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Narrative on Islam and Democracy
Re-reading the Relation Between Islam and Democracy in
a Critical Way: The Hermeneutical Alternative**
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Day 1 Session 2: Narrative on Islam and Democracy

Re-reading the Relation Between Islam and Democracy in a Critical Way: The Hermeneutical Alternative

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Abstract

Towards the end of 20th century, the Muslim countries witnessed resurgence of religious movements, political Islam and the democratization process. These developments were both complementary and contradictory, depending on different circumstances in the Muslim world. Globalization, liberal democracy, demographic changes and greater cosmopolitan urbanization in the Muslim world has brought about critical transformations in terms of greater demands for socio-political and economic changes in major Muslim countries. Although in today's world the relationship between Christianity and democracy has not been much discussed, it is very much common to make the relationship between Islam and democracy through not 'religion and politics' but 'religion and state'. These different conceptions enable the researchers to reconsider their research on the relationship between Islam and democracy. The mainstream ethnographic approach suffers from serious ethnocentric stereotypes. Actually, so-called 'objectivist' conceptualization significantly neglects multidimensional approach in examining the relationship between Islam and democracy. Thus, so-called 'objectivist' approach, interestingly has also been used by both major Muslim movements and leading Muslim scholars. This paper addresses the problem of discussing the relationship between Islam and democracy from conceptual and methodological perspectives. This research aims to show how it is important to take into consideration multidimensional aspects, as to do away with overgeneralizations, because the social sphere is diverse and includes religion, education, economy, politics etc. The Muslim society or any society as a matter of fact is based on specific set of socio-political, religious, cultural, historical and linguistic principles. These principles are interconnected and interrelated and as such make a single whole; ignoring any of them will bring about reductionism. Similarly, the relationship between 'religion and state' could eventually lead towards reductionism. Due to different and often rival interpretations, the challenging questions related to 'meaning', 'Which –what- Islam and which –what- democracy?' still stand unanswered. The studies on the relationship between Islam and democracy oversimplify the fact that both religion (although not the sacred texts themselves) and democracy are historical constructions. This paper aims to project as an alternative a hermeneutical method for examining meaningful relationship between text, context and reader in a constructivist way.

Keywords: Islam; Democracy; Politics; Hermeneutics, Discourse

Positivism and hermeneutics are two main methods of inquiry, which provide the methodology for meaningful study and examination of socio-political aspects of life. However, so-called 'objectivist', positivist and 'scientific' approaches couldn't give appropriate answers to the relationship between Islam and democracy. As a matter of fact although positivism was inspired by natural sciences it falls short of providing acceptable interpretation of imbedded intersubjective meanings in multilayered, interconnected and complex nature of social life. These missing points appear because of a methodological fallacy accompanied by a failure of conceptualization, with intended or unintended socio-political implications. Intersubjective, hermeneutical and constructive reading, on the other hand, aim at interpretation for the sake of a better understanding. All these methodological fallacies expose themselves very well in the studies devoted to the relationship between Islam and democracy.

Huntington (1997) in his work *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of world order* raised the question of compatibility of Islam with democracy, which in turn brought about numerous research studies. However, such studies, being at the service of dominant discursive trends, were questionable because of overgeneralizations, stereotypes and weak, poor conceptualizations. Like other discourses, it purposefully produced its own meanings that were aimed at the global large-scale consumers. This paper shall scrutinize some points suffering from such methodological fallacy and as an alternative this paper shall propose constructive, intersubjective, hermeneutical reading as an alternative.

From the scientific point of view, dominant discourse on the Muslim societies is rather questionable. As Bayat (2007: 7-9) puts, although fundamentalism, fanaticism, extremism or in his words 'over-religiosity' is a global trend to which all major world religions are prone, negative and sometimes hostile approaches are directed to Islam and Muslim societies. Likewise Orientalism of the 19th century in the form of a discursive apparatus that produce knowledge as power (Said, 1979) to maintain the domination of colonial forces, the Muslim world today is depicted as a monolithic, homogenous, unchangeable and exceptional. Such subjective stigma and categorization led to the marginalization of 'Muslim societies' not only in the public sphere but by the wider Western scholarship. It is not surprising, as Foucault (2000: 84) warns that the success or validity of any discourse of knowledge is tied to its connection with the networks of power. Thus, power-knowledge produce the truth and in this sense, any set of power-knowledge relations will produce certain forms of truth in a monopolized pattern while disqualifying others; until the discourse establishes its own order through its own *truth regime*.

