Theory predicted that rulers freed from the bonds of the sharia would seek absolute power, and they regularly lived up to that expectation.

CHAPTER 2

What Went On?

THE QUESTION "What went wrong?" has emerged as a compelling starting point for discussions of the contemporary Middle East. It appears to be a reasonable historical question. Even within the Arab and Muslim world there is broad recognition of weakness and failure, and widespread fear that the passage of time only makes matters worse. It is important to ask the right questions, but one cannot do so until one has explained why the question that is currently being asked doesn't work.

"What went wrong?" stands history on its head. The notion that something went wrong presumes a comparative perspective in which there is a clear notion of how things should have gone, something against which the actuality of failure can be measured. One might hypothesize an example from the Civil War. The leadership of the Confederate States of America sought victory; they lost. In the aftermath, their asking "What went wrong?" would have made

good historical sense. It was their plans, after all, that had failed; and the question would have presumed this perspective.

But whose perspective is involved when the question is raised for the Middle East? Bernard Lewis, the popularizer of the phrase, puts it this way at the outset of his book *What Went Wrong?*:

> What went wrong? For a long time people in the Islamic world, especially but not exclusively in the Middle East, have been asking this question. The content and formulation of the question, provoked primarily by their encounter with the West, vary greatly according to the circumstances, the extent, and duration of that encounter and the events that first made them conscious, by comparison, that all was not well in their own society.[1]

This introduction avoids telling us just who in the Islamic world has been asking the question; but it does make it clear that the question is comparative in intent. Why do people in the Islamic world live in circumstances they consider to be so much worse than those of people in the West? As he proceeds with the book, Lewis details the terms of this comparison. The Islamic world, and especially the Middle East, sadly trails the West in freedom, gender equality, secularism, economic and intellectual vitality, material living standards—in fact, in just about everything.

But what path should have been taken? What caused the Muslim societies to veer from that path? Comparison alone sheds no light. Comparatively speaking, the United States lagged far behind Europe in music, drama, and the visual arts well into the twentieth century. This was recognized on both sides of the Atlantic. But no one would begin an analysis of this disparity by asking "What went wrong?" because social and cultural circumstances in the two regions were so disparate that there is no reason to suppose that they should have attained equal levels of achievement.

The Muslim world never possessed a road map with a clearly marked path leading to a promised land of equality with Europe. To be sure, some rulers and statesmen sought to be as rich as the

European powers, or as powerful militarily, and a few believed that liberal principles and governmental institutions might help them toward those goals. No one, however, dreamt that an adroit deployment of European ideas and techniques would lead, by the end of the twentieth century, to societies, governments, and economies that would be as free, as prosperous, and as dominant as those of Europe and North America. The reason I can say this with confidence is that no one in Europe and North America knew where the ship they were sailing on was heading. The great goals that the West now believes it has achieved—equality of race and gender, peace and unity among European nations, global dominance by Euro-American economic enterprise unencumbered by the artificial boundaries and rivalries of empire, and the unquestioned dominance of democratic government—were invisible to Europeans and Americans alike throughout the whole of the nineteenth century and most of the twentieth.

It is comforting to think, when things are going well, that where you are is where you were destined to be, that you took the right path. Ever since the Nazis were defeated, the Soviet Union collapsed, the war-weary European empires gave up their colonies, and France and Switzerland finally gave women the vote, it has been tempting to believe that this is how history was meant to come out. Yet things almost went horribly and irrecoverably bad, as scores of millions of graves marking the victims of European war, holocaust, and oppression testify.

To the extent that observers in the Muslim world tried from time to time to look at things in a comparative perspective, and to visualize ways of countering or matching the incontestable and growing economic and political superiority of Europe, their standard of comparison was not late-twentieth-century Euro-American society. It was the dominant European society or political regimes of their own day, the imperialists, the fascists, and the communists, as well as the liberal-minded democrats.

In 1810, when Muhammad Ali was dreaming of making Egypt as strong as any European power, his standard of comparison was

Napoleon: no democracy, no liberal values, just the massive power of the imperial military state and the will of an absolute monarch. Such was the path he chose. In 1856, in the aftermath of the Crimean War, when an Ottoman sultan issued a series of decrees instituting reforms along European lines, his standard of comparison was the France of Napoleon III and the Great Britain of Queen Victoria: no gender equality, no international economic synergy, no universal education, just the velvet glove concealing the imperialist fist. Such was the path taken two decades later by Sultan Abdülhamit II. When Mustafa Kemal Atatürk was laying down the principles of the Turkish Republic in the 1920s, his standards of comparison were Benito Mussolini and Josef Stalin: no political openness, no freedom of expression, no economic liberalism. He took the same path.

The marvel of Europe at the outset of the twenty-first century is that despite the horrors of the preceding two centuries, it has said goodbye to empire, set aside national rivalries and military confrontation, made a universal commitment to democracy and civil liberties, and recognized, at long last, the fundamental equality of all human beings. It is a wonderful outcome, but not one that was predictable or inevitable, much less the consequence of a developmental path that could have been observed and followed to a similar end by people in other lands. The idea that people in the Middle East once embraced the goal of becoming like Europe and hoped that by adopting European ideas and institutions they would someday experience all of the liberal values we recognize in the Europe of today is nonsense. It assumes a historical outcome for Europe itself that no one even in Europe could have predicted.

So where did the idea that something "went wrong" come from? Since Bernard Lewis popularized the notion, his first important scholarly work, *The Emergence of Modern Turkey*, is a reasonable place to look. He completed the book in 1960, but its genesis dates to 1949–50 when he went to Turkey to pursue research. He relates his feelings about the Turkey of 1950 in the preface to

the book's third edition, published in 2002, the year *What Went Wrong?* also went to press:

> Several factors, it seems in retrospect, determined the basic approach, the dominant conception, and the final conclusions of the book . . . In my historical studies, I began with medieval Islam, proceeded to the Ottoman Empire, and then, later, to modern Turkey. . . . The fact that I first came to Turkey, so to speak, from the past and from the south [i.e., the heartland of medieval Islamic civilization, Lewis' first area of research] instead of from the present and from the west, gave me a different—and I would claim better—understanding of the country, of its history and culture, and therefore of its problems.[2]

I too spent many years immersed solely in medieval Islamic studies before turning my attention on the modern Middle East, and I share Lewis' self-serving opinion that coming at the modern period from the medieval Islamic past has given me a different—and indeed better—understanding of the region's history, culture, and problems. Lewis again:

> A second determining factor, of at least equal importance, was the world situation during my formative years and during the period when the book was begun and completed. For the men and women of that generation, their whole lives, their every thought, was dominated and indeed shaped by the titanic struggles in which they had participated, or which they had at the very least witnessed—the defeat and, so it seemed at the time, the destruction of fascism by an alliance of democrats and communists; the ensuing struggle, commonly known as the Cold War, between these former allies to decide which of them would shape the future of the world; the emergence of a third, neutralist bloc in some of the countries liberated by the withdrawal of the western Empires. In the fifties, these issues loomed very large, and the choices before us still retained something of the clarity, even the starkness, which they had through the war years and which they have subsequently lost.[3]

By "the men and women of that generation" it is clear that Lewis is referring primarily to Europeans and Americans. For the Palestinians displaced by the Israeli triumph of 1948, the Egyptians who rose as a nation to support Gamal Abdel Nasser after the revolution of 1952, the Iranians who cried in anguish when the CIA and British intelligence helped the Shah crush Mohammed Mossadegh's nationalist movement in 1953, and the Algerians who initiated a war to free their country of French colonial rule in 1956, "their whole lives, their every thought, was dominated and indeed shaped" by their own national dramas, not by the defeat of fascism and the struggle against communism. And it is difficult to recognize the thrill of achieving national independence, or the torment of falling short of that goal, in what Lewis blandly recalls as the "emergence of a third, neutralist bloc in some of the countries liberated by the withdrawal of the western Empires." The issues of the fifties that gripped the western men and women of Lewis' generation were decidedly not the issues that gripped the same generation of men and women in the Muslim world.

From Lewis' standpoint, however, the startling political spectacle of 1950 was understandably exhilarating. In free elections, Turkey's newly founded Democrat Party, led by Adnan Menderes, unseated the Republican People's Party that had dominated every Turkish government since the establishment of both republic and party by Atatürk himself. The military overthrow of Menderes, and his trial and execution for violating the constitution, were still ten years in the future. And with the clouds of the Cold War gathering, no one was yet ready to speculate that Turkey's sudden turn toward democracy had something to do with American financial and military support extended under the Truman Doctrine, or with a desire, realized two years later, to be accepted into NATO. (As today Turkey confronts explicit European demands for liberalizing reforms as conditions for acceptance into the European Union, the notion that history is repeating itself is hard to resist.)

> This clarity of choice gave a special significance to the already dramatic development of events in Turkey at the time when this book

> was conceived and written. What could be more illuminating, more in accord with the mood of optimism that victory had brought and which the Cold War had not yet dissipated, than the spectacle of a nation liberating itself from ancient bonds—a country of age-old authoritarian habits and traditions turning to democracy; a regime [i.e., the Republican People's Party] that had for decades enjoyed a virtual monopoly of power setting to work, systematically, to prepare, organize, and preside over its own electoral defeat. Even now, more than fifty years later, despite all the ensuing setbacks and frustrations—and there have been many—no one who was there at the time can ever forget the excitement, the exhilaration, of Turkey's first giant step towards a free and open society.[4]

I would not dream of disputing what Lewis says of the exhilaration of the moment, or of its continuing force fifty years later. "The mood of optimism that victory had brought" is another question. Whose victory? Whose optimism? Turkey was neutral during World War II; Iran was militarily occupied and its ruler deposed; the rest of the Middle East lived under more or less oppressive imperialist control. Political aspirants in Egypt, Palestine, Iraq, and Iran, to name but four, had tentatively reached out to the Axis powers for support against imperialism. Six months after VE day, Britain and France had announced no plans for loosening their imperial grip on Muslim lands, nor had the Soviet Union shown any indication of adhering to a wartime commitment to evacuate Iranian territory. In the absence of specific corroborating information, therefore, it would seem that to the extent that the mood of optimism that Lewis describes was shared by the Turks, it was not for the same reasons.

