THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN STATE AND RELIGION

in the Arab and Islamicate Contexts: Civil State, Secular State, Religious/Islamic State

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Using this study as a reference

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What do the terms or concepts “civil state,” “secular state,” and “religious/Islamic state” mean? How can we understand the existing or possible relationships between religion/Islam and the state or politics in the Arab-Islamicate contexts based on the aforementioned concepts and their relationship to the concept of democracy? These were the two main questions that the conference “The Relationship between State and Religion in Arab and Islamic Contexts: The Civil State, the Secular State, and the Religious/Islamic State” sought to address, exploring multiple possibilities and perspectives. These two questions, as well as other related questions, deal with two distinct and overlapping aspects of the actual and/or potential relationship between the state and/or politics and religion/Islam. They include both a descriptive aspect, that seeks to reveal “what is,” and a normative aspect that shows, from an ethical, political, and philosophical perspective, “what should be.”

The papers presented at the conference covered studies on the relationship of religion with the state in many Arab Islamic countries (Morocco, Egypt, Sudan, etc.), as well as reflections and theoretical discussion from various academic disciplines and different political perspectives in Arab and Islamic countries. These papers attempted to answer the following questions: What are the forms and implications of the relationship between state and religion in Arab-Islamicate contexts? How could/should we theoretically approach the concepts that express this relationship? What is the relationship between state and religion in intellectual and political Arab and Islamicate contexts? In what sense and to what extent can we talk about a state as civil, secular and/or religious/Islamic? Does secularism mean the separation of religion (or church) from state, politics, or sovereignty? Or does it mean the separation of religious and political authorities? What are the practical and conceptual differences between these definitions and meanings of secularism? Can the concept of “civil state” be a complementary, substitute, or alternative concept to those of “secular state” and “religious/Islamic state”? In what sense and to what extent can each of these states be democratic?

The conference was held at The Centre for Advanced Studies in the Humanities and Social Sciences “Multiple Secularities (CASHSS) - Beyond the West, Beyond Modernities,” at Leipzig University, on 9–10 December 2021. It was organized by **Housamedden Darwish** (CASHSS Multiple Secularities, Leipzig University) and **Markus Dressler** (Institute for the Study of Religions/Modern Turkish Studies, Leipzig University), with administrative and logistic support from CASHSS, and financial support from the “Academics in Solidarity” program. In addition to the fifteen scholars who contributed to the conference, it was well attended, with more than 50 people registering in advance, many of whom took part in its discussions. The conference included five panels in which 14 research papers were presented over two days: three panels on the first day, and two panels on the second day. In the following I will present an extensive summary of the papers presented at the conference, the discussions that addressed those papers, and the issue of the relationship between state and religion (in Arab-Islamicate contexts) in general.

The organizers opened the conference with an outline of different notions of the rule of law and the theoretical considerations driving the book project.

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I. Panel I: The Relationship between Religion and State in Contemporary Arab Thought

In the first panel, three papers were presented that dealt with the issue of the relationship between religion and the state in the works of some prominent figures in contemporary Arab thought (Abdallah Laroui, Taha ʿAbd al-Rahman, Muhammad ʿAbed al-Jabri, Sadiq Jalal al-ʿAzm, Burhan Ghalioun, ʿAbd al-Wahab al-Misiri, Abu Yaʿrub al-Marzuqi, and ʿAzmi Bishara). This panel was chaired by **Housamedden Darwish,** who was also the discussant.

Mohamed Hashas (Luiss Guido Carli University of Rome) addressed three major Arab philosophers: Muhammad Abed al-Jabri (1935–2010), Abdallah Laroui (b. 1933), and Taha Abdul Rahman (b. 1944) in his paper entitled "Religion and the State in Contemporary Moroccan Thought," each representing a distinct trend. Laroui is a liberal-Marxist, Taha ʿAbd al-Rahman is a critical conservative, and al-Jabri, à la Hasan Hanafi's style in Egypt, represents a form of "Muslim Leftism" that stands somewhere between the two other trends. Hashas showed that their differing views on what modernity means, and the place religion could occupy in modern nation states and societies, the public sphere, and on an individual level, serves as a sample of how Arab thinking engages with the topic. He focused his attention on their differences in diagnosing the predicament of reforms and the way ahead at all levels in society. In the *Concept of the State,*[1] Laroui saw the problem represented, specifically or primarily, in the lack of individual engagement in politics, in addition to the lack of legitimation of the state or the ruling regime. On this basis, he argued for the priority of individual political engagement. As for al-Jabri, in the political section of his *Critique of Arab Reason* project,[2] his focus was on the lack of political will and saw reforming the state itself as the priority: getting rid of tribalism, nepotism, the rentier state and sectarianism. Taha ʿAbd al-Rahman, in his book *The Spirit of Religion,*[3] criticized both Salafi political Islam, in its Sunni and Shiite versions, and the model of the European, colonial, arrogant and anti-religious secularist state, as well as modernity in general for its consumerism and its lack of morality and altruism. For him the main problem lies in the lack of morals and internal will or determination. On this basis, he considered individual moral reform to be the priority. Hashas concluded his presentation by arguing that this intellectual diversity does not easily find its way into the public sphere and political life as smooth democratic pluralism because political dynamics have their own time range and dynamics.

In the second presentation, **Hiroki Okazaki** (Chiba University) presented a paper entitled "How did Syrian Political Thinkers Understand an Alliance between Secularism and Authoritarian State?," in which he

1 Abdallah Laroui, *Mafhum al-Dawla* (Beirut and Casablanca: al-Markaz al-Thaqafi al-ʿArabi, 1981).

2 Muhammad Abed al-Jabri, *al-ʿAql al-Siyasi al-ʿArabi* (Beirut: Markaz dirasat al-Wihda al-ʿArabiyya, 1990).

3 Taha ʿAbd al-Rahman, *Ruh al-Din: min Diq al-ʿAlmaniyya ila Siʿa al-ʾItimaniyya* (Beirut and Casablanca: al-Markaz al-Thaqafi al-ʿArabi, 2012).

addressed the visions of Sadiq Jalal al-ʿAzm and Burhan Ghalioun, examining how these two Syrian thinkers sought new ways of thinking about the relationship between the state and religion in Arab countries.

