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Bruce B. Lawrence: Shattering the Myth: Islam beyond Violence

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Islam across Time and Cultures

MY MAIN argument is simple, yet it is at odds with most popular and academic understandings of Islam. I argue that Islam cannot be understood except as a major and complex religious system, shaped as much by its own metaphysical postulates and ethical demands as by the circumstances of Muslim polities in the modern world. The last two hundred years have witnessed challenge upon challenge, from colonial subjugation to sporadic revivalism to elitist reform movements to, most recently, pervasive struggles with fundamentalism or Islamism. During each phase, Muslims have had to address internal tensions as well as external threats. The success of anticolonial struggles was followed by the disappointment of indigenous neocolonialisms. More recently, postcolonial Muslims—some Arab, most non-Arab—have been playing ever greater roles in economic changes, both regional and global. As the impact of these changes has become evident on societies everywhere, they have propelled new actors into public view. The most remarkable new presence is that of Muslim women.

In what follows I argue that the experience of Muslim women, above all, calls for a more nuanced approach to Islam and global change. It is time to counter negative stereotypes about Muslim women with knowledge about their newly constituted roles.

Yet few books attempt to synthesize data from regionally separate and geographically discrete countries with a majority Muslim population. Where such an effort has been made, it is usually through multiauthored or edited volumes that belie the very coherence suggested by their titles. While I do offer an in-depth study of one pivotal judicial saga, from India, I have otherwise drawn together data provided by others in order to demonstrate (a) that Islam is not inherently violent and (b) that the longer view of Muslim societies offers hope, rather than despair, about the role of Islam in the next century.

This book offers three convergent foci: the crystallization of Islamic sociopolitical movements, women as the key index of

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Muslim identity, and finally the staging of new global economic developments that bode an unexpected Muslim difference in world affairs.

The Muslim difference will remain hidden, its force unacknowledged, unless the dominant stereotype is exposed: Islam is not violence, nor are Muslims intrinsically prone to violence. The stereotype amounts to a slur, and it must be addressed at the outset if the emerging profile of postcolonial Muslims is to be understood.

ISLAM BEYOND VIOLENCE

Islam is . . . Islam is . . . Islam is . . . Islam is many things. Just as there is no single America or Europe or the West, a seamless caption etching diverse groups and persons with the same values and meanings, so there is no single place or uniform culture called Islam. There is no monolithic Islam. There is a Muslim world spanning Africa and Asia. It is as pluralistic as the West, outstripping both Europe and America in the numerous regions, races, languages, and cultures that it encompasses. The Afro-Asian Muslim world is also internally pluralistic, containing multiple groups who might be said to represent Islamic norms in each Muslim country. And Muslims themselves are aware of how necessary, and how difficult, it is to specify differing notions of Islam. An Indonesian friend of mine once quipped: “There are three Islams: the popular Islam which anthropologists are fond of studying, mostly as curious spectators; the public Islam with which political scientists, journalists, and policy makers identify, mostly as adversaries; and the academic Islam in which Orientalists delight, whether as art historians, linguists, or religion scholars, each studying artifacts esteemed by their guild. In Indonesia we try to provide our visitors with all three.”¹

If Islam is so diverse and Muslims so accommodating, then why has Islam so often been viewed by non-Muslims as alien at best and violent at worst? I suggest that the principal reason for the negative view of Islam is the predominance in popular thinking of the second view: public Islam. In that view, Islam emanates from a hostile, “Arab” Middle East. Most journalists, and many policy makers, continue to discount any but Arab Islam, or what is conjured up as Arab Islam in projecting the orthodox face of puritan-

ism and militancy. In the 1990s most Euro-American journalists continue to echo the sentiments that drove European kings and their subjects to launch their crusades almost a millennium ago, crusades whose enemy was Arab Muslims. In the aftermath of the Cold War the enemy, once again, has become the one Islam, the militant, unyielding, violent face of “Arab” Islam. Whether one picks up a popular book claiming to represent “Western cultures and values” under attack from Islam,² or lead articles of *The New York Times*, such as the recent “Seeing Green: The Red Menace Is Gone. But Here’s Islam,”³ the message is the same: Islam is one, and Islam is dangerous.

The Muslim enemy is invariably male, whether a foreign warrior conjured from the past or a potential terrorist stalking modern America. The fierce Kurdish anti-Crusader Salah ad-din Ayyubi, known popularly as Saladin, seems to have multiple contemporary look-alikes. Whether it is Ayatollah Khomeini denouncing the United States as the Great Satan or the Egyptian Sheikh Omar Abdel Rahman plotting to bomb the World Trade Center and other New York public buildings, Muslim leaders continue to be newsworthy principally for their adversarial words and deeds.

Behind the hostile Muslim men, Americans imagine the faces of Muslim women, homebound creatures marked alike by seclusion from the outside world and apparent oppression by their tyrannical husbands. The reality of Muslim women’s active participation in their societies is glossed, covered, as it were, by a veil that projects the violence of male “Arab” Muslims everywhere. They hate the West and abuse their women.

Both images depend on singularizing Islam and then describing it as both different and violent. That stereotype remains remote from Islam as lived experience. Popular Islam is more than just the remote village or exotic domain of anthropologists. It is also the shared notion of a world view and a pattern of living that characterizes most Muslims in Asia and Africa. It provides enormous challenges and hopes and satisfactions for Muslim women and for Muslim men. Islam offers all Muslims no fewer possibilities than every major religious tradition offers the women and the men who identify with it.

Because gender imbalance pervades both popular understanding and Muslim historiography, I will call attention to the places where women have been excluded. I will also draw out the implica-

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tions of their exclusion. How best to weave the multiple levels of women's history and their interests into a narrative that also takes account of macropolitical changes has not been an easy task. I have decided to do a separate section on women's history for three countries—Iran, Pakistan, and Egypt—in order to show how different that history looks from the “standard” history I provide in the earlier analyses of these same countries. While the preponderance of dates given in country chapters highlights male actors, it is the significant dates for women that highlight chapter 5, where I explore the double bind of Muslim women in the current period of Islamic fundamentalism. In chapter 6 I limit analysis to one non-Muslim country and one famous court case, that of Shah Bano in India. The Shah Bano case is important for India but also for its Muslim majoritarian neighbors, Pakistan and Bangladesh. Since these three polities govern the largest number of Muslims in the world, I have tried to demonstrate how the Shah Bano case discloses the juridical structures that define, and also restrict, the public opportunities for Muslim women throughout the Asian subcontinent.

