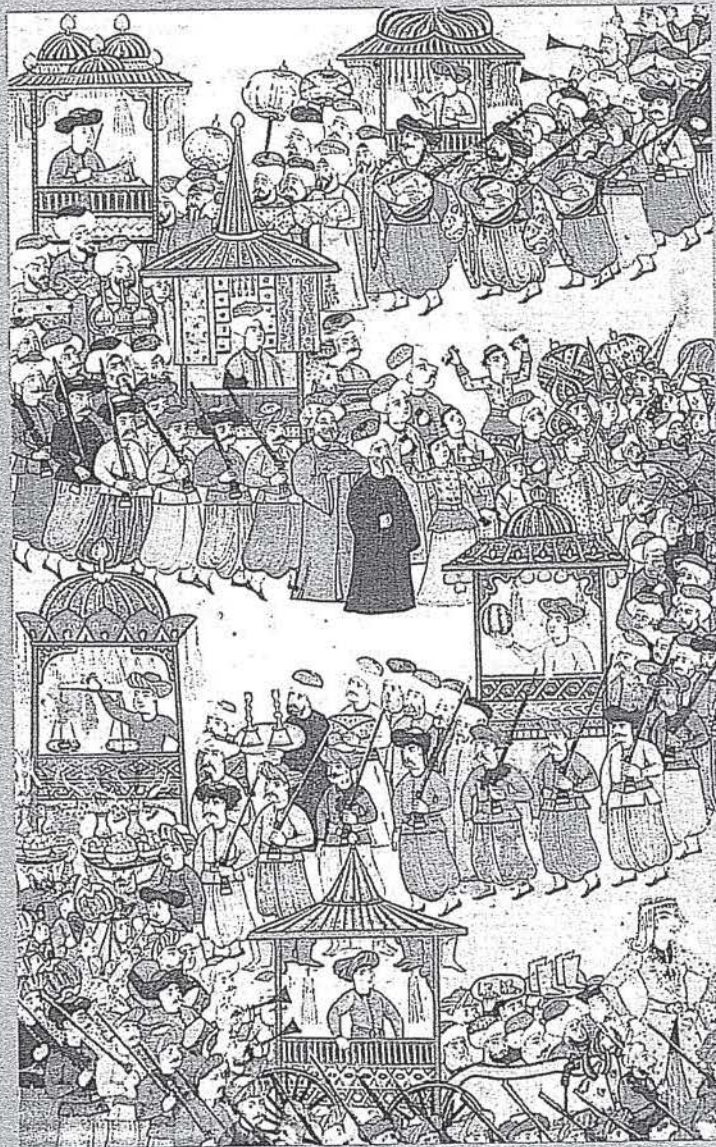


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CIVIL SOCIETY DEMOCRACY AND THE MUSLIM WORLD



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The Cultural Underpinning of Civil Society in Islamic Civilization: Islam and Democracy - Bridges Between the Civilizations

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Thinking About Islam and Democracy in a Global Context

Among people with a democratic orientation there exists a consensus on the ideas of civil society and democracy. In recent debates the Kantian concept of "democratic peace" has been forwarded in support of the argument that global democratization is needed as the basis of the world peace aspired to.¹ The basic requirements for democratization and for establishing democratic peace is the promotion of civil society on global grounds.² In the course of several international inter-civilizational dialogues between the West and Islam held in Jakarta, Karachi, and Amman many of my Muslim co-religionists joined me in arguing that democracy could build bridges between civilizations. I have been involved in unfolding the argument that the clash of civilizations has not been invented, but rather abused.³ The history of mankind is a history of different civilizations around which a great variety of local cultures revolves. It is a history both of trenches dividing and of bridges connecting civilizations. In our age of globalization the need for bridges connecting civilizations can be equated with the need for world peace.⁴ Peace between Islam and the West in the Mediterranean is a pivotal case in point. There are both avenues for reaching this end and obstacles in its way. It is the aim of this paper to inquire into both of them.

