To: Peggy

and to Sarah, Elissa, David, Michael, and Leona
Acknowledgments

After a thirty-year career in the financial and banking field in New York, Philadelphia, London and Riyadh I decided to return to academia as a student to seek answers to questions that had preoccupied me for several decades, regarding the cultures, politics and development prospects of Arab countries. I was fortunate to join the History Department of London University’s School of Oriental and African Studies (SOAS) between 1998 and 2001, and to engage in doctoral research for three additional years at SOAS. These were intellectually stimulating years. It was a great privilege to benefit from very focused and relevant regional scholarship and inspiration. This book is a by-product of my SOAS experience.

I owe a special gratitude to Professor Tony Allan, my dissertation supervisor. I shall forever remember the many hours of engaging discussion that I had the pleasure of exchanging with Professor Allan. He truly is an intellectual giant and a very fine human being.

A special recognition must be accorded to my wife Peggy whose understanding and encouragement throughout the project were critical.
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Introduction

America's “War on Terrorism” uses Western democratization of the Arab World as its main weapon. The book argues that American-style democratization of Arab countries would replace absolute rule by Arab kings and presidents with Islamists’ theocratic dictatorships opposed to American interests in the Middle East. This book argues that the idea of a Western style Arab democracy is pure fantasy; Islamist governance and western democratic governance are contradiction in terms.

The book contends that Arab societies are characterized by a culture of obedience to dictatorial authority, which transcends the Arab home, school, work place, and the country at large. In two case studies, the book examines why Saudi Arabia and Syria, two ideologically and economically different countries, rely on non-representative dictatorial system of governance. The examination concludes that genuine democratic reforms are not likely to develop in either country for a very long time, if ever.

The book identifies certain religious and political causes, which are behind the causes of terrorism and offers concrete solutions for dealing with the problems. Half-way political expediences and partial solutions will fail to end the growing scourge of terrorism.

The book addresses questions such as: Why do non-Arab Islamic countries conduct democratic elections, while Arab rulers declare democracy as un-Islamic? Why do non-Arab Islamic countries elect women prime ministers and presidents, while Arab women suffer discrimination? Do the Arab peoples consider themselves Islam’s guardians? If so, why? What could be behind the growing attachment to radical Islam in recent decades? What do the Jihadists want? How have the Ulama (Islamic clergy) become so critical in Muslims’ life? Are Sharia rules changeable? How likely is it that a future Arab leader with the stature of Kemal Ataturk might emerge? Has American fear of an Islamists’ regimes delayed Arab democracy? Did Zionism’s politicization of Genesis 15:18 lead to politicizing the Quran? How viable is a two-state solution to the Palestinian-Israeli conflict? What might the consequences be of Sunni Islamist regimes contesting Shii Islamist regimes in the Middle East and beyond?
Part I

Environmental, economic, religious, and the local and foreign political influences that help perpetuate a culture of obedience to dictatorial authority in Arab societies and to spreading Islamic orthodoxy, Jihadism, and terrorism
Chapter One

The Role of Islamic Culture in Shaping Arab Societies and Governance

The purpose and outline of the book

“Americans are asking, why do they hate us?” exclaimed the President of the United States in his address to a Joint Session of Congress and the American People on September 20, 2001.¹ His reply was: “they hate what we see right here in this chamber — a democratically elected government. Their leaders are self-appointed. They hate our freedoms — our freedom of religion, our freedom of speech, our freedom to vote and assemble and disagree with each other.”

Since the atrocities of September 11, 2001 there has been a growing acceptance, mainly in the US, among certain policy makers and academics that because the Arab world suffers from “freedom deficit” democratizing Arab countries² could reduce terrorism of Arab Jihadists (Islamic fighters in defense of Islam) against US and Western interests. The US’ “War on Terrorism”³ uses the ideal of democratizing the Arab World as one of its primary weapons.

This book will argue that the causes behind terrorism are varied and interrelated. Freedom deficit is only one of the causes. The book will argue that American democratization of the Arab world is a fantasy. Democratization would lead to anti-American Islamist⁴ regimes in

² Lebanon is excluded, due to its special circumstances. First, Lebanon, a small country of under four million in population, is composed of 18 religious sects. Secondly, Lebanon has a high proportion of Christians relative to other sects. Thirdly, Lebanon has traditionally had a representative democratic system constructed around a unique denominational power sharing arrangement. A National Pact based on a never-updated 1932 census provides for a ratio of Christians (including those who had emigrated) to Muslims of six-to-five. The Pact appears to be sacrosanct. Not even the 15-year civil war between 1975 and 1990 could change its parameters.
³ Although terrorism has become a major concern worldwide, there is no international agreement yet on a definition. The word terrorism evokes ideological and political controversies. Standing in the way of an agreement on a definition are issues like whether liberation movements from foreign occupation are terrorist movements. The occupiers say yes. The occupied say no. The independence of the United States from England in 1776 was one such liberation movement. Standing in the way of an agreement also are issues like the legitimacy, or the illegitimacy, of state extra-judicial killing of suspects, and preemptive strikes against individuals or groups suspected of conspiracy to commit acts of violence. In this book, terrorism is defined as those acts of violence, committed by individuals, groups, or governments for political gain, which deliberately and indiscriminately target innocent civilians.
⁴ An Islamist regime enshrines Islam in its constitution as the sole source of law. An Islamic regime, on the other hand, makes Islam as one of the sources of legislation, not the sole source. Most regimes in the Arab world today are Islamic, not Islamist. Only Saudi Arabia, and to a lesser extent, its GCC partners,
Elie Elhadj

Arab capitals. There is no genuine democracy in the Western sense under Islamists’ rule. The book will recommend certain solutions to deal with the scourge of terrorism and will assess the likelihood of their successful implementation.