Okazaki showed that most of al-ʿAzm's criticism in his writings in the 1960s (*Self-Critique after the Defeat* (1968), and *Critique of Religious Thought* (1969)[4] was aimed at religious thought. He considered religion necessarily incompatible with scientific thought, and propounded that it contributes to the consolidation and promotion of negative conditions in the Arab world, hindering attempts for political and social liberation. Okazaki emphasized that al-ʿAzm was neither essentialist nor culturalist, unlike Adonis, who attributed Arab backwardness solely to Islamic doctrine in *The Fixed and the Movable* (1975).[5] Instead he was inspired by Kant's idea of reason and moral responsibility, in his exercise of "self-criticism." Okazaki remarked that since al-ʿAzm's critique of religious thought was more useful for the criticism of emergent Islamic fundamentalism than for criticizing Asad's dictatorship, which claims to be the guardian of the secular state, younger intellectuals have begun to seek alternative discourses to replace it.

Okazaki considers that Burhan Ghalioun (1945-) presents a new point of view on these questions in, for example, his book *Critique of Politics: The State and Religion.*[6] He did not consider religion itself a main subject of criticism, although he tended to attribute Arab decline to Islam. His analysis focused rather on the historical process by which the state and religion developed, each following its own logic, until the former overwhelmed and eventually dominated the latter, particularly after the era of the Rightly Guided Caliphs. Ghalioun therefore emphasized that the state in the Islamic world should not be understood as a completely ideological model, but rather as a series of political communities historically and pragmatically "amalgamated with" religion. Ghalioun argued then that the reduction of all social problems to "religious culture" might lead either to essentialism or to overlooking the "inherent logic of politics," which was generally the same in all countries. In fact, the political experience of the Arab world during the mid-20th century suggested that "secular" states concealed the reproduction of authoritarianism rather than realizing true democracy.

Okazaki concluded by mentioning three important points in relation to Ghalioun's ideas. Firstly, the question of the "arrogance of secularism" has already been mentioned by, for example, Talal Asad, especially in relation to the Western attitude regarding the Rushdie affair. However, Asad expressed this point of view in the context of a critique of cultural imperialism, whereas Ghalioun contributed to the disclosure of the same logic in the local authoritarian states of the Islamic world. Secondly, Ghalioun's book was vehemently criticized by other secular thinkers who could not tolerate partnership or dialogue with Islamist movements such as the Muslim Brotherhood. On the other hand, Ghalioun did not focus only on Islamists, but also on the fact that those who control the despotic Arab states are unwilling to realize national inter-

4 Sadiq Jalal al-ʿAzm, *Critique of Religious Thought*, trans. George Stergios and Mansour Ajami (Berlin: Gerlach Press, 2015); *al-Naqd al-Dhati baʿd al-Hazima* (Self-Criticism after the Defeat), (Beirut: Dar al-Taliʿa, 1968).

5 Adonis, *al-Thabit wa-l-Mutahawil*, four parts (Beirut, Maktabat al-ʿAwda, 1973).

6 Burhan Ghalioun, *Naqd al-Siyasa: al-Dawla wa-l-Din* (Beirut and Casablanca: al-Markaz al-Thaqafi al-ʿArabi, 1994).

ests through dialogue with secular opponents, such as workers' unions or patriotic intellectuals. Thirdly, most Arab intellectuals who were born during the 1930s, including al-ʿAzm and Amin, identified the Islamic fundamentalism of Hasan al-Banna and Sayyid Qutub as a continuation of the ideas of 19th-century moderate Islamic reformists such as Jamal al-Din al-Afghani and Muhammad Abdu. On the other hand Ghalioun considered the idea of Islamic Reformism a valuable resource of Arab identity, which could support the development of citizenship and the coexistence of science and religion, mediated by reason within a modern society.

The third paper in the first panel, "The Controversy of Religion and Secularism in the Arab World: Methodological and Philosophical Approaches," was presented by **Abdulrahman Helli** (Qatar University). Helli critically analysed the texts of four prominent Arab thinkers: ʿAbd al-Wahab al-Misiri (Egypt), ʿAzmi Bishara (Palestine), Taha ʿAbd al-Rahman (Morocco), and Abu Yaʿrub al-Marzuqi (Tunisia). He considers their thought on the question of secularism and religion to represent two central approaches on the topic. The "methodological approach," which is exemplified in the works of al-Misiri[7] and Bishara,[8] aims at recording and defining the phenomenon rather than providing an alternative theory. The "philosophical approach," exemplified in the works of ʿAbd al-Rahman and al-Marzuqi, provides a philosophical vision of a third or middle way between the antithetical camps of secularists and Islamists. Helli criticized both approaches. Despite their valuable contributions in their discussion of the question of religion and secularism, they failed to provide a clear and practical answer to the most pressing question in public societal discourse in the Arab World, i.e. the question of "religious referentiality" in the public sphere.

Helli praised the important methodological contribution made by al-Misiri in his book *Partial Secularism and Comprehensive Secularism*, in which he distinguished between partial and comprehensive secularism, and analysed its historical and contemporary reality. On the other hand, Helli emphasized that although al-Misiri acknowledged, along with many Islamists, that there is no religious authority in Islam, this was not accompanied by addressing the issue of religious referentiality, which is central in the dispute between "Islamists" and "secularists," nor did he provide an alternative to secularism, or a theoretical foundation that can be relied upon when facing contemporary social and political controversies between secularists and Islamists. Similarly, Helli described Bishara's texts on secularism as "the most significant Arab study that observes and analyzes secularism and secularization in their historical context and their relationship with religion and religiosity." He considered Bishara's observations and analyses about religion and secularism in a historical context as basic, indispensable introductory foundations for any (Islamic) study about secularism. However, Helli again stressed that the problem of secularism, in the Islamic world, is not related to institutional separation, but rather specifically concerns the question of referentiality in both religious and ethical provisions, which applies on the institutional as well as the individual level.

7 ʿAbd al-Wahab al-Misiri. *al-ʿAlmaniyya al-Juzʾiyya wa-l-ʿAlmaniyya al-Shamila* (Partial Secularism and Comprehensive Secularism) (Cairo: Dar al-Shuruk, 2002).

