

Mansoor Moaddel.**Islamic Modernism, Nationalism, and Fundamentalism: Episode and Discourse.**

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This book offers a review of historical events leading to the rise of Islamic modernism, liberal nationalism, Arabism and Arab nationalism, and Islamic fundamentalism in selected countries in the Arab Middle East and Iran. The bulk of the book covers Egypt, Syria, and Iran. In addition, the author discusses the development of Islamic modernism in India, albeit briefly in the first part of the book. Similarly, Algeria and Jordan receive relatively little attention in relation to the rise of Islamic fundamentalism.

Moaddel undertakes a historical comparative analysis of the shaping of Islamic and secular ideologies over the last 300 years from the seventeenth century to the second half of the twentieth century. Moaddel challenges a binary view that situates Islamic politics between the pursuit of a universal conception of Western modernity emerging from the Enlightenment, and a local counter-reactionary project to that modernity on the basis of a claim for cultural difference. The author also refutes explanations of 'Islamic fundamentalism' as an anti-imperialist political force directed against Western dominance in the Islamic world. Rather, Moaddel demonstrates that Islam has been politicised only during the second half of the twentieth century as a discourse of opposition, not to Western domination in the state system, but to the ideas, practices, and arbitrary political interventions of a westernizing secularist political elite. This elite has established ideologically uniform, repressive states which have imposed a Western model and outlook in Muslim societies by coercive means. Islamic fundamentalism thus emerged as a competing narrative contending for state power against a secularist discourse. Its goal was to seize state power through an Islamization of all aspects of life in a Muslim society.

In order to demonstrate this view, the author employs a methodology comparing historical variations in social conditions in terms of the political shaping of ideas, public narratives, and explanatory systems. Interestingly, the author locates Islamic ideology formation within the 300 year long-history of Western global dominance in the state system. This period starts from the decline of Islamic empires in the seventeenth century and continues to the rise of Islamic fundamentalism in the second half of the twentieth century. However, the author does not specify those 'Islamic empires'. Since Egypt, Syria, Algeria, and Jordan were located within the Ottoman Empire, I expected the Ottoman Empire to figure prominently in his argument; but it does not. Rather, Moaddel analyses the role of Islam in restructuring the state as if the fiercely debated ideational differences between secularist reformers and pan-Islamists in the Ottoman Empire had little influence on these societies. In this debate, Ottoman secularist reformers advocated a wholesale westernization program to restructure the state along secular principles, while pan-Islamists were strong proponents of the adoption of Western technology but not its culture. This controversy still influences political debates on the role of Islam in restructuring state and society.

The historical comparative methodology adopted in this book allows us to trace the historical variability in Islamic ideology formation as mediated by a variety of factors that are internal and external to these societies. Such an approach brings forth the historical contingency of ideology

formation against an essentialist interpretation of the timeless nature of anti-Western Islamic movements. Nevertheless, a theoretical articulation of historical variations in Islamic ideology formation and persisting Islamic ideas could have created an opening for recognizing the epistemic importance of Islamic ideational history. In this book, Islamic ideologies are conceptualized as episodic constitutions. Their production is subject to a discontinuous and bounded historical process that has a beginning and an end. This suggests that the ideational power of Islam is temporary, limited in its appeal in time, and without the epistemic persistence of a moral narrative of social justice.

According to the author, the colonial diffusion of Western culture was instrumental in the emergence of a modernist version of Islam in the Arab Middle East and India. This is because Western cultural encroachments constituted a dynamic part in the shaping of a plural discursive context. The interactive plurality of discourses among the European Enlightenment, British westernizing discourse, colonial administrations, the proselytizing discourse of the Evangelicals, and the discourse of the orthodox Islamic establishment gave way to the formulation of Islamic modernism as a discourse of social change for these Muslim societies. The weakness of European cultural influences in Iran, on the other hand, explains the historical roots of conservatism in that country.

Proponents of Islamic modernism assume that Islam is perfectly compatible with the instrumental reason of modern science and technology. In order to counter Western dominance in the world economy and the state system, Muslims must first recognize the scientific and economic dynamism of Western societies. They must then reinterpret the Koran's meaning in such a way that Muslims can catch up with European levels of development. Despite the intensity of cultural encounters in the nineteenth-century consolidation of British hegemony, the author argues that the colonialization of Islamic societies did not give way to Islamic fundamentalism directed against Western dominance, but to Islamic modernism. Islamic modernism was an ideology of Muslim restructuring according to the Western progress ideal, one which accommodated the secularization thesis.

The author shows that Islamic fundamentalism is a recent and a historically unique phenomenon. It was a response to the formation and consolidation of a monolithic ideological environment by a state-ruling elite following independence from European colonial rule. The author sees its genesis in the solidification of a secularist state by means of the undemocratic coercive means of exclusion. Although the influence of Western domination of the Muslim world is examined extensively for the emergence of Islamic modernism in the nineteenth century, internal political dynamics alone are analyzed for the emergence of Islamic fundamentalism in the twentieth century, with little justification. The only explanation provided is that foreign domination of Muslim societies is absent and Western hegemony has declined during the second half of the twentieth century. Since these societies gained their political independence from colonial rule and then established national states, fundamentalism cannot be explained as an ideology of opposition to imperialism. This is a puzzling conclusion in that the hegemonic position of the United States in the reorganization of the world economy and the state system during the Cold War disappears from the analysis without notice.

In order to show that state repression was a key factor in the emergence of Islamic fundamentalism, the author examines Jordan as an exceptional case. He argues that the absence of a repressive state imposing a monolithic ideology along secular principles in Jordan proves his argument. He concludes the book by stating "... if our analysis is correct, the main culprits in the genesis of religious extremism were the totalitarian despots who resided at the pinnacle of state power." But is

his analysis entirely correct? How do we explain, for example, the rise of the pro-Islamic Justice and Development Party to a government position in Turkey within a secularist monolithic ideological framework rigidly guarded by a state-ruling civil and military bureaucratic elite?

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