The focus of the book will be on the Muslim Arabs, the Quran’s “Best of peoples evolved to mankind \(3:110\) [Chapter (Surah) number 3, Verse (Ayah) number 110],” the guardians of a religion whose Prophet, Companions, Holy Quran, and Holy Sanctuaries in Mecca, Medina and Jerusalem are all Arabic.

The book will be divided into three parts. Part I will be composed of three chapters. Chapter One will analyze the cultural factors that help perpetuate a culture of obedience to Arab dictatorial authority in the Arab home; under a dictator father, at school; under a dictator teacher, at the work place; under a dictator manager, and in the country at large; under non-representative self-appointed tyrannical kings and presidents. Chapter One argues that representative governance is not a natural choice for the Arab masses. Chapter One will also examine the possible effects caused by the combination of culture, religion, economics, the environment, as well as frustrating domestic and foreign political pressures in recent decades, on spreading among a minority of Arabs Islamic orthodoxy, Jihadism (fighting in defense of Islam), and terrorism.

Chapter One likens Islamic extremism to a volatile chemical. However, the chemical alone is harmless. The chemical explodes when sparked by: a) Arab rulers’ tyranny (domestic spark), and b) external political frustrations, mainly Israeli humiliation and US support of Arab

may be described as Islamists. In the non-Arab Muslim Middle East, secular Turkey is Islamic. Theocratic Iran is Islamist, despite its representative parliament (Majlis). In Iran, Islam is the sole source of law and laws enacted by the Iranian parliament are subject to confirmation by the un-elected “Council of Guardians” to ensure conformity with Shi Islamic principles. Afghanistan, under the former Talibans regime was Islamist. New Afghanistan is Islamic.

There are dozens of diverse definitions for culture. J. H. Bodley (1994) stated that in 1952, Kroeber and Kluckhohn published a list of 160 different definitions of culture, classified as follows:

- **Topical:** culture consists of everything on a list of topics, or categories, such as social organization, religion, or economy.
- **Historical:** culture is social heritage, or tradition, that is passed on to future generations.
- **Behavioral:** culture is shared, learned human behavior, a way of life.
- **Normative:** culture is ideals, values, or rules for living.
- **Functional:** culture is the way humans solve problems of adapting to the environment or living together.
- **Mental:** culture is a complex of ideas, or learned habits, that inhibit impulses and distinguish people from animals.
- **Structural:** culture consists of patterned and interrelated ideas, symbols, or behaviors.
- **Symbolic:** culture is based on arbitrarily assigned meanings that are shared by a society.

Culture involves at least three components: what people think, what they do, and the material products they produce. Thus, mental processes, beliefs, knowledge, and values are parts of culture. Culture also has several properties: it is shared, learned, symbolic, transmitted cross-generationally, adaptive, and integrated. Individuals are born into and are shaped by a pre-existing culture that continues to exist after they die. The influence that specific individuals might have over culture would itself be largely determined by culture (J. H. Bodley, Cultural Anthropology: Tribes, States, and the Global System, 1994).

The National Center for Cultural Competence – Georgetown University defines culture as: an integrated pattern of human behavior that includes thoughts, communications, languages, practices, beliefs, values, customs, courtesies, rituals, manners of interacting and roles, relationships and expected behaviors of a racial, ethnic, religious or social group; and the ability to transmit the above to succeeding generations (http://gucchd.georgetown.edu/nccc/).

The masses are defined as the citizenry outside the ruling groups.

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\[\text{References:}\]

- National Center for Cultural Competence – Georgetown University.
tyrants and now, the occupation of Iraq (foreign sparks). Said differently: Jihadists’ terrorism = Islamic extremism (volatile chemical) + despair over Arab rulers’ tyranny (domestic spark) + despair over US protection of Arab tyrants and Israeli humiliation of Arabs and over the American occupation of Iraq (foreign spark).

It must be emphasized that Jihadists’ terrorism is not the result of Islamic extremism alone, Arab rulers’ tyranny alone, or American and Israeli occupation and humiliation alone. Rather, it is a consequence of the combination of these three factors. To end Jihadists’ terror every element in the equation must be eliminated; the chemical must be defused, and the sparks must be deactivated. Short-term political expediencies will fail.

It must be emphasized that Jihadists’ terror must be condemned as a premeditated cold murder of the innocent irrespective of any cause.

Chapter One finds that democratic governance has no effective sponsor among the major power groups in Arab societies. The majority of the Arab masses may be described as politically quietists, though a minority, mainly Shii Muslims, is generally not. The masses are plagued with poverty and illiteracy, fear the security forces, and are steeped in a culture of obedience to authority and belief in predestination. The Arab peoples are constantly reminded by the Ulama class (Islam’s scholars or clergy) of God’s orders in 4:59 of the Quran, “Obey God and obey the apostle and obey those of authority among you.” This Quranic injunction is repeated eighty times. They are also reminded of Prophetic Sayings (Hadith) such as: “Hear and obey the emir, even if your back is whipped and your property is taken; hear and obey (Book 20 of Sahih Muslim).” Islam teaches predestination, and to many, the ruler is ordained by the will of God. The Prophet has also reportedly condemned innovation and change, leading many Muslims to discourage innovation and change.

Arab rulers resist true democratic reforms because these rulers would almost certainly be replaced at the first free election. Arab rulers and their supporters among the Ulama teach that obedience to a Muslim ruler’s authority is a part of the Muslim creed, a form of piety, even if the ruler is unjust.

The military generals would typically replace one dictator general by another.

Additionally, US’ fear that democratic elections might bring into power hostile Islamist regimes to American interests in the world’s richest oil region thwarts the prospects for democratization in the Arab world. Such fear prolongs Arab dictators’ misrule and suppression of dissent, which in turn radicalizes the dissenters further.