8 ʿAzmi Bishara, *al-Din wa-l-ʿAlmaniyya fi Siyaq Tarikhi* (Religion and Secularity in Historical Context) 2 vols. (vol. 2 with two parts), (Beirut: Arab Center for Research and Policy Studies, 2013).

Helli then focused on the philosophical approaches of the Islamic intellectuals Taha ʿAbd al-Rahman and Abu Yaʿrub al-Marzuqi. In discussing ʿAbd al-Rahman's spiritual/religious approach to secularism, Helli emphasized that it does not constitutes an alternative, either to the secularist vision that separates between religion and politics, or to the religious vision that unites religion and politics. Instead it presents a mystical vision of gnosis that is suitable for individual (not collective or societal) behavior. In his analysis of al-Marzuqi's criticism of both secularist and religionist/traditionalist views, and of the dyad of religion and secularism in general, Helli explained, that like ʿAbd al-Rahman, al-Marzuqi's critical approach is based on philosophy and Islamic fundament. Helli critically discussed Marzuqi's criticism of the disciplines of Islamic jurisprudence (*uṣūl al-fiqh*), the objectives of shariʿa (*maqāṣid al-shariʿa*), and the approaches of jurists to solve contemporary issues. This criticism and the insistence on the referential authority of the Quran, the Sunna, and consensus was not accompanied by nor led to any "alternative methodology to understanding these primary sources when it comes to evaluating individuals' actions and the enforcement of legislation." Helli ended his presentation by stressing that the intellectual debates in Islamic societies and thought on the question of secularism/secularization is and should be an unnecessary and marginal luxury, while these societies continue to suffer from the absence of justice and the domination of (political) authoritarianism.

At the end of each panel, and after the presentations, there were comments and a Q & A session open to all participants and audience members. The discussion began with comments and questions from the assigned discussant. The following is a summary of the main ideas addressed.

There was a discussion about the concept of secularity/secularism, in the Arab-Islamic contexts, in general, and in the texts of al-Jabri and ʿAbd al-Rahman, in particular. The discussion revolved around al-Jabri's "contradictory stance" towards the question of secularity/secularism in the Arab and Islamicate world(s). On one hand, he considered that these concepts express an "ambiguous ambivalent slogan" and refer to a "false problem" in the Arab and Islamicate contexts. He therefore called for excluding this "slogan" from contemporary Arab thought and replacing it with "democracy" and "rationality." On the other hand, he emphasized the necessity of "separating religion from politics"—one of the main definitions of secularism—in this selfsame context.[9] ʿAbd al-Rahman saw secularism as "Dahrāniyya", separating between moral and religion, and criticized that separation, and the separation between secularism itself and morality.[10] ʿAbd al-Rahman's thoughts on this matter reflected the centrality of the question of ethics in the discussion around secularity/secularism. Regarding Okazaki's paper, the discussion focused on the historical transformations that occurred in al-ʿAzm's thought, according to which he moved from "extreme secularism" with an anti-religion stance to a (moderate) secularism that is, in principle, not hostile toward religion, and sees

9 Muhammed ʿAbed al-Jabri, *Democracy, Human Rights and Law in Islamic Thought* (London: I.B.Tauris, 2009).

10 Taha ʿAbd al-Rahman, *Buʾs al-Dahraniyya: al-Naqd al-ʾIʾtimani li-Fasl al-ʾAkhlaq ʿan al-Din* (Beirut: al-Shabaka al-ʿArabiyya li-l-ʾAbhath, 2014).

a possibility to reconcile between Islamic religiosity and democracy.[11] Okazaki's remarks that Ghalioun's critique of secularism is secular, that is, took place from a secular perspective, and not from a religious one, was also discussed. Concerning Helli's paper, there was a question about the criteria of distinguishing between what he called "methodological approaches" and "philosophical approaches," the accuracy or reasonableness of classifying each of the four thinkers (al-Misiri, Bishara, Taha, and al-Marzuqi), within these approaches, and the possibility of the intertwining of the two within individual texts.

II. Panel II: Concepts of Citizenship, Nation/Community and Secularity/Secularism in Contemporary Islamic Thought

In the second panel, two papers were presented: "The Contemporary Concept of *Muwāṭana* and the Constitution of Medina" by Ahmed M. F. Abd-Elsalam (Orient-Institute Beirut) and "Elements of Secularization and Authenticity in the Political Discourse of the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood Members (2011–2013)" by Duha ʿAbdelgawad (University of Warwick). Dietrich Jung (University of Southern Denmark) chaired the panel and was the discussant.

Ahmed M. F. ʿAbd-Elsalam began his presentation by introducing a historical study of the "theology of coexistence"[12] in Islam or Islamic thought, and its religious and secular dimensions. He focused on the concepts of "ʾ*umma* (nation/community)" and "*muwāṭana*/citizenship" in "the constitution of Medina" and in contemporary Islamic discourse. Abd al-Salam argued that the "secular" concepts of ʾ*umma* and *muwāṭana* belong to Islamic theological concepts related to the coexistence of different religions, inter-religious coexistence, and the theology of coexistence. One could therefore understand the concepts of "religious or Islamic nation" and the "Arab nation" on this basis. ʿAbd al-Salam emphasized the importance of the "constitution of Medina," in this regard, as it aimed to regulate the relationship between various religious—Muslims and non-Muslims, especially Jews—and non-religious groups in Medina, after the Muslims migrated there from Mecca. The importance of this constitution lies in the fact that it includes a partial transformation from the clan/tribal concept or system to the concept of the (civil) nation/umma, to the extent that it could be considered the foundation of the first Islamic vision of the concepts of nation and citizenship. These concepts assume two spaces, secular and religious, whether they are Muslim or non-Muslim, in Islamic ʾ*umma*.

ʿAbd al-Salam pointed out that the constitution secured the sovereignty of individual tribal communities in the city in matters related to relationships between tribes (a secular space), and, at the same time, created a contractual space for tribal and cross-tribal issues, that is, for secular and religious issues, in the space of

11 Sadik Jalal al-ʿAzm, *Islam und Säkular Humanismus/Islam and Secular Humanism* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2005).