In principle, there exists no dispute over the insight that "civil society is both necessary and important". However, the definition of civil society is disputed among people stemming from different cultures. Civil society "can provide a ballast against the power of the state and permit the existence of channels of public expression in order that society's wishes can be articulated".⁵ It is a Western concept not fully shared by peoples of different cultures and civilizations. In fact, the major and cru-

1 Michael E. Browns et al., eds., *Debating the Democratic Peace*, Cambridge/MA, 1996, preface ix-xxxiii and also pp. 157ff. Democratic peace is also the subject of a major research project on "Democracy and Democratization in Asia" at the Université Catholique de Louvain. Prof. Michèle Schmiegelow is the director of this project. The research hypothesis is the Kantian approach that democracies do not wage war against one another. The findings are forthcoming in a book to be published by St. Martin's Press, New York, 1997.

2 Adam Seligman, *The Idea of Civil Society*, New York, 1992.

3 See the interviews with Bassam Tibi, *The Clash of Civilizations* was not invented, but it was used, and abused for other reasons, by Tehmina Ahmed, in *Newsline* (Karachi), November 1995, pp. 9-10. See also the report on Tibi's lectures in Jakarta by Patrick Walters: "West, Islam Clash on Human Rights, Democracy", *The Australian*, April 1, 1995. Further: Ali Satan, "Huntington'in 'Medeniyetler Çatışması'na Bassam Tibi'den Alternatif: Uluslararası Ahlak", *Aksiyon*, 22-28 April 1995, pp. 16-17.

4 Bassam Tibi, *Krieg der Zivilisationen: Politik und Religion zwischen Vernunft und Fundamentalismus*, Hamburg, 1995.

5 Heather Deegan, *Third Worlds: The Politics of the Middle East and Africa*, London and New York, 1996, see pp. 38ff on civil society.

cial difficulty is this very Western origin of the concept. From this follows the criticism that civil society is nothing but an effort to transplant a Western democratic concept into non-Western civilizations. In our age of the politicization of religions to the extent of creating religious anti-Western fundamentalisms,⁶ democracy and civil society are considered to be "solutions imported from the West" and thus condemned. This is the qualification formulated as an invective by the leading Muslim fundamentalist Yusuf al-Qaradawi.⁷

In talking about civil society and democracy while still remaining honest and acknowledging the Western origin of these concepts, we cannot escape the observation that there is no global common way of thinking and no universal history in and through which people can unite. However, globalization has contributed to transforming world history into global history.⁸ The question to be asked is: Does this global history lead to establishing the needed cultural underpinning for democracy and civil society in societies which regard these Western concepts as alien? I agree with David Held that the new networks of communication and information technology stimulate new societal forms but they equally rekindle and intensify old and parochial ones. "Globalization in the domains of communication and information is far from creating a sense of common purpose ... Hence the political and cultural obstacles ... remain formidable. But while few could seriously doubt the nature of these obstacles, their meaning should not be overstated, either."⁹ The call for a de-Westernization of the world is an important articulation of these cultural obstacles. My basic argument in this paper is that only a cross-cultural, not a universalistic approach could contribute to overcoming these obstacles. The unfolding of the needed cultural underpinning of civil society in Islamic civilization is the substance of an effort toward democratization.

The point of departure of this presentation is our world's reality of the simultaneity of structural globalization and cultural fragmentation. This simultaneity is the hallmark of our age, in particular of the present crucial historical period at the turn to the new millennium. By the formula employed I address the fact that the globe is shrinking in terms of interaction and mutual awareness through networking on structural grounds, without, however, the creation of a unity of outlook concerning systems of government, concepts of peace and options for the future of humanity. There exist global structures, but no global order for a civil society shared by all civilizations. The corollary of this statement is that different civilizations need to establish bridges between one another in the pursuit of world peace. My basic contention is that democracy and civil society are the needed bridges.

Some exponents of Political Islam argue that "democracy is an import from the West to the world of Islam" and thus dismiss it as one of the so-called "*al-hulul al-mustawradah*/imported solutions" (see note 7). In my view, an open-minded interpretation of Islam and of our holy scripture smoothes the way to embracing democracy by our Islamic civilization. In the following presentation I want to elaborate on this approach, and support it both with arguments and evidence.

To state that democracy has Greek origins sounds like the reminiscence of traditional wisdom. To say that Islam and democracy are at odds and to support this statement by referring to the non-Islamic sources of democratic thought sounds like an anti-Islamic prejudice. Not surprisingly, this statement comes from some pivotal

6 Martin Marty and Scott Appleby, eds., *Fundamentalisms Observed*, Chicago, 1991; and Bassam Tibi, *Der religiöse Fundamentalismus*, Mannheim, 1996.