Chapter One addresses questions like: why do non-Arab Islamic countries conduct democratic elections and have women prime ministers and presidents, while Arab rulers proclaim that democracy is incompatible with Islam and Arab women suffer inferior legal and social status? Do Arabs consider themselves Islam’s guardians, and if yes, why? Who shapes Arabs’ Islamic persona? How has the Ulama class become so influential in Muslims’ life? Is Sharia (Islamic law) changeable? If yes, who has the authority to change it? Is Islam compatible with representative democracy? What could be behind Arabs’ growing attachment to radical Islam?

Chapters Two and Three will examine how the issues raised in Chapter One relate to two contrasting countries; Saudi Arabia and Syria. The contrasts among the ideological agendas, socio-political power pyramids, and economic systems that the two governments adopt make the analysis insightful into the rest of the Arab World. Each country represents a socio-political model that is more or less found in other Arab countries. The Saudi model is generally seen in Arab monarchies. The Syrian model is broadly followed in Arab military republics. Despite their wide differences, however, the two models converge on an undemocratic, non-representative, and non-participatory system of governance. Typical of the Arab patrimonial states, the two models
are characterized by a narrow decision-making coalition driven to enrich and perpetuate the control of members of the ruling group. Self-enrichment and corruption have proved to be part the glue that keeps dictatorial powers together. In decision-making, such a system ignores scientific evidence and the underlying fundamentals. Although their misrule is widespread, the misallocation and waste of scarce resources in Saudi Arabia and Syria, water in particular, will be examined. Of Saudi Arabia’s US$1,034 billion in oil revenues (1974-2001), almost one half 45% was spent on the military and security, 10% on the ruling family, and 10% on desert agriculture. Making the forbidding Saudi Desert bloom, produced wheat at costs five times the international price and depleted from non-renewable groundwater the equivalent of six years of the Nile River’s flow into Egypt, while 53% of Saudis have no municipal water connections in their homes. Syria, basically, a poor country spent on armaments between 1970-1990 about US$30 billion, or around 13% of GDP, plus annual military budgets recently of 12% of GDP. US$20 billions of government agricultural spending, mainly between 1988 and 2000, returned an estimated US$150 million loss in 2000, while the non-financial returns were poor, most water basins over-pumped and most urban centers enduring acute water shortages. Chapters Two and Three conclude that genuine democratic reforms are not expected in either country for a very long time, if ever.

Part II is composed of four chapters. These chapters address four possible strategies to fight Jihadists’ terror. Chapter Four argues that Ulama’s dogmatic teaching and discouragement of innovation during the age of European enlightenment and the industrial revolution led to the destruction in 1918 of Islam's second empire, the Ottoman Empire. The chapter calls for scientific and philosophical teaching to dispel the debilitating grip of predestination on Muslim mentality and to encourage innovation. The chapter advocates emphasizing the peaceful parts of the Quran and exonerating today’s Jews and Christians from the actions of their seventh century ancestors, which provoked the Prophet’s enmity. Chapter Four argues for the separation of Islam from the state; religion is a matter for the individual. It also calls for ending Sharia law’s inferior treatment of women. Chapter Four contends that the Arab world needs a Muslim Martin Luther, as Jamal Al-Din Al-Afghani (1839-1897) had advocated, and a Kemal Ataturk. The chapter compares Islamist democracy with Western democracy. It concludes that, contrary to Ulama teachings, Islam is compatible with representative democracy of the Western type and that Islam allows freely elected parliaments to replace millennia old Sharia Laws of the Arabian Desert. Chapter Four finds that the US project to democratize Iraq dealt a blow to secularization and religious moderation efforts in Iraq and the region, replacing the secular Baath Party regime of Saddam Hussein by orthodox Shii clerics. The Draft Permanent Constitution, midwifed by US officials and approved in the October 15, 2005 referendum, specifies in Article 2, Clause (a) that: “no law can be passed that contradict the undisputed rules of Islam.”

In Chapter Five, the focus will be on the importance of developing democratic governance to fight terrorism, or at a minimum, on making Arab dictatorships benevolent dictatorships. The chapter calls for a major “Peace Fund” to invest in reducing illiteracy, ill health, and unemployment among the poverty stricken-neighbors of the oil rich GCC states of the Arabian Peninsula. The chapter considers also questions like: What are the differences between Arab Islamist governance and Turkey’s Islamic rule? What effect has US’s fear of Islamists’ gains at the ballot box had on delaying democratization in Arab countries? What are the arguments in favor of and against the accession to power by Islamist regimes on the fight against terrorism? Should the US help Arab Islamist parties accede to power? If the answer is yes, what might the possible consequences be of Sunni Islamist regimes facing Shii Islamist regimes in the Middle East and beyond? What do the Jihadists want?
Chapter Six concentrates on the imperative of removing Israel’s humiliation of Arabs. Chapter Six argues that Zionism’s politicization of Genesis 15:18 of the Old Testament to occupy Palestine, plus possibly the region from the Nile to the Euphrates Rivers, led to the politicization of the Quran. Muslims lived with Jews peacefully for centuries. Islam is the “Religion of Abraham.” Muslims regard Abraham as the first Muslim and the Jewish people as their Semitic cousins. As cousins, Arabs would welcome living with the Jewish people in Palestine in peace. Chapter Six calls for the de-politicization of the Bible and the Quran. The chapter proposes a one-state solution to the Israeli Palestinian conflict, instead of the two-state solution currently in vogue.