The question of who has been asking "What went wrong?" thus finds its answer. It is not unnamed "people in the Islamic world," but rather Lewis himself. He witnessed in 1950, with decidedly European eyes, what he took to be "Turkey's first giant step towards a free and open society," and the vision is undiminished more than fifty years later. Is there a free and open society in Turkey today? No. Is there a free and open society anywhere in the

Muslim Middle East, or in the Muslim world at large? No. What went wrong? Lewis' vision of a goal provides the comparative standard. Lewis' perception of a derailment on the way to that goal motivates the question.

Were it not for the publicity given to his question, there would be no reason to address it in such detail. Every westerner who visits the Middle East, whether only an occasional visitor or one who lives there for a longer period, encapsulated in the typical cocoon of an expatriate community, generalizes too grandly from his or her experiences. (The same holds true for Middle Easterners who sojourn in Europe and America.) Someone who happened to go to Iran for the first time in 1971 during the build-up to the Shah's celebration of 2,500 years of Iranian imperial greatness might understandably have come away with a vision of enduring autocratic grandeur, just as someone who went for the first time in 1979 might understandably have come home convinced that Islamic revolution was the wave of the future. Like Lewis, the former might subsequently have wondered what went wrong when the Shah abandoned his throne to Ayatollah Khomeini, and the latter might have wondered what went wrong when the overwhelming electoral victory of President Khatami led to harsh repression of dissent rather than liberalization. Visitors collect snapshots and connect dots. They examine scattered samplings of trees and extrapolate forests. When they ask what went wrong, their standard of comparison is of their own making.

What, then, do people within the Muslim world ask? Which of the many constructions of history most helps to explain the well-documented miseries of today? The list of explanations is long: absence of political freedom; squandering of national wealth on armaments; suppression of dissent and free expression; stagnant economic development; export of capital by people of wealth; massive unemployment; stultifying educational institutions; religious, ethnic, and gender inequality and discontent; excessive population growth; etc. Certain constructions command great attention. For many, what has seemed most important is the cre-

ation of the state of Israel, and the support of Israel by the United States from 1967 on. For others, the heavy legacy of imperialism, in all of its many forms, tells the tale best. Still others focus on western conspiratorial plots to strip Muslims of their capacity to act effectively in their own interests. And a few, like Lewis, find the dead hand of Islam behind every failure. What these constructions hold in common is the notion of a villain, a malevolent force persistently preventing good things from happening.

Refuting these multifarious readings of history would be of little value. Those who hold them dear are unlikely to relinquish them, and most of them make some degree of sense. In any case, there is no need for a single unitary explanation of so far-reaching a phenomenon as the desolation besetting the Muslim world. Instead of refutation, I would propose a question that is too seldom considered: What went right?

What Went Right?

Lewis quite reasonably asks us to consider the viewpoints of people in the Islamic world as they considered various disparities between their own situations and those of citizens in western countries. Some of these viewpoints are contained in memoirs, travel accounts, political tracts, and novels. Others can be read into the undertakings of rulers from the early nineteenth century to the present, from Egypt's Muhammad Ali and the Ottoman sultan Mahmud II to the likes of Husni Mubarak and the recently enthroned dynastic rulers of Morocco, Jordan, Syria, Bahrain, and Qatar.

All of these individuals, and thousands of others whose names have gone unrecorded, have observed significant differences between their own societies and those of Europe. But they have not all observed the same differences. One writer will comment on female shoulders fetchingly bared by French ball gowns, another on European scientific achievements, a third on the shocking and awesome firepower of western armies. As for the rulers, they typically

recognize disparities in economic and military power but disagree in appraising the source of these disparities. Some want less Islam, some want more. Some want freer trade; some want a closed door.

Nor do Arab and Muslim observations always reflect a sense that things are better in the West. The Muslim zealot Sayyid Qutb, the martyred firebrand of today's revolutionary wildfire, spent the years 1948–1950 in the United States, observed a multitude of differences, and concluded that Islam afforded a better path to the future. So it is far from self-evident that comparative observation results in a consistent sense of what the Muslim world is lacking, or even in a sense that differences with the West must always be understood as Muslim deficiencies. Moreover, when differences are cast as deficiencies, the nature of the deficiency, and the recommendations for rectifying it, differ from observer to observer.

To start at the level of the individual, one example will suffice. Writing from the most mundane and practical standpoint in the 1890s, a little-known Egyptian official named Yusuf Bushtali focused on day-to-day life in his *Hidyat al-Muluk fi Adab al-Suluk* ("The Conduct of Kings on the Propriety of Behavior"), subtitled in French *Etiquette*.[5] He takes as his topic "the entry of western civilization and the customs of its people in our eastern land; the acceptance by easterners of the acquisition of the westerners' sciences and arts; and the imitation of them in matters of eating, drinking, residential living, and dressing."[6]

The westerners, he observes, "spend dirhams and dinars and cross seas and deserts to come to this land in order to study our customs. They observe our homes, our mosques, and our meeting places. They attend our weddings, our festivals, our birthdays, and our funerals. Then they write fat volumes about them. They buy our goods and the crafts of the people of our country for the highest prices, and they use them to ornament their homes, their museums, and the palaces of their rulers. They study our languages and investigate the traces of our forefathers. They decipher the secrets our ancestors have written on the faces of hard stones in order to understand their customs and knowledge."

Then, after enumerating and praising the traditional and continuing virtues of his countrymen, he declares: "It is perfectly clear that studying the customs and peoples of the West is an absolute obligation"—here he uses *fard wajib*, a technical phrase from Islamic law—"on every easterner who wants to mingle with them and draw close to them in order to live among them as an acknowledged equal, not as someone who is below them in understanding and elementary education."[7]

Four hundred pages of minutely observed description of western customs follow. The topics range wide: riding in a carriage, calling cards, party games, etiquette at dinner, wedding gifts, dances, and a long section on western foods, including lists of dishes in French, English, and Arabic with line engravings showing how to carve a chicken or a rabbit.

Who was Bushtali? Nobody. A minor government official. The histories of modern Arabic literature ignore him, and his prescription of slavish imitation of western ways offends the Arab nationalist sensibilities that surfaced two decades after his writing and continue today. But his approach to the problem of difference shows considerable insight of a behaviorist kind. The differences he sees between the Egyptians and the Europeans are clearly deficiencies. Though he puts the burden of learning how to behave like the westerners only on those Egyptians who want to mingle with them, he explicitly states that the cost of not doing so is European disdain. Furthermore, Egyptians studying the behavior of westerners are not mirroring the practices of westerners examining the behavior, languages, etc. of Egyptians. European ethnography, archaeology, and orientalism yield fat volumes, but he never says that the Europeans aspire to be treated as equals by the Egyptians. His prescription for his countrymen aims not at producing ethnographic tomes, though that is precisely what he himself is doing, but at producing equality of status, something that involves not only social acceptance, but also acknowledgement of a parallel level of understanding. An Egyptian who behaves exactly like a westerner, he believes, will be received as a westerner.

One may wonder whether Bushtali actually believed that reading a manual on etiquette would help very much. Nevertheless, his basic perception was both sound, and very widespread. Untold thousands of Muslims consciously or unconsciously acted on the syllogism Bushtali sets forth: A) Europeans do not respect or accept as equals non-Europeans who behave in "native" fashion. B) Europeans *do* grant acceptance to non-Europeans who learn to dress, converse, and otherwise comport themselves in a European manner. C) Therefore, non-Europeans who wish to be accepted as equals must learn to comport themselves in European fashion. This simple idea, whether consciously articulated or intuitively sensed, continues the guide the lives of many Arabs and Muslims down to the present day.

Ingrained stereotypes relating to the Arab and Muslim world over the past century or so contain many examples of westerners reacting favorably to "natives" fitted out with European clothes, manners, and social graces, and other examples of non-Europeans being disparaged for trying unsuccessfully to ape western customs. These reactions have lately reinforced political sentiments in the warmth accorded impeccably tailored Arabs like Jordan's late King Husain or Saudi Arabia's ambassador to the United States, Prince Bandar bin Sultan, as compared with the caustic comments often made about Yasir Arafat's unshaven face and inappropriate military garb. But what alternative is there for someone who wants western respect? Nonwesterners who stick to their own costumes and practices may sometimes be admired as colorful denizens of semi-civilized lands. Afghanistan's Hamid Karzai with his colorful robe and Afghan hat comes to mind. Derisive cartoons of Arab oil sheikhs in gowns and checkered headdresses, however, associate the retention of nonwestern styles and habits with primitive, if not vicious, inclinations. As for Europeans who "go native" and adopt local dress and customs—a not uncommon affectation among nineteenth-century Englishmen—they are regularly dismissed as eccentrics or mountebanks. A Turk or Arab or Persian wearing a business suit may well be treated as an equal. An American, Eng-

lishman, or German wearing a turban is a fool. As Bushtali saw so clearly, cultural exchange between west and nonwest presumes western superiority.

Were Bushtali alive today, he would surely remark that things have obviously gone right for many Arabs and Muslims. Kuwaiti businessmen with flats in London, first-class tailors, and degrees from American and British universities are unquestionably received as equals, and their opinions accorded respect, in the western circles they frequent. Iranian and Lebanese doctors practicing in the United States stand at the highest levels of their profession. Elegantly attired Palestinian professors at renowned universities write cutting-edge works that command worldwide respect. In Bushtali's day, such a prospect was almost unthinkable, and it is still hard to imagine it happening if the individuals in question had chosen to rely on their personal talents alone without the accompaniment of a western wardrobe, education, and comportment.