To some, the arrangement of chapters might seem to perpetuate the perverse axiom “equal but separate” as applied to women in general and Muslim women in particular. My intent has been the opposite: to argue for the inclusion of a perspective on Muslim women that complicates the standard interpretation of Muslim norms and values, at the same time that it does not obscure the prevalence of violence as a condition that affects both Muslim men and Muslim women, in much of Asia and Africa but also in Europe and America.

Why do I begin with violence? Because violence is where most non-Muslims begin to think about Islam, especially if they live in a society where Muslim citizens are either silent or absent. In some cases, Muslims are too few to be properly viewed as multiple rather than singular in their outlook. Such is the case with America in the mid-1990s, where popular attention focuses on Louis Farrakhan and his message of hatred as if that messenger speaks for most Muslims as well as many African American males.⁴

Though there are episodes in which Muslims, like members of any contemporary religious community, do commit violence, and though there are other Farrakhans in the world outside the United States, violence remains an aberration rather than the norm. Vio-

lence is no more intrinsic to Islam than to Judaism, Christianity, Hinduism, Buddhism, or Sikhism. The distorted link of Islam to violence has to be brought into the full light of critical enquiry.

It is to restore balance to the popular Euro-American understanding of Islam and Muslims that I begin my foray into recent Muslim history by focusing on violence. Violence fully exposed can illumine how Islamic rhetoric and symbol function for Muslim leaders and institutions. If violence pervades Muslim public life throughout this century, it is because violence pervades the world order, old and new. It affects all Muslims indirectly, but it has a direct and immediate impact on those who are marked as Muslim political figures.

Take, for example, ‘Alija Izetbegovic. The president of Bosnia-Herzegovina, Izetbegovic provides the first epigraph for this book. “Islam,” in his view, “means the call to create a person harmonious in body and soul, and [the call to create] a society whose laws and socio-political institutions will maintain—and not violate—that harmony.” Why Izetbegovic? Because he has lived during a period of unprecedented turmoil for himself and for his countrymen. The Cold War ended abruptly in 1989, yet the promised new world order did not emerge, at least not in Bosnia. Izetbegovic, however, continues to struggle as an East European Muslim who refuses to parochialize Islam or to advocate a defensive Islam against an offensive West. Izetbegovic exemplifies the crucial, transregional scope of impulses to locate Islam within rather than against global processes.

Who is Izetbegovic? Except for his dour countenance flashed from time to time on CNN, he remains little known to most Americans or Europeans. Yet he is an intellectual turned activist. Neither Arab nor Asian nor African, he is fully European. His being European calls into question the standard set of equivalents attached to religious affiliations that tend to frame Islam as Afro-Asian, Christianity as Euro-American. A lawyer and a philosopher, Izetbegovic is conversant with the major intellectual and social challenges of this century that originate from the so-called West, that is, the nation-states of Europe (and America) located to the west of Bosnia.⁵

To some Izetbegovic might well be dubbed a “violent” Muslim, since violence forms part of his world view and he does not flinch from its consideration in his writings. But he views physical vio-

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lence, including military confrontation, as a last resort only, a counterforce to others' violence. What he advocates is a defensive, not an offensive, resort to violence: violence to achieve a more harmonious political-social order. In Bosnia, and elsewhere, Izetbegovic seeks a pluralist polity where Islam becomes not the preemptive religion but the pragmatic middle way, a *modus vivendi* between remnants of the formerly Communist East and the emerging European Union, with its global allies.

Yet violence of another kind does loom large, casting its dark shadow over Izetbegovic's Bosnian homeland, as it does over the destiny of most Muslims in most parts of the globe at the end of the twentieth century. It is a structural violence that reduces the range of choice for European, as for African and Asian, Muslims. It is a structural violence that restricts the options for Muslim nation-states in a post-Cold War world, but it also does something far more subtle and consequential: it victimizes Muslim intellectuals by imposing limits on discourse about Islam at the end of this century. It talks *about* some other, in this case Muslim others, but never talks *from* a perspective that is self-critical about location (Euro-American) and time (end of a century).

But which century is ending? It seems obvious, almost banal, to state "the twentieth century" because we take it for granted as *our* century. We presume the Christian century as a universal time gradient, though there is also a new Muslim century (the fifteenth) that is only in its second decade. Most persons calculate "real" time only by the Christian calendar, and that is fitting since the century that is coming to an end in the year 2000/2001 is a supremely Christian century. The common calendar reflects the axis of global power: the twentieth century belongs to Christian nations or to "secular" nations with a residual Christian ethos or a majority of Christian citizens. Muslim players have been few and peripheral. This century, more than any that preceded it, will be remembered and portrayed as the Euro-American century. And it is against that backdrop of taken-for-granted hegemony, a kind of blind structural violence writ large, that the relationship of Islam to violence needs to be reconsidered.

Izetbegovic, alert to French science, British history, and Russian literature, able to cite Freud, Marx, Engels, and Buber with equal ease, should be in the so-called Western camp: both by training and by disposition he is a Muslim modernist. The first of two

epigraphs for this book was taken from his major theoretical writing published in 1984, long before the debacle of 1991 in ex-Yugoslavia. Yet already Izetbegovic felt himself beset by enemies. Despite being an eclectic pluralist broadly engaged in the scholarly tradition of modern Europe, he asserts (a) that Islam is under attack and (b) that Islam under attack is always split into two Islams, one etherialized as religion, the other demonized as politics.

Izetbegovic rejects the dichotomization, which amounts to the demonizations, of Islam. He acknowledges the link between Islamic rhetoric and *some* acts of political violence, but he stops short of making Islam either the primary cause or the principal motivation for violence. Instead he tries to project and preserve the Islamic middle ground or middle way. He also tries to restore Muslim intellectuals to a role of mediation in charting the future for Muslim polities and the Muslim world as a whole.

In what follows I will try to chart my own middle way, steering between the twin minefields of apologetics and polemics. While no one can deny that some Muslims perpetrate acts of violence, I will attempt to show how the variability of Islam permits not one but several Muslim responses to violence: loyalty to Islam may be invoked as easily to avert cyclical violence (as in the case of Izetbegovic) as to pursue violent confrontation in the name of Allah. Nor is such variability unique to Islam; it is shared by other religious traditions—Hindu, Buddhist, or Sikh—that also share with Islam the experience of being shaped by a Christian century, one stamped by “the West” in its colonial and now postcolonial configurations of public space and institutions.