Chapter Seven addresses the US occupation of Iraq; from its ostensible and likely undeclared causes, to its cost and benefits to the US. The chapter argues that America’s democratization project in Iraq represents a cataclysmic event that could redraw the religio-political map of the Muslim world. Democratizing Iraq, replaced for the first time in more than seven centuries Sunni control in Mesopotamia by Shii control. This development could rejuvenate Shiism at the expense of Sunnism. It could incite sectarian warfare among Muslims for a very long time, spilling rivers of blood and breeding hoards of hardened terrorists. Some Arab analysts and religious leaders see in the American project in Iraq a catalyst to regional conflicts, a weapon in a war against Islam and to occupy the oil fields. To avert rapidly growing Jihadism and terrorism, Chapter Seven advocates that the US needs to scale down its monopoly over Iraq’s spoils and to create the conditions that could replace its forces by United Nations peace keepers, heavy in Muslim and Arab representation, and for Iraq’s Arab Sunnis, a minority, to lower their future expectations to those of a minority being ruled by the Shii majority.

Part III of the book covers the final Chapter. Chapter Eight considers the likelihood that the strategies to fight terrorism in Chapters Four, Five, Six and Seven might be achieved successfully. Although, evaluating the likelihood of the future outcome may differ from one reader to another, this author is of the opinion that, on the short-term, the likelihood of success is rather slim. Both the Arab masses and rulers would take refuge in Islam, raising an Islamic shield to ward-off modernizing the Islamic creed and implementing genuine democratic reforms. Israeli policies are not likely to de-politicize the Old Testament soon. US policy in Iraq set in motion events that are difficult to halt. On the long-term, however, with recognition on the part of Americans, Arabs, and Israelis of all the causes behind Islamic orthodoxy and Jihadism and with effective actions to eliminate these causes there might just be hope.

A classification of Arab rule

To characterize Arab governance, a yardstick based on the manner through which a country’s laws are enacted and enforced will be established. Law making is chosen as the criteria because it represents the highest form of authority, mirroring the material and cultural attainment of society. Four standards will be created:

A- Democratic governance ensures that free and contested elections for a legislative assembly are held regularly and periodically. No single party dominates the legislature. The rule of law is enforced vigorously and fairly.

B- Authoritarian governance is the same as democratic except that a single party dominates parliament.

C- Dictatorial governance enacts the laws by an undemocratically constituted parliament. The ruler respects the law and enforces it fairly.

D- Tyrannical governance is the same as dictatorial governance except that the ruler and the ruling group violate the law with impunity.
Arab rulers manage to govern for life, unless removed by force. They seized power through military coup d’états, or were made monarchs, mostly by Britain, after the First World War. Arab rulers’ authority is absolute. Arab rule is non-representative and non-participatory. Arab parliaments, where they exist, are rubber-stamp assemblies. Arab rule is mired in favoritism, nepotism, and corruption. The ruling groups violate the law with impunity.

Accordingly, as Chapters Two and Three will show, Arab rule generally corresponds to the definitions in C and D above.

The first Arab Human Development Report (AHDR), published in 2002, reveals that in the political and human rights sphere, “out of the seven regions of the world Arab countries had the lowest freedom score in the late 1990s (Executive Summary, 2002, p.1).” P. Norris and R. Ingelhart (2002: p.4) state that, “according to the annual assessment made by the Freedom House (2002), of the 192 countries around the world, two thirds (121) are electoral democracies. Of the 47 countries with an Islamic majority, one quarter (11) are electoral democracies. Furthermore, none of the core Arabic-speaking societies in the Middle East and North Africa fall into this category.”

In the economic sphere, AHDR stated that, in Arab countries “Over the past 20 years, growth in per capita income was the lowest in the world except in Sub-Saharan Africa (AHDR, Executive Summary, 2002, p.5).” Compared with East-Asian countries, the relative economic performance of Arab countries over the past three decades has been poor. “In 1970 Arab GDP per capita was half that in East Asia: by the opening stages of this century it dropped to less than one seventh of GDP per capita in that region (AHDR, 2003: p.90).”

Table 1.1 shows the scores that seven countries achieved in 2000/2001 in the six areas related to governance matters - citizens’ voice, accountability, political stability, government effectiveness, regulatory quality, respect for the rule of law, and corruption control. The scores underline the poor state of the four listed Arab countries.

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7 UNDP states that, “the AHDRs are the product of an independent editorial team of Arab scholars, policymakers and practitioners. As such they are not statements of UN or UNDP policy, although UNDP, according to its mandate, has been and remains involved in programmatic follow up to many of the recommendations contained in the report”–
UNDP is the United Nations worldwide development network. It advocates change and provides countries with access to the knowledge, skills, and resources their populations need to improve their lives. UNDP is present in the field in 166 countries, helping them to identify their own solutions to the national and global challenges facing them in terms of development (Ibid).

8 This study, Policy Research Working Paper 2772 dated February 2002, covered 175 countries. It was a joint product of the World Bank Development Research Group, the World Bank Institute’s Governance, Regulation and Finance Division, and Daniel Kaufmann, Aart Kraay, and Pablo Zeido-Lobaton, who authored the study. The findings, interpretation, and conclusions are entirely those of the authors and not of the World Bank, its directors, or the countries they represent. The data is extracted from table 2, pp.19-25.
Table 1.1 Scores that seven countries achieved in 2000/2001 on six risk areas related to governance matters. Four of the countries are Arab.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Austria</th>
<th>Canada</th>
<th>Egypt</th>
<th>Saudi Arabia</th>
<th>Syria</th>
<th>UK</th>
<th>Yemen</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Voice/Accountability</td>
<td>1.34</td>
<td>1.33</td>
<td>(0.65)</td>
<td>(1.07)</td>
<td>(1.40)</td>
<td>1.46</td>
<td>(0.63)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Political Stability</td>
<td>1.27</td>
<td>1.24</td>
<td>0.21</td>
<td>0.51</td>
<td>(0.28)</td>
<td>1.10</td>
<td>(1.07)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Govt. Effectiveness</td>
<td>1.51</td>
<td>1.71</td>
<td>0.27</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>(0.81)</td>
<td>1.77</td>
<td>(0.77)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Regulatory Quality</td>
<td>1.19</td>
<td>1.07</td>
<td>0.13</td>
<td>(0.11)</td>
<td>(0.66)</td>
<td>1.32</td>
<td>(0.30)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rule of law</td>
<td>1.86</td>
<td>1.70</td>
<td>0.21</td>
<td>0.19</td>
<td>(0.52)</td>
<td>1.61</td>
<td>(1.12)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Corruption Control</td>
<td>1.56</td>
<td>2.05</td>
<td>(0.16)</td>
<td>(0.55)</td>
<td>(0.83)</td>
<td>1.86</td>
<td>(0.70)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: World Bank Development Research Group

Are Arab masses politically quietist?