Needless to say, access to these desiderata of western acceptance is not, and never has been, available to everyone. Ironically, those individuals who by virtue of family position, wealth, or espousal of non-Muslim religious beliefs have had the greatest opportunities for assimilation to western modes of thought and behavior are often the ones who feel most acutely the disparity between the life circumstances of their compatriots and those of native-born Europeans and Americans. Their anguish testifies to the fact that while assimilation may enable individuals to bridge the gulf in life circumstances, the problems of their home societies have to be addressed in a systemic fashion.

Has the failure to keep pace with the west been rooted, then, in wrong-headed leadership? In the history of nonwestern nations trying to close the gap with Europe, the universally recognized paragon of leadership is the Meiji emperor in Japan. Between 1868 and his death in 1912, Meiji presided over a transition in almost every facet of Japanese life. A constitution and parliamentary electoral system came into being. Equality of status was achieved in international treaties. Industrial growth and military reforms led to

victory in the Russo-Japanese War of 1905 and subsequent recognition as a great power. Whatever the problems besetting the Japanese economy today, no one, either Japanese or western, finds serious fault with the path taken during the Meiji period.

Meiji himself, however, was not the one who charted that path. He chose the people to put in authority, and he stood behind their decisions; but he did not govern and did not promote his own personal ideas. His surviving writings consist almost exclusively of poems. Though he observed military maneuvers, and insisted on sharing the personal discomfort of his soldiers, he did so because he thought it was his duty rather than because he wanted to learn about strategy or join in war planning. He donated money to victims of disaster, but his reluctance to spend money on himself kept him from building a suitable palace in his capital city. Very well read in the classics of Confucian thought, he served his nation with humanity and diligence and was deeply mourned on his passing.

By comparison, the leaders of the Arab and Muslim world who have most ardently sought equality with the West have also been consumed with dreams of unlimited personal power. As heads of state they have shared a common set of goals: to prolong or achieve independence from European control, to make their countries militarily and economically stronger, to tighten controls over their domestic populations, to develop and make more European the skills of those who serve their governments, and to free themselves from real or potential criticism by Muslim men of religion.

Yet maximizing personal power has always loomed as an unspoken end surpassing all of these proclaimed goals. Muhammad Ali, a military commander sent by the Ottoman sultan to Egypt to help regain control after the withdrawal of Napoleon's expeditionary force in 1801, used European military and economic techniques to make himself omnipotent at home and a threat to his master in Istanbul. He ultimately failed to unseat the sultan, but he won for his descendants the hereditary right to rule Egypt. Sultan Abdülhamit II, the paranoid "Red Sultan" who ruled the Ottoman Empire from 1876 to 1909, pioneered techniques of internal spying and oppression that flourish today in the tyrannies of

the Middle East. Relying on these techniques to quell dissent, the nonmonarchical strongmen of today base their unlimited power on elections in which they face no opponents, and aspire to Muhammad Ali's achievement of passing their positions on to their sons. Bashar al-Asad succeeded his father Hafiz in Syria. Saddam Hussein was grooming his sons Uday and Qusay for the succession in Iraq. Husni Mubarak promotes his son Gamal as the leader of the new generation in Egypt. This series of would-be dynasts is matched, of course, by the real dynasts of Morocco, Jordan, Saudi Arabia, and the states of the Persian Gulf. Whether hereditary by right, hereditary by might, or simply a usurpation by military or single-party strongmen, the power of rulers has inexorably strengthened throughout the Middle East over the past two centuries. And the rulers have with few exceptions been fixated upon personal aggrandizement rather than self-sacrificing public service.

So something did go right—again at a personal level. The rulers wanted more personal power, and they got more personal power. The so-called despotisms of the eighteenth-century Islamic world pale in totalitarian control beside the police-state governments of the late twentieth century. And today's media-powered cults of personality, exemplified by omnipresent pictures of the ruler, exceed by far past impositions upon the nation of a ruler's personality. Ottoman coins bore the ornate, and almost unreadable, signature of the sultan; but his facial features were unknown to most of his subjects. No ruler in the modern history of the Middle East remotely resembles the self-abnegating, dutiful, and aloof Meiji emperor, even though worldly aware Turks and Arabs consistently looked upon Japan, from 1905 onward, as a model of successful confrontation with Europe.

Sharia vs. Sultan

In the case of Meiji, lifelong immersion in Confucianist thought conditioned the emperor to be the servant of his nation—albeit a semi-divine iconic servant—rather than an exploiter of his nation

or a power-crazed autocrat. The remainder of this chapter will argue that the worldviews of Arab and Muslim rulers have been as conditioned by Islamic political traditions as Meiji's outlook was by his Confucian upbringing. I do not mean by this that because they were Muslim, they behaved badly in power or fell prey to the evil machinations of Muslim religious figures. My argument, rather, will be that the historic relationship between state and religion that in the Christian wing of Islamo-Christian civilization culminated in an ideology of peaceful (and sometimes not so peaceful) separation, developed in the Muslim wing into a malignant rivalry in which personal tyranny, accompanied by suppression of critical religious voices, developed as a self-fulfilling prophecy.

Traditional Islamic political thought had a horror of *fitna*, a word signifying upheaval and disorder and embracing everything from riot to civil war. Anarchy was intolerable, government a societal necessity. On the other hand, the impulse of rulers to maximize their power to the point of tyranny, *zulm*, appeared as a natural concomitant of government. All that restrained rulers from acting as tyrants was Islamic law, sharia. Since the law was based on divine rather then human principles, no ruler could change it to serve his own interests. Since the interpretation of the law was the prerogative of the ulama, the religious scholars, rulers who were tempted to go beyond the law, and thereby achieve absolute power, had to devise ways of coopting, circumventing, or suppressing the ulama.

This portrayal needs little elaboration in its broad outline. Scholars more or less agree on it. The Turkish historian Halil Inalcik traces it back to a "circle of justice" in pre-Islamic times, citing the words of a sixth-century Persian shah, apocryphally quoted by an early Muslim chronicler: "With justice and moderation the people will produce more, tax revenues will increase, and the state will grow rich and powerful. Justice is the foundation of a powerful state." Then, from one of the earliest Turkish works on statecraft, dating to the eleventh century: "To control the state re-

quires a large army. To support the troops requires great wealth. To obtain this wealth the people must be prosperous. For the people to be prosperous the laws must be just. If any one of these is neglected, the state will collapse."[8]

The Muslim version of the circle of justice sees the sharia as the guarantee of that justice. Even Bernard Lewis, with his generally negative outlook on Islamic traditions, acknowledges the strong association of the sharia with justice and opposition to tyranny. "Westerners have become accustomed to think of good and bad government in terms of tyranny versus liberty. . . . For traditional Muslims, the converse of tyranny was not liberty but justice. Justice in this context meant essentially two things, that the ruler was there by right and not by usurpation, and that he governed according to God's law, or at least according to recognizable moral and legal principles."[9]

The use of freedom as a metaphor has been a staple of European political rhetoric ever since Herodotus celebrated the Greeks' escape from metaphorical "enslavement" by Xerxes' invading Persians. What underlies the metaphor changes over time, however. The Greeks wanted to retain the independence of their city-states. As slave-holders themselves, however, they knew perfectly well that becoming subjects of the Persian emperor would not have been the same as slavery. Two millennia later, "liberty" was still a codeword. Patrick Henry's cry of "Give me liberty, or give me death!" protested the British crown's financial exactions, not indentured servitude. Even more recently, in echoing Moses' "Let my people go," Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. had in mind an equality of social and economic opportunity that tragically had not accompanied statutory emancipation. And the "Free World" of Cold War rhetoric equated absence of freedom with communist one-party rule, even though many parts of the Free World lived under non-communist one-party rule, dictatorship, or absolute monarchy.

What, then, is the indispensable "justice" of Muslim political theory to be compared with if "liberty" is such a variable metaphor? Some key episodes in the history of democracy's rise in Europe and

North America direct our attention to taxation. "No taxation without representation" was not so resounding a war cry as Patrick Henry's, but it reflected a concrete reality. Britain's American colonies resented being taxed by a parliament that did not represent them. A decade later, it was France's turn. Louis XVI summoned the unruly parliament that touched off the French Revolution because he needed to raise funds.

Tax revolt, of course, can go only so far in explaining rebellions against legitimate authority. Unlike "freedom," however, but like "justice," it is concrete. People experience tyranny in particular forms—financial exactions, injustices—and look for a means of resisting. If the tyranny is starved for money, withholding permission to tax can be effective. If it is starved for soldiers in wartime, as czarist Russia was during World War I, mutiny and desertion can bring it down. When a populace speaks out in opposition to tyranny, regardless of the cultural context, it uses the tools that stand the best chance of achieving a positive result. In the Islamic cultural context, an appeal for justice, and particularly justice rooted in the sharia, is more often than not the tool of choice.

What is supposed to make an appeal to justice work, according to Muslim political theory, is the fact that all Muslim rulers must abide by the same divine ordinances that are incumbent on other believers, and they must uphold those laws in their governance. In addition, as we saw in the preceding chapter, the rulers must recognize that the interpretation of the laws in judicial proceedings is the job of the ulama, a body of religious specialists that originated outside the orbit of government control. The pre-Islamic circle of justice saw justice as depending on the moral character of the monarch, thus raising Juvenal's incisive query: *quis custodiet ipsos custodes?* ("Who watches the watchmen themselves?") In Islamic political theory, the theoretical assumption is that, in fact, there *is* someone other than the rulers themselves monitoring the rulers: the ulama.