To disconnect the equation of Islam with violence, I will employ a double stratagem. The first stratagem will be definitional: I will explore how Islam is more than what is commonly presupposed as religion. In the deepest sense, Islam remains a religion, since those who profess belief in Allah and in Muhammad as His final prophet are marked with a distinctive set of rituals and laws. Yet Islam is also a modern ideology subordinated to the dominant ideology of this century, nationalism, and it is the relationship of Islam to nationalism that is at once pivotal and understudied.

It is fashionable in some circles to debunk nationalism, and to project either the “end of history”—in Francis Fukuyama’s misguided slogan—or a “coming clash of civilizations”—in Samuel Huntington’s vaporous restaging of postnational, global conflict.⁶

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A close look at day-to-day affairs, however, suggests both that nationalism is alive in the mid-1990s and that the nation-state is far from obsolete as an instrument of power. As one shrewd observer has lamented, the nation-state remains “the politics of the first person plural.” It coalesces ideological forces precisely because “the sense of being ‘we’ . . . is the necessary foundation for any durable political system” and “only the nation-state possesses this necessary sense of identity.” “The nation-state will last longer than most people had thought.”⁷ And because most Muslims exist within postcolonial Muslim nation-states, the ubiquitous character of nationalism has to be acknowledged in any discussion of contemporary Islam. At the same time, one must be alert to recall, as Bruce Kapferer has reminded us, that nationalism itself is far from a unitary movement; it reflects much more than European norms, First World values, or elitist experiences.⁸

If my first stratagem is to revisit and redefine basic categories, my second stratagem will be discursive: I will focus on how European colonial powers have used religion in the service of ideology to divide and control major segments of the world, from West Africa to Southeast Asia. The record does not permit blanket condemnation of all legacies from the colonial period, for the modern sector of Muslim societies has produced creative advocates and notable benefits. Yet fifty years after the founding of the United Nations and the near elimination of European control over much of Asia and Africa, one must remain wary of how postcolonial independence has been shaped by the immediate past. The British may have gone home, and the French mission to civilize (*la mission civilisatrice*) declared a failure, but British and French, as also Dutch and Russian, legacies persist in the Muslim world. Part 2 will explore the durable influence of postcolonialism in specific Muslim nation-states.

I approach this task conscious that I am limited as well as enabled by who I am. I am male. I am Anglo. I am upper middle class. European in ancestry, I was born in America. Raised non-Muslim, I remain non-Muslim. Yet after studying both the Arabic language and Middle Eastern history from an early age, I remain deeply attracted to Islam as a life force: it animates many Muslims with whom I have lived and worked and whom I count among my closest friends.

While these are ascriptive limits shaping my viewpoint, I am further limited by what I embrace: I choose to be both an intellectual and an unabashed humanist. Despite the many assaults on the humanities from within and beyond the academy, I remain not only a humanist but a late modern humanist.

I am not a *postmodernist* humanist, however. I continue to scan metanarratives in the pursuit of local histories. I seek patterns that interconnect numerous Muslim histories, whether local, national, or regional, and also link them collectively to global forces. At the same time, I reject the judgment that none but the persons invoked can talk about themselves. In that case, only the words of informants count, and they must be cited as the trump authority, or if one does not cite their exact words, goes the argument, then at the least one must use terms that these same informants would be comfortable having others use.⁹

The Syrian philosopher Sadik al-Azm has exposed the foolhardiness of embracing rank nominalism as a benchmark of scholarship. Rhetorically, he asks: “Were I to take seriously the subjectivist advice of those who ask us never to ‘apply words to describe people that they would not accept and apply to themselves,’ would I ever be able to say that such and such a Middle Eastern ruler is ‘a brutal military dictator,’ considering that he never applies such words and descriptions either to himself or to his regime?”¹⁰

The evident answer is “NO!” But too often it is a muted or defensive “No!” It needs to be announced again and again as a “NO!” “NO” to relativism, “NO” to delusionary escapism from the interlocking character of late capitalist culture and social movements that relate to it even when they claim to be independent of its influence.

At the same time, I do not advocate the total neglect of other people’s self-presentation. It *does* matter what people say about themselves, the categories they use, the arguments they construct, or the goals they advocate. It does matter what people say, yet as the American religious critic Robert Segal deftly put it, “there is a difference between *starting* with the actor’s point of view and *ending* with it. . . . The actor may be right, but the assumption that the actor automatically is right is dogmatic.”¹¹

Beyond trying to make comparisons through explicit and interdisciplinary categories, I espouse cross-cultural enquiry as a genu-

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ine form of academic labor. It is not reducible to the new Orientalism that the feminist critic Gayatri Spivak claims it to be. In Spivak's view, cross-culturalism serves only to perpetuate banality in a postcolonial world,¹² but it can do more: it can also become a pathway to exploratory dialogue that is both interdisciplinary and international.

But cross-culturalism, if it is to generate useful dialogue, must first accept "open appraisal, the typical plausibility tests, the bargaining adjustments regnant in an open pluralist market of ideas." The criteria are set forth by the sociologist Jose Casanova.¹³ I advocate the same criteria, and I advocate them as a humanist who is at the same time a perspectivist. In an open pluralist market of ideas, I set out self-consciously what beliefs, attitudes, and assumptions inform my approach to the social reality of the Muslim world.¹⁴ And it is from the perspective of the humanities that I challenge both humanists and social scientists to rethink how their own prior convictions—religious, political, and social—have shaped their approach to contemporary Islam. What units of analysis are suitable to assessing Muslim thought and Muslim societies? What presumptions do some of the taken-for-granted categories carry? How do we account for the difference that they convey from a context that is predominantly Christian and secular to one that is Muslim and often nonsecular?

I begin with the category religion.

ISLAM AS RELIGION AND ALSO NOT RELIGION

The history of the twentieth century has confirmed something well known to all the historians of the past, something our ideologies have stubbornly ignored: the strongest, fiercest, most enduring political passions are nationalism and religion.

—*Octavio Paz*, *One Earth, Four or Five Worlds*

To unhinge the reflexive stereotyping that plagues too much scholarship on modern-day Muslims, I begin at a point of reference outside the Muslim world but within the so-called Third World. I take as my starting point Octavio Paz, the Mexican Nobel Laureate in Literature. Like many contemporary Euro-American intellectuals,

Paz implies not only that religion and nationalism are equivalent passions but also that religion, like nationalism, is an undifferentiated whole that evokes deep-seated *political* passions. He concurs with the cultural historian Daniel Pick that nationalism is a form of mimetic religion, “involving a kind of faith, indeed something of the aura of ‘religion’ which it arguably both displaces and substitutes.”¹⁵ In that sense, religion can be both opposed to nationalism and allied with it. Yet religion is more than political and it is other than passion; it also entails language, values, and institutions. One cannot begin to compare religion and nationalism without recognizing at the outset that they are very different categories of individual expression and collective experience. While they have been engaged, each with the other, since at least the sixteenth century, Paz argues that it is in the present century that their interrelationship has become most explicit and most dangerous. Why? Because only in the twentieth century did historians for the first time recognize nationalism as evoking a passion equivalent to religion; only then did both become enduring passions—not just enduring, but “the strongest, fiercest, most enduring.”