Research studies on Islam haphazardly use and make interpretations of key terms and concepts. Think of the labels 'Islamic society', 'Islamic world' or 'Muslim societies'. For instance, Bayat discussed labels of 'Islamic society' and 'Muslim societies'. The latter conception denotes the member of a society, namely, Muslims as agents and members of a specific culture, which is not static but changing, flexible and contested. In such societies, different aspects of Islam, interpreted and adopted within diverse circumstances, are applied in different socio-political and economic domains. Therefore, Muslim societies are not singular and abstract but *plural and concrete entities* (Bayat, 2007:8) and their cultures as all other cultures in the world are not confined to religion. Likewise all the other cultures, they have their own historical experiences, class affiliations and patterns. Thus, the members of each Muslim society represent various degrees of understanding how religion shapes their culture.

Considering the above in-depth discussion, the subject of the relationship between Islam and democracy, clearly demonstrate that there are two rival approaches whether Islam is compatible with democracy. According to sceptics, Islam is apparently at the root of authoritarianism, particularly in the Middle East, because of patriarchal society, traditionalism and God's sovereignty. In addition, weak civil societies and non-governmental organizations as intermediaries (Nisbet, 1987) are major causes of authoritarianism and the political culture with anti-democratic elements. These characterizations are often attributed to the religion of Islam. On the other hand, so-called optimists, claim that there are some encouraging experiences and Quranic principles like *Shura* (consultation) that can ensure the compatibility of Islam with democracy (Bayat, 2007: 9-10). Both sceptics and optimists draw their arguments from the *literal* reading of sacred texts. Since their readings are literal (objective, *lafzi*) they neglect the constructive and subjective meanings of the texts (Chandler, 1995:6) in the daily lives of Muslim people with different historical, ethnical, cultural, socio-economic backgrounds these meanings inevitably vary in different historical junctures.

Similarly as other readings, the sacred texts are subjected to competing and contending readings and interpretations that are made within the historical context. Thus, deducing and defining the truth is the job of the readers who like rational animals function within the historical context. Being not isolated from power relations and social power holders human beings reproduce, manipulate, hegemonize (Bayat, 2007: 10) those artefact truths and as a result they establish 'truth regimes' through discourses formed through power networks in Foucauldian (2002) sense. In this regard, there is a plurality of theological genres (historically emergence of different sects and of different schools of thought like *Asharite, Mutezilite...*); which different social groups base their theologies and religious truth on their own readings and interpretations within a particular historical context. Using such allegory, the question whether Islam is compatible with democracy or not is meaningless. Or think in a reverse logic and restate the question: Is democracy compatible with Islam? Moreover, if not, what would happen, will some democratize Islam? Or Islamize democracy? As a result, Bayat (2007: 13) concludes that "we, the social actors render a religion inclusive or exclusive, mono-vocal or pluralist, democratic or authoritarian." Likewise, inferred from his analysis, as Price (1999: 177) puts, Islam is

not a monolithic political force that is the primary cause of political outcomes in Muslim countries. Actually, any religion is far from monolithic and that all religions require interpretation to give them meaning in a given context (Minkenberg, 2007).

Diverse interests, backgrounds and orientations shape diversity of individual meanings and interpretations. In addition, the popularity of an interpretation is a matter of a group's capacity to mobilize consensus around their truth (Bayat, 2007: 14) or its capacity to be concomitant with the dominant discursive formation. In this sense, not only of Islam, but of a wide spectrum of democratic experiences and understandings are inevitable. A dominant discourse may emerge but multiple discourses are continuously re-established. For instance, the term "democracy" involves multiple interpretations and applications and it is contrary to the belief or presuppositions of some, the Western experience of democracy reveals a rich mosaic rather than a single paradigm (Esposito, Voll, 1996: 193). Using this allegory, the Muslim world is not a monolithic entity. Moreover, Islam and democracy are not permanent categories and as such they are both subjected to reading, interpretation and the historical context.