Sadly, as every historian of Islam knows, in practice the ulama seldom succeeded in preventing despotism. For the post-1500 pe-

riod, contemporary chronicles of the Turkish (Ottoman), Iranian (Safavid), Indian (Mughal), and Moroccan (Saadian) monarchies abound in stories of arbitrary killing, licentiousness, internecine outrages, and the like. Leading ulama, as often as not coopted by the ruler's money, seem to have weighed very little as a moral counterweight. On the other hand, examples are hard to find of ulama becoming the prime facilitators of royal domination after the fashion of seventeenth-century European churchmen like Cardinal Richelieu and Cardinal Mazarin, who as chief ministers paid scant attention to religion in governing France for Louis XIII and Louis XIV. On those rare occasions when Muslim monarchs do seem to be subject to religious guidance, as under the first Saudi regime in eighteenth-century Arabia, religious concerns appear to take priority over despotic whim.

A litany of despotic acts in the face of a theoretical, but seemingly impotent, countervailing force in the hands of the ulama tells only part of the story, however. Muslim rulers have unjustly had their sons strangled, their viziers decapitated, and compliant stable-boys raised to the highest posts in government. But tyrannical acts like these are not the concern of the ordinary populace or of the theoretical circle of justice. Just as today in America, for most people, justice means knowing that there is a stable and consistent body of law to which one can turn for protection or redress, and believing that the officials administering that law are fair and impartial. The personal moral behavior of a president may arouse a certain morbid fascination, but justice does not depend on it. By the same token, in traditional Muslim societies, concerns for justice focused not on royal caprice, but on a religious court system staffed by ulama.

The twentieth-century sociologist Max Weber, extrapolating perhaps from received European opinions about oriental despots, coined the term "qadi justice" (referring to the judge presiding over a Muslim court) to describe the utmost in arbitrariness of judicial procedure.[10] However, scholars who have gained access to the judicial court records of the Ottoman Empire, unavailable in

Weber's day, have thoroughly and repeatedly refuted this stereotype. Minutely studying case after case, they have shown that justice was generally meted out impartially, irrespective of religion, official status, gender, or ethnicity. Clear indicators of the perception that the qadi's court was in fact a place where justice could be found are the legal disputes involving two Jews or two Christians. Not being subject to the sharia, Jews and Christians were free to go to their own religious authorities for adjudication of disputes; but in many cases they went instead to the qadi. In these cases the qadi served essentially as the judge of a civil court. In addition, close study of the way in which judges reached their decisions reveals not arbitrariness, but careful and thoughtful study of precedent, consultation of standard legal treatises, and application of a time-honored system of legal logic.

Looking at Islamo-Christian civilization at large, the struggle of monarchs to expand their personal jurisdiction and limit religious jurisdiction is a common feature. In Latin Christendom it gave rise to repeated conflicts between the crown and the church from the Investiture Controversy of the eleventh century to the Peace of Westphalia of 1648 that brought peace between Catholics and Protestants by curtailing the extension of jurisdictional claims beyond national boundaries. In judicial matters, the kings bested the priests.

In the Muslim world, the priests (ulama) were weaker, but they held their own. The century and more of Mongol rule inaugurated by Genghis Khan's invasion in 1218 accustomed the subject populations to accepting a ruler's decrees as law. Each decree was called a *yasa*, leading some Muslim observers to believe that the Mongols had an entire code called the *Yasa* equivalent in scope and character to the sharia. Though the Genghis Khanid dynasty that ruled Iran converted to Islam long before its last sultan died in 1335, the various Mongol and Turkic warlords—Muslims all—who fought over the remnants of his empire continued to revere the family of Genghis Khan as a touchstone of legitimacy and con-

tinued to issue legal decrees. The Mongolian word *yasa* became equated with the Arabic word *qanun* (taken ultimately from the Latin word "canon"), and the issuance of qanuns, or edicts, became a sufficiently normal part of post-Mongol imperial rule for the Ottoman sultan known in the west as Suleiman the Magnificent (r. 1520–1566) to be lauded by his subjects as Suleiman Kanuni, Suleiman the Lawgiver.

If any of the caliphs of Baghdad had been vouchsafed a glimpse of a future that included such acknowledgement of sovereign legislation, they would surely have been amazed at the implied erosion of religious jurisdiction. They too had issued edicts, usually, like the Ottoman sultans, with the goal of raising money; but their decrees had always been considered disreputable contraventions of religious law. Newly installed rulers sometimes advertised their cancellation of the illegal laws of their predecessors. Like the European monarchs, then, the shahs and sultans of the post-1500 era strove to increase their legislative authority; but in the absence of a religious cataclysm like the wars of religion between Protestants and Catholics, the Islamic legal system held firm. Lacking legitimate grounds for establishing royal courts that would compete directly with those dominated by the ulama, the rulers settled for cooption. They funded and built elite seminaries (madrasas) and exercised their prerogative of appointing judges (qadis) and legal advisors (muftis). In matters of highest state policy, this produced in most cases a gratifyingly compliant judiciary, but it did not diminish the theoretical or practical dominance of the sharia, particularly in the eyes of the ruler's subjects. Nor did it wean the justice-seeking populace from looking to religious courts, presided over by ulama, for succor. As they had for centuries, the people continued to look for leadership to the ulama, large numbers of whom were trained in seminaries that were not under government control.

How aggravating for a would-be tyrant—or later a would-be modernizer. Though the ruler's hands were normally free, the

manacles of the religious law were in plain sight, just waiting for him to go too far. Within the cultural discourse of Islam, there seemed to be no way of eradicating this theoretical opposing force.

Reform and Resistance

The French Revolution and its Napoleonic epilogue punctured the universe of theoretical Muslim discourse that had for so long postulated a dynamic tension between tyranny and sharia. The French occupation of Egypt after Napoleon's invasion of 1798 was short-lived. The invader's pamphlets proclaiming a French objective of liberating the Egyptians from the tyranny of their rulers were met with ridicule. And the robust international market for Egyptian wheat created by wartime conditions collapsed after Waterloo. But the French emperor's omnipotence and grandeur, along with his establishment of the Code Napoleon as the law of the land, and his reaffirmation of the anticlerical attitude spawned by the French Revolution, provided for Muslim rulers a vision of what a true tyrant might accomplish using modern European methods. For a decade and a half, Napoleon commanded the attention of every political personage on both sides of the Mediterranean. Like Adolf Hitler in the twentieth century, he loomed larger than life, and his deeds could not be ignored, even in Muslim lands.

The history of post-Napoleonic efforts to maximize state power, inaugurated by Muhammad Ali and Sultan Mahmud II and continued by their respective successors, has been retold many times with little recognition of how they parallel what was simultaneously transpiring in Europe. The model for such studies is Bernard Lewis' *The Emergence of Modern Turkey*. While narratives of change in Europe focus on the revolutions of 1830 and 1848, and the royalist efforts to oppose them led by the Austrian Prince Metternich, narratives of change in the Muslim world concentrate more materially on programs to bring armies and navies up to European

standards by introducing new armaments and training: factories for uniforms and arms; military schools for instructing officers in gunnery, medicine, and military music; compulsory army service for common citizens; and economic measures, such as state monopolies, to pay the costs.

Such programs required ambition on a Napoleonic scale and a willingness to destroy the old to build the new. Muhammad Ali slaughtered the Mamluk slave-soldiery that had dominated Egypt for centuries, and then sent his own Albanian troops to fight a long and draining war against the Saudi kingdom in Arabia. This effectively cleared the decks for creating a completely new army. Mahmud II slaughtered the soldiery of his own Janissary Corps in 1826 to remove the greatest obstacle to imitating Muhammad Ali. Both men turned to European arms, European military advisers, European instructors for their new military schools, and the dispatch of prospective officers and administrators to Europe for training in modern sciences and instruction in European languages.

In what would be a preview of the American campaign against Saddam Hussein in 1991, in 1840 the European powers pulled Muhammad Ali's teeth after he became too threatening to the Ottoman sultan, a neighbor whom the European powers were unwilling to see fall. They demanded, and after initial resistance accomplished, a substantial disarmament and a dissolution of the economic monopolies—regime change—that had sustained the previous build-up. Seeing the direction the wind was blowing from, Ottoman officials involved in Mahmud's rival military renewal—warmly encouraged by European ambassadors—agreed that "reforms" were needed in nonmaterial areas as well. Over the following decades, through the mechanism of imperial edicts, they introduced law-codes constructed on European models and European-style judiciary practices. High schools with curricula that stressed science and European languages were established to feed into the military officer schools. And in 1876, an Ottoman constitution was promulgated and an elected parliament convened—only to be suspended almost immediately by Sultan Abdülhamit II.

The principle of religious equality between Muslims, Christians, and Jews, pushed particularly strongly by the European ambassadors, made steady headway throughout the period.

The entire movement, termed "renewal" (*tajdid*) in Arabic and "reorganization" (*tanzimat*) in Turkish, is labeled "reform" by some historians, "Europeanization" or "Westernization" by others. But since every aspect of it was paralleled by contemporaneous developments in certain European countries, most notably Russia, there is little reason to separate it from the overall currents of change, and resistance to change, that beset Islamo-Christian civilization as a whole in the aftermath of the Napoleonic upheaval. What separating the Muslim from the Christian political sphere fosters is the retrospective imagining of a historical goal, that goal being Muslim self-improvement aiming at a standard of civilization set by the West.

From the point of view of historians of the modern Middle East, that goal was never reached. "Reform" failed to turn the Ottoman Empire into a part of Europe. Far from gaining the respect of the Europeans, between 1830 when the French occupied Algeria and 1920 when the League of Nations subjected the Arab provinces of the fallen Ottoman Empire to European occupation under the mandate system, every part of the Middle East and North Africa, except Turkey, succumbed to European imperial domination.