While religion can be and should be conjoined with nationalism, there remains a deeper, crucial question: Is religion privileged or diluted by being paired with nationalism? The question cannot be avoided, and Paz does give an implicit answer: in the twentieth century religion has been superseded by nationalism. Its influence, defensive and residual, becomes felt to the extent that its advocates can couple their goals with nationalist aspirations, their structures with the administrative, political, and commercial apparatus of the state. In short, for Paz religion can succeed, but it can succeed only when it becomes part of the nationalist agenda.

Yet Paz’s notion of religion, never stated, seems restricted to Christianity and at the same time divested of the early modern history of Christian missions. He ignores the role and influence of “colonialism” as the vanguard and often the partner of Christian missions.¹⁶ His notion of religion needs to be expanded beyond its most immediate referent group, Euro-American Christian elites living in the postcolonial era. Few Muslim intellectuals, still facing the legacy of colonialism, juxtapose religion to nationalism as equivalent categories, for Islam still retains a symbolic force independent of nationalism, just as it projects a pragmatic function that can, and often does, challenge nationalist ideologies.

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Consider the Muslim intellectual with whom we began this book: Izetbegovic. Religion as a category remains problematic for Izetbegovic precisely because it projects belief as Christian belief unaffected by the historical process that led to European control over much of Asia and Africa. Yet Christian missions and missionaries were married to the colonial project in much of Asia and Africa, even when, as in the case of India, British officials attempted to limit missionary activity in order to curtail civil unrest. Religion can never be neutral when it is controlling or linked to structures that control.

At the same time, religion should have, and does have, political valence apart from the state. The Islamic “difference,” in Izetbegovic’s view, is to project a holistic world view that invokes religious norms as a corrective to political practices. Religion becomes a vehicle for the redress of public life, not its betrayal, since Islam advocates control—of mind, of body, of space—as an *explicit* dimension of religion.

Whereas Paz links religion with nationalism, Izetbegovic contrasts religion with worldly gain. Islam, in Izetbegovic’s view, escapes the too Christian/European dialectic of religion and nationalism because pure Islam, ideal Islam, is not mere religion: it applies alike to the inner and outer life; it couples belief with action in a single, equal accent. The most palpable site of belief enacted is the mosque. It functions as a place of worship and education. “That is why schools in the Islamic world cannot be classified according to the European criterion: secular-spiritual.”¹⁷ They are both spiritual and secular, even as Islam is both other-worldly and this-worldly. The stress is double rather than staged; to believe in the next world is to be engaged in this world.

Yet engagement with this life entails more than educational pursuits; it also requires attention to the pivotal role of politics. Ideal politics are channeled to a higher vision than narrow self-interest. Islam, according to Izetbegovic, should be invoked not for expedient political ends but rather for justice: How then does one serve justice?

In principle, force has nothing to do with morality. But in real life, there is no justice without force. Justice is the unity of the idea of equity and power . . . the impotence of religion¹⁸ to carry out in practice even a part of the great ideals it preaches, compromises its demands before the humble and the repressed. Violence and politics, on the contrary,

have been justified to a certain extent, for they created the means needed for realizing the great ideas which religion had discovered or inspired but could not manage to translate into reality.¹⁹

Though Izetbegovic's view is that of an idealist, his views very closely match those of the Cyber Muslim host line citation that appears, along with his, at the outset of this book: the goal of lived Islam is "to insure that the real-world struggles of Muslims for social justice and peace may bear fruit." In pursuit of his ideals, Izetbegovic went to jail under Tito. Later he was maligned by both Serbs and Croats for his commitment to a pluralist polity in Bosnia-Herzegovina. He remains a committed exponent of Muslim universalism, seeing Muslims as one group among many, not Islam as a socioreligious orientation superseding others in the civil domain.

Yet, in trying to make Islam more than an exclusionary religion, Izetbegovic overlooks the challenge that nationalism has posed to the autonomy of religious language, religious values, and, above all, religious institutions. Especially in this century nationalism has become a quasi-religion, displacing prior religions. There are several instrumental reasons, such as the emergence of print-capitalism,²⁰ that help to explain the success of nationalism. But still more important has been the ability of nationalism to provide an alternative vocabulary to religion. Nationalists preempted the public authority of religious leaders and institutions. Beyond the instrumental force of language, one must also calculate the *values* of nationalist leaders. These values, as I have argued elsewhere,²¹ often clashed with those of religious leaders, at the same time that nationalists either undercut or co-opted the resources of religious institutions for their own ends.²²

Islam—no less than Christianity or Judaism, Hinduism or Buddhism—is shaped by its world historical context, in which nationalism occupies center stage. However much religious symbols may be invoked or religious leaders coopted, or religious buildings sprinkled on the landscape, nationalist fervor remains at heart a rival to the universalist claim of religious fervor. In the twentieth century nationalism and ethnic/regional markings have superseded religion as the hallmark of collective identity. Nationalism does for the modern era what religion did, or tried to do, in the premodern era: to direct the hopes of the majority toward its norms while also engaging their energies in its public life.

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The displacement of religion by nationalism on these grounds needs to be closely examined if we are to understand the shifting valence of Islam in the high-tech era. Can religion become an adjunct of the state and still function as religion, or does co-optive nationalism amount to little more than a thinly disguised variant of the secularization hypothesis?

