

**PRELIMINARY REFLECTIONS
ON
THE NOTION OF ISLAMIC DEMOCRACY**

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[This is very much a tentative first draft by someone who knows precious little about Islamic religion or Muslim societies. I am sending it to a small number of scholars (whose knowledge in this area is much greater than mine) for comments and criticisms. I thank you in anticipation for your attention and eventual response.]

Placing adjectives in front of the noun, democracy, is hardly a new practice. David Collier and Steve Levitsky found of them in the academic literature alone.¹ Had they perused the operational lexicon of politicians and political activists, they probably would have found 4 or 5 times as many – most of them diminutives or invectives referring to the inferior state of

existing practices. But most recently, a new adjective has crept into position in front of democracy: **Islamic**.

Its pretence is that this combination of adjective and noun is both distinctive and possible. Needless to say, the claim is highly controversial – even among leading specialists of Arab-Muslim history, culture, society and politics. Outsiders tend to dismiss the notion summarily as an oxymoron concocted either by deluded wishful thinkers or deliberate and sinister obfuscators. Part of the misunderstanding is due to the almost universal tendency to presume that what one could call “real-existing democracy” (RED) as practiced in the West is synonymous with the root concept itself and, therefore, its institutions must be definitive of it.ⁱⁱ Regimes in Western Europe, North America Oceania and, more recently in Latin America and Asia that call themselves democratic and are recognized as such by other polities that have previously called themselves that and gotten away with it provide the exclusive benchmarks for a valid definition and empirical application of the concept. Moreover, political scientists have by-and-large tended to go along with this and virtually all of their definitions

are composed of a compilation of principles and institutions that are presumed to be characteristic of contemporary REDs. – ignoring the fact that some of them were considered democratic long before they acquired these traits and that others have only acquired them recently. Hence, it becomes impossible to imagine that a *demos+kratos* (government of or by the people) could be anything other than **liberal & individualistic** in its principles, **constitutional** in its foundations, **representative** on the basis of regular **electoral** competition between **partisan** candidates in **territorial** constituencies, **tolerant** of cultural and religious diversity, **separate** in the relations between church and state, **protective** of private property, **observant** to the rule of law and *e così via*.

In fact, Western REDs bear only a passing relationship to the democratic ideal of a self-governing body of equal citizens. They are the product of a complex sequence of historical compromises with decidedly less democratic principles and institutions: monarchism, socialism, militarism, liberalism, nationalism and, most of all, capitalism. They are certainly **not**

governments “**of**” or “**by**” the people, as is implied by the etymology of the generic term. What is sure is that they are “governments by politicians” who may (or may not) act “**for**” the people.

It is nothing less than astonishing that this same concept has somehow survived while its “real-existing” institutions and practices have changed enormously -- and continue to change.ⁱⁱⁱ Robert Dahl is notorious for the observation that RED (which he called *polyarchy*) has radically transformed itself over the centuries.^{iv} Seen in this more dynamic perspective, the notion that something like an Islamic democracy could emerge from the current turmoil may seem to have greater potential.

Islam in REDs

Practicing Muslim citizens of Western secular societies have by-and-large behaved no differently in political matters than their citizens of other religions. Also the presence of RED in predominantly Muslim societies is nothing new. In these cases, the type of democracy is analogous to that of the West with only minor modifications to accommodate to the distinctive

religious principles and social practices of Islam. Lebanon was long regarded as a model of consociational democracy until the Israeli invasion of 1982-84 destroyed this arrangement.

Malaysia, Indonesia, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Mali and Albania have all been recognized as REDs – albeit to differing degrees and for varying periods of time. Tunisia may have had a dominant party for the entire period since its independence in 1956, but elections there seem to have been “free and fair,” at least, until the corrupt and autocratic government of Ben Ali came to power. Such a situation of single party dominance has also not been rare in Western REDs, *vide* Japan, Italy, Israel, Sweden, Norway where rotation in power due to elections took a long time in coming. Switzerland, often taken as model democracy, has never had a complete rotation at either the national or cantonal level!