Notwithstanding their abuse of absolute power, corruption, and poor performance, Arab rulers invariably stay in office until death, naturally or in a military coup. They are eager to legitimate their rule by claiming the loyalty of their subjects. Arab presidents manage to achieve almost 100% approval in stage-managed referendums. Arab monarchs draw mile-long queues of men on every national and religious occasion to display their people’s allegiance. Are such shows indicative of genuine approval? Are such shows totally devoid of genuine support? It will be contended here that regardless of how contrived these shows might be, a degree of genuine support does exist.

Why support tyranny? Is it the fear of confronting the security forces of Arab rulers? Not entirely. In spite of his elaborate security apparatus, the Shah of Iran was removed from power in 1979. Likewise, most military dictatorships in Latin America, the former Soviet Union and its Eastern European and Asian allies were removed during the 1980s and 1990s.

Is it Arab countries’ low per capita income? Not entirely. Many low-income countries enjoy democratic rule, having political multi-party systems and gender equality. India (about US$500 per capita income) and Sri Lanka (some US$800 per capita income) are democratic, while Arab countries are not. Also, India had a woman prime minister several times and Sri Lanka has a woman president.

Is it Arabs’ relatively short experience with democracy? Not entirely. Many younger states in Africa, Asia, and Eastern Europe are democratic. Indeed, Muslim but non-Arab Bangladesh, poor (US$350 per capita income) and young (established in 1971), is democratic, and has a woman prime minister. Indonesia, a poor Muslim country (US$650 per capita income) had a woman president. Pakistan (US$470 per capita income) and young (established in 1947), has had periods of democratic governments, a woman prime minister several times, and respect for the rule of law that no Arab king or president can claim. These three poor non-Arab Muslim countries represent almost one-half of the world’s population of 1.25 billion Muslims. If democratic Turkey and Malaysia are added, the ratio becomes higher.

Why is it that the electorates’ attitude to democratic governance in non-Arab Muslim countries like Bangladesh, Indonesia, Malaysia, Pakistan, and Turkey differs from that of their Arab coreligionists? It will be argued in this chapter that different linguistic and cultural endowments influence different interpretations of Sharia between the Muslim Arab peoples and non-Arab Muslims regarding a ruler’s legitimacy and the limits to his authority.

The following will examine the possible causes behind the politically quietist personality that generally characterizes the majority of the Arab masses. It will also address the basis for radical Islam that grips a minority among the Arab masses.
Three possible causes behind Arabs’ politically quietist persona
Three possible causes behind the generally politically quietist Arab personality will be considered:

A. The first cause is the fear of the security forces of Arab rulers.
B. The second cause is the obedient personality that bows to hierarchical authority.
C. The third cause is the fear that change might bring an even worse ruler.

While the three causes combine to shape the Arab political personality, it is impossible to assign relative weightings to these causes because they could change quickly. They may also differ from one community to another in the same period.

A. The security forces
Lackluster performance of Arab military forces in their confrontations with outside threats over the past few decades suggests that Arab military forces exist mainly to protect Arab kings and presidents from internal dissent. Brute military force is an important factor behind the long reign of Arab rulers. The masses are too poor and weak to confront them. Security forces are most effective when opposed by citizenry afflicted with poverty, unemployment, ill health, belief in predestination, angels, and Jinn, and in religious injunctions that demand blind obedience to authority. Such a constituency has neither the strength nor the inclination to risk losing the meager little that it possesses in a confrontation over a ruler’s legitimacy and abuse. Mere survival in this instance is an achievement. To placate the poorest strata, Arab rulers typically ensure that a basic subsistence level is provided through financial subsidies to basic items and through large-scale government employment. In Saudi Arabia and in Syria, for example, it is estimated that 20% of the population in each country is dependent on income from employment in government bureaucracies.

Although Arab rulers came to power through force, or appointed by Britain as kings, emirs, sheikhs, or sultans after the break-up of the Ottoman Empire in 1918, none of them spares an opportunity to pretend to be democratic – each according to his own definition of democracy. Such a desire is in spite of presiding over a coercive police state; complete with emergency laws, military courts, single party rule, and absence of freedom for the press, speech, or assembly.

Uncontested referendums by Arab military regimes
Arab military presidents periodically produce uncontested referendums to renew their terms in office. Approvals in excess of 90% are the norm. In October 2004, the president of Tunisia managed to win about 95% of the votes, slightly less than his previous record in 1999 of 99.4%. Saddam Hussein managed in October 2002 not only a 100% approval but a 100% turnout as well. His previous record was 99% in October 1995. In July 2000, the young president of Syria succeeded with 97.29%, a result consistent with that of his father in the previous four referendums. The president of Egypt received some 94% of votes in October 1999, and the president of Yemen attained 96.3% in September 1999.

While it is dangerous to rely on such stage-managed performances to measure genuine support, these referendums do reflect a degree of voter approval. It is difficult, if not physically impossible, to falsify every ballot. Furthermore, the referendums provide the citizenry with a secret ballot opportunity to say “no” if the voter wishes to say “no.”