These questions are crucial to any reconsideration of post-colonial Muslim hopes, for behind all the arguments about Islam and politics remains the twifold assumption that (a) Christianity defines “true” religion, and Islam as religion must, or should, resemble Christian models, and (b) all religion is premodern and antirational while the state is both modern and rational. Assumptions die hard, and the most closely held resist even sympathetic exposure. Underlying the critique of religion in general and Christianity in particular is an evolutionary bias. Religion, whether Christianity or Islam, could not stand the light of scientific truth. When the modern era fully dawned, the superstitious and backward nature of antecedent myths (scriptural dicta, creedal formulae, local magic) became evident, their hold on believers gradually eroded or disappeared. And in those instances where religion did not vanish, it was at least revalued and consigned to its proper domain, which is to say, private spaces of individual choice, far from the public realm of scientific progress and rational pursuits. To the extent that civil society was independent of political society and the state, it provided a haven for belief in, and pursuit of, prescientific myths.²³

Such is the assumption of evolutionary “believers.” Seldom exposed, their convictions permeate much so-called neutral or objective scholarship on religion. A corollary of evolutionism is also claimed with equal conviction, namely, that societies where religion lingers as something other than a gnostic symbiosis between self and other²⁴ remain suspect. In the new order heralded by all modernists (and not just liberals), public loyalty to religious precepts connotes what Laroui once called historical retardation. That is to say, religion comes to symbolize a willful resistance to the tidal wave of change that must move the premodern (religion) off center stage in order to propel the modern (nationalism) onto it.²⁵

By this approach, there can be good and bad nationalisms but no religious nationalisms since the very phrase “religious nationalism” embodies a logical impossibility, an illusion, an oxymoron.

Major First World nationalisms, according to one widely cited sociological study, can be deduced from the review of five nation-states, all of which have forged more or less adequate roads to modernity. All are roads to the modern, which is to say, industrial, high-tech era. The dominant trope, the goal to which these and other nationalist polities aspires, is liberal democracy; no other candidate of social organization can be admitted. Religious structures, like religious actors, are omitted, or else defeated, in the great venture of nation-building.²⁶

Just as nationalism is deemed to be the exclusive carrier of secular modernity, so is it further presumed that the reason only some countries succeeded in the high-tech era is that only some were able to modernize. Nationalism becomes but one more way of differentiating the modern West from all its precursors, which in the post-Cold War era have also now become its dreaded nemeses. Nationalism cannot be ascribed to any premodern point in the pre-industrial past.²⁷ With nationalism, as with industrialism, all those groups who have not already succeeded can succeed only by mimesis. Nationalism occurred in one place, among those groups prefiguring the high-tech era. They clustered as the nations of Western Europe and North America. All other nations came later. They were compelled by events beyond their control to imitate antecedent Euro-American models. In Richard Falk's haunting phrase, all the non-West was transformed into state-nations hoping to become nation-states,²⁸ yet destined to flounder and fail.²⁹ Economic inequality led to despair and often violence, causing the have-nots to drift still farther to the margins of global exchange.

There have been some who question this view of nationalism, but they choose to make their's a rearguard protest. They resist from the margins, as those who acknowledge their powerlessness even while voicing their opposition to the dominant view. The 1980s witnessed the emergence within critical theory of a new generation of Asian and African intellectuals. They challenged extant paradigms of nationalism. In particular, they "opposed much of the prevailing academic practice in historiography and the social sciences because it failed to acknowledge the subaltern (i.e., the indigenous non-elite) as the maker of his [or her] own destiny."³⁰ Despite excesses and shortcomings, a group of scholars linked to the Asian subcontinent, known as the Subaltern School, has made evident the problem of social scientific assertions about what na-

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tionalism means and how it can best be studied. To the centrist, top-down gaze of Ernest Gellner and Benedict Anderson, subaltern scholars counterpose views from the margins or from the bottom up. To complicate a public-sector, masculine view that excludes women actors or voices, they highlight a private domain where women, along with elders and minors, contribute to postcolonial developments.³¹

Yet even those who oppose a hegemonic, Eurocentric view of nationalism have not thought to restore religion to a place of distinction compatible with other ideological options. The ideal nationalism remains one that enshrines Profit, Progress, and Peace. (The other P's—Poverty, Population, Pollution, and Proliferation—are usually ignored, or else treated as problems that will be solved along the way.³²) Where is religion in this forward gaze? Religion might relate to Peace: insofar as it either protects or threatens peace, it can be included in the nationalist project, but it is deemed out of bounds on the major subjects of Profit and Progress. Mark Juergensmeyer,³³ for instance, not only has given new life to the term “religious nationalism,” he has also argued that religious sensibilities should be conjoined to the nationalist project, where they would serve as a valuable counterweight or deterrent to violent outcomes.

Religion in the national interest? That suggests a return to theocracy, and a nationalist theocracy would attempt to transform history, not merely recuperate and validate a golden past. As Juergensmeyer himself notes about the Iranian revolution, “it was not simply a revival of an earlier form of Muslim rule, but a new form of Islamic politics. In a curious way, it was the shah’s vision of an Iranian nationalism come true.”³⁴

Despite the clarity of Juergensmeyer’s thesis, late twentieth-century theocracy frightens most analysts of religion and nationalism. It conjures up particular fear when applied to the case of Islam because ideal Islam, like the premodern Catholic Church, functions as the comprehensive defining code for public as well as private pursuit. While every religion, from a modernist viewpoint, is “bad,” to be minimized or better excluded, there remain degrees of exclusion. Islam remains the worst religion, the spoiler for a nationalist utopia. It remains the worst because many scholars argue that no Muslim nation-state, including Turkey and Tunisia, has ever experienced social modernity. Social modernity is linked to

the formation of an urban middle class. Turkey since the 1920s may have come close to generating an indigenous secular bourgeoisie, but even Turkey is said to have failed, just as Tunisia appears to have been stymied by an overgrown urban bureaucracy. Other newer Muslim nations, like Malaysia and Indonesia, are excluded because the general public and even many academics deem them too remote from the Middle East heartland to be considered “real” Muslims.³⁵

Yet the historical “failure” of Turkey and Tunisia is minor compared to the ongoing “threat” of Iran. For among all those premodern nations that cling to Islam as arbiter of public norms, Iran stands out as the most glaring culprit. While official Turkey in the 1920s distanced itself from Islamic symbols in trying to emulate European/secular norms, the Iranian revolution of the 1970s threatened to bring Islam from offstage to center stage in the realm of global politics. It posed a twin threat, making Islam central and the West villain. It was against this twin threat of the Iranian revolution—its perceived impossibility, its geopolitical unacceptability—that the dread of Islam’s antiquarian status as antimodern was rekindled. In its most distinctive religious guise, Islamic “fundamentalism” was seen to be inseparable from the undiluted opposition of Muslims to Christian or pluralist influence. In vain could an Izetbegovic try to demonstrate that Islam is already modern, and that a middle class is not the analytical key to its character, for from Iran came a flood of literature suggesting the opposite: Islam can never become modern, not because Muslim countries lack a bourgeoisie, but because Muslims—in this case, Iranian Muslims—themselves invoke religion to perpetuate the continuing, unremitting primitiveness of Islam. The renowned Iranian essayist Jalal Al-i Ahmad speaks for numerous others when he lauds an “Islamic totality”:

India reminds one of Africa as a linguistic Tower of Babel and agglomeration of races and religions. Think of South America becoming Christianized with one sweep of the Spanish sword or of Oceania, a collection of islands and thus ideal for stirring up dissensions. Thus only we in our *Islamic totality*, formal and real, obstructed the spread (through colonialism, effectively equivalent to Christianity) of European civilization, that is, the opening of new markets to the West’s industries. The halt of Ottoman artillery before the gates of Vienna

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concluded a process that began in 732 C.E. in Andalusia. How are we to regard these twelve centuries of struggle of East against West if not as the struggle of Islam against Christianity? . . . In the present age, I, as an Asian, as a remnant of that *Islamic totality*, represent just what that African or that Australian represented as a remnant of primitiveness and savagery. . . . I, as an Asian or an African, am supposed to preserve my manners, culture, music, religion and so forth untouched, like an unearthed relic, so that the gentlemen can find and excavate them, so they can display them in a museum and say, “Yes, another example of primitive life.”³⁶

Al-i Ahmad cannot escape the contradiction embedded in his eloquent lament. Though he decries the reification of a Muslim mindset as unchanging, at once anti-Christian, anti-Western, and now antimodern, he, unlike Izetbegovic, perpetuates the mindset that he opposes. He offers no alternative to what he opposes and, by invoking an Islamic totality, confirms the stereotype of European observers, and now their American successors. Al-i Ahmad demonstrates that Islamic obscurantism is not solely the whimsical distortion of colonial administrators and political commentators; it also becomes the project of certain Muslim advocates insofar as they repeat, without modifying, the profile of a primitive and unchanging, a defiant and challenging Islam.

To offset the dialectic of self-other, progressive-primitive that pervades Muslim and anti-Muslim rhetoric alike, we must reveal its tenuous, recent origins; we must not only cite the alternative, modern view of Izetbegovic, which announces a dialectic of accommodation, we must also examine the many faces of Islam that, though less evident, are as real as its one face, the face of bloclike antagonism, whether to Christians, to the Christian West, or to the post-Christian modern world.

THE MANY FACES OF ISLAM

Though Izetbegovic is right about the ambivalent status of Islam in the late twentieth century—it is too often seen as either sociopolitical or religious but seldom both—his argument still needs to be extended. While Islam is not “mere” religion, it is also more than “mere” religious politics. Islam can be as well a kind of symbolic

resource or world view that invites accommodation to other world views, not confrontation with them. Islam as religion, Islam as politics, Islam as world view—all three, and not merely the first two, need to be explored.

Such categorization emerges out of critical reflections on the role of imagination in defining and projecting identity. Imagination is both collective and individual. Collectively imagination is nourished by the institutions of a society; individually it is shaped and reshaped by members of that society. In religious discourse, it is imagination—the ability to play with the material world and its limits, including the too evident limits of love and death—that sustains the conscious advocacy of a range of beliefs and practices deemed to be inseparable from the “real” force of life. Names abound for the Object/Subject of imagination: Yahweh, God, Allah, Other. Let us call it Other. Other is always a transtemporal force; exceeding time, it also exceeds all other human limits. Yet Other also must always be mediated in human discourse and through social institutions. In its most intellectual form it becomes theology, in its most pervasive expression popular religion, and in still another form ideology.³⁷

Numerous Muslim apologists who assert that Islam is, above all, religion mean that Islam as religion concerns itself with the practice of imagining the Other, also known as divine revelation. Whether systematic or pragmatic, theological, popular, or ideological, Islam, in their view, is always religion. Even when it assumes a political dimension, Islam expresses a religious impulse. It is the impulse to align the human imagination with the divine imagination, so that social norms and individual conduct are always directed toward a path already specified. While obstacles on the path may vary, the contours of the path, as also the requirements it imposes on those who would tread it, have not changed. This is the message, for instance, of Muhammad Qutb in his diatribe, *Islam: The Misunderstood Religion* (1977). Examining all the facets of modern science and European civilization, he summarizes them as embodiments of an age-old pattern of slavery. Islam rejects slavery, slavery of men and women, slavery of whole nations and classes. Since both capitalism and communism, the two ideologies of the modern West, continue age-old patterns of slavery, they must be opposed in the name of Islam. It is only Islam as the “third” way that can provide guidance on the path that will

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help humankind “get out of the darkness it has long since been plunged in.”³⁸

While Muhammad Qutb’s writings do have a political message, the message is implicit rather than explicit: he does not advocate a specific political system nor a set of political reforms. Others do. More than a few modern-day Muslim writers see Islam as preeminently an ideology, that is, “an organized and polarized formulation” of a system that must be equally secular and sacred, encompassing the instrumentalities of politics as well as the pieties of mosque, court, and home. Among those who argue for political Islam is Muhammad Qutb’s older brother, Sayyid Qutb. He is the oft-cited ideologue of Islamic extremism or fundamentalism. A founding figure of the Muslim Brethren in prerevolutionary Egypt, he opposed Nasser when the latter came to power. His opposition led to jail and eventually to the gallows: he was hanged, along with two other Brethren leaders, in August 1966.

But it was not just Nasser whom Sayyid Qutb opposed. Sayyid Qutb opposed Nasser as the advocate and embodiment of Arab nationalism. The true evil was nationalism—whether Arab, Iranian, Turkish, or Pakistani—nationalism as an ideology rivaling Islam. Qutb’s numerous writings gradually came to stress a Manichaean divide: on one side was justice, rule according to the precepts of the Qur’an and Islam, that was the sign of *hakimiyya*, or divine lordship. On the other side was *jahiliyya* or opposition to *hakimiyya*, the willful persistence in ignorance, perversity, and error. It consisted of glorifying any -ism, whether communism or capitalism, scientism or humanism, instead of God. Nationalism became one more Godlessness. Loyalty to it, like loyalty to any other -ism, was false. It was a sign of *jahiliyya*. The difference between *hakimiyya* and *jahiliyya* was epitomized by Sayyid Qutb in a famous set of slogans that subverts the nationalist agenda. In true Islam, when *hakimiyya* prevails, according to Qutb, “nationalism will be recognized as belief, homeland as Dar al-Islam, the ruler as God, and the constitution as the Qur’an.”³⁹