12 Mahmoud Abdallah, "Theologie des Zusammenlebens: Von der Glaubensorientierung zum interaktiven Miteinander?," in *Theologie des Zusammenlebens: Christen und Muslime beginnen einen Weg*, eds. Bern-Jochen Hilberath and Mahmoud Abdallah. (Mainz: Grünewald Verlag, 2019): 215–239.

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what was called "ʾ*umma*." In this space, all those who adhere to this contractual constitution, Muslims and non-Muslims (Jews for example), are treated equally, so that they are guaranteed freedom of worship and the safety of their properties as members of this nation. After tracing the history of the concepts of ʾ*umma*/nation and *muwāṭana*/citizenship, in the 19th and 20th centuries, among a number of thinkers of the Arab Renaissance, such as Rifaʿa Rafiʿ al-Tahtawi, Salama Musa and others, ʿAbd al-Salam showed the presence of these two concepts in contemporary Islamic discourse, in Egypt, with the Egyptian Minister of Endowments, Muhammad Mukhtar Gumʿa, and the Grand Imam of al-Azhar, Ahmad al-Tayyib, for example. Finally, ʿAbd al-Salam stressed that the concepts of secular nation and citizenship are religious/Islamic concepts of peaceful, friendly, and positive coexistence between religions, to the extent that many religious/Islamic parties adopt them. Therefore, these concepts are simultaneously secular, religious and challenge as well as transcend the religious-secular classification and division.

In the second presentation, ʿAbdelgawad addressed the narratives of members of the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood, after the bloody ouster of the movement in 2013, and the effect this had on their belief in the model of representative democracy, and the ideological uniqueness of the movement. She began by pointing out that her paper relies on a field study of the narratives of 48 former affiliated and current members of the movement, regarding an ideal/Islamic model of governance and how this resonates with a process of secularization within the Islamist political discourse. On the theoretical level, she partially and particularly relied on the secular thesis introduced by Jose Casanova[13] and Charles Taylor[14] and the notion of post Islamism in the work of Asef Bayat[15] and Olivier Roy[16] to address two critical issues at the heart of the debate over Islamist secularization. The first issue concerns the stance towards limits to the state's legal intervention in the personal sphere while the second issue relates to the concept of popular sovereignty and how this is compatible with the secular model of governance. ʿAbdelgawad indicated that her research focused on the voices of lay Islamists in order to challenge the elitism bias in the study of Islamism, and bringing the ethnographic field dimension to abstract concepts in Islamist political discourse.

ʿAbdelgawad then explained how the Muslim Brotherhood, as a political Islamic movement, is or turned into "a secular political group with a religious garnish." Nevertheless, the narratives of members of the Muslim Brotherhood indicate that they do not fit with the three main theses of secularization theory: (1) the functional differentiation between religion and other social spheres, politics in particular; (2) the privatization of religion or religious beliefs; and (3) the public decline of (social values of) religion or religious beliefs and practices. The secular feature of the Muslim Brotherhood movement did not prevent tension or conflict between the political imagination of its members and these three theses of secularization theory. The Muslim Brotherhood members emphasized, on one hand, the limits of the state's sovereignty and le-

13 José Casanova, *Public Religions in the Modern World* (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1994).

14 Charles Taylor, *A Secular Age* (Cambridge, Massachusetts, and London: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2007).

15 Asef Bayat, ed. *Post-Islamism: The Changing Faces of Political Islam* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013).

16 Olivier Roy, *L'échec de l'islam politique* (Paris : Éditions du Seuil, 1992).

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gal power without having a detailed or clear conception of the relationship between political and religious authority. On the other hand, they expressed the conviction that the state cannot and should not "fly away from the religious guidance of Ulama," and that religion still does and should play an important role in the public sphere in the contemporary (Islamic) world.

ʿAbdelgawad concluded that "the notion of secular would be unjust to the Muslim Brotherhood members' imagination for polity," and that "sweeping narratives about the secular traits of the movement should not obscure its internal diversity and unheard interpretations for secular modern conceptions."

In the following discussion and Q & A session, the question of the accuracy or historical reliability of the constitution of Medina, as a historical document, was raised. While acknowledging the reasonability of doubts about the date and contents of this historical document, there was an emphasis on the importance of its contemporary uses and functions regarding issues of the Islamic/civil state and democracy that accept and accommodate religious and non-religious pluralism within the framework of equal citizenship. There was also a discussion about the possibility and necessity of viewing secularism in its relationship with Islam as being part of or based on Islam, and not necessarily contrary to it. Regarding ʿAbdelgawad's paper, there were questions about her research methodology and the extent to which the selected sample represents the views of the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood membership in general, and how she managed to conduct interviews with these individuals in Egypt specifically given the circumstances and political decisions that classify the Muslim Brotherhood movement as a "terrorist organization." Questions were also raised about the meaning of secularism in the paper as well as that understood by the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood members, and the extent to which these meanings coincide, differentiate or intersect with those expressed in the works of Taylor and Casanova, for example. The question around the meaning of labelling the Muslim Brotherhood a "secular political group" remained open.

III. Panel III: On the concepts of the civil state and political Islam

The third panel consisted of three presentations. The first dealt with the presence of the concept of the civil state in the constitutions of some Arab countries after the outbreak of the Arab Spring uprisings. The second focused on the concept of political Islam, and the extent to which its future depends on the adoption of the concept of "civil state." The third discussed the possibility that "negative secularism," represented by the civil state, could be a moderate and acceptable middle ground between two extremes: the secularist and the Islamist. Markus Dressler was the discussant and chaired the panel.

Limor Lavie (Bar Ilan University) presented a paper entitled "The Constitutionalization of the Civil State: The Self-Definition of Egypt, Tunisia and Yemen Following the Arab Uprisings."[17] In her presentation, Lavie focused on the symbolic and foundational aspects of the new Arab constitutions, which are perceived as

17 Limor Lavie, "The Constitutionalization of the Civil State: The Self-Definition of Egypt, Tunisia and Yemen Following the Arab Uprisings," *Religions* 12, no. 269 (2021): 1–18, https://doi.org/10.3390/rel12040269.