However, the master narrative of Europeanizing "reforms" and their failure is not the only way of looking at the long-term results of the post-Napoleonic upheaval in the Middle East. As in Europe itself, new techniques and practices, such as state-controlled telegraphic communication, railroad lines, military conscription, and systematization of bureaucratic practices progressively enhanced authoritarian control. The suspension of parliament by Abdülhamit II (r. 1876–1909) reads as a tragic failure of reform when looked at with the goal in mind of achieving parity with Europe, but the sultan's authoritarianism was right in step with Bismarck, Napoleon III, and Czar Nicholas II, as was that of the dictatorial

triumvirate who seized power from the sultan in 1908, ostensibly to restore the Ottoman constitution. Even Mustafa Kemal Pasha (later Atatürk), who saved Turkey from foreign occupation following World War I, and who was undoubtedly sincere in his hope that Turkey would someday become a fully European state, resembled Lenin, Stalin, and Mussolini in his resort to authoritarian practices.

The Muslim road to authoritarianism, however, differs significantly from that in Europe. Prospective European dictators, as well as hereditary absolute monarchs, had to contend with strong public movements for constitutional government and electoral institutions, but the Christian churches supported the rulers' authoritarian tendencies more often than they opposed them. The opposite obtained in Muslim lands. Resistance to government "reforms" centered among the ulama. Historians who interpret the Europeanization movement as the Muslim world's sole, and ultimately forlorn, effort to catch up with the West see this resistance as obscurantist and obstructive. How, after all, could the Muslims enter the modern world with a benighted, backward-looking clergy dragging them down? This viewpoint, which is certainly not without merit in certain cases, considers the steps that would-be dictators took to undermine the foundations of ulama influence fully justifiable, given the need to free the government of their clerical stranglehold. Whether sharing this viewpoint or withholding judgment on the reformers' anticlerical measures, historians all agree that the reforming governments saw organized ulama power as endangering their designs.

The question in terms of interpretation is: 1) whether the ulama opposed reforms because they were against modernity, a view that finds the most supporters today; 2) whether they opposed them because they were part and parcel of a governmental attack on their own well-being and social status; or 3) whether they opposed them because they saw them facilitating the growth of tyranny. The first two alternatives certainly go far toward explaining the motivations of the ulama in many instances. But opposition to

tyranny cannot be easily dismissed. It is incontrovertible that ulama and laymen of deep religious conscience played leading roles in some of the best known episodes of opposition to domestic tyranny. The Iranian Tobacco Rebellion of 1891–93 developed when the shah granted a monopoly on the production and sale of tobacco to a British entrepreneur. High-ranking ulama responded to the complaints of Iranian tobacco merchants by pronouncing a ban on smoking. The ban was so effective that the shah was forced to cancel the concession. In another instance, the Arab uprising against the Ottoman Empire during World War I was led by Sharif Husain, the descendant of the Prophet, who was known to pilgrims throughout the Muslim world because of his position as governor of Mecca and Medina. Powerful religious opposition also developed when Atatürk abolished the caliphate in 1924 in favor of his personal dictatorship. Religious figures from many countries came together in several international conferences to call for its restoration.

Religious scholars and Sufis also assumed leadership of numerous movements resisting foreign domination. A charismatic religious figure presenting himself as the Mahdi, or Messiah, led the opposition to Anglo-Egyptian control of the Sudan in the 1880s. Palestine's grand mufti (chief jurisconsult), Hajj Amin al-Husaini, took command of Palestinian resistance to Zionist settlement. And a Sufi of the Naqshibandi brotherhood named Shaykh Shamil fought tenaciously against Soviet expansion in the Caucasus.

Irrespective of the protagonists' attitudes toward modernity and reform, these acts of religiously led resistance testify to the continuing potency of Islam as a bulwark against foreign and domestic authoritarian rule. Muslims in distress accepted the notion that men of religion should lead them. To be sure, resistance to dictatorship by individuals of deep religious conscience is not unknown in Europe. But priests did not lead armies, bishops did not anathematize dictators, and popes did not ban smoking. Europe's Christians had long since shifted from looking to the church for protection against tyranny to looking to political leaders working within,

or for the establishment of, constitutional or parliamentary institutions. Such was the long-term consequence of the centuries of conflict between church and monarch that culminated in the devastating wars of religion in the seventeenth century. The Christian clergy were tamed and henceforward served as tribunes of the people only in local matters. By comparison, in Islam, the legal authority of the ulama emerged intact from the sea-change of the middle centuries. Despotic shahs and sultans routinely flouted it in their personal lives, but no one dared deny his theoretical subjection to the sharia. As for the common people, Muslim populations that had long looked to the ulama or to saintly Sufi shaykhs as tribunes of justice continued to do so. This was the natural locus of resistance to tyranny and a long-standing part of the political culture.

Anticlericalism: Success or Failure?

This is not to say, however, that the efforts of the Westernizing governments to undermine the ulama were ineffective, or even that they were unwarranted in the context of changing social and political values. My intention is not to maintain that the ulama were more enlightened than they were. I am simply observing that when a Muslim community feels threatened, looking to religious leaders for help is an ingrained characteristic of traditional Islamic political culture. This explains why so much state energy came to be expended in pursuit of anticlerical objectives, objectives mislabeled "secular" by most western observers. The reforming rulers and their advisers believed that the goal of achieving parity with Europe could not be reached without first maximizing autocratic power, and that meant eviscerating the oppositional potential represented by the sharia and the ulama. In terms of Islamic political theory, what subsequently happened was what was supposed to happen. *Theory predicted that rulers freed from the bonds of the sharia would seek absolute power, and they regularly lived up to that expectation*. By the 1960s most governments in the Muslim world had become "secular" dictatorships. As for the ulama guardians of the

sharia, who were theoretically expected to defend against tyranny, their power to act (though not their inclination) was severely curtailed. This new imbalance in the traditional power equation resulted from rulers following the "Napoleonic method," if that term can be used for authoritarian rule based on new military and communication technologies, anticlerical principles, and appeal to the higher goal of becoming a modern society. Unrelenting state suppression of religion as a political force raised the hope that Europe might someday recognize the "secular" Muslim countries as equals, a hope still vigorously alive in Turkey. But anticlericalism also stripped a political culture based on the circle of justice of the one recognized force that in extreme cases could be summoned to resist a slide into tyranny.

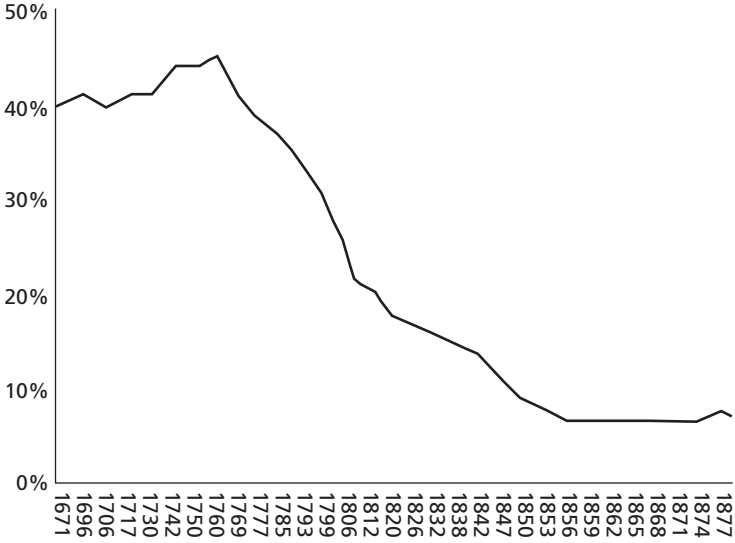
Narratives of "reform" give little space to the dislocation of the sharia and marginalization of its guardians. Being typically western in outlook and convinced that living and thinking like Europeans was an appropriate goal for nineteenth- and early-twentieth-century Muslims, the historians who hatch these narratives tacitly affirm that omelets cannot be made without breaking eggs. The only flaw they see in the Europeanization movement is its ultimate descent into unbridled tyranny. This failure, which ironically only became generally recognized after 9/11 when religious resistance to westernized Muslim dictatorships, and to the western governments that supported them, broke with murderous force upon the world stage, was no accident. It was built into the process of Europeanization from the very start.

Someone writing within the traditional discourse of Islam would craft a very different narrative of the last two centuries. The modernizer sees Muhammad Ali's seizure for state use of the vast revenue-generating properties that generations of pious Egyptians had donated for the upkeep of mosques, seminaries, and local public services as an astute means of gaining the resources needed to finance reform. The traditionalist would lament the loss of religious and public services, and the loss of control and jobs by the ulama. The modernizer sees the Ottoman sultans' promulgation of law

codes based on European models as progress toward a freer and more equitable civilizational standard. The traditionalist would mourn the abandonment of the sharia and the ulama's loss of control, jobs, and public dignity. The modernizer takes the new state schools emphasizing science and European languages, and the simultaneous closure or shrinkage of seminaries, as evidence of modern thinking on the rise. The traditionalist would see only a decline in religious knowledge, a further shrinkage of ulama opportunity and prestige, and a loss of religiously trained personnel in government service. One can imagine similarly polarized interpretations of the restrictions Europeanizing governments placed on Sufi brotherhoods and Sufi-linked craft guilds, of their redesigns of cities along European lines at the expense of local neighborhood unity, and, in Atatürk's Turkish Republic, of the successful substitution of the Latin alphabet for the Arabic alphabet.