7 Yusuf al-Qaradawi, *al-Hulul al-mustawradah* (The Imported Solutions), new printing, Beirut, 1980.

8 See the chapter by Wolf Schäfer in: Bruce Mazlish and Ralph Bouhijens, eds., *Conceptualizing Global History*, Boulder/Col., 1993, pp. 47-69.

9 David Held, *Democracy and the Global Order: From the Modern State to Cosmopolitan Governance*, Stanford, 1995, pp. 281-82.

exponents of Political Islam.¹⁰ Students of Islamic heritage and history are, however, familiar with the extremely positive attitudes of Muslim philosophers vis-à-vis the Greek legacy in the classical age of Islam. Aristotle was named by these philosophers the “*Mu'allim al-Awwal/The First Master*”, whereas the most significant Muslim philosopher, al-Farabi, was ranked as *al-Mu'allim al-Thani*, only second to Aristotle.¹¹ In giving the top ranking in Islamic intellectual history to a non-Muslim, Muslim thinkers have proven how open-minded and how flexible Islam originally was.¹²

In view of this remarkable Islamic historical background it sounds strange to read the following statement by one of the most preeminent exponents in Political Islam, the late Abu al-A'la al-Maududi. In his book “Islam and Modern Civilization” Maududi expresses his conviction as follows:

I tell you, my fellow Muslims, frankly: Democracy is in contradiction with your belief ... Islam, in which you believe, ... is utterly different from this dreadful system ... There can be no reconciliation between Islam and democracy, not even in minor issues, because they contradict one another in all terms. Where this system (of democracy) exists we consider Islam to be absent. When Islam comes to power there is no place for this system.¹³

As a liberal Muslim I place my thoughts in the philosophical tradition of classical Islamic rationalism. Within this framework, I am inclined to ask: Is this alleged incompatibility of Islam and democratic civil society correct? I then wonder, why are Islam and democracy described as being at odds to such an extent? Given the intellectual openmindedness of Islam as an assumption on which my point of departure is based, the quoted sharp rebuff of democracy in the name of Islam seems to me very questionable.

It is true, in terms of *Iman*/belief there exists only one Islam shared by all Muslims. In Islamic history there were, however, many different approaches to understanding Islam and thus varying schools of thought. What school of thought in contemporary Islam is reflected in the quoted statement by Maududi? Clearly Political Islam. There is, however, an alternative, a true synthesis between Islam and the concept of democratic civil society. My contention is that the concept of civil society can be presented on Islamic grounds.

At the very outset of this inquiry it is essential to make clear the distinction between the interpretation of Islam as a religious belief and Political Islam (see note 10). To be sure, Islam is both a basis for a variety of local cultures and for one all-encompassing civilization around which these cultures rally in terms of world-view. Now, the contention adverse to democracy, namely that Islam is a specific system of government opposed to democratic rule, is a quite recent one. For instance, the fundamentalist term *Nizam Islami*/Islamic system occurs neither in the Qur'an nor in the *Hadith*/tradition of the prophet. It follows that this term provided by Political Islam is not an authentic Islamic concept. It is most important to draw a clear distinction between these two totally different understandings of Islam in further advancing the argument that Islam and democracy are not at odds, as suggested by Maududi.

10 For an enlightened Islamic criticism see M. Said al-Ashmawi, *al-Islam al-siyasi* (Political Islam), Cairo, 1987. For recent studies on this subject, see Nazih Ayubi, *Political Islam*, London, 1991; and Olivier Roy, *The Failure of Political Islam*, Cambridge/MA, 1994.

11 On al-Farabi, see Chapter 4 in Bassam Tibi, *Der wahre Imam: Der Islam von Mohammed bis zur Gegenwart*, München, 1996, pp. 133-50.

12 See the most recent record of this Islamic heritage: *The Political Aspects of Islamic Philosophy: Essay in Honor of Mushin Mahdi*, ed. by Charles E. Butterworth, Harvard Middle Eastern Monographs, Cambridge/MA, 1992.