Islam and Islamism are not the same thing, they are different entities. In this way, Tibi (2012: vii) states that Islamism emanates from a political interpretation of Islam. This interpretation is not entirely based on the religion of Islam as the faith but on an ideological use and sometimes abuse of religion within the political realm. From a more sociological perspective, Bayat (2007:15) claims that Islamism is a middle class movement and it was spurred through the feelings of marginalization as a result of the failure of both capitalist modernity and socialist utopia. This failure made the language of religion a substitute for politics. Islamism is, as a political notion, against both communism and secular nationalism. Furthermore, it is offered as a religious system with superior political model, cultural codes and as an ability to respond to the political, economic and cultural deficits of 'western allies and cultural domination of the 'excluders' –national elites, secular governments, colonization, poverty etc.

In order to witness the discursive transformation it is surprising that during the Cold War the main question was not compatibility of Islam and democracy but Islam and Communism (Lewis, 1954). Lewis relates the communist tendencies in Muslim societies to anti-Western reactions and social-economic discontents. Actually, for Lewis (1954:8), identifying Islam and democracy is a result of misunderstanding based on the romantic and apologetic representations of Islam. He argues that there are many anti-democratic elements in Islamic tradition for which he indicated examples of pro-communist traditions in the history of Islam.

There are numerous stereotypes and prejudices on the relationship between Islam and democracy. First, there is a commonly accepted truth of inherent, exceptional and particular relationship between Islam and politics. As other major world in their relations to the state formation, Islam is also subject to historical contingencies (Jung, 2004:61). However, political Islam has assumed the role of 'other' in the current debates on globalization. In this regard, an inherent connection between religion and politics in Muslim societies is an orientalist stereotype. There is an inevitable social differentiation between state, religions, law or in other fields of social action. Therefore Jung (2004: 62), in his analysis, argues that any enquiry into the relationship between Islam and the state that exclude political economy, colonial legacies, political culture and power structures falls short of providing sound reasons for questionable democratic culture in the Muslim countries. In this regard, different regimes in the Muslim societies have been under the pressure of a transformation, commonly labelled as 'modernisation'. Such process produced a huge gap between state elite and society, which contributed towards the predominance of authoritarian and repressive systems that lack accountability and legitimacy. In order to compensate the lack of proper legitimacy, such states attempt to control the means of symbolic reproduction (as the source of legitimacy) by using Islam as the state religion. Herewith, Islam serves as a justification for monarchical and authoritarian regimes whereby the power structures are often justified by religious means. The state politicised Islam (Jung, 2004: 68) is a cover for paternalistic and tutelary (mis)using of power and authority. Although Islam was politicised in certain periods of history, Islamization of

politics – the ideal unity of religion and politics in an Islamic state - is the political idea of 20th century; the relationship between modern state formation and religion in the context of globalization.

The process of Islamization, as a modern phenomenon, was a reply to the challenges of modernization because in modern societies the relationship between religion and politics was radically different from that of in the traditional societies. In modern societies, secularisation brought about three expectations: the separation of political and religious spheres, namely the separation of church and state; the gradual erosion of the societal relevance of religious symbols, 'disappearance of religion'; and individualization of religion. The concept of modernisation, embraced by the Muslim societies, regards secularisation as a zero-sum game compatible with the authoritarian aspirations and assertions of the modern state without having any intermediate associations that guarantee the separation between state power and civil society. These authoritarian states have a tendency to control the religious sphere for the sake of symbolic reproduction of the society. For instance, Jung (2004: 64, 73) made an excellent comparison of distinct traditions in Iran and Turkey in terms of Islamism and secularism. These two are not antithesis to each other as in both examples there are attempts of the state elites to monopolise the means of symbolic reproduction for the sake of justifying the current power structures. It is to say that, the relationship between religion and politics is not basically and allegedly characterized by the inherent Islamic features but *by the logic of modern state formation within a particular historical context*. Therefore, the question whether Islam is compatible with democratic politics is a result of stereotypical public image and prejudiced thinking and as such is irrelevant (Jung, 2004: 75).