But it is Turkey that occupies a special position in current debates about the compatibility between Islam and democracy

MORE MATERIAL HERE

The issue of Islamic democracy has been dominated by reference to the explicitly political principles asserted in its sacred writings: *shura* (consultation), *ijma'* (consensus) and *ijtihad* (independent interpretation), and to the practices of the early caliphate or the city-state of Medina(OR IS IT MECCA?). One begins with the presumption that whatever else it might be, Islamic democracy will be rooted in some fusion of religious and political authority. But what has been missing from the discussion are the practical implications that this religion (or, better, set of religions) might have for the distinctive formal institutions and informal practices that might characterize it. Scholars from various perspectives seem to agree that RED in the conventional 'Western' sense where religion and the state are (allegedly) separated is only likely to prove viable in a few "special cases" the Middle East and North Africa — although they may not agree on which ones these are.

We begin with a generic definition of democracy that does not associate it with any specific institutions, real or imaginary:

"Modern Political Democracy" is a regime or system of governance in which rulers are held accountable for

their actions in the public realm by citizens, acting indirectly through the competition and cooperation of their representatives.^v This provides us with three sets of actors: citizens, representatives and rulers. They should interact in a distinctive process that produces accountability, but through the combination of different political and social institutions.

Now let us turn to Islam and its principles and practices in an attempt to discover how such actors might emerge and what might lead to such a process – and how Islamic RED (IREED) might be different from the standard Western RED model.

CITIZENS

They are the foundation upon which all existing and potential forms of democracy are based – regardless of adjectives.

Without granting and ensuring **political** equality to all persons residing in a given political unit (minus those under a certain age and those with another nationality), no contemporary regime would be recognized as democratic.^{vi} Granted that most liberal *démocraties censitaires* of the past did formally impose a wide range of discriminatory treatment upon their

residents (e.g. based on domestic servitude, indebtedness, religion, literacy, income, property-holding or tax-paying) and others more informally conspired to deny specific groups the equal exercise of their political rights (e.g. blacks in the South of the USA); nevertheless, equal opportunity for citizens to vote in elections for some stipulated set of offices, to present themselves as candidates in these elections, to form or to join associations or movements, to petition authorities for access or redress, to be treated as subjects of public law or treatment by public officials, to be informed of the actions of their rulers and to have access to multiple and diverse sources of information are all considered indispensable defining conditions for the existence of democracy in the contemporary world. Whether these expressions of **political** equality are also related legally or empirically to other forms of equality (social, cultural, religious, economic, *etc.*) is a matter of contingency that varies a great deal across REDs and would be expected to do so also across IREDs.

This is, therefore, the initial threshold for judging whether Islamic democracy can exist: Is it conceivable that for political

purposes women and men, unbelievers and believers, Christians and Muslims, could all be guaranteed the same political rights and opportunities within the same political unit? If this limited (but very important) degree of mutual acceptance of diversity is unimaginable for doctrinal or other reasons related to Islam as a religion or as a society, then, there is no reason to inquire further into the prospects for IRED.

DISCUSSION ABOUT PRACTICE OF TOLERANCE [ACTUAL OR POTENTIAL] ESP WITH REGARD TO GENDER AND RELIGION

NB RIGHT TO BE DIFFERENT IN OTHER ASPECTS OF SOCIAL, RELIGIOUS AND CULTURAL LIFE – EVEN TO HAVE DIFFERENT RIGHTS AND RESOURCES ATTACHED TO THEM. INTRODUCE MILLET SYSTEM OF THE OTTOMAN EMPIRE AS A POTENTIAL PROTO-TYPE?.

Western RED presumes that the exclusive holders of citizenship are individual persons, despite the obvious fact that in modern REDs very few individuals can make effective their claims upon rulers without doing so through permanently organized and usually professionalized intermediaries: political parties,

interest associations, social movements, even business firms and cultural centers. If so, why might IRED not be explicitly based on collective citizenship?

DISCUSSION ABOUT POSSIBLE COLLECTIVE CITIZENS IN MENA: LINEAGE GROUPS, EXTENDED FAMILIES, TRIBES, RELIGIOUS COMMUNITIES, MOSQUES, FOUNDATIONS.

Another 'peculiar' characteristic of Western REDs is that many aspects of citizenship are contingent upon location, i.e. territorial constituencies. While equality may be the formal norm for counting votes in elections, in actual practice, there tend to be systematic differences in their weighed importance in different constituencies, even more so in federal regimes with sub-units of varying size and population density.