13 Abu al-A'la al-Maududi, *al-Islam wa al-madaniyya al-haditha* (Islam and Modern Civilization), reprint Cairo, no date, pp. 41-42. On these views of Maududi see also Muhammad Dharif, *al-Islam al-siyasi fi al-watan al-'Arabi* (Political Islam in the Arab World), Casablanca, 1992, pp. 98-99; and Youssef Choueiri, *Islamic Fundamentalism*, Boston 1990, pp. 93ff.

The Grounds of the Inquiry

The assumption of compatibility or incompatibility is in each case related to the point of view from which Islam is regarded. The argument that classical Islam was able to embrace Greek philosophy with very few problems smoothes the way for a favorable debate on Islam and democracy. At first glance, we may ask whether or not the question can be asked at all in such a general manner.

To begin with: In the world of Islam there exists a great variety of local cultures, each united by ethical standards related to similar norms and values, as well as by a corresponding world-view. The Islamic unity in terms of a common *Weltanschauung* and diversity in terms of local cultures can be considered as Islamic civilization. It is true that there are dividing lines between the world's civilizations (see note 4). The reason for the clash between the West and the world of Islam lies in the fact that both claim universality for their world-view and the related concept of order. Given, however, that people who belong to divergent civilizations share the very essence of belonging to one humanity, there must be a common core of ethical values that can unite humanity for the sake of peace in our world. In my view, the concepts of democracy and civil society are the core issues in this international morality.¹⁴

Our present post-Cold War world is characterized by the rise of ethnic nationalisms and religious fundamentalisms in all regions of the world and its major religions (see note 6). Unfortunately the politicization of all religions emphasizes the dividing lines within humanity (see note 4). The vision of a world in dignity and peace embraces the concept of a global order based on civil society. In my introductory remarks I alluded to democratic peace, i.e. that democracies do not wage war against one another. Basically, democracies resolve their conflicts peacefully through negotiations (see notes 1 and 9). In the light of this argument, world peace among divergent civilizations requires this envisaged ethical convergence on the grounds of accepting civil society as the basis of a global order. The underpinning needs to be cross-cultural, not universalistic. To question universalism and to honor cultural pluralism is not the same as endorsing cultural relativism. There are limits of pluralism due to the fact that neo-absolutisms and relativism¹⁵ tend to clash and so endanger world peace. Inversely, a cross-cultural, i.e. universal consensus on democracy and civil society provides the grounds for establishing world peace. European relativism and fundamentalist neo-absolutisms must inevitably clash, whereas an enlightened interpretation of Islam and European modernity could come to terms.¹⁶ Civil society is a pivotal concept of this very cultural modernity (see note 2).

Despite the given assertions, postmodern politics result in division. By emphasizing heterogeneity and incommensurability cultural relativism undermines the needed bridges between competing world civilizations. The notion of a united humanity goes beyond relativism in stressing that a shared international morality essentially requires the universality of a shared ethical core. It is a precondition for world peace between civilizations that a global order of democratic civil societies is ethically agreed upon and institutionally upheld by all the participating parties (see note 9). Viewed in this manner, the clash of civilizations seems to be, as the Belgian expert on democracy in Asia, Michèle Schmiegelow, rightly argues, "a

14 See the following contributions to the Arab debate on this subject: Center for Arab Unity Studies, ed., *al-Demoqratiyya wa huquq al-insan*, Beirut, 1983; idem, ed., *Azmat al-demoqratiyya fi al-watan al-Arabi*, Beirut, 1984 (see my contribution in the latter volume on pp. 73-87). See my later research on this subject: Bassam Tibi, "Democracy and Democratization in Islam - The Quest for Islamic Enlightenment", *Universitas*, 36, (1994), 4, pp. 244-254. French version, "Democratie et Democratization en Islam", *Revue Internationale de Politique Comparee*, vol. 2, (1995), issue 2. See also Bassam Tibi, "Islamic Law/Shari'a, Human Rights, Universal Morality and International Relations", *Human Rights Quarterly*, 16, 2 (May 1994), pp. 277-299.

15 See the proceedings of the Erasmus Ascension Symposium, *The Limits of Pluralism: Neo-Absolutisms and Relativism*, Praemium Erasmianum Foundation, Amsterdam, 1994.