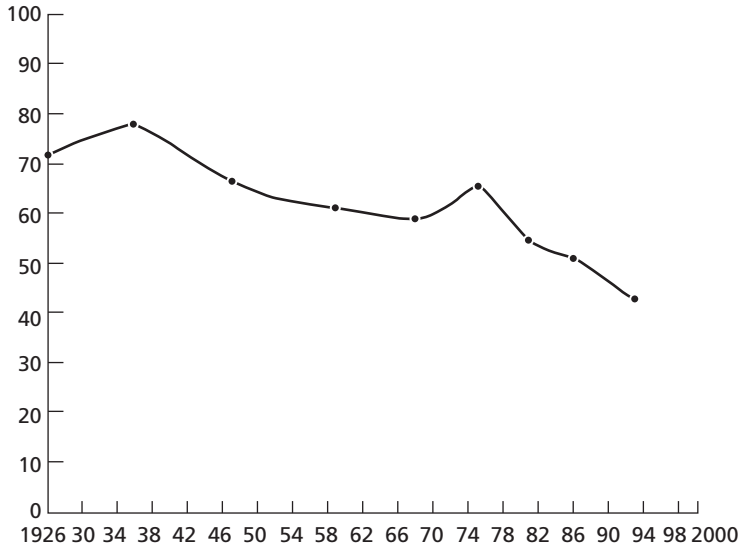
The anticlerical intent of the self-described reformers is clear. But was it successful? Looking at the disappearance and degradation of seminaries and the confining of the sharia to matters of family and personal status in country after country, the answer would have to be yes. But what about the hearts and minds of the Muslim citizenry? Some evidence indeed points to a steady erosion of religion as the touchstone of public life. Other evidence, coming primarily from the second half of the twentieth century, points to the persistence of a political culture based on a tense balance between religion and state and an enduring popular acceptance of religious leaders—albeit leaders of a new type, as will be discussed below—as opponents of tyranny.

The first body of evidence, that indicating an ebbing of religion as a focus of public life, can be seen in a comparison of data from Massachusetts, Turkey, and Iran. Graphs 1–3 show similar declines in parents giving their sons religious first names in all three regions. The first graph, based on the names of Harvard graduates, reflects the naming practices of prosperous families in Massachusetts. The second tallies the names of members of the Turkish parliament and their fathers. The third combines data from provincial cities in Iran.



1 Frequency of names derived from the Old Testament among Harvard Graduates

2 Frequency of names Mehmet, Ahmet, and Ali in families of Turkish parliament members.



3 Islamic names from Hamadan and Arak (Rajabzadeh)

In each case, the beginning of a steady decline in the popularity of religious names coincides with a strong secular assertion of collective identity: the onset of republican revolutionary ferment in the 1770s in Massachusetts, the beginning of the tanzimat reform movement in 1839 in Turkey (the Ottoman Empire), and Reza Shah Pahlavi's advocacy of Persian nationalism and condemnation of traditional religious practices, such as the complete veiling of women, in Iran in the early 1930s.

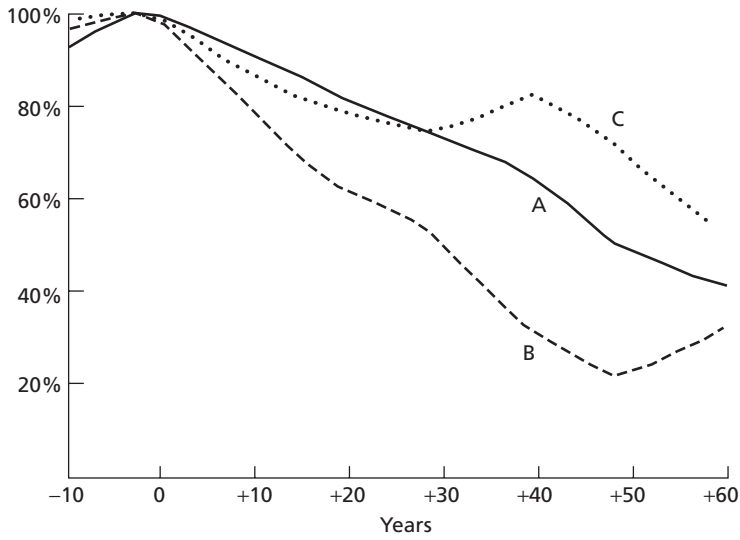
Consider the many influences that come into play in naming a child: family custom, remembering a deceased relative, adulation of a public figure, honoring a friend or mentor. Complex and personal factors like these determine many names; but their influence remains more or less constant over time. They cannot explain sweeping changes like those on the graphs. Parental expectations regarding the future are subject to broad change over time, however. Parents who think about helping their sons fit into the kind

of society they are likely to grow up in give names that reflect their expectations of the future. In this way they reveal their individual appraisals of the trajectory of change they see around them. Large samples of names, therefore, reflect collective guesses about the future being made by parents. As more and more parents visualize a future in which public life does not revolve around religion, they increasingly opt for nonreligious names.

The three graphs show that the American Revolution, the tanzimat, and the reign of Reza Shah all triggered long-term declines in religious naming. In the Iranian case, the decline temporarily reverses in the pre-revolutionary years of the mid-1970s, when Islam became a rallying point for those opposed to the tyranny of Reza Shah's son, Mohammad Reza Shah. This brief resurgence of "Islamic" naming peaked around 1977. Then the decline resumed despite the creation of the Islamic Republic two years later and the great popularity of Ayatollah Khomeini. If this indicator should prove an accurate harbinger of future developments, the Iranian Revolution will ultimately be seen as the point of transition from tyranny to democracy, rather than from secularism to theocracy. And at what speed? Graph 4, which compares the rate at which religious naming is declining in Iran with the historical rates in Turkey and Massachusetts, suggests that Iranian parents are betting on a more secular future at roughly the same rate as their American counterparts did in eighteenth-century Massachusetts. For a fuller exposition of this technique of measuring attitudinal change, see the Appendix on Quantitative Onomastics.

Print Culture and New Authorities

Against these indicators of religion receding from societal and parental consciousness in response to government attacks on the sharia and on the traditional religious establishment, one must weigh the evidence for the persistence of a political culture in which the association of religion with justice empowers movements that seek to curb tyranny and oppose foreign penetration.



4 Comparison of decline in religious naming in: **A** Massachusetts, **B** Turkey, **C** Iran

(These movements may also seek tyrannical ends of their own design, but they do not advertise such unworthy goals.) Some historians trace the ideological roots of Islamism, to use one of the labels coined for such movements, to the formation of the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt in 1929; others take their search back to eighteenth-century Arabia, West Africa, India, and Iran. For present purposes, however, the content and genealogy of the various Islamist ideologies are less important than are some new means of communicating them.

Among the many Europeanizing measures aimed at putting the government forever ahead of the ulama, one innovation, the printing press, had the unintended consequence of setting the religious culture of the Muslim world on a new path.[11] Muhammad Ali introduced the first Egyptian newspaper in 1824. Sultan Mahmud II imitated his action in 1831, and the Shah of Iran brought Iran into

the print era in 1837. These first publications were essentially government gazettes intended to disseminate news about official activities. Beyond these official newspapers, the governments also encouraged the publishing of books on secular subjects, most notably textbooks for the new state schools. As had been the case in Europe, however, printing proved too powerful a force to be easily contained.

Historians agree that Gutenberg's brainchild transformed European thought and society from the fifteenth century onward. Among other things, the printed word began to wean the literate public from sermons and moral lessons delivered orally by clergy from pulpits and school lecterns and reorient them toward authors, editors, and publishers. Since in Europe printing and printers eventually became associated with dissent from established religious practices, the new technology seemed perfect for curing the literate Muslim public of its propensity to listen overmuch to the ulama. In practice, however, roughly a generation after governmental and secular publications made their first appearance, certain Muslims who were concerned with what was happening to their societies, including a few ulama, began to grasp the potential of the new technology. The result was the slow emergence of a new class of religious authorities who experimented with using the printing press as a pulpit.

Lines of religious authority had for centuries depended on personal classroom linkages between teachers and disciples. Any literate person might read religious texts, but men who did not have a known mentor or a seminary degree commanded little attention in religious circles. Women were totally excluded. With the advent of printing, this changed. Writers, editors, and publishers did not need the credentials provided by a seminary education or the endorsement of an important member of the ulama in order to command an audience. Just as in Europe centuries before, the intellectual monopoly exercised by learned men holding forth in religiously oriented schools and assemblies collapsed in the face of the widespread dissemination of printed materials.

In principle, this is what the Europeanizing innovators desired. It fit well with their other efforts to diminish the influence of the ulama. What they did not foresee was the flood of novel *religious* ideas that began to appear in newspapers, magazines, books, and pamphlets. Just as Protestant authors in sixteenth-century Europe used the newly invented printing press to publish works that contradicted established opinions, so did an increasing number of Muslim religious thinkers. And as in Europe, some of the new authors lacked the traditional seminary education that was the hallmark of the ulama. As the twentieth century progressed, more and more of them came from secular educational backgrounds, being trained as lawyers, doctors, engineers, economists, journalists, and the like. Without the print media, these neophyte religious authorities—the new authorities, as I will call them—would have found no audience. But the transition from a classroom and pulpit culture to a printing press culture made their lack of traditional credentials unimportant. The new technology enabled *authors* to become *authorities* simply by offering the reader persuasive prose and challenging ideas. A Muslim in Egypt could become a devoted follower of a writer in Pakistan without ever meeting him, or meeting anyone who personally knew him, or knowing whether or how he was qualified to write about the faith.

Why did printing cause this transformation? After all, Muslim scholars had produced hundreds of thousands of religious manuscripts over the centuries, and many of them were readily available in mosque libraries or private collections. Yet knowledge acquired from manuscripts lacked the cachet of knowledge acquired in the religious classroom or at the foot of a preacher in the mosque. So how did reading a religious text in print acquire greater import than reading the same text in manuscript? Part of the answer lies in the production of hundreds and thousands of identical copies. One person reading a manuscript and relating its contents to friends and families is a droplet; thousands of people reading and talking about exactly the same text builds toward an ocean. Another part is widespread distribution of these multiple copies.

Whereas lectures and sermons by ulama differ from city to city and country to country, with printed texts, Muslims in South Africa know that they are reading exactly what Muslims in Morocco and Indonesia and Bosnia are reading. In this way the local intellectual communities of ulama trained in seminaries gave way to an international intellectual community of readers of significant books and magazines. We take this for granted as an aspect of Euro-American culture, but we had a four-century head start. In the Muslim religious world it only developed in the late nineteenth century.