While it is unlikely that IREDs would completely ignore the territorial dimension, they might be well advised to complement it with one of three alternative conceptions of constituency: namely, **religion**, **occupation** or **lineage group**. In such an arrangement, the lower house might be composed of territorially defined representatives and the upper one of representatives from one or another of the other

expressions of collective identity. At the time of registration (or re-registration if he or she chooses to change affiliation), the citizen would be free to choose a second constituency in which he or she wishes to vote – knowing that the Lower Chamber would be exclusively territorial and responsible for the eventual formation of a government. The Upper Chamber might then have representatives drawn from competing candidates in occupational, religious or tribal categories who would have a veto power over some types of legislation or a delaying power for others. Obviously, there would have to be some proportional threshold for recognizing which of these constituencies would have the right to be directly represented and another choice mechanism for eventual changes in line with socio-economic and cultural conditions.^{vii}

DISCUSSION: would Islamists tolerate such a voluntary choice? I gather that any attempt to renounce one's Islamic faith is considered apostate.

Such an arrangement would probably result in a sunni or shi'a dominant majority in most Arab/Muslim countries, hence, a potential "tyranny of the citizen majority." But would they be

sufficiently united to act coherently and coercively against minorities of non-believers?

What might be the mix of "religion" and "tribe" as constituencies? Presumably, this would vary across Muslim societies depending on the strength of lineage ties (Libya? Yemen? Gulf States?) or the size distribution of different rival Islamic groups in the population (Iraq, Syria). Lebanon's consociational system seems already to function *ex officio* on such a basis. What might be the outcome in Egypt with its larger urban and secular population? Could there be a "*lumpen* category" of "others" – namely, those with neither religious or lineage ties?

I think we can forget about the likelihood that a significant number of citizens would choose "occupation" as their preferred constituency. Such Corporatist assemblies have never functioned well in REDs because the respective professional identities tend to be weaker than the others, and because they are constantly changing as a result of economic developments. Apparently, the Ottoman Empire had a guild system, but are there any remnants of it left? Most of the

state-corporatist systems of more recent times have been completely unsuccessful in generated such identities.

REPRESENTATIVES

The orthodox response in REDs to who represents citizens is: the candidates nominated by political parties and who win in contested elections within territorial constituencies. While this ignores (or de-values) the existence of other channels of representation between elections, as well as the growing importance of non-elected (or self-proclaimed) spokespersons for a wide variety of interests and passions, virtually no analysis or description of their democratic institutions does not presume that “The political parties created democracy and modern democracy is unthinkable save in terms of the parties.”^{viii} While parties have manifestly declined in their significance in almost all Western REDs in recent decades,^{ix} it is doubtful that contemporary IREDs will be successful in suppressing them completely – and still remain democratic.

But what might such parties look like? There have been many cases in which in “deeply-divided” societies, the convocation of elections of uncertain outcome has triggered not just the

formation of competing political parties, but violent conflict during and after these elections.

IS THE CLEAVAGE BETWEEN SUNNI AND SHI'A DEEPLY DIVIDED AND WITH OTHER GROUPS SUCH AS COPTS IN EGYPT OR SECULAR URBAN GROUPS EVERYWHERE?

A pragmatic "Islamic" response might be to reduce their role, at least for the first few "founding" elections. Consider, for example, the following formula:

NOMINATION OF CANDIDATES

1. Any national citizen can nominate him or herself for any elective office within each of the pre-established constituencies -- territorial, occupational, religious or lineage group, whichever exist.
2. All candidates would have to provide basic information about themselves (including a declaration of wealth), to draft a short statement of ideology and policy intent and to choose a personal symbol (color x logo).^x
3. All candidates would fill in a questionnaire with candidate responses to a set of important political issues as decided

by an Electoral Council (EC). These answers would be made publicly available.

INSERT SMART VOTING OR TOO DETAILED?

4. All self-nominated candidates would present signed and witnessed affirmations that (1) they will conduct an honest campaign respectful of opponents; (2) they will not request or receive funds from national profit-making organizations or from foreign sources of any kind – public or private; and (3) they will not accept funds from any government agency other than the EC.

5. Each candidate would then have three months to gather the maximum number of supporting signatures, with each signature to be identified by a valid voter card with the appropriate choice of constituency. Citizens would be entitled to support the nomination of up to three candidates in each of his or her chosen constituencies (to be monitored by EC and entered on the corresponding citizen's voter card).

6. At the end of this period and some time before the actual elections, all candidates would be rank-ordered from the one with the most to the least number of supporting signatures and this ranked set of names (along with personal symbols) would be made public. Depending on the total number of applications, a quota could be imposed by drawing a line at some point on the list to ensure that the number of candidates does not exceed 3 to 5 times the number of seats to be filled – just to avoid confusion at the polls.