"the state's charter of identity," and presented a contextualized analysis of the way in which three Arab constitutions—in Egypt (2014/2019), Tunisia (2014), and Yemen (2015)—came to a similar self-declaration of a "civil state" (*dawla madaniyya*) following popular uprisings. Lavie emphasized the novelty or uniqueness of this self-proclamation of the state, as a civil state, since this has not happened before, neither in previous constitutions in those countries, nor in any other constitution worldwide. Lavie considered this proclamation as a "product of ongoing internal struggles of Muslim societies over the definition of their collectivity between conservatism and modernity, religiosity and secularism."

Lavie then focused on analyzing the symbolic and practical meanings of the concept of "civil state" in each individual case. This analysis also included tracing the path of migration this idea took from one country to another, and the interconnectedness between the three cases, while pointing out possible implications on future Arab constitution-making in other countries. With regard to Egypt, Lavie showed that the concept of "civil state" was anchored in article 200 of the amended 2014 constitution, as the result of a decades-long debate on the place of Islam in politics and on the country's religious/non-religious orientation. She argued that the Egyptian conception or self-definition as a civil state enshrines the one-sided anti-Islamist narrative of the June 2013 coup regime, while empowering the armed forces to thwart the resurgence of Islamist rule in the future. As for Tunisia, Lavie saw in the constitutionalization of the concept of civil state as an expression of a settlement and consensual vision between Islamists and non-Islamists regarding the role of Islam in politics. Concerning Yemen, she saw the use of the concept of civil state, in a constitution that remained just a draft, as expressing an aspiration for detribalization and modernization within an Islamic model of statehood. Despite all these differences, Lavie concluded that all these conceptions of civil state are based on some common premises, most notably the idea that the optimum is a modern Islamic state that is simultaneously non-secular and non-religious/non-theocratic.

Housamedden Darwish (Leipzig University) presented a paper entitled "Political Islam and its Prospects in the Arab and Islamicate World(s)." The key question that this paper explored was: What are the prospects for political Islam in the Arab and Islamicate world(s), after more than ten years since the outset of the Arab Spring revolutions and uprisings?

Darwish began his presentation by stressing the possibility, and even the necessity, of addressing the issue of political Islam, in the context of a discussion on its prospects, in a general conceptual approach that considers the diversity of the concrete phenomena that represent it without reducing it to any of them. He analysed, in a first step, the concept of political Islam and its distinction from other related concepts, such as jihadi Islam, Islamism, official Islam and preaching/missionary Islam. He then critically examined and argued against two leading theses. One suggests that political Islam is the destiny of Arab and Islamicate societies, if these societies are given the opportunity to express themselves politically and choose their political representatives. The second warns of the danger of political Islam because of its necessary conflict with the principles of democracy and (individual) human rights. In a third step, he addressed political Islam's relationship with the other, as this is one of the most important determinants of the future of political Islam and the prospects for its presence in the Arab and Islamicate world(s). That "other" is embodied, on one hand, in society and other political (and) Islamic/religious parties present in its public sphere, and on the other, in the (national/civil) state and authority.

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Darwish concluded by saying that the future of contemporary political Islam oscillates between two main poles, jihadi Islam or Islamism, and one seeking a civil (democratic) state. One of the crucial factors that may determine this future in the "Arab and Islamicate world(s)" is the relationship with the concepts of the nation state and the civil state in general, the actual state in which it is found, and the ruling political system of that state in particular. If this relationship is positive, it can lead to political Islam becoming part of a democratic transition or a democratic process in the nation state. However, if it is negative, political Islam can transform into jihadi Islam or extremist Islamism. The relationship of political Islam with the state and politics in general is positive when it recognizes the existing state's legitimacy as the political entity in which it operates, and respects its borders and sovereignty, when it moves from the concept of "the (Islamic) nation" and the slogan "Islam is the solution," to the concept of a "(democratic) civil state" based on the principles of citizenship, the rule of law, and respect for pluralism and individual freedoms. From the other side, this relationship is positive when the state/ruling powers recognize the initial legitimacy of political Islam as an acceptable political party in the national democratic political process and adopts an accommodating, non-exclusionary approach towards it.

The last presentation on the first day of the workshop was "Can the 'Civil State' Be a Middle Ground Between Assertive Secularist and Islamist States?" by **Ahmet T. Kuru** (San Diego State University). In his historical analysis of the phenomena of secularism and Islamism in the Islamic world, Kuru distinguished between two main trends: secular and Islamic. The secular trend began with Mustafa Kemal Ataturk in Turkey in 1921, then spread and was embodied in many regimes in Iran, Pakistan, Afghanistan, Syria, Iraq, Tunisia, and Egypt ...etc. The Islamic trend emerged with the Islamic revolution in Iran in 1979, and found parallel embodiment in other countries, such as Afghanistan, and became a role model for various Islamic movements. Kuru emphasized that the fundamental problem that remained intractable in both directions was how to guarantee the political participation of the people while preserving citizenship equality among them. In order to find a solution to this problem, a third trend emerged, which is what Kuru called "passive secularism" or the civil state. In order to clarify the differences between these three approaches, Kuru distinguished between the secular state, where there is no official religion for the state and no judicial or legislative role for the ulema/clergy, and the Islamic state, where Islam is the state religion and the ulema/clergy have a judicial and legislative role, and the mixed state, where Islam is the state religion, and the role of the ulema/clergy is limited to the judiciary, with no legislative role. According to this classification, Kuru points out that there are twenty secular states, eleven Islamic states and fifteen mixed states in the Islamic world. He also points out that there are many other complex cases that do not easily fit into this classification. Based on the distinction between states of firm secularism (France and Mexico, for example), states of passive secularism (the United States and the Netherlands, for example) and Islamic states (Saudi Arabia and Iran, for example), Kuru discussed the ambiguity of the concept of the civil state in terms of definition and the lack of clarity of the role of the clergy in the judiciary and legislation, and in term of the possibility of discrimination between citizens based on religion. Kuru concluded by emphasizing the importance of this concept, but also the need to scrutinize, clarify, and distinguish it from other concepts intertwined with it (the religious state, the Islamic state, the secular state) through clear and specific criteria.