16 An example of such an interpretation is Fazlur Rahman, *Islam and Modernity*, Chicago, 1982.

clash between fundamentalists of all denominations" (on her project, see note 1). In clearly and distinctly distinguishing between Islam as a religious belief and fundamentalism as a political ideology, we may then ask: Where is the place of Islam in the envisaged synthesis with democracy and civil society? I maintain that an open-minded interpretation of Islam could lead to the full-hearted embrace of democracy. Thus, I distinguish between "Open Islam" and its enemies, the fundamentalists.

Between *Asalah*/Authenticity and Learning From Other Civilizations: How to Adopt "Civil Society"?

The concept of civil society is based on the premise that social and political institutions in a society are autonomous; they are linked to the state, but not controlled by it nor subjected to it. Thus, the institutional division between civil society and the state authority is essential in determining whether or not a society is a civil society. It is unfortunate that the requirements of a civil society have always been missing throughout the World of Islam. There never existed a division of powers nor institutions lying beyond the reach of the rulers. The Islamic concept of politics revolves around the qualification of the ruler as an *Imam*.¹⁷ The late Muslim Oxford scholar Hamid Enayat argues, "the absence of independent political thought in Islamic history" has led to politics rarely being studied in isolation from religious disciplines. As he continues, the result has been that traditional Islamic scholars failed to deal with "problems such as the nature of the state, the varieties of government, the qualification of rulers, and limitations of their power. The rights of the ruled were discussed as a part of the comprehensive treatises of jurisprudence and theology ... It was only under the trauma of European ... encroachments ... that Muslim élites started to write separate works on specifically political topics".¹⁸ In my research (see note 17) I found that the focus of traditional Islamic treatises was on the eligibility of the ruler to be an *Imam 'Adil*/Just Ruler in contrast to *Imam Ja'ir*/Despotic Ruler. In other words: the reasoning on institutions of state and society that guarantee just order, such as civil society, is missing. These findings lead to the conclusion that an Islamic theory of civil society is required for the establishment of an authentic cultural underpinning. Democracy and democratization are not only needed but also possible in the World of Islam. In fact, some distinguished efforts have been taken in this direction, namely by the renowned Egyptian social scientist Saad Eddin Ibrahim, who has contributed to making the Arabic term *al-mujtama' al-madani* a politically and culturally established equivalent for the Western term "civil society".¹⁹

I believe the concept of civil society can be embedded in Islamic thought on the basis of an "Open Islam". Underlying the contention that Islam could accommodate the concept of civil society is the fact that Islam has - apart from its own rich achievements - a historical record of interaction with and learning from other civilizations.²⁰ The hub of Islamic civilization is located in West Asia, i.e. the region that Europeans place ethnocentrically in their own geopolitics as the Near and Middle East. Islam is also a basic religion in South and Southeast Asia. The secular state of India has hitherto successfully demonstrated that Muslims, Sikhs, and Hindus, as well as others, can share the secular citizenship of the same state while living peacefully within its territory. India, however, provides an illustration of how fundamentalism - in both its

¹⁷ See Tibi (1996) (referred to in note 11 above).

¹⁸ Hamid Enayat, *Modern Islamic Political Thought*, Austin/Texas, 1982, p. 3.

¹⁹ See, among many other publications, Saad Eddin Ibrahim, *al-Mujtama' al-Madani wa al-tahawul al-demokrati fi al-watan al-'Arabi* (Civil Society and the Democratic Transformation in the Arab World), Ibn Khaldun Center Cairo, 1993 (annual report). See also the bulletin of the Ibn Khaldun Center: *al-Mujtama' al-Madani/Civil Society* (bilingual), published in Cairo.

²⁰ The authoritative history of Islamic civilization is Marshall Hodgson, *The Venture of Islam: Conscience and History in a World Civilization*, 3 vols., Chicago, 1974.