Conduct of Campaigns

The objective is to confine the process to a limited time period and limited expenditure – while evening out the conditions for competition between candidates. It should also serve to introduce the public to the notion of random-sampling as an intrinsically democratic device and to provide it with as much direct exposure to candidates as possible.

1. All Successfully nominated candidates will receive an equal amount of public funding from the EC.

2. All candidates will be entitled to raise funds from private sources, both individual and collective, but not from profit-making or foreign organizations or state agencies (other than the EC).

3. All candidates will be allotted (gratis and randomly) two specific and individual "slots" of TV time, one earlier in the campaign for 10 minutes and one later, just before the election itself, for 2 minutes. No other purchasing of TV time would be allowed, either by individual candidates or collectivities that support them.

4. The campaign will last for a pre-determined period (three months?) beginning with the announcement of the definitive list of self-nominated candidates.

5. The EC will organize in a dispersed set of locations a series of "Deliberation Sessions" between a chosen number of candidates and a randomly selected audience from the vicinity close to a given location or in religious or tribal sites. Each candidate will be assigned to one of these Sessions and required to participate.

6. The EC will monitor the conduct of all candidates for eventual violations of the rules and will be empowered to remove them from competition if necessary. If these infractions can only be proven after the elections, winning violators may be removed from office.

Conduct of Elections

1. Elections would be held simultaneously for all constituencies within the entire country as a single, overarching constituency.

2. Voters would be entitled to vote only in the constituencies that they had previously chosen to represent them – and they would be entitled to vote in each of these constituencies.

SHOULD THEY BE GIVEN A SINGLE PREFERENCE OR MULTIPLE ONES?)

3. Seats would be allocated according to proportional representation – just as the multiple-membered constituencies (how many and how much of a spread?) would be assigned a number of seats roughly proportional to the number of citizens that choose to be represented in that constituency.

(Which PR formula would be most apposite?)

3. The EC would announce the eventual winners, ranked in each of the designated constituencies according to total votes they received up to the total number of seats proportionally allocated to that constituency.

SHOULD CANDIDATES BE ALLOWED TO COMPETE IN MORE THAN ONE CONSTITUENCY AND EVEN TO OCCUPY MORE THAN ONE MANDATE – AS IS THE CASE IN SOME REDS WITH *CUMUL DE MANDATS*?

4. It might be desirable for social/religious/cultural/ethno-linguistic groups that are still too small to cross the electoral threshold to be allocated some number of 'supplementary' seats, filled competitively. There is also the delicate issue of the political rights of legally resident foreigners ("denizens"). Should they be allowed to be candidates and to be elected? Or, should some system of special allocation be adopted for their incorporation? Or, should they just be ignored – as is the case in most Western REDs]

5. Each citizen would be assigned a 'designated' representative, according to his or her announced constituency preferences -- and provided with information about how to contact this

representative. One could even imagine a system whereby voters would be regularly informed of the subsequent legislative behaviour of his or her representative (although this may require a technical capacity which is not yet available in MENA countries)

IF THERE WERE TO BE A RELIGIOUS UPPER CHAMBER,
WOULD, FOR EXAMPLE, CLERICAL CONTROL OVER
CANDIDACIES FOR ITS CONSTITUENCIES BE
DEMOCRATICALLY LEGITIMATE?

RULERS

To be democratic, rulers in a polity have to conform to democratic rules. In REDs, the predominant one is something approaching either plurality or majority rule. i.e. the person, party or *projet de loi* gaining the most votes or more than one-half of those cast wins. The complementary rule is that losers in this situation should respect these results and the right of winners to enter representative bodies, form governments and take legitimate decisions binding on all. These practices have been frequently qualified to include various forms of “weighted”

or “super” majorities for specific issues – including, of course, amending the basic rules themselves.

However, it has long been recognized by political scientists that many REDs, while they may apply plurality or majority for electoral purposes, when it comes to forming governments and making authoritative decisions about policy they use a different set of rules. The label “consociational” in English or”, better, “Proporz-demokratie” in German has stuck to these situations. In such cases, regardless of the electoral outcome, potential rulers are pre-committed to seeking a larger than majority agreement based on some formula that is roughly proportional to the distribution of citizen identities or preferences. This may go so far as to include all competing parties in an overarching ‘grand’ compromise.