Yet those who advocate Islam either as an oppositional religion (Muhammad Qutb) or as religious politics (Sayyid Qutb) reduce Islam to a single platform of protest against the dominant forces of the modern world system. Despite the urgent, impassioned, and often impatient tone of their writings, they do not advance arguments that integrate Islam either with its own past history

or with the issues that commonly confront humankind. They too easily elide human imagination with the divine imagination read as divine will. As one shrewd observer of Islamic movements wrote, their advocates make political philosophy shoulder the role of metaphysics: “God’s relevance can only be seen in a political context.”⁴⁰

“Divine” politics is a meaningless concept unless related to history. Raimundo Panikkar, a seasoned cultural critic, was only half-right when he declared that in the modern period “religion without politics becomes uninteresting, just as politics without religion turns irrelevant.”⁴¹ The crucial factor remains historical location, and for contemporary Muslims the most significant dimension of their history is marked by European colonial expansion and consequent anticolonial nationalist movements. *One cannot talk about modern Islam without paying attention to the world-transforming activity of the eighteenth, nineteenth, and early twentieth centuries.* It was only in the colonial period that nationalist movements involving Muslims first emerged, and the subsequent history of Islam is inseparable from nationalisms both European and indigenous. There are specific turning points in this history that merit recapitulation, if we are to understand why Islam is more often the victim than the agent of violence.

1. Colonial rule gave birth to national movements organized in *secular* terms with mythical appeals, structural features, and institutional mechanisms that reflected, even when they did not imitate or replicate, the same instruments characteristic of the colonizers’ country of origin. Ethnic nationalism became the primary organizing principle or symbolic engine to liberation from overseas rule. This was so even when religious symbols were invoked, or religious movements, such as Pan-Islamism, drew sizable numbers of followers. It is crucial not to accept at face value the assertions of Muslim revivalist leaders. For instance, one scholar, after charting the Pan-Islam movement in massive detail from primary sources, concluded that in the 1990s “Pan-Islamists (along with other consociational groups) may well turn a 120-years’ old dream from what seemed a utopia into a political reality.”⁴² Yet another scholar, taking a functional view of this same movement, chose to look not at what Pan-Islamists say, but rather at the impact their movement had on subsequent nationalist endeavors. In so doing, he reached a conclusion opposite to the first scholar: not only is

there no future to Pan-Islamism, but “the rise of Pan-Islamic sentiments helped to establish the credentials of particularized nationalisms.”⁴³ Why? Because Pan-Islamic ideologues posed, albeit indirectly, the question of permeable boundaries and drew attention to both ethnic nationalism (*qawmiyya*) and region-specific nationalism (*wataniyya*) as alternative polities—alternative not only to European rule but also, more importantly, to the universal Muslim community (*umma*). Pan-Islamism may conjure the “fear of Islam” yet it itself proved to be a restricted, short-lived movement. The antidote to fear is to look beyond slogans and examine the historical development of a protest movement. Pan-Islamism relies more on ideological accents than on pragmatic strategies. Throughout the twentieth century links among Muslims of different races, regions, and languages remain more rhetorical than pragmatic, signaling a loose affinity of faith, not an actual alliance of forces, whether military or political or both.

2. Islam as a pragmatic referent in organizing social or economic life was denied autonomy under colonial rule, even when certain farsighted elites attempted to forge a link between Muslim and national identity, as did Muhammad Abduh, for instance, in British Egypt. “What had begun as an attempt to protect Islam by reinterpreting it tended to end as a discussion of the possibility of creating a secular society with nationalism as its animating principle, and with Islam as its inherited culture rather than a guide to social action.”⁴⁴ The subordination of Islamic ideals and values to political pragmatism continued in postcolonial polities. As a result, Islam remained a reservoir of symbolic dissent, often couched in violent terms, available to marginalized, aggrieved groups.

During the postcolonial period, as political independence was achieved by more and more newly formed Muslim polities, appeals to Islam were slow to garner attention. Whether hidden from European eyes or ignored by indigenous elites, it was not until the late 1960s and early 1970s that Islamic rhetoric and Islamic loyalty were brought to the forefront of domestic, regional, and international issues. Nationalism did not provide the panacea for a host of ills and inequities, and Muslim spokespersons began to contend not only with external non-Muslims but also, just as often, with internal, “impure” Muslim others.

Again, there is no uniform view of the “Islamic difference.” Even within the ranks of social science, the lack of consensus is

evident. Two social scientists concerned with Egypt disagree on how Egyptian elites viewed the ideal postcolonial polity. One German-based political theorist argues that nationalism, like modernization, rules out religion. He cites as proof of this maxim the stance of the nineteenth-century Egyptian Rifa'a al-Tahtawi, for whom "the social was more important than the religious." Al-Tahtawi's neologism *hubb al-watan*, "love of country," was thoroughly secular, since it conveyed the sense of *wataniyya*, the Arab(ic) equivalent of patriotism, a concept divorced from religion.⁴⁵ But in the view of an American political scientist, it is not al-Tahtawi but another twentieth-century Egyptian theorist, Tariq al-Bishri, who augurs the future stance for his country: neither a secularist nor a fundamentalist but a liberal (of sorts), al-Bishri argues that Arab nationalism cannot omit Islam, while at the same time admitting that Islam cannot be made the sole basis for Arab/Egyptian nationalism. What should be the *modus operandi* then for Muslims and the state? Islam, according to al-Bishri, should play an instrumental role in fostering what are the primary goals, namely, "independence, cultural authenticity, and political integration."⁴⁶ While al-Bishri does not offer his own prescription for an ideal Muslim state, his engagement with Islam is a far cry from al-Tahtawi's vision of a secular state.

3. It is the presence of colonialism that linked all Muslim collectivities, throughout the Afro-Eurasian *oikumene*, especially in that heavily populated cosmopolitan area south and east of the Mediterranean. There has been an attempt from time to time to isolate Saudi Arabia, as though what happened on the peninsula was immune from events around it. But it was not, for as Marilyn Waldman has pointed out: "though not all Muslim territories were colonized, nearly all experienced some kind of dependency, be it psychological, political, technological, cultural, or economic. . . . Even in Saudi Arabia oil exploration, begun in the 1930s, brought European (and then American) interference."⁴⁷

If the colonial experience has a crucial mediating role in the development of the present-day Muslim world, it is a role that commands attention in order to avoid a double myopia. One is the myopia of indigeous elites who claim to be exponents of "true" Islam. To the extent that they ignore the colonial period, except as a reminder of the "defeated" enemy, such elites tend to project their own polities as homogeneous associations, at once natural

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and voluntary. The other myopia is that of dissidents who claim, on behalf of Pan-Islamic ideology, that there has always been a borderless Muslim nation, that all nation-states are fictive, post-colonial inventions, their leaders impeding the reemergence of the pristine Muslim collectivity, the *umma*.