Hindu and Islamic varieties- is today a threat to that peace, with anti-Islamic oriented Hindu-fundamentalism as the source of this threat. On the other hand, the insistence of some Muslim leaders on the implementation of the *Shari'a* does anything but promote harmony with the Hindus.²¹ India is a model for the peaceful coexistence of peoples belonging to diverse civilizations under democracy as the common umbrella, but India is also a model for the "coming anarchy" and the "new Cold War" between politicized religions²² in our crisis-ridden world. Indonesia is another case of an Asian country where an enlightened and tolerant Islam currently seems to embrace democracy, while providing an institutional guarantee of inter-ethnic and religious peace between the existing five divergent religious communities. Given that Indonesia, with a population of 193 million, constitutes not only the largest Islamic nation in Asia but in the entire world, the Indonesian model could be particularly significant for other Muslims.²³ In this context the question can be asked whether the favorable conditions for democratization in Indonesia can serve as a model that generates demonstrative effects throughout Islamic civilization, i.e. also for West Asia as the center of Islamic civilization. It remains to be hoped that the Indonesian model, despite all its limitations, can affect the experience with democracy in other parts of the Islamic civilization. In this paper, however, my focus will be on the Arab world as the cultural center of the world of Islam.

The search for an accepted frame of reference compatible with liberal Islamic views constitutes my point of departure. In view of the fact that democracy is a recent addition to the political concepts of Islam we need to inquire into the Islamic awareness of this novelty.²⁴ Muslims have encountered this utterly new concept in the context of globalization and through the exposure of their own civilization to cultural modernity.²⁵

Early Arab Muslim liberals were at pains to embrace democracy and to reconcile it with Islam. The first Muslim Imam, leading Muslim students in Europe, Rifa'a Rafi' al-Tahtawi, expressed his deep admiration of French democratic culture. He was to witness the July revolution in Paris in 1830 and was impressed to see the representatives of the toppled regime being granted basic human rights after their arrest. For Tahtawi this was evidence -as he says- of "how civilized the French are and how closely their state is bound to justice".²⁶ Early Muslim modernists and reformists were critical of Europe on account of the colonial incursion into the Islamic homelands. They nevertheless continued their efforts at a reconciliation of Islam with cultural modernity. In the Islamic liberalism of Muhammad Abduh and others in the early twentieth century, democracy was at the top of the agenda of Muslim thinkers. The reasoning of Abbas Mahmud al-Aqqad²⁷ led the way. In a recent work, the Turkish sociologist Fatma Müge Göçek has shown that the Western ideas adopted in the Ottoman period also included the concept of democracy, and thus indirectly civil society.²⁸

21 See Bassam Tibi, "Islam, Hinduism and the Limited Secularity in India", in W.A.R. Shadid and P.S. van Koningsveld, eds., *Muslims in the Margin*. Kampen/Netherlands, 1996, pp. 130-44.

22 Robert Kaplan, "The Coming Anarchy", in *The Atlantic Monthly*, 273, 2 (February 1994), pp. 44-76. See also Mark Juergensmeyer, *The New Cold War: Religious Nationalism Confronts the Secular State*, Berkeley, 1993.

23 Bassam Tibi, "Vom Werden eines neuen muslimischen Zentrums in Südostasien: Indonesien als Modell für die islamische Zivilisation", *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, October 27, 1995, pp. 10-11.

24 See note 14; and John Esposito and John Voll, *Islam and Democracy*, New York, 1996.

25 See Abdulmajid Sharfi, *al-Islam wa al-hadatha*, Tunis, 1991. I use the notion of cultural modernity in line with Jürgen Habermas, *The Philosophical Discourse of Modernity*, Cambridge/MA, 1987.

26 Rifa'a Rafi' al-Tahtawi, *Takhlis al-ibriz ila talkhis Paris (1834)*, new printing Cairo, no date, see the German translation of Tahtawi's Paris diary, ed. by Karl Stowasser, *Ein Muslim entdeckt Europa*, München, 1989, p. 223.

27 'Abbas Mahmud al-'Aqqad, *al-Demoqratiyya fi al-Islam* (Democracy in Islam), Cairo, 1952.

28 Fatma Müge Göçek, *Rise of the Bourgeoisie, Demise of the Empire: Ottoman Westernization and Social Change*, New York, 1996, pp. 118-22.