IRED is more likely to be viable (and, hopefully, legitimate) if it avoids majoritarian rules^{xi} and follows the latter institutional format. Which means (1) the formation of broadly encompassing coalition governments by consensus; and (2) the allocation of seats in representative bodies/positions in governing institutions roughly proportional to the presence in

society of the groups represented by their respective electorates; (3) each of the component groups that are granted representational status (whether formed along locational, religious, occupational or tribal lines) should be granted a substantial degree of self-government in matters vital to their survival.

Needless to say, such a formula is presumed to rest on (1) a foundation of shared values (as the product of Islamic values about the legitimate use of political authority?) and (2) a tolerance of the social/cultural/locational differences that these elected politicians represent – both of which may be in short supply (and not just in Islamic societies).

WHAT IS NOT CLEAR TO ME IS WHETHER OR NOT A SUFFICIENT OVERLAP IN VALUES EXIST BETWEEN DIFFERENT VARIETIES OF ISLAM OR BETWEEN SOME OF THESE VARIETIES AND OTHER RELIGIOUS OR SECULAR ELECTED POLITICIANS SO THAT CONSOCIATIONAL/PROPORTIONAL GOVERNMENT WOULD BE POSSIBLE.)

NEED TO FURTHER SPECIFY THE FOLLOWING SETS OF RULES

1. Rules for forming a government
2. Rules for deciding on the authoritative allocation of values or resources
3. Rules for determining the nature and degree of self-government to be granted to component units.
4. Rules for changing the rules

ACCOUNTABILITY

Do these three elements: citizens, representatives and rulers, combine regularly and predictably to produce this quality? In form, this depends on their being regularly and predictably inter-related to each other according to mutually agreed upon rules such that none of the collectivities incorporated in the process has a strong incentive to defect from or to over-throw the process. Moreover, the longer such rules are sustained, the more the players are likely to structure their expectations (and careers) accordingly, which enhances their incentives to remain in the existing game.

If transitologists have discovered anything, it is the unique and challenging nature of the politics of uncertainty that characterize this interim period between different regime types. Given a number of special features that characterize the regime transitions since the Arab Spring broke out,^{xii} there are many reasons to suspect that this period will be more protracted and tumultuous than their predecessors in Southern and Eastern Europe, South and Central America and Asia since 1974. Not only does something like a consensus have to emerge about what Islamic democracy might be, it will also be necessary to prevail against both radical Islamists who reject the very idea, and secularized civil and military elites who find some type of Western RED more appealing. Moreover, the very fact that democratization came from below (and accompanied by large scale violence in some cases), rather than as the result of a pact among elites or an imposition by a faction within the previous autocracy, is hardly a favorable point of departure. The trick consists in transforming the accidental **arrangements**, prudential norms, and contingent solutions that emerge during the uncertain struggles of the transition into **institutions**, i.e. into relationships that are reliably

known, regularly practiced and normatively accepted by the participants/citizens/subjects of such institutions. Add to this the strong probability that a sizeable proportion of the population of these countries will be highly suspicious of the motives of foreigners promoting their own forms of RED and sceptical about the compatibility of Islam with any form of democracy and one finds a context in which the successful consolidation of any type of democracy is highly problematic. It may be comforting to recall that very few of the Western and none of the Eastern countries made it to RED on their first try and many, especially in Latin America, suffered from repeated failures. This should not be interpreted to mean that the efforts were not worthwhile, however.

Accountability in substance is first and foremost a relationship between two sets of actors (actually, most of it is played out not between individuals, but between organizations) in which the former accepts to inform the other, explain or justify his or her actions and submit to any pre-determined sanctions that the latter may impose. Meanwhile, the latter who/that have become subject to the command of the former, must also

provide required information, explain how they are obeying or not obeying the formers' commands and accept the consequences for what they have done or not done. In short, when it works, accountability involves a mutual exchange of responsibilities and potential sanctions between citizens and rulers, made all the more complicated by the fact that in between the two are usually a varied and competitive set of representatives. Needless to say, there are many caveats, loose linkages and role reversals in this relationship, so that its product is almost always contested. Information can be selective and skewed ("sexed up" seems to be the current expression); justifications and explanations can be deflected to other actors ("The IMF made me do it"); sanctions are rarely applied and can be simply ignored ("Who are you to question and threaten my ...?"). Most importantly, as Andreas Schedler has pointed out, in the real world this relationship typically involves "recursive cycles of mutual accountability," rather than a simple, linear and self-exhausting event.^{xiii}