The misfortune of recent scholarship is to perpetuate, rather than correct, these reinforcing myopic readings of the Muslim past. There are two dominant social scientific approaches to Islam and nationalism. One offers a straightforward narration of Muslim polities, linking them to each other and not to neighboring or similar non-Muslim polities, as if the mere label “Islam” were sufficient to merit their clustering as a discrete group separate from all other groups.⁴⁸ The other approach traces how Muslim polities took on relevance *only* with reference to an invasive colonial administration, whether Dutch or Russian, French or British. This blindness is much more serious than the first, because it erases the Islamic “difference” and freezes all Muslims into the role of defensive opponents of an emergent global order. Its proponents claim that Muslim elites, in competing with one another under the same non-Muslim aegis, became redefined: they came to differ as much from their precolonial Muslim ancestors as they did from their contemporary non-Muslim compatriots. The cultural marking of Islam, if not irrelevant, was at best residual, while the temporal marking of modernity became all-important. From the premise that the European/Christian West as colonial overlord provided the crucial dimension is drawn the conclusion that only attention to the colonizing process will generate analytical insights into the relationship of Muslim polities to nationalism.⁴⁹

While the first approach oversimplifies the emergence of Muslim polities from a common colonial past, the second overloads the significance of the colonial experience. Its advocates deny the agency of their Muslim subjects, dismissing urban intellectuals, in particular, as little more than hapless purveyors of an ossified or retarded civilizational legacy.

The truth is more complex. If Europe transformed the Muslim world, it did not itself remain immune from change. The direction of influence between Europe and the Muslim world was never unilinear; it was always interactive. Those European colonial powers that extended their influence, whether by direct or by indirect rule,⁵⁰ were themselves reshaped by the experience of their colonial

subjects. But they seldom acknowledged their own reshaping as a direct experience of the other. Instead, colonial history, when not luxuriating in the romance and mystique of the Orient, masked its own change as economic gain, commercial profit, overseas investment, or civilizational uplift. Implicit in the exercise of massive military and political power was the denial of agency anywhere in Africa or Asia, including countries with major Muslim populations.

Yet not all Europeans acted with the same motivation or the same set of interests: in the early phase of British colonial rule in India, for instance, not only administrators but also often linguists identified with their subjects, as Richard Fox has shown in his critique of the Orientalism thesis.⁵¹ And when the imperialists did succeed the colonialists, as happened in most cases after the 1870s, there was a heightened degree of intra-European rivalry—from French-British in the Sudan to British-Dutch in the Asian archipelago—that shaped the regional outcome of colonial projects.⁵²

Often wrapped into social scientific analysis of Islam is a variant of the economic determinist argument: capitalist forces are placed in the foreground and credited with changing the colonial and postcolonial Muslim world. Particular emphasis is placed on the dismemberment of the central premodern Muslim polity, the Ottoman Empire.⁵³ Modern-day Turkey becomes the chief negative case representing all Muslim polities stumbling into the twentieth century: its leaders could neither reverse outdated modes of production nor generate a viable middle class.⁵⁴ Absent in the Turkish case as elsewhere, we are told, were mechanisms of exchange. Without either accountability or obligation, how could one produce either a viable democracy or a modified authoritarianism? One could not, according to these theorists, and so most African/Asian polities were doomed to be undemocratic; oil merely worsened their economic malaise in the late twentieth century.⁵⁵

Perhaps the most negative assessment of oil production/export and its impact on Arab/Muslim state formation has been set forth by the Lebanese political commentator Georges Corm. Corm offers an intensely detailed, closely argued variation of Delacroix's thesis about the evils of a distributive economy and rentier state. Corm is especially bitter about the petromania unleashed since the early 1970s. "In the deserts of the Arabian Peninsula, . . . the oil-exporting countries of the Gulf barely had sufficient manpower,

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managerial staff, technicians, employees and teachers to meet the needs and projects this new oil wealth gave rise to. Other Arab countries (and also Pakistan and Bangladesh) were suddenly drained of the most dynamic among their active populations, which further undermined their already eroding social structures.”⁵⁶ In the case of Pahlavi Iran, petromania did not cause an influx of Muslim outsiders, but it did create a too rapid immigration of rural Iranians to Tehran, leading to structural asymmetries that have persisted in post-Pahlavi Iran.⁵⁷

To place the colonial period and the determinist interpretations of Islam in a broader perspective, one must move beyond both politics and religion to the contingencies of history. The best place to begin is with the boldly revisionist thesis of the world historian and American Islamicist Marshall Hodgson. As Hodgson explained, Islamic loyalties relate above all to a larger, complex process that he labels the Great Western Transmutation. The Great Western Transmutation was “great” because it was *global*: European norms of political rule and social and economic exchange were introduced throughout Asia and Africa. It remained “Western” not only because it was European in origin but also because it reflected changes going on in the New World, especially North America. But finally it remained a transmutation because it depended on a variety of factors rather than a single, predictable response to European events and actors; it was not inevitable to one region or one culture or one time; it was not even a transformation but rather, following biological models, a transmutation.

The Great Western Transmutation was *local* as well as global, since the process it spurred was framed within indigenous contexts and limited by indigenous responses, in our case Muslim responses to European norms. To the extent that we can depict a composite Muslim profile, it emerged only after World War I and did not achieve widespread prominence till after World War II.⁵⁸ What it revealed was a world turned inside out.⁵⁹ Neither Muslim collectivities nor individual Afro-Asian Muslims could any longer operate from a position of parity in the world-system.⁶⁰ All Muslim elites—whether by choice or compulsion, whether explicitly adjusting or implicitly demurring—were reshaped by European norms and expectations.⁶¹ Precisely because their lives were under constant stress, their identities remained in flux, and Islam became a symbolic resource both shared and debated. Colonial and post-

colonial reverberations were most evident in urban metropolitan centers, yet their impact also extended to rural or peripheral groups, even when these groups seem not to be affected or represented by the momentous events occurring at the center.⁶²

To understand the difficulty of this circumstance, but also to locate the kernel of hope within it, one must revisit the colonial period and attempt to analyze its internal shifts, or successive phases, reflecting the views of Muslim “others” as well as European overlords. One must recognize that not all colonizers had the same agenda nor did all periods yield the same record of brutal conquest and systematic negation of Africans and Asians who happened to be Muslim. Instead, one must look at three major periods that overlap but still need to be distinguished each from the other: revivalist, reformist, and fundamentalist.⁶³