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9 Jinnee (pl. jinn) is “spirit lower than angels, able to appear in human and animal forms, and having supernatural power over men (The Concise Oxford Dictionary).” To Jinn is dedicated Chapter 72 of the Quran (Surat Al-Jinn) with its 28 verses (Ayat), and verse 29 of Chapter 46.
Indeed, when a semblance of a democratic multi-candidate presidential election was conducted in Egypt on September 7, 2005. President Husni Mubarak won a fifth six-year term with 88.6% of the cast vote (see Chapter Five), very near the over 90% approvals which the 77-year old President had achieved in his four previous referendums.

**Popularity shows by Arab absolute monarchs**

In Arabs’ absolute monarchies, not even those sham referendums exist. Nor is there any other kind of a reliable approval-gauging indicator. Arab royals produce an abundance of loyal messages in support of their rule and miles of well-wishing men displaying their allegiance (or Bay’a) whenever a new monarch accedes to the throne, or on days of religious and national festivals, or whenever a new factory, road, public utility project, and school is dedicated. Government-controlled media covers the festivities extensively for days. Some of the attendees hope to ingratiate themselves with the ruler and his officials so that they may remain networked with the centers of power to get jobs that they do not qualify for or contracts that they do not merit. They also fear being labeled as insufficiently loyal or patriotic if they do not show up. Peer pressure is enormous here. While insincerity is common, these shows, nonetheless, do reflect some degree of approval, which is however, impossible to quantify accurately.

**B. Obedience to authority**

The second cause behind Arab masses general tolerance of dictatorships is obedience to hierarchical authority. This characteristic has been formed under a combination of three influences: (i) religious, (ii) poverty, and (iii) the challenging living conditions in an arid habitat.

**(i) Religious influences**

To Muslims, the Prophet Muhammad is the greatest of all prophets. He is a human messenger of God with no divinity. Islam requires the faithful to believe in the uniqueness and oneness of God, the truthfulness of Muhammad’s mission, the divinity of the Quran and the last day-of-judgment. To profess the faith, a Muslim must perform the five daily prayers, fast during the month of Ramadan from sunrise to sunset, give alms (Zakat) and make the pilgrimage to Mecca once in a life time, if possible. The faithful are also enjoined to holy war. Islam prohibits drinking wine (though wine is promised in Paradise in 47:15 of the Quran), eating pork, dealing in usury, gambling and image representations. It has laws regulating personal status affairs such as marriage, divorce, and inheritance as well as moral and ethical codes demanding chastity, honesty, charity, justice, and societal peace.

While many Islamic sects and doctrines came into existence and disappeared, around 85% per cent of the approximately 1.25 billion Muslims in the world today are Sunnis. Shii Muslims are under 200 millions living mainly in Iran (about 62 millions out of 68-million population), Pakistan (about 25 million out of a 160-million population), and Iraq (about 15 million out of a 25-million population). There are Shiis in the Gulf region and in Yemen, in Syria and Lebanon. Also, there are minorities of Shiis in India, Russia, and Afghanistan.

Four Sunni schools of jurisprudence survive today. They are named after their founders: Abu Hanifa (d. 767) with followings in West and Central Asia and in the Indian subcontinent, Malik (d. 795) in North and West Africa, and Shafei (d. 820) in East Africa, South Arabia and the Malay Archipelago. Ninety eight per cent of the more than one billion Sunnis belong to these three Schools. Ahmad bin Hanbal (d. 855) established the fourth. The Hanbali School is the most austere, and orthodox, among the Sunni schools of jurisprudence. Hanbalism never enjoyed a large following. Today, its adherents are a tiny fraction of Sunnis; concentrated in Wahhabi Saudi Arabia and among the Talibans in Afghanistan.
Islam combined the spiritual and temporal lives of Arabians for the first time. It amalgamated religion and the state into an inseparable one. It united the disparate desert tribes in seventh century Arabia. Within a few decades after the death of the Prophet in 632, Muslim Arabs became “the masters of an empire greater than that of Rome at its zenith, an empire extending from the Bay of Biscay to the Indus and the confines of China and from the Aral Sea to the lower cataracts of the Nile… Damascus, which young Muhammad, according to Tradition, hesitated to enter because he wished to enter paradise only once, had become the capital of this huge empire” (P. Hitti, 1970: p.215).

To the Muslim faithful, Islam is the complete and perfect religion. Muslims are taught that they are the perfect people. God declares in 5:3 in the Qur’an: “This day, I have perfected your religion for you, completed my favor upon you, and have chosen for you Islam as your religion.” Referring to the Qur’an, God declares in 6:38: “Nothing have we omitted from the Book.” In 16:89: “We have sent down to thee the Book explaining all things.” Like other self-righteous ideologues, good Muslims believe that they are always right. They can commit no sin.

Islam evolved during its first three centuries into a total way of life, regulating in every detail every waking minute of a Muslim’s life, be it in personal hygiene and diet, or in the theological, ritual, judicial, penal, political and financial realms. Din wadinyawi, meaning the religious and the worldly, describes the role of Islam in the lives of Muslims. The tiniest details of every known moment in the life of the Prophet Muhammad evolved into an ideal standard for Muslims to emulate faithfully. For example, “in deciding whether it was permissible to wear a gold signet ring,” Ignaz Goldziher (1890: p.29) wrote, “The sole criterion was to find out whether the Prophet wore such jewelry.” The Sunna (the habitual behavior of the Prophet Muhammad as it was recorded in the Hadith, or Sayings-Traditions), even “regulated the form of greetings and good wishes; if someone wanted to know what to say to a person who sneezes, he would find rules in the Sunna.” Ibn-Hanbal (d. 855) “is alleged never to have eaten watermelon because he was not in possession of any Prophetic precedent on the subject” (N. Coulson, 1999: p.71).