Cavatorta (2006) in his analysis on the civil society in North African countries argued that Islamist associations are often labelled as undemocratic; however, such claims are mostly based on prejudices. Thus, the mainstream approach usually presupposes that Islam is incompatible with democracy a priori and consequently Islamic associations are undemocratic too. However, such associations share the same Islamic *ethos* and there is significant complexity in studying and understanding them from the scientific point of view. Then, Roy (2005) rightly argues that the debate on the compatibility of Islam and democracy ignores the fact that the main obstacle to democratization in the Muslim countries is not religion but the secular authoritarian regimes. Furthermore, he argues that the West favour the authoritarian secularism over democracy to curb the 'Islamic threat'. Such views and norms are being reinforced and peoples of these countries, who are against radical Islamism and authoritarianism, conceive Islam as proper and acceptable alternative. Roy (2005) concludes that a democratization process in these countries is impossible unless the nationalism, sectarian cleavages and Islamist parties are taken into account. Actually this is an issue of religion, culture and political culture or in turn political legitimacy, nationalism and political actors.

The problem is not only that of scope but also of a conceptualization. Etymological and conceptual meanings of key terms and concepts has been neglected which led to the conceptual confusions. An excellent example is using the terms the Islamism and Islam. These terms are used interchangeably and such metonymical uses are very common in studies on the Muslim societies. Like many other terms 'Islam' and 'Islamism' are but labels and not etymologically and conceptually carefully used terms. However, the label 'Islamist' backed up by stereotypes is so superficial and common still problematic that, for example, as Karcic (2015: 402) states, '... the media tend to abuse the term and pigeonhole anyone ranging from Recep Tayyip Erdoğan to the leader of Boko Haram as an 'Islamist'.

Different studies link the democratic weaknesses in Muslim societies to culture and particularly with Islam. In doing so, they usually presuppose the widespread stereotype that there is only one single political doctrine of Islam and the past of this doctrine is totally alien to democratic culture. Kramer (1993: 2) argues that these are ahistorical views and he proposed progressive emancipation of the Muslim societies through the process of enlightenment and secularization. In contrast to these views, Islamist activists either overplay and exaggerate the concepts like shura (consultation) or adopt democracy in an instrumentalist way. Nonetheless, Kramer (1993: 4) emphasizes that it is not possible to talk about Islam and democracy in general, but only about Muslims living and actualizing themselves within specific historical and socio-political circumstances. Furthermore, he exhibits several contrasting interpretations of Muslim scholars. Although there is an inclination

of *ulema* in the Muslim countries to place the religion of Islam in present-day context, they hardly cope with ever-changing world and social, global and cultural challenges (Brown, 2015: 144). Consequently, there is no consensus even on what is the *sharia*. Whether it is a comprehensive set of norms that regulate whole human life or it is a set of general rules of good behaviour. For instance, Sunni and Shii as two main traditions have developed contrasting views regarding the fundamental *sharia* principles. In this regard it is consequently wrong to put together Islam and ideology as to develop populist concepts such as 'Islamic democracy', 'Islamic socialism' or 'Arab democracy'. On the other hand, scholars in their works rarely or hardly ever talk about 'Judaic democracy' or 'Christian democracy'.