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In the Q & A session that followed there was a comparative discussion on the similarities and differences between the concept of "passive secularism" (of Kuru), the different conceptions of the "civil state" in Egypt, Tunisia and Yemen (as presented by Levi), and the concept of civil state in Islamic and non-Islamic writings (presented by Darwish). During the comparison, the complementarity between the descriptive approach, dominant in Lavie's presentation, and the normative dimension that was present in the approach of both Kuru and Darwish, was noted. There were also questions about the possibility and necessary of distinguishing between the concept of civil state and conflicting or competing concepts, and the unique presence of this concept in the Arab-Islamicate world(s), since it is not present elsewhere. The discussion also addressed the possibility of realizing or achieving a "civil state" in the Arab-Islamicate world(s), under the hegemony of "non-civil" military regimes that have more often produced an official Islam that is subject to their will, and an oppressed and excluded Islamic/Islamist opposition, than a political Islam that accommodates the idea of a modern state and a democratic political system based on (individual) freedoms, pluralism, and citizenship equality.

IV. Panel IV: Soft Secularism, Islamic State, Islamic Democracy

The fourth panel also included three papers, presented by Dietrich Jung, Sari Hanafi (American University of Beirut), and Mujtaba Isani (University of Mannheim). The panel was chaired by Muhammad Hashas, who was also the assigned discussant.

Dietrich Jung presented a paper entitled "'Islamic States': The Cases of Iran, Malaysia, and Saudi Arabia," in which he addressed the "Islamic state" as an idea linked to Islamic tradition and history, and the merging of religion and modern political institutions, on one hand, and a social practice, on the other. Based on this, Jung discussed two main questions relating to the concept of the state and the concept of "Islamic state."

In addressing the first question, Jung relied on Weber to point out that the ideal type of the state is determined by the monopoly of violence/physical force, a people, a territory, legitimate authority, and the state as a political unit that enjoys international/global acknowledgement by the "society of states." Jung turned to Norbert Elias to briefly explain the historical process or the ideal type of state formation in Europe, which was, at the same time, a monopoly formation. This double formation leads, in its first phase, to the centralization and accumulation of resources in one hand (European absolutism). In the second phase, this monopoly passes from the hands of an individual ruler to a broader public and becomes, with the bourgeois revolution, the function of society as a whole. In this monopoly/state formation, there is a twin monopoly of physical force and taxation. Jung also distinguished, using Weber, between two ideal types of state authority: traditional authority based on the established belief in the sanctity of immemorial traditions (religious and/or dynastic) and the legitimacy of those exercising authority under them; and rational/legal authority based on the legality of enacted rules, and the right to issue commands of those elevated by formal procedures under such rule.

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Regarding the second question—what does make a state an Islamic state?—Jung noted that in the move to political independence, postcolonial political elites often tried to bolster their political legitimacy by reverting to the symbolic sources of Islam. In declaring Islam the state religion, allying themselves with the religious establishment, or elevating the sharia to a constitutionally defined source of law, Muslim regimes were more or less part of the Islamic discourse of modernity once launched by Islamic modernists in the 19th century. Jung emphasized that there have been many various ways by which a postcolonial state could/should relate to religion/Islam, and that Islamic traditions could serve as a source of modern postcolonial authenticity and political legitimacy. Only a few states, however, have been explicitly declared Islamic states. Among them, Jung chose three, based on their different political ideologies: Iran, Malaysia, and Saudi Arabia. Although they all draw from the semantics of Islamic modernism, they employ it in utterly different ways. They represent excellent cases for analyzing the contextual differences between state-driven Islamic projects of political modernity that have appeared in postcolonial state formation.

The Islamic character of the state of Iran is clear, through the system of *vilāyat-i faqīh*, the power hegemony of the ʿulamaʾ/clergy, and the supremacy of religious texts and their interpretations. This "Islamic" dimension gives advantages to one group at the expense of others. In Malaysia, the Islamic feature appears in a different form. Islam is the constitutionally official religion of the state, and the actual authority in Malaysia is a rational legal authority, but there also are traditional Islamic authorities. The Islamism of Malaysia appears, in the first place, in the Islamic character of national belonging, and in the priority given to Muslims in the economic field, at the expense of the non-Muslim minority, Chinese and Indian, for example. The Islamic character of the state of Saudi Arabia is clear in the state's flag and in the fact that Islam is the state's religion, and the Qur'an and Sunnah are its constitution. At the conclusion of his presentation, Jung stressed the great difference between the characters of the states mentioned, and pointed out that the hypothesis of the research he is working on is that the common feature among Islamic states is a form of mechanism of exclusion, whereby the Islamic feature of the state necessarily leads to the exclusion of part of its people.

The second presentation, by **Sari Hanafi**, was entitled "The Relationship between State and Religion in the Arab World: A Separation/Connection/Multiple Actions Approach." He began by pointing out that "since the onset of the Arab uprising, there is no more controversial topic than the relationship between state and religion in the Arab world." The crucial question addressed by this presentation was centered on the possibility of dealing with this relationship from the perspectives of both religious sciences, social sciences and humanities, at the same time, rather than placing these two perspectives as dichotomies and in duality, in which each party excludes the other. Hanafi argued along similar lines as in his book, *Addressing the Rupture Between the Religious and Social Sciences: Is the Morning Coming Soon?*[18] He proposed using something he called a separation/connection/multiple actions approach. This approach refuses to look at the spheres of religion, culture, politics, society, and economy as separate spheres and emphasizes that

18 Sari Hanafi, *ʿUlum al-Sharʿ wa-l-ʿUlum al-ʾIjtimaʿiyya: Nahw Tajawuz al-Qatiʿa. ʾAlays al-subh bi-Qarib?* (Kuwait: Nohoud Center for Studies and Research, 2021).

all forms of knowledge are important to enable transversal common logics in a given society to be encompassed in its totality. The separation/connection/multiple actions approach consists of studying each issue in the science concerned according to its own epistemology and the same thing in theology before connecting the outcome, guided by the lifeworlds of those involved. Then two forms of action should be taken: one for citizens and the other for believers, including issuing civil law and *fiqh* (religious jurisprudence) informed by the previous two stages. In this way the intersection and communication between the secular and the religious, between the different sciences, can pass through a moral channel, and could result in two aforementioned forms of action.