At the present day, enlightened Muslims are able to draw on their own history to find a historical record of their process of learning from other civilizations. Islamic rationalism of the medieval period was in fact a synthesis of the Greek legacy and Islamic civilization (see notes 11 and 12). One has to bear in mind that this Islamic rationalism was one of the major sources of inspiration for the European Renaissance and thus one of the main pillars of cultural modernity. It can further be argued that this very modernity is the major source of democracy. Again, the Renaissance is among its initial sources and this very same legacy grew from the interaction between Islam and Europe. As the Berkeley scholar Leslie Lipson puts it:

Aristotle crept back into Europe by the side door. His return was due to the Arabs, who had become acquainted with Greek thinkers ... The main source of Europe's inspiration shifted...²⁹

An earlier encounter predates the above-mentioned cultural interaction. In the course of the Hellenization of Islam medieval Muslim philosophers adopted rational Greek philosophy and Islamized it in the form of a synthesis.³⁰

It is unfortunate that the Greek legacy transmitted to Europe by Muslim philosophers vanished in the world of Islam itself. Some historians point to this fact as an explanation of the ensuing decline in Islamic civilization.

In modern times early Muslim liberals were at pains to resume the vanished Islamic enlightenment in coming to terms with democracy and adopting its norms and values in an Islamic context. As the late Oxford Muslim scholar Hamid Enayat puts it, their failure was caused not so much "by conceptual incoherence as by absence of specific social and economic formations". In continuing this line of reasoning, Enayat argues that the major internal obstacles are: "educational backwardness, widespread illiteracy, and the prevalence of servile habits of thinking and blind submission to authority." There are, however, he continues, external obstacles as well. These are related to "the reluctance of the United States and some West European powers to adjust themselves to the realities of the post-colonial era".³¹ The late Hamid Enayat emphasizes this while acknowledging that the West, despite all its lip service, has not been favorable to the process of democratization in the world of Islam. Enayat died before being able to observe the West's behavior in the post-Gulf War developments as further evidence for his argument.

There are many Islamic countries with a record of democratization in the early postcolonial period. The rise of one-party authoritarian regimes marked the end of democratization. Recently there were some remarkable signs of electoral democratization in Algeria, Jordan, Egypt, and Morocco.³²

Before I move to a more detailed discussion of the available openings for the establishment of a cultural underpinning for civil society in synthesizing Islam and democracy in a tradition of enlightenment, I should like to quote some views by representatives of Political Islam. As I pointed out in my introductory remarks, this stream in Islamic civilization argues against democracy. There, I have cited the late Pakistani Abu al-A'la al-Maududi as arguing that Islam and democracy were at odds. Another authority is the late Egyptian Sayyid Qutb. He supports the assertion of such a contradiction and views the conflict on a global scale:

After the end of democracy in a state of bankruptcy the West has nothing to give to humanity.³³

²⁹ Leslie Lipson, *The Ethical Crises of Civilization*, London, 1993, p. 63.

³⁰ See Chapter 4 in Tibi (1996) (referred to in note 11).

³¹ Enayat (1982) (referred to in note 18), p. 138f.

³² See the surveys in Ellis Goldberg et al., eds., *Rules and Rights in the Middle East: Democracy, Law and Society*, Seattle and London, 1993.

³³ Sayyid Qutb, *Ma' alim fi al-tariq* (Signs on the Road), 13th legal printing, Cairo, 1989, p. 5.

Following the legacy left by Maududi and Qutb, Yusuf al-Qaradawi is one of the most influential writers of Political Islam in our time. He invented the already quoted formula "*al-Hall al-Islami/The Islamic Solution*" versus "*al-Hulul al-Mustawradah/The Imported Solutions*". al-Qaradawi places democracy at the top of the "imported solutions" which he dismisses. al-Qaradawi tells his readers: "Democracy is a Greek term which means the government of the people" and then continues that "democratic liberalism entered the life of Muslims through the impact of colonialism. It has been the most dangerous result of the colonial legacy."³⁴ As the reader notices, al-Qaradawi's dismissal of the Greek legacy deliberately withholds the positive record of Hellenism in the heritage of classical Islam. My consent to a synthesis of Islam and democracy as the cultural underpinning for a civil society is based on this very record of cultural borrowing and exchange.

The rejection of democracy by representatives of Political Islam is based on the idea of popular sovereignty. Are these really authentic Islamic political views? Is it true that Islam and democracy are "in contradiction in all respects", as Maududi contends? And last but not least: Why cannot contemporary Muslims vie with their ancestors at the height of classical Islam in learning from others? Islam and Islamic history teach us that there is no contradiction between authenticity and learning from others in the search of cultural patterns in our age of globalization. Our Prophet prescribed: "*Utlubu al-'ilm wa lau fi al-Sin/Seek for knowledge even in China*". The Prophet well knew that China did not belong to the world of Islam.