In the course of a proper understanding of the relationship between Islam and politics, there are not many valuable works. Numerous works lack the methodology in terms of a systematic historical comparison, reductionism, ignoring the variations among Muslim societies, vague generalizations and ethnocentric stereotypes (Moaddel, 2002: 366). Similarly as Said, who clearly demonstrated that the Western scholarship on the Orient is an ideological project aimed at political, economic, cultural domination of the Orient, Moaddel (2002: 366) gives examples of how the approach in present-day scholarship has not changed. Therefore, using so-called a grand narrative may not be adequate in analyzing the present-day global world, including the Muslim world. Even the focus of analysis aimed at either the Islamic texts or culture, is usually not clear and scholarly convincing. And as a result, comprehensive studies are rare in this field. Moaddel (2002: 371) identifies three clusters of the studies: crisis theories (fundamentalism as a result of political or economic crisis), cultural duality theories (West-Islam dichotomy) and state culture theories (political). However, the mainstream studies usually miss the conceptual dimension as for example they ignore the rentier state, militarist republicanism, tribal characteristics etc.. The same problems could be associated with so-called Islamists because when we think of the positions of Islamist groups in dealing with democracy, Islamists are divided into three groups: (i) those who consider democracy as a heretical form of government and so reject democracy vehemently in an essentialist way ("Islam is incompatible with democracy") (ii) those who believe that true Islam is inherently democratic ("Islam is compatible with democracy") and (iii) those who put more emphasis on representative forms of democracy ("Islam, in some points compatible with democracy and in some points not") (el-Solh, 1993: 58). However, the above mainstream studies ignore historical context in examining the relation between Islam, democracy and ideology. For example, as el-Solh (1993) demonstrates as a result of Gorbachev's *perestroika*, Arab regimes had adopted the Soviet single-party system but later on it was found fragile and communism as an ideology ceased to be an alternative. Instead with the fall of communism, liberalism with the cover of democracy came to picture as an alternative. Moreover, the attitudes of Islamists towards democracy are also determined in terms of the system under which they live. If they suffer under a non-democratic system, for example, they are likely to be more appreciative of the merits of democracy (el-Solh, 1993: 63).

Tessler (2002) asserts that discussions on democracy in the Muslim societies are predominantly directed towards the political orientations of ordinary people and the popular attitudes. But, he claims, the views of the citizens are examined within an impressionistic and anecdotal context of the Western stereotypes not on scholarly socio-political analysis. Tessler complains about a lack of the 'systematic empirical inquiries into the nature, distribution and determinants of political attitudes in the Arab world. Therefore, he carried out a survey in Palestine, Morocco, Algeria and Egypt to examine influence of Islam on attitudes toward democracy. However, studies of democratic transitions and consolidation usually focus on political institutions, citizen's attitudes and values and political culture. The relationship between the religion and politics, especially democracy, largely depends on how and by whom it is interpreted. Moreover, there can not be a single interpretation and a consensus on who speaks in the name of Islam (Tessler, 2002: 340). It is widely observed that strong religious attachments feed more conservative political views and it is valid for all religions. Actually, the ideologies or all religions of the world are not immune from fanatical, radically conservative or fundamentalist particles, interpretations. Many religious traditions have been prone towards the emergence of a conservative or fundamentalist movements, even in established democracies, among non-Christian and Christian traditions alike (Minkenberg, 2007: 897). Thus, a despotic or totalitarian understanding of a religion or an ideology is a matter of the interpretation. In this regard, it is futile and exclusive to talk about the compatibility of Islam and

democracy without considering the relationship between religion and ideology. As a matter of fact, so-called radical and exclusive trends can emerge in any religion. Islamism as a fundamentalist version of the religion is not a struggle between the poor and the rich nor a purely religious phenomenon; not a war of Islam against Christianity; for Islamism 'Islam is the solution' for all injustice, immorality, persecution and corruption. It is a response to the social change within the age of globalization and Marxism as an inspiring ideology for the 'third world' (Mirskii, 2003: 70). In the same way, according to Wright (1992: 131), following the demise of Communism, by 1990's Islam is increasingly being perceived as one of the ideological rivals to the West and expected to play the role of 'other'.

A thorough analysis of studies carried out in the U.S. and Europe show significant similarities in the study of the Muslim societies. For example, the Arab world from U.S. and Europe may be of limited importance and findings show that the influence of Islam on political attitudes is usually exaggerated (see, Tessler, 2002). Therefore, the religious orientations have similar impacts on political attitudes in any society and religion that has played a significant role in mobilizing people (Dallmayr, 2011: 640). Although the major sacred texts always emphasize authority its conception within the socio-political and historical contexts is subject of different interpretations (Zakaria, 2004: 5-6). Moreover, the absence of an official clergy makes Islam much more vague; almost in position that anything, any interpretation may become acceptable as long as it doesn't contradict the main principles of Islam. For instance, issuing different *fatwas* on the same subject clearly indicate the significance of interpretation in Islam. Similarly, theology itself is largely subject of interpretation and, thus, religion itself is not the mere determining factor in accommodation of democracy (see, Fox and Sandler, 2005).