Even then the idea that authorship in and of itself might take the place of traditional religious credentials was not immediately apparent. The Arabic religious newspaper *Al-Urwat al-Wuthqa* ("The Firmest Bond," *i.e.*, between man and God [Quran 2:256; 31:22]), published in Paris for 18 issues in 1884, ushered in the new era with its call for an activist reinterpretation of Islamic principles and strong opposition to British imperialism. But its two authors were both trained as ulama: Muhammad Abduh, an Egyptian, and Jamal al-Din al-Afghani, an Iranian who posed as an Afghan to disguise his Shi'ite background. The issues were distributed free throughout the Muslim world until the British banned their import into Egypt (since 1881 under British occupation) and India. Picking up the briefly quenched torch, Abduh's Syrian disciple Muhammad Rashid Rida edited the Arabic-language magazine *Al-Manar* ("The Minaret") in Cairo between 1898 and 1935. Rida had studied in both an Ottoman state school with a "modern" curriculum and an Islamic school, but he wielded his influence as a writer and editor. Thousands of Muslims around the world first encountered the modernist ideas of Muhammad Abduh in the pages of *Al-Manar*. After Abduh's death in 1905, and the subsequent defeat of the Ottoman Empire in World War I, they followed in its columns Rida's own flirtation with nationalism, advocacy of a revived Islamic caliphate, and eventual support for Saudi Arabia as the guardian of Muslim independence in an imperialist world.

Al-Urwat al-Wuthqa and *Al-Manar* were both set in type, but Muslim religious writers drew particular benefit from another print technology introduced from Europe. Between 1793 and 1796, a Bavarian playwright named Alois Senefelder, looking for a cheap way of printing his plays, developed a new process he called lithography. When he wetted a flat piece of limestone and inked it, the ink stuck to whatever marks he had made with a greasy crayon, but not to the wet area. Every line, whether alphabetic or pictorial, printed exactly as it had been drawn, and an unlimited number of prints could be pulled from the stone without reducing the quality.

European and American artists hailed this new and flexible way of reproducing drawings, but the innovation of printing books and newspapers by lithography took place outside of Europe and America and became particularly widespread in the Muslim world. Lithographed texts appeared everywhere and became much more popular than typeset texts in Iran, India, and North Africa. The British East India Company brought lithography to India in the early 1820s, and lithographed books soon appeared in Istanbul (1831), Iran (1843), Tunisia (1857), and Morocco (1865). (By comparison, the first lithographic press in the United States started turning out pictures, but not books, in 1825.) Besides allowing elegant Arabic handwriting to be reproduced as written, lithography depended on scribes rather than typesetters. How this affected the control of the publisher, as opposed to the scribe, over the intellectual content of the books he issued has not yet been studied; but it certainly made the technology congenial to the ulama, who were all well trained for scribal activities and who enjoyed reading books that looked like traditional manuscripts.

Authors with western-style educational backgrounds, and little or no traditional religious training, gained increasing prominence after World War II, by which time the most popular, innovative, and inspiring thinkers in the Islamic world were expounding their ideas in print rather than in the classroom. These new authorities effectively supplanted the old authorities, the traditional ulama,

whose power had been based on seminary education, judicial office, and income from pious endowments. Sharia judgeships persisted in a few countries, and such seminaries as remained continued to train and employ ulama; but the Muslim public at large, both male and female, increasingly learned about their religion from a torrent of books, magazines, newspapers, and pamphlets, written in large part by people who lacked the credentials to be classified as ulama.

The Iranian revolution revealed the importance of the new, print-based authorities. European imperialist domination in Iran was indirect and late in developing, being formalized only in 1907 through an agreement between Britain and Russia to divide the country into spheres of influence. Thus the strong pressure to impose anticlerical measures and enforce religious equality that the lands to its west had felt from European ambassadors, and later under European colonial administrators, came late to the land of the shahs. This is borne out by the very high rate of religious personal naming that lasted through the 1920s. Delayed exposure to Europeanization also explains why, despite the vigorous anticlerical efforts of the Pahlavi shahs beginning in the late 1920s, Iran lagged far behind Turkey and the Arab lands in marginalizing the ulama. Reza Shah Pahlavi banned the wearing of turbans in parliament and, in 1936, outlawed the figure-shrouding chador. He ordered his police to forcibly tear the garment from women on the streets. Nevertheless, seminaries and shrines remained active and survived various measures designed to undermine their financial independence. At the time of the revolution in 1979, most of the population still looked to the traditional ulama, the old authorities, for guidance. Further buttressing ulama authority was the doctrine in Iranian Shi'ism that every believer should personally follow a leading cleric, called an ayatollah, in matters of faith and behavior.

The Iranian revolution drew much of its force from the popular expectation that the ulama could be turned to for defense against tyranny, an expectation that had previously manifested itself in the Tobacco Rebellion of 1891 and a Constitutional Revolution in

1906. The latter achieved only limited success in curbing the power of the shah, but the constitution it forced into being did contain the seed of ulama veto power over legislative activities. That seed quickly withered only to flower later—whether as a rose or a nettle is a matter of opinion—in the constitution of the Islamic Republic of Iran. Traditional ulama like Ayatollah Khomeini exploited this expectation through the use of new media—books, audiotapes, and television news. They also used traditional means, sending their seminary students to spread their ideas. Non-ulama intellectuals contributed ideologically to the revolution, but lacked the human network of the ulama. Ali Shariati, who was educated in France, galvanized university students with his pamphlets, spellbinding oratory, and novel ideas about Islamic history. The French-educated economist Abolhasan Bani Sadr received Khomeini's blessing as the first elected president of the new Islamic Republic in 1981. He succeeded the provisional government leader Mehdi Bazargan, an engineer also educated in France. All three of these figures gained wide audiences for their writings.

Throughout the Muslim world, displays of Khomeini's portrait signaled, for a few years, sympathy with Islamic revolution. But outside of Iran, and of likeminded circles of Shi'ite ulama in Iraq and Lebanon, very few ulama stepped forward to lead the new current of religious politics. Instead, the new authorities in Turkey and the Arab world included writer-journalists like Egypt's Sayyid Qutb; European-trained lawyers like Mahmoud Muhammad Taha and Hasan Turabi, both of whom founded political movements in the Sudan; engineers like Necmeddin Erbakan, who founded the first significant religious party in Turkey; students of European pedagogy like Abbasi al-Madani, the founder of Algeria's Islamic Salvation Front (FIS), and Rachid Ghannouchi, the founder of Tunisia's Islamic Tendency Movement; and university philosophy professors like Egypt's Hasan Hanafi and Algeria's Muhammad Arkoun, who used western scholarly approaches in developing new thoughts about Islam. The same phenomenon manifested itself in south and southeast Asia.

By the end of the twentieth century, men of deep religious conscience—and for the first time women—had inundated bookstores, newsstands, and sidewalk kiosks with a flood of magazines, newspapers, pamphlets, and books expressing their personal views of Islam. Many publications published *fatwas*, or religious opinions on matters of law and religious practice. Traditionally, such nonbinding opinions came from the pens of high-level ulama. Now they represented the views of the magazine's or newspaper's editors. Some authors called for a return to life as they imagined it had been lived in Muhammad's own time—a matter they did not always agree on—and disparaged the teachings of scholars from later centuries. Others expressed opinions of great novelty, many of them calling for greater personal liberties and the creation of Islamic republics, or at least the participation of Islamic parties in free elections. Still others, most notoriously Osama bin Laden, an engineer, and his associate Ayman al-Zawahiri, a surgeon, preached terrorist violence as the solution to Islam's problems.

A Message Finds an Audience

In recent decades, the electronic revolution has reinforced the print revolution. Radio and television, being under government control in most Muslim countries, did not initially affect religious authority. But audiocassettes and videocassettes, followed by the Internet, have become effective media for transmitting personal interpretations of Islam. These later technologies do not diminish the historical importance of print because the audiences they found had first been created by the printing press. Yet the use of the new media by the new authorities does serve to underscore another way in which anticlerical measures backfired on the governments that put them in place.

Today's Islamic political revival draws its mobilizing force from three attempts at reducing the power of the ulama that ended up producing unintended consequences. Two have been discussed. First, the marginalization of the ulama, the old authorities, suc-

ceeded to a large extent in freeing aspiring authoritarian governments from political threats from their long-term rivals. Today's ulama, at least in many countries, more often than not depend on government salaries and government institutional support, and accordingly defer to the government, or are seen by the general population as deferring to the government, on controversial political issues. However, the unintended consequence of this anticlerical success was to make room for new authorities with different, and less conservative, educational and intellectual backgrounds. Secondly, the print revolution was intended as a vehicle for disseminating governmental views and modern secular and scientific knowledge. It succeeded on both counts. But it had the unintended consequence of handing the rising new authorities a tool for reaching a vast international readership and luring readers away from the declining old authorities.

The third reforming backfire was made by the nationalist governments that emerged after World War II (as well as nationalist Turkey after World War I) when they adopted mass education as a means of training young people for public service and indoctrinating them with secular nationalist principles. They successfully brought about mass youth literacy and political awareness, but with the unintended consequence of creating an enormous audience for the writings of the new religious authorities. Specific conditions in particular countries contributed to a varying time lag between the initial publication of modernist Islamic ideas in the late nineteenth century and the surfacing of Islamist movements as mass political phenomena. The Muslim Brotherhood became a force in Egypt in the 1930s; parallel movements did not appear in Iran until the 1960s. But wherever such movements gained headway, their success depended in large part on youth literacy and a politically aware public.