Regarding the question of democracy, for example, Hanafi considered that it could be based on the concept of shura, for believers, and on other foundations, for non-believers. A discussion could then take place that considers the universality of the idea, on one hand, and the specificity of the local environment, on the other. He used Cécile Laborde's *Liberalism's Religion*(19) to discuss the idea of a multiplicity of procedures in order to find a better (re-)formulation of how the liberal state deals, on an equal footing, with the plurality of obligations of its citizens, the plurality of their beliefs and identities, finding the necessary balance, and positive interaction, between religious and secular dimensions, in the state and society.

Hanafi concluded that there is and should be what he called "soft secularism," as the operating mechanism, when two conditions are met. The first, when the separation between religious institutions and state institutions secures liberal democratic ideals. The second, when the state's neutrality is restricted to reply to the notion of overlapping consensus about the good.(20) Hanafi emphasized the necessity of preserving what Rajeev Bhargava called the "principled separation"(21) between state and religion, and of looking at a proper distance between them, on the basis of the principle of equity, favoring the values of peace, universal human rights, dignity, freedom, equality, and fraternity. The soft secularism that Hanafi adopts, theorizes, and calls for in the Arab world is a tailored system that can be more tolerant to the non-authoritarian presence of religion, as argumentation and manifestation, in the public sphere, and that forges more contextual models that advance our quest for social justice, democracy, and active citizenship.

The third presentation was entitled "Popular Sovereignty, the Caliphate of Man and the Flexibility of an Islamic Democracy," in which **Mujtaba Isani** provided a critical reading of Andrew Marsh's book *The Caliphate of Man: Popular Sovereignty in Modern Islamic Thought,*(22) which argues that "Islamic democracy can ever be a liberal democracy because it borrows the ideas of Ḥakimiyya and *Khilafa* from scholars such

19 Cécile Laborde, *Liberalism's Religion* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2017).

20 John Rawls, *A Theory of Justice*, revised edition (Cambridge; Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1999).

21 Rajeev Bhargava, "What is Secularism For?" in *Secularism and Its Critics*, ed. Rajeev Bhargava (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), 486–550.

22 Andrew F. March, *The Caliphate of Man: Popular Sovereignty in Modern Islamic Thought* (London: Harvard University Press, 2019).

as Mawdudi[23] and Qutb[24] that are against popular sovereignty at the very core." Isani pointed out that the issue of the relationship between the Islamic character and the liberal and secular features of democracy is problematic in modern Islamic thought, and there is no single or decisive opinion about it. He rejected Marsh's thesis and argued that conceptions of Islamic government have differed according to context, place and time and that in the modern era the public views democracy as a vehicle for justice and welfare. He therefore emphasized that Islamic government can still be based broadly on the principles of modern Islamic political thought while the exact institutional configurations may differ according to place, time and context, and in accordance with the ruling regime, the competing theories of the time, and the intellectual gap that is intended to be filled, among other factors.

Isani explained the possibility of great diversity and difference of opinions, in this regard, by the fact the Quran and hadith say little on the Caliphate directly, so that most theories put forward—from al-Mawardi[25] to Mawdudi—are speculative, as a result of ijtihad and independent jurisprudence. Isani showed that the basics of Islamic governance are limited to small number of general principles. Other than that, there is infinite variety in the way it is applied and in most of the details. He concluded that as long as certain principles are applied, there may be infinite diversity in the manner of its application. In Islamic jurisprudence, this is known as *ikhtilaf* or legitimate diversity of opinion in secondary issues of religion.

In the Q & A session that followed, questions were raised about the extent to which there are common denominators between Islam in different Islamic countries, and the the many and great differences between those Islams or Islamic states, to the point that other sub-categories or criteria that may be more significant in the process of understanding their individual Islamic character must be sought. There are states classified as Islamic, without defining or calling themselves such, and it may seem that the Islamic feature of these states is stronger than those of other states that labels themselves Islamic. On this basis, one can say that there are different criteria, subjective (the state's self-definition) and objective (political, economic or social etc.) through which one can talk about the Islamic or non-Islamic character of a state. The discussion dealt with the thesis of "the impossibility of the Islamic state" (like Wael Hallaq),[26] and the opinion of those who say it is necessary to stop any attempt to Islamize modern concepts, such as democracy, for example, (such as ʿAbd Allah al-Naʿim),[27] in contrast to others who talk about the possibility of

23 Abu alʿala Maududi, *Islamic way of life*. trans. K. Ahmad (Delhi: Markazi Maktaba Islami, 1967).

24 Sayyid Qutb, *Milestones*, ed. A.B. al-Mehri (Birmingham: Maktabah Publications, 2006).

25 Abu al-Ḥasan al-Mawardi, *Al-Ahkam al-Sultaniyya* (The Principles of Governance) (Cairo: al-Halabi Press, 1960).

26 Wael B. Hallaq, *The Impossible State: Islam, Politics, and Modernity's Moral Predicament* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2013).

27 Abdullahi Ahmed An-Naʿim, *Islam and the Secular State: Negotiating the Future of Shariʿa* (Cambridge, Massachusetts and London: Harvard University Press, 2008).

an Islamic democracy (such as ʿAbd al-Karim Surush),[28] and Islamic secularism (such as Hasan Hanafi).[29] Sari Hanafi's thesis of a multiplicity of procedures, and the need to allow the presence of different opinions, religious and non-religious/secular, in the public sphere, in order to search for overlapping consensus between different perspectives, or to find ways for coexistence between them, within the framework of democratic pluralism, was also discussed.

V. Panel V: Islamic secularization in Morocco, the struggle over the Islamic and secular state in Sudan, feminism and the secular and religious issue in Egypt

In the fifth session, three papers were presented that dealt with different aspects of the relationship between religion and the state, in Morocco, Sudan, and Egypt. The panel was chaired by **Sari Hanafi**, who was also the main discussant.