Transparency of information: IS THERE ANY REASON TO BELIEVE THAT ISLAM INTRINSICALLY ENCOURAGES SECRECY

MORE THAN IN OTHER SOCIETIES/CULTURES? THE BROTHERHOOD IS A CASE IN POINT BUT IT SUFFERED PROTRACTED PERSECUTION. HOWEVER, IF THIS IS THE CASE (AND IT SEEMS TO BE SO IN OTHER MUSLIM POLITIES), WILL IT BE ESPECIALLY DIFFICULT TO ADJUST TO CONDITIONS THAT REQUIRE GREATER TRANSPARENCY?

Justification of practices: ISLAM SEEMS TO HAVE PLENTY OF THIS (CF. IJTIHAD) BUT IS THE UNIQUE PERSPECTIVE FOR JUSTIFICATION THE INTERPRETATION OF HOLY SCRIPTURES AND HISTORICAL PRACTICES? CAN AN ISLAMIC POLITICIAN EITHER MANIPULATE AMONG COMPETING INTERPRETATIONS OR MORE PRAGMATICALLY SHIFT TO OTHER LEGAL OR POLITICAL MODES OF JUSTIFICATION? IS IT REALLY THE CASE THAT ISLAMISTS INSIST ON THE EXCLUSIVE SOVEREIGNTY OF THE QU'RAN OVER ANY CLAIMS FOR POPULAR SOVEREIGNTY?

Sanctioning of behavior: THE NORMAL SANCTIONS IN REDS ARE TO LOSE AN ELECTION, TO BE FORCED OUT OF OFFICE BY PUBLIC PROTEST OR TO BE FOUND GUILTY UNDER THE LAW. DOES ISLAM HAVE ANY SPECIFIC MEANS FOR SANCTIONING

MISBEHAVIOR OR JUST PLAIN UN-POPULARITY? WOULD IT
CONTENANCE SANCTIONS BEING APPLIED AGAINST A
REPRESENTATIVE OR RULER EVEN IF HE OR SHE DID NOT
VIOLATE ANY ISLAM NORMS? INVERSELY, COULD VIOLATION
OF ISLAMIC NORMS OR CUSTOMS EVEN BE USED TO
SANCTION ACTORS WHO OTHERWISE ARE ELECTED, POPULAR
AND LEGAL?

CONCLUSION

The viability of consolidated Islamic democracy will depend not just on its legitimacy in the judgment of its citizens and/or its capacity to produce valued public goods for them. If the historical experience of Western REDs is any indication, it will also have to prove its capacity to evolve – to change its institutions and practices – in response to challenges raised by changes in its economic, social, cultural and strategic environment. If we know anything about RED, it is that it has had to change repeatedly in order to remain the same, i.e. accountable to its citizens.^{xiv}

In this regard, the experience of Catholicism and liberal democracy may be illuminating. For a protracted period,

certainly from the French Revolution until the 1870s, Catholics were proscribed from participating in then existing institutions of RED. Moreover, contrary to the present situation with regard to Islam, this hostility was backed by an absolutist, hierarchical and (allegedly) infallible power not responsible to any earthly powers and located in another country: the Papacy. At some point, more-or-less corresponding with the end of the Papal Captivity by the new Italian monarchic democracy, this policy was changed and Catholics successfully plunged into the formation of distinctive political parties, interest associations and social movements. Today, they are not only considered as normal components of several European democracies, but they are even hegemonic in several of them.

MORE INFORMATION ON PROCESS OF INCORPORATION AND ARGUMENT ABOUT POTENTIAL PARALLELS WITH ISLAM??

POST SCRIPTUM

The future for Islamic democracy will not only be a domestic matter. It may be contingent on corresponding developments in the region in which it is located. The process of democratization elsewhere since 1974 has conclusively

demonstrated the existence of a “neighborhood effect.” The more a given polity has neighbors that are REDs, the more likely it also will become democratic. Moreover, democratization has also benefited enormously from the existence of a prior security community in the adjacent region. If polities going through the uncertain process of transition do not have to worry simultaneously that aggressive neighboring powers will take advantage of their momentary weakness to press claims by threatening or using violence, then, it becomes much easier to experiment with novel institutions and to cope with the inevitable conflicts surrounding them – as well as with the almost inevitable sense of *desencanto* (disappointment) that adheres to the consolidated outcome. No transition to democracy (regardless of the adjective in front of it) has ever resulted in a set of institutions and practices that appeal to everyone, but many of them have found the means to convert these conflicts into the policies needed to resolve some of these conflicts and to divert them into the reforms that eventually improve the quality of democracy.