The political relations are subset of a political system that is unique to the general organization of any particular society. As a complex network of power relations, political systems are too complicated to manipulate as there are countless factors from all spheres of society. The societies develop their own political system within the particular historical and cultural contexts. Therefore, values of different societies are incommensurable in their relations to democracy. In the past decades there is a trend of democratization however all societies with their own political system will experience different democratization process. In some countries the antidemocratic stance is fuelled by the anti-colonial sentiments and autocratic political regimes.

In addition to all these reductions, oversimplifications, the relationship between Islam and democracy brings about different question as for example: has there been any political system based on the Sharia? If yes, when some laws are amended, is it to say that Sharia changed? Does Islamic state mean the same to all Muslims? If yes, what are the distinguishing organizational characters of such state –What makes it Islamic? Is it possible to distinguish the world as Muslim and Non-Muslim? Are all Arabs Muslims? Certainly, critical assessment of these questions and a problematization are excellent beginning for the researchers. In Foucault's words "Problematization doesn't mean the representation of a pre-existent object, nor the creation through discourse of an object that doesn't exist. It's the set of discursive or non-discursive practices that makes something enter into the play of the true and false, and constitutes it as an object for thought" (Foucault, 1988: 257). Furthermore, he argues that problematization is problem itself because it is the only path through which rational human beings construct the discourses and meanings that are produced and put in circulation. Using this analogy, the relationship between Islam and democracy is set beyond contextuality without referring to its own, unique context, namely historicity. Foucault's concept of 'problematization' clearly indicates why some certain facts are 'scientifically' analysed or considered but not others. All these are matter of discourse, and that of *truth regime*.

Some Islamists in their apologetic and romantic works and discourses embraced the conception of such 'problematizations'. This may be partly because as Salvatore (1997:243) talks about historical imbalance in terms of 'power-knowledge' in transcultural space, '...since valid knowledge about Islam could be legitimized only by varying degree of association with the Western academic establishment. No matter what the reason is, their works were usually at the service of self-orientalization and self-colonization. As Said pointed, orientalism with all its political implications has been functionalized to replace the ideological adversaries of the Cold War with so-called 'pre-modern and backward Islam' (Ingram, 2014:380). Ingram (2014), in analyzing

the secular democracy, compares the antagonistic stance of Catholicism and that of Islamic fundamentalism towards liberalism and secular democracy. He argued that both Catholicism and Islam don't necessarily demonstrate hostility and radicalism in the name of social justice. Actually, both religious politics and secular democracy shape each other. Secular democracy cannot be reduced to the institutional separation of religion and state but shows the degree of democratic toleration and civility towards religion as a political culture. Actually, a particular religion may become a driving force behind the secular democracy. For example, religion with an emphasis on equality through fraternity (*uhuvvet*) may become an appropriate source for the moral requirements of a secular democracy in claiming legitimacy. Finally Ingram (2014) concludes that, although political Catholicism and political Islam could potentially inhibit democratization, the real threats to democracy are authoritarian governments and global capitalism.

There are attempts to clarify the scope and conceptualization for insuring the risks of reductionism. In his criticism of interchangeable use of Islam and Arab, Zakaria contends that the problem is not the problem of whole Muslim world (think of the cases of Turkey, Indonesia, Malaysia, Pakistan, ...) but mainly of the Middle East Arabs (there are 22 members of Arab League but none is democracy). As Zakaria (2004:6) puts it, of the 1.2 billion Muslims in the world only 260 million live in Arabia. Therefore, the labels Islamic, Middle East and Arab can not be used interchangeably. The tribal and patriarchal monopolization of authority reflected Pan-Arabism in anti-colonial struggle is a distinct cultural characteristics of these countries. As a result, in Arab world this political culture brought about autocratic monarchies, military republicanism, state socialism, Baath nationalism ... all with anti-democratic character. One wonders how it is possible to put a direct connection with these anti-democratic characteristics and Islam. This is the inevitable consequence of the problem of problematization in Foucauldian sense. Democratization is a task of peoples, so to speak, neither liberalism nor constitutionalism or democracy take place without popular demand or commitment. Absence of free market means lack of an appropriate ground for rule of law (capitalism needs contracts). And since cultures vary, different societies with their own social dynamics are in the need of different governmental frameworks.