Toward a Synthesis of Islam and Democracy

On an ethical level there are many theoretical affinities between Islam and democracy. On this level I deem it possible to find features common to Islamic civilization and the other civilizations in the pursuit of the requisite international morality and democratic peace. I share the view of the late Oxford Muslim scholar Hamid Enayat that it is "neither ... inordinately difficult nor illegitimate to derive a list of democratic rights and liberties" from Islamic sources "given a fair degree of exegetical talent".³⁵ Thus the contention earlier cited, i.e. that Islam and democracy are at odds, does not hold. To be sure, I have liberal and open-minded Islam, not the ideology of Islamism in mind. Thus, my procedure is radically different from the one pursued by Esposito and Voll.³⁶ In the name of Muslim-Christian understanding these two American scholars of Islam end up legitimizing Islamic fundamentalism.

Islamic fundamentalists confuse civil society with the Islamic state. In fact, the concept of an "Islamic state" does not exist in the Islamic sources. Besides the reference to the holy scripture there are also historical facts that run counter to the ideology of an "Islamic state", i.e. to the pattern presented by Political Islam as an alternative to the democratic state. Students of Islam who are familiar with Islamic *Shari'a* law know that there are four Islamic traditions related to the Hanafi, Shafi'i, Hanbali, and Maliki legal schools. In their respective traditions of law-making, these *Madhahib* never entrusted the state with the implementation of *Shari'a*. As Hamid Enayat puts it, in Islamic history the *Shari'a* "was never implemented as an integral system."³⁷

The goal of "Rethinking Islam"³⁸ is an adaptation of religious doctrine to changed historical realities. Rethinking Islam involves, as I argue in one of my books, a cultural accommodation to social change, not simply a conformism in a pragmatic man-

³⁴ al-Qaradawi (1980) (refer to note 7), p. 50f.

³⁵ Enayat (1982), p. 131.

³⁶ Esposito and Voll (1996) (referred to in note 24), p. 126.

³⁷ Enayat (1982), p. 131.

³⁸ Mohammed Arkoun, *Rethinking Islam*, Boulder/Col., 1994.

ner.³⁹ With regard to democracy, the repeatedly quoted Islamic scholar Hamid Enayat makes the point:

What is blatantly missing ... is an adaptation of either the ethical and legal precepts of Islam or the attitudes and institutions of traditional society to democracy. This is obviously a much more complex and challenging task than the mere reformulation of democratic principles in Islamic idioms. It is because of this neglect that the hopes of evolving a coherent theory of democracy appropriate to an Islamic context have remained largely unfulfilled.⁴⁰

In reiterating my conviction that it is not only possible to avoid a conflict between Islam and the concept of a democratic civil society, but also to develop a synthesis between both of them, I should like to conclude this paper by stating that the need of Muslims for a "coherent theory of democracy appropriate to an Islamic context"⁴¹ is not restricted to the interests of Islamic civilization. In our contemporary world, fast shrinking to a global village, there is an overall need for an ethical core of political values shared by humanity as a whole. The universal acceptance of civil society on cross-cultural grounds is the basis for democratic peace and a global order of democracy (see notes 1 and 9). Democracy and civil society are part and parcel of modernity and are among the basic bridges between civilizations under the conditions of the simultaneity of structural globalization and cultural fragmentation. I believe that an open-minded comprehension of Islam would enable us to contribute to this goal in the pursuit of democratic world peace. In contrast, the political ideology of Islamic fundamentalism does not provide a real opening for embracing cultural modernity by Muslims.⁴²

39 Bassam Tibi, *Islam and the Cultural Accommodation of Social Change*, Boulder/Col., 1991 (2nd printing).

40 Enayat (1982), (referred to in note 18), p. 135.

41 *Ibid.*, p. 135.

42 See Bassam Tibi, "The Worldview of Sunni Arab Fundamentalists", in Martin Marty and Scott Appleby, eds., *Fundamentalisms and Society*, Chicago, 1993, pp. 73-102; and also Bassam Tibi, "Fundamentalism", in Seymour M. Lipset, ed., *The Encyclopedia of Democracy*, 4 vols., here vol. 2, Washington D.C., 1995, pp. 507-10.