Political analysts in the early 1980s, belatedly forced by the Iranian Revolution to focus on anti-regime religious movements, often expressed puzzlement at the strength of these movements on university campuses and their special appeal to students in the

most competitive and technical programs. Some dismissed the student activists as rebellious teens who would become like their fathers once they matured. Certain others sought more pragmatic explanations: effectiveness of religious movements in arranging study groups for poor students who could not afford to buy copies of the professors' lectures, the security of person afforded to female students who wore Islamic dress, and so forth. Underlying these rationalizations was an unspoken sense that rather than encouraging religious ideas, modern education should have inoculated students against such things. Secularization of society in the West, after all, was historically associated with the role of secular education in refuting hoary religious dicta, from the victory of Copernican astronomy over church-supported Ptolemaic cosmology to the triumph of Darwinism over creationism.

The mass educational systems in the Muslim world also succeeded in transmitting modern scientific views, but they met only limited success in inculcating anticlerical political views. Two characteristic differences between western education and modern education in the Muslim world shed light on this contrast: The latter has always lacked a philosophy of liberal education, and the challenge of teaching about Islam without empowering Islamic scholars has never been resolved.

The educational philosophy of modern education in the Muslim world has various roots. In countries like India, Algeria, and Indonesia, which were subject to colonial rule, modern secular education, more often than not modeled on the system of the imperialist homeland, was usually reserved for a very small number of students from elite families. With high career expectations and a substantial stake in the existing power structure, most of these students were intellectually and politically docile.

In countries like Egypt, the Ottoman Empire, and Iran, which retained their independence long enough to institute their own educational programs, the purpose of modern schools was education for state service, first to train military officers and later to train government officials as well. Though their curricula were Euro-

pean, these institutions were not without indigenous models. The Palace School established in Istanbul by Mehmet the Conqueror in the fifteenth century had trained both officers and administrators, and Egypt had long had training barracks for the Turkish and Circassian slave boys imported for service in mamluk regiments. In both cases, instruction went well beyond military skills. In addition, both in these countries and elsewhere, service in government bureaus relied on apprenticeship training within each bureau. Seminary alumni, who constituted the most numerous group of literate citizens in the nineteenth century, seldom served as military officers or civil administrators. They either became ulama or went into civilian trades.

When modern educators, following the precedents laid down by Muhammad Ali in Egypt and Mahmud II in the Ottoman Empire, took it for granted that government employment was their students' primary objective, they devised curricula for that purpose. They deemed history, philosophy, and literature of little use. Religious instruction they kept at a fairly perfunctory level since they did not want to create a new career track for the ulama. In terms of overall educational philosophy, there was nothing comparable to the notion of liberal arts, or the quest for intellectual broadening for its own sake. Such notions of abstract inquiry as existed were more at home among students training to be ulama, who mostly applied them to religious rather than worldly matters. Exceptions to this pattern were confined almost entirely to foreign religious schools—The American University of Beirut and Istanbul's Robert College founded by American missionaries in the nineteenth century, or the chain of Jewish secondary schools supported from France by the Alliance Israélite Universelle—or western-language preparatory schools like Victoria College in Alexandria and Cairo and The American School in Tehran that received support from western governments. No indigenous private institutions of nonreligious higher education arose to offer alternatives to the secular state schools and the seminaries until the 1980s.

The basic philosophy of education in state schools did not change when independent nationalist governments opted for universal educational in the twentieth century. Students still hoped to work for the government after completing their degree programs, though nationalist fervor and, in some countries, socialist policies made notions of government service less prosaic than those entertained by students in the nineteenth century. Until the 1980s, the Egyptian government would announce each spring how many new graduates it would absorb into its bloated bureaucracy. As the systems grew, instead of small numbers of students from elite families or military castes, thousands of young men and women from humbler social origins packed the lecture halls, and thousands more graduated from high school but failed to gain university admittance.

Educated youth swelled the ranks of the unemployed and underemployed. Their high school or university backgrounds made them more politically aware than the young people in the villages and workshops; their leisure, literacy, and discontent made them avid consumers of religious tracts advocating political activism. In response, apprehensive governments carefully monitored what was being taught in the universities, just as they monitored, or dictated, what was being preached in the mosques. With modern education rooted in traditions of state service, governments had no compunction about interfering in scholarly affairs and limiting freedom of inquiry. Accordingly, the educational systems that had once been the hope of dynamic nationalist regimes began to spiral downward: no classroom freedom, no intellectual innovation, no idealization of the life of the mind, no room in the lecture halls, no jobs for the graduates, and no comparability with parallel institutions in non-Muslim lands. A richer sea for the new religious ideologues to fish in could not be imagined.

What Went On?

A careful follower of the sinuous course of my argument thus far might now interject that the exception I took to Bernard Lewis' pregnant question "What went wrong?" was quite unfair because

I am adopting the same logic myself. What are unintended consequences, after all, except instances of something going wrong? In their quest for modernity, equality with the West, and release from the cold grip of religion, governments diminished the roles and status of the ulama, introduced printing presses, and established secular state school systems. They did many other things besides, but in these three cases the cumulative outcome was to empower a new and more assertive type of religious authority and create an audience for it. A classic case of things going wrong: the goals were clearly visualized, and they just as clearly miscarried.

Yet I would restate my objection to constructing the history of the last two hundred years in terms of missed goals, because a sound interpretation of goals and outcomes depends on a much broader context. To understand why the nineteenth-century architects of change were so single-mindedly anticlerical one must see their actions in the context of a long-term contest between crown and mosque over political legitimacy. The ulama were not discredited simply because they were religiously conservative, or the Sufi shaykhs because they encouraged superstition. Nor would their hold on the mass of believers have withstood the challenge of modern ideas if there had been no tradition of mobilizing the faithful against tyranny and foreign intrusion. In this broader perspective, what went on in the nineteenth century involved not just the ulama as a reactionary class, but the entire tradition of the guardians of the sharia as the protectors of justice. One can easily find different cultural situations—the civil rights movement in the United States, for example—in which would-be reformers have looked upon religious leaders as allies rather than enemies.

By the same token, the printing press offered a public platform to new thinkers of all kinds, and the people I have been calling the new religious authorities were not the first or the most clamorous in availing themselves of it. Nationalists, socialists, communists, and secularists wrote thousands of shelf-feet of books, pamphlets, magazines, and newspapers. They too attracted readers by the eloquence and logic of their presentations. But the fires lit by these nonreligious ideologies ultimately produced more smoke than heat, and

most of them died out for lack of the crucial combustible represented by people ardently committed to stoking them higher. Print and other new media thus only partly explain the comparative success of the new religious authorities. The more important component of success was their taking the place of the old religious authorities in a political tradition of combatting tyranny with justice. People who followed Hasan al-Banna into the Muslim Brotherhood, or who listened raptly to Ali Shariati denouncing the Iranian monarchy, or who joined Osama bin Laden in al-Qaeda, would have followed a self-proclaimed Mahdi in previous centuries, or a militant Sufi, or a mufti proclaiming his opposition to an act of imperial tyranny. The manifestos of the nonreligious print ideologues ultimately came to naught for lack of roots in an indigenous political culture. The preachings of the religious print ideologues sank deep because the roots were already in place. What went on, then, was not just a media revolution, but a media revolution that favored those who could credibly cite Muhammad as their inspiration over those who took their cues from Voltaire, or Thomas Jefferson, or Karl Marx.

As for mass education, outcomes might have been different if every graduate had found a job in a bustling economy. But perhaps not. Full employment may satisfy material longings, but it does not keep people from chafing under authoritarian rule and suppression of personal freedom, particularly in a world increasingly committed to participatory government. The broader context of what went on was a fulfillment of what Islamic political theory predicted: an increase in authoritarian rule as Islam receded from public life.

In Egypt, Iraq, Tunisia, Algeria, Pakistan, and Indonesia, among other places, the forms and ideals of secular democracy implanted by imperial overlords could not prevent the rise of dictators. Nor in Turkey, the most robust democracy, could the military guardians of Atatürk's secular political vision restrain themselves from repeated coups. In Morocco, Iran, Jordan, and the sheikhdoms of the Persian Gulf, monarchs deployed internal security forces to increase their autocracy, often under the benevolent oversight of western powers that were themselves committed to democratic in-

stitutions at home. Even in Saudi Arabia, the bastion of conservative Islam, the power of the royal family, the Al Saud, increased at the expense of the Al Shaikh, the descendants of the kingdom's ideological founder, Muhammad ibn Abd al-Wahhab, and enforcement of religious strictures on public behavior became an instrument of royal social control.

Within the structure of what went on, the rise of Islamic ideologies of resistance should have been predicted. Sharia and tyranny balance each other. As sharia recedes, tyranny increases, until a yearning for a return to a just society—as opposed to a wealthy, powerful, or modern society—causes people to give ear to the guardians of sharia. The idea that this dynamic permanently passed away with the decline of the ulama was wishful thinking based on the historical triumph of crown over clergy in Europe. Islam and Western Christendom are sibling forms of a single civilization, but this does not mean that an evolution of church-state relations that took six centuries to accomplish in Christian Europe could be duplicated in one in the Muslim world.

The lesson of what went on is that Islam cannot be dismissed as a factor in the public and political life of Muslims. To be sure, millions of Muslims live secular lives and deplore religion in politics; but political cultures change only slowly, the wishful thinking of secularists on both sides of the divide between Islam and the West notwithstanding. Railing against Islam as a barrier to democracy and modern progress cannot make it go away so long as tyranny is a fact of life for most Muslims. The ghastliness of international terrorism in the name of Islam, and the bleakness of lives lived under the most oppressive of Muslim behavioral rules, cannot conceal the fact that in rallying Muslims against domestic tyranny and foreign oppression, the new religious authorities, whether peaceful or violent, are acting according to a centuries-old political dynamic designed to protect Muslims from tyranny. Finding ways of wedding this protective role with modern democratic and economic institutions is a challenge that has not yet been met. The path to the future cannot skirt the Islamic past.