The Prophetic Sunna regulates all religious and secular aspect of Muslims. The collection of Al-Bukhari (810-870), considered by Muslim scholars as the most authoritative, is composed of some 7,400 Sayings covering detailed circumstances.10

10 These are organized in 93 books in 9 volumes, each book reporting a number of attributed Sayings-Traditions in a particular area of human activity. The extent of Islam’s regulation may be gauged from the wide range of subjects covered. These are: revelation, belief, knowledge, ablutions (ritual cleansing of the body), bathing, menstrual periods, rubbing hands and feet with dust (where water is unavailable to perform ablution), prayers, virtues of the prayer hall, times of the prayers, call to prayers, characteristics of prayer, Friday prayer, fear prayer, the two festivals, witr Prayer, invoking Allah for rain, eclipses, prostration during recital of Qur’an, shortening the prayers, prayer at night, actions while praying, funerals, obligatory charity tax, obligatory charity tax after, Ramadan, pilgrimage, minor pilgrimage, pilgrims prevented from completing the pilgrimage, penalty of hunting while on pilgrimage, virtues of Medina, fasting, praying at night in Ramadan, retiring to a mosque for remembrance of Allah, sales and trade, sales in which a price is paid for goods to be delivered later, hiring, transfer of a debt from one person to another, representation, authorization, business by proxy, agriculture, distribution of water, loans, payment of loans, freezing of property, bankruptcy, lost things picked up by someone, oppressions, partnership, mortgaging, manumission of slaves, gifts, witnesses, peacemaking, conditions, wills and testaments, fighting for the cause of Allah, one-fifth of booty to the cause of Allah, beginning of creation, prophets, virtues and merits of the prophet and his companions, companions of the prophet, merits of the helpers in Medina, military expeditions led by the Prophet, prophetic commentary on the Qur’an, virtues of the Qur’an, marriage, divorce, supporting the family, food, sacrifice on occasion of birth, hunting, slaughtering, Al-Adha festival, sacrifice, drinks, patients, medicine, dress, good manners and form, asking
It is argued here that Arabs in general adhere very strongly to Islam. To study the strong influence of Islamic culture on Arab Muslims, particularly the effect of this culture on shaping the generally quietist political personality of the majority of the Arab masses, four issues will be addressed.

The first issue is to: 1) demonstrate that to Arab Muslims Islam is the most important in life. 2) Argue that Arab Muslims consider themselves the guardians of true Islam, and thus, believe that they take their Islam more seriously than non-Arab Muslims. 3) Analyze why Arabs’ attachment to Islam is so strong.

The second issue is to address the effect of the belief in predestination and fate on the Arab culture of obedience to authority, notwithstanding Islam’s early advocates of free-will.

The third issue is to examine how Islamic injunctions to promote good societal order have been exploited by Arab rulers to promote obedience to their absolute rule.

The fourth issue is to examine how Islamic injunctions to promote good family order have been exploited by Arab men-fathers to promote obedience to their absolute authority over their wives and children.

**Do Arab Muslims adhere more seriously to Islam than non-Arab Muslims?**

Most Arab Muslims have a genuine affinity for and a very strong attachment to Islam. Two evidences will be shown here.

The first evidence may be gleaned through the result of an International survey of 50,000 people in 68 states conducted by Gallup International for the BBC World Service program “Who Runs Your World.” The survey, a rarity in Arab countries, confirms this argument, at least in Egypt, the Arab world’s most populous country, with 75-million people, or one quarter of the population of the Arab world. The survey questioned 500 Egyptians. It found that Egyptians are “more likely to define themselves by religion than anywhere else in the world.” The survey found that, “a massive 87% said their religion was the most important, giving them the strongest religious identity of any country surveyed.”

The second possible evidence may be seen through the high percentage of pilgrims who go from Arab countries to the Holy Cities of Mecca and Medina annually during Eid Al-Adha. They take the journey in spite of its demanding travel rigors and the high expense relative to the low per capita income of these countries, estimated at US$1,300 in 2001. Pilgrimage is one of the five duties in Islam. It is required once in a lifetime of every able Muslim.

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permission, invocations, to make the heart tender, divine Will, oaths and vows, expiation for unfulfilled oath, laws of inheritance, limits and punishments set by Allah, punishment of disbelievers at war with Allah and His apostle, blood money, dealing with apostates, saying something under compulsion, tricks, interpretation of dreams, afflications and the end of the world, judgments, wishes, accepting information given by a truthful person, holding fast to the Quran and Sunnah, oneness, uniqueness of Allah (Translated by M. Muhsin Khan). The largest number of attributions; 501 traditions, are in Book 60, which reports “prophetic commentaries on the Quran.” The second largest number of Prophetic attributions is Book 59, which lists 465 traditions relating to the “military expeditions led by the Prophet.” The smallest number of attributions; 5 traditions, are reported in Book 14 on the subject of “fear prayer,” followed by 6 traditions in Book 1 on “revelation.”


12 US$284 billion in total GDP for 220 million Arab Muslims (MEED Databank). This estimate excludes Saudi Arabia and oil exporters in the Arabian Peninsula because of their rather close geographical proximity to Mecca and Medina and of their relative affluence, which could distort the average.
While Arab Muslims represent 22% of world’s Muslim population (about 280 million out of about 1.25 billion world Muslims), it could be shown that over 40% of Muslim pilgrims in 2002 were estimated to have come from Arab countries other than Saudi Arabia. If Saudi pilgrims and Arab residents in Saudi Arabia were added, the ratio becomes almost 60%.

**What could be behind Arabs’ serious attachment to Islam?**

**The case for four religious factors**

The answer might be found in a combination of four religious factors that make Arabs feel justified in believing that they are Islam’s privileged race and protectors. The relative weight of these factors differs from one individual to another in one country or another.