Like Zakaria, Fish (2002), in his comprehensive cross-national quantitative survey addressed the relationship between Islam and authoritarianism in a comparative way. He found out that among many well-known variables (correlations of economic performance, colonial heritage, socio-cultural division... and democracy) of the relation between Islam and democracy, a meaningful correlation, a casual pattern is the relatively low status of women. In numerous regression analyses, he examines the effects of many stereotyped hypothesized influences on the relation between Islam and democracy, including level of economic development and recent economic growth, socio-cultural division, colonial or communist heritage, OPEC membership, and Islamic religious tradition. In this sense, interestingly only a very particular fact like the female empowerment may be expected to contribute to democratization in Muslim majority countries.

Actually, the issue of incompatibility of Islam and democracy is a part of a grand narration which almost has surpassed all cultural or structural analysis. This conclusion was denoted by Huntington who articulated in a dichotomised way the cultural gap between the West and Islamic world. But Brumberg (2015:97) puts that there is a fundamental problem among scholar in tackling Islam and democracy because they erroneously assume that only Islam itself provides the foundation of political identity. Being a party in the discursive network of the meta-narrative, Huntington inevitably imposes outdated ethnocentrism or simplistic universalism (Brumberg, 2005: 98). Moreover, the label of "Islamism" suffers from (i) underestimating the political, social, ideological and cultural differences (ii) exaggerating the role of Islam in shaping identity in general and political identity of Muslims and (iii) considering the lack of Islamic solution to identity conflicts. For the sake of democracy in Muslim majority societies, the problem is about institutions, interpretations, many other political and cultural factors not Islam, politics itself to be fixed.

Both democracy and Islam are open to the multiple interpretations and applications in such a way that, for example, Islam is itself an inspiring source for wide spectrum of political models (Cook, Stathis, 2012: 175). For this reason, any controversy associated with the compatibility or incompatibility of Islam and democracy inevitably faces the challenging and critical questions of 'whose, what Islam' and 'whose, what democracy'.

Although, through a monolithic and essentialist, the incompatibility notion is theoretically and historically problematic, it is usually considered as self-evident standard and Archimedean point. On the contrary, Islam reveals a rich historical mosaic not a single operational paradigm, in fact, as Cook and Stathis (2012: 176) state, no culture or religion has shown itself to be compatible with dictates of democracy.

It is clear that Muslim countries lag so far behind in their democratization is due in large part to political, historical, economic, and cultural factors –not, in fact, only religious ones. The basic issue is not about Islam but about Muslims. It is not just about the text or tradition of Islam, but about modernity and authoritarian and patriarchal cultures in the Muslim countries. Westernized elites, military officers, and tribal/traditional leaders hold an inordinate control over state power, politics and culture (Cook and Stathis, 2012: 181). As Enteshami (2004: 91) puts, political upheavals tend to accompany serious social and economic problems; urban and environmental degradation, growing poverty and unemployment, corruption and nepotism, patriarchal autocracy, militarism, state socialism, cruelty all mix into a cocktail of resentment, often stirring the people in the heartland of Muslim-dominated territories into action. Which of the problems are directly tied to Islam? Taking into considerations all these aforementioned problems as methodological deficits and political risks, for the critical subjects like the relationship between Islam and democracy, the constructive hermeneutical method which aims at a better understanding (not explanation usually with political purposes) of any multilayered and so complex nature of any society is a much more secure alternative. In addition to this hermeneutical approach, a permanent caution on problematization seems a 'way out'. By the way, a secure path to avoid from the risk of being a part, at service of the discourse formed by the grand narrations with primarily political not scientific purposes might be insured.

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