and democracy in central Asia, Islam, and Muslims in south Asia, as well as Islam and democracy in Southeast Asia. Some deal with the same issue with a focus on the future. However, there has yet to be a book that deals with the relationship between Islam, Muslims, and democratization in the context of Asian cultures from the perspectives of theory and empirical country studies in South, Southeast, and Central Asia. This volume seeks to help fill the gap.

Although most contributors in this collection are affiliated with scholarly institutions in North America and Europe, most of them have their ethnic origins in Asia. Contributors in this

# Islam and Muslim Societies

## - a social science journal

collection include not only scholars but also practitioners, such as diplomats. The voices of this diverse group thus represent a variety of viewpoints, spanning from those who believe that Islam is compatible with democracy to those who have doubts about it.

The first three chapters by Muqtedar Khan, Moataz A. Fattah, and Laure Paquette discuss the theoretical issues of Islam in the context of Asian cultures. Issues addressed include the relationship between Islamic governance and democracy, the Muslim political culture, and the underdog strategy adopted by some Islamic countries in Asia. These theoretical studies are followed by three chapters by Touqir Hussain, Tariq Karim, and Omar Khalidi, who comment on South Asia. They discuss topics that include the relations between Islam and democracy in the context of Pakistan, the aspiring pluralist democracy and expanding political Islam in Bangladesh, and the Muslim experience of Indian democracy.

This is then followed by a section on Southeast Asia where Felix Heiduk discusses the role of political Islam in post-Suharto Indonesia in one chapter and Naveed S. Sheikh comments on the ambiguities of Islamic (ate) politics in Malaysia in another chapter, and the last two chapters are on Central Asia. Brian Glyn Williams provides unprecedented insight about the Taliban and Al Qaeda suicide bombers with an account of his field trip to Afghanistan, and Morris Rossabi discusses Muslim and democracy in the context of China and Central Asia.<sup>26</sup>

*Islam and Democratization in Asia*, on the whole is a good contribution to the literature on Islam and Democracy theme. This comprehensive study offers a balanced understanding of the debated issue of democracy and Islam in post 9/11 interreligious, intercultural relations, covering

# Islam and Muslim Societies

## - a social science journal

both theoretical and practical aspects of Islam, Muslims, Democracy, and democratization in Asian Countries, from India, Pakistan, and Bangladesh, to Afghanistan, China, Central Asia.

### Conclusion

The above survey, an assessment of the literature – produced by Muslims and non-Muslims alike from 1990-2009, a span of almost 2 decades, ( from the final decade of 20<sup>th</sup> to the almost end of first decade of 21<sup>st</sup> century) - on one hand shows the (increasing/growing) scope of Islam – democracy theme, and on the other, it reveals that it is their misconception and misunderstanding who argue that Islam-democracy compatibility theme is against Islamic law and who argue that any form of democracy as *haram* (forbidden) in Islam.

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