The first factor is the pride that Arabs take in the fact that God’s word in the Quran was revealed in Arabic, the language of paradise.

In 12:2: “We have sent it down as an Arabic Quran in order that you may learn wisdom.”

In 13:37: “We revealed it as an Arabian judgment…”

In 26:195: “In the perspicuous Arabic tongue.”

In 41:3: “A book, whereof the verses are explained in detail; a Quran in Arabic, for people who understand…”

In 43:3: “We have made it a Quran in Arabic…”

In 46:12: “… And this book confirms it in the Arabic tongue…”

To Muslims the Quran is God’s miracle.

In 17:88 God declares that: “If the whole of mankind and Jinn were to gather together to produce the like of this Quran, they could not produce the like thereof…”

The second factor is Arabs’ feeling of honor that the Prophet Muhammad was an Arab from the Meccan Tribe of Quraish. It is, also, Arabs’ pride that every Companion of the Prophet who reported His sayings (Hadith) and conduct (Sira) as well as the founders of the four Sunni Schools of jurisprudence that survive today, Hanafite, Hanbalite, Malikite, and Shafeite were all Arabs, though Abu Hanifa was the grandson of a Persian slave (P. Hitti, 1970: p.397). Indeed, all 55 Caliphs (the Islamic rulers after the Prophet) since the death of the Prophet in 632 and until the destruction of Islam’s first Empire of the Arabs in 1258 were Arabs from the Quraish Tribe. The 37 Abbasid Caliphs (750-1258) were descendants from Abbas, the Prophet’s uncle. The famous scholar Al-Mawardi (991-1031) stipulated that the Caliph should belong to the Quraish Tribe (A. Hourani, 1997: p.10).

For a very long time after the Caliphs lost political control to non-Arab Muslim military commanders and governors starting mid-ninth century the existence of an investiture from an Arab Caliph was considered sufficiently important to confer legitimacy on receiving commanders. The successive military generals who turned the Abbasid Caliphs into virtual prisoners in Samarra, the Abbasids short-lived Capital (836-892), and in Baghdad allowed the
Caliphs’ names to be minted on coins and mentioned in Friday prayers. The Seljuk Sultan Malikshah (1072-1092) found it useful to give his daughter in marriage to the Caliph Al-Muqtadi (1075-1094) in 1087. “When a son was born, Sultan Malikshah planned (unsuccessfully) to combine in his grandson the Caliphate and the Sultanate on a common throne” (P. Hitti, 1970: p.476). In 1261, after the destruction of Baghdad in 1258 by the Mongols, the Mamluk ruler of Egypt, Baybars, installed a scion of the Abbasid House who escaped the Baghdad massacre of 1258 as the Caliph Al-Hakim. “One descendant of Al-Hakim after another, for two and a half centuries, held the pseudo-Caliphate” (Ibid: p.677). Certain Muslim rulers, “including some from India and the Ottoman Bayazid-I (1389-1401) secured from them (pseudo-Caliphs) diplomas of investiture” (Ibid). Although, most of the 37 Ottoman Sultans (c. 1280 to 1924) did not act as if the Caliphate was important, those who felt that it could be useful in the final years of Ottoman decline asserted the right to the Caliphate. They claimed that the last of the “pseudo-Caliphs” had transferred his office to the Ottoman Sultans following the conquest of Egypt in 1517 by Sultan Selim-I (1512-1520).

The third factor in Arabs’ pride is that Islam’s holiest shrines are located in Arab lands: Mecca, Medina and Jerusalem.

The fourth factor is Arabs’ pride in the belief that God described them in Quran’s 3:110 as: “The best of peoples, evolved for mankind.”

This ethnic-linguistic connection makes Islam an Arabic religion. Over the centuries, many non-Arab Muslim leaders have resented this reality. The friction that existed among Arabs, Persians, and Turks defined the course of Islamic history since the early days of the Arab conquest in the seventh century.

**Three different degrees of attachment to Islam**

Notwithstanding the inherent difficulties in categorization, three levels in the attachment to Islam will be established here: moderate, orthodox, and jihadist. This classification is based on the belief that a person’s behavior is a product of their environment – childhood upbringing, education, life experience, and culture in general. Within each category, there could be shades to the commitment that an individual might have.

Moderate Muslims are defined as those Muslims who are tolerant of other beliefs and ways of life. The moderates also accommodate modern thought and values. The moderates are politically quietists. The moderates represent the majority among the Arab peoples.

Orthodox Muslims aspire to live in an Islamist state, where Islam is the sole source of legislation and ideology, and the only way of life. Orthodox Muslims do not resort to violence in pursuing their objectives. They strive towards Islamist governance through peaceful means. Except in Wahhabi Saudi Arabia, where orthodoxy represents the great majority of Saudi citizenry, orthodox Muslims in other Arab countries are minorities, though rapidly growing.

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13 The last Ottoman Sultan, Abbdul-Mecit-II (1922-1924), was a Caliph in a religious context only, not a political ruler. Ataturk abolished the Caliphate altogether in 1924.
14 Not one Sultan performed the pilgrimage to Mecca, according to Sina Askin in a lecture at School of Oriental African Studies on January 15, 1999.
15 As early as 685, armed revolts against Arab domination took place. Al-Mukhtar, led the first such rebellion. He revolted in Kufa, Iraq against the Umayyad Caliph in Damascus. “Mukhtar’s propaganda explicitly claimed that he was acting in the interest of the ‘weak’ and the **Mawali** (early non-Arab Muslims)” (H. Kennedy, 1996: p.96). This revolt shows “clearly the antagonism between the Ashraf (Arab aristocracy) and other Arabs and the **Mawali** who, for the first time, play a significant role in the politics of the community” (Ibid).