IS IT SIMPLY UNREALISTIC TO IMAGINE THE EXISTENCE OF A SECURITY COMMUNITY IN MENA? IS ITS EXISTENCE A PRE-REQUISITE FOR IRED? WOULD IRED ONCE CONSOLIDATED REPLICATE THE 'DEMOCRATIC PEACE' PROPOSITION, NAMELY, THAT DEMOCRACIES DO NOT GO TO WAR WITH EACH OTHER?

ENDNOTES

ⁱ David Collier and Steve Levitsky, "Democracy with Adjectives," World Politics, Vol. 49, No. 3 (1997), pp. 430-451.

ⁱⁱ For a particularly egregious example of this sort of bias, see David Bukay, "Can There Be an Islamic Democracy?," The Middle East Quarterly (Spring 2007), pp. 71-79. The fact that the author is an Israeli scholar is hardly surprising, but deeply ironic since his country is one of the most systematic violators of the very norms and institutions that he considers to be characteristic of (liberal) democracy – both in its treatment of Palestinians in the occupied territories and the second class citizenship imposed on the political rights of its Arab citizens. Perhaps, scholars should add yet another adjective to the root concept: Judaic.

ⁱⁱⁱ My Future of Democracy article

^{iv} Polyarchy (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1971).

^v Philippe C. Schmitter and Terry Karl, "What Democracy is ... and is not", Journal of Democracy, Vol. II, No. 3 (Summer 1991), pp. 75-88. The definition most commonly used by American social scientists is that of Joseph Schumpeter: "that institutional arrangement for arriving at political decisions in which individuals acquire the power to decide by means of a competitive struggle for the people's vote". Capitalism,

Socialism and Democracy (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1943), p. 269 – a minimalist one which places exclusive emphasis on the role of elections and parties and ignores the existence and relevance of other mechanisms of representation and competition available to citizens.

vi Although the United States of America which incarcerates a very substantial proportion of its citizens and denies them civic rights – sometimes in perpetuity – still gets away with being called a respectable RED.

vii This practice opens up an interesting democratic possibility, so far denied in all REDs – namely, the opportunity for citizens not only to choose among competing candidates but among competing constituencies. Considering that this would be a dynamic process as new generations enter into citizenship and older ones may change their preferred constituency, the polity would have an explicit capability of monitoring and responding to social and cultural changes. It might also contribute to enhancing the accountability of existing representatives since they would have a strong incentive not to lose the preference accorded to them – even to be eliminated from the game if their actions deviated too much from the interests or passions of their constituents.

viii E. E. Schattschneider, Party Government (New York: Transactions Publishers, 1942), p. 53.

ix Philippe C. Schmitter, "Parties are not what they once were", in L. Diamond, R., Gunther (eds.), Political Parties and Democracy (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2001), pp. 67-89.

x In the advent of identical choices, the color and symbol might be allocated by lot. What is important is to try to prevent the "premature" formation of parties and their immediate monopolization of the nomination and electoral process.

^{xi} Which also obviates the possibility for relying upon presidentialism. One can imagine in the case of monarchies that the king could become the constitutionalized head of state – reigning but not ruling – and even occupying a significant role in religious affairs. After all, the Queen of Great Britain is also head of the Church of England! There are also various parliamentary and semi-parliamentary formulas that involve a largely symbolic role for national presidents, whether directly or indirectly elected, and which could be appropriated in Islamic democracies. One could even imagine that if the Upper Chamber is composed of religious or clan representatives, it could vote for such a symbolic leader from within their own ranks.

HOW MIGHT THIS CONFLICT WITH THE PURELY RELIGIOUS HIERARCHY, ESPECIALLY IN SHI'A SOCIETIES?

^{xii} Ambidextrous ...

^{xiii} Andreas Schedler, "Conceptualizing Accountability," in L. Diamond, M. F. Plattner & A. Schedler (eds.), The Self-Restraining State. Politics and Accountability in New Democracies (Boulder, CO: Lynne Reiner, 1999), pp. 13-29.

^{xiv} Reference to Future article