First, **Salim Hmimnat** (Mohammed V University) presented a paper entitled "Morocco is a Civil State, yet with an Islamic Reference: Muslim Secularization to Circumvent the Islamism and Secularism Trap," in which he discussed the concept of Muslim secularization/secularism by studying the case of official Moroccan Islam. He argued that this concept is not just a meaningless catchphrase that lacks practical expression, but rather a concept that reflects a creative ideological construct through which Moroccan policymakers, specifically the Ministry of Islamic Affairs, reconcile two priorities of utmost importance: on one hand, ensuring that official Islam helps absorb the collateral side effects of secular authoritarian modernization; on the other, ensuring that the religious sphere is well-incorporated in the modern nation-state building project that entails, inter alia, the bureaucratization of official Islam institutions and the consolidation of what state discourse called "the democratic option." On this basis, Hmimnat considered that the Moroccan state can be seen neither as a "secular state" nor an "Islamic state" but rather that is a de facto "civil state (dawla madaniyya), yet a one with an Islamic reference." In order to demonstrate this thesis, Hmimnat examined two crucial interrelated aspects. First, he conducted a content analysis to show how the binary concepts of "civil state" and "Islamic state" are represented in the religious establishment's official documents, in particular the guides and training curricula meant to frame and mentor the work of the ulema (religious scholars) and the young generations of Imams-murshidin (spiritual guides) and murshidat (female spiritual guides). Secondly, he explored practical aspects of ongoing "Muslim secularization" by displaying the tasks and roles entrusted to ulema and Imams as a spiritual driving force in the everyday functioning of modern state institutions.

28 ʻAbdolkarim Soroush, *Reason, Freedom, and Democracy in Islam: Essential Writings of Abdolkarim Soroush*, translated, edited, and with a critical introduction by Mahmoud Sadri, Ahmad Sadri (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2000).

29 Hasan Hanafi, "al-ʿAlmaniyya wa-l-ʾIslam: al-ʾIslam la Yahtaj ila ʿIlmāniyya Gharbiyya," in Hasan Hanafi and Muhammad ʿAbid al-Jabri, *Hiwar al-Mashriq wa-l-Maghrib: nahwa Iʿadat Binaʾ al-Fikr al-ʿArabi al-Muʿasir* (Beirut: al-Muʾassasa al-ʿArabiyya li-l-Abhath wa-l-Dirasat, 1990), 34-38.

Hmimnat indicated that the ulema establishment's involvement in "grand politics" is not limited to providing advisory views on public affairs issues, nor to conveying the faith of Islam (al-tabligh), which ensures the spread of moderate Islam and promotes "the spirit of renaissance in people and guiding them to the path of civilization and progress." Instead, the ulema establishment strives to prove itself as a dynamic, qualified actor with resources and practical experience, enabling it to engage concretely with development in all cultural, social, economic, and political fields. Hmimnat concluded that Moroccan state Islam, regardless of the pressing security context post-9/11, pursued a modernizing endeavor slightly different from the priorities that dominated religious policy in the 1980s and 1990s. The official religious establishment has greatly contributed to providing the regime with crucial ideological interpretations that open the door to a pragmatic path of compromise between the state's secular modernization and sharia principles in 21st-century Morocco.

The second presentation, entitled "Sudan: The Great Transition from an Islamic to a 'Secular State,'" was made by **Madi Elfatih Ali Ibrahim** (Centre of Diplomatic and Strategic Studies in Paris). Ibrahim discussed the concepts of "civil (state)" and "secular (state)" in the Sudanese context, following the revolution that overthrew the rule of President Omar al-Bashir, in April 2019, which had been described, in several contexts, as Islamic rule. However, the civil feature or characteristic of the state was one of the problems raised by protesters, whose slogans sometimes seemed to reduce the country's crisis to being governed by a military leader with a military mentality. Ibrahim argued that there was a connection between the concepts of "civil (state)" and "secular (state)" as a result of the forces that led the revolutionary movement and came to the fore, as representing the Sudanese youth and revolutionaries, such as the "Sudanese Professionals' Association" and "The Forces of Freedom and Change," and because of the presence of communists and "other extremist secular parties" that support the aforementioned forces, and base their discourse on the need to completely exclude Islam and Islamists from the public sphere.

Ibrahim saw in this development an "intellectual hijacking of the revolution" that led to major problems, represented in the deliberate exclusion of all those who did not agree with this extremist vision, supporting the exclusion of religion from the public sphere. This actually contradicted the "revolutionary priorities and demands" themselves, as the advocators of this "exclusion" were not a majority, and they knew they would "probably" be defeated in any referendum or election. From Ibrahim's point of view, this explains why, during more than two years in power, The Forces of Freedom and Change disrupted the work of the constitutional institutions and the establishment of a parliament, and did not begin to prepare, in any way, for the holding of elections. It seemed, from the statements of a spokesperson for these forces, that their ambition was to extend the transitional period for as long as possible.

Ibrahim then moved on to discuss the recent coup in Sudan, which took place on October 25, 2021, in which the army commander revoked his alliance with The Forces of Freedom and Change, leading to open hostility and the attempt by the rest of the alliance to bring him down. He considered the alliance between The Forces of Freedom and Change and the leaders of the Sudanese army exceptional for two

reasons. On the one hand, the army commanders whose history and closeness to the ousted president were overlooked, were given leadership positions, such as Chairman of Sudan's Sovereignty Council Abdel Fattah al-Burhan. On the other, small parties, in terms of popularity and membership, found their historical opportunity to participate in shaping Sudan according to their political and ideological orientations and agendas. Ibrahim stressed at the end of his presentation that his critical view of the political situation in Sudan during the past few years does not include any principled hostility towards secularism. Instead, he tried to explain, by presenting the Sudanese experience, how secularists sometimes abuse themselves and secularism when they make it hostile to religion, or linked to coercion and the violation of the rights of the majority who still see religion playing an important role in their lives. The Sudanese case also provides an example of the link between the military and secularists. In a social context in which it is difficult to convince the majority to limit Islam to the private sphere, secular parties find no harm in seeking the assistance of the military in order to impose their model, generating resentment or corresponding support for any other party, even a military coup.

The third and final presentation was made by **Amany Abdelrazik Alsiefy** (The Free University of Berlin) under the title "Secular State and Feminism in Postcolonial Egypt: The Politics of the Right to Exclude." Alsiefy discussed the presence of religion in the public sphere by examining the regulation of the relationship between males and females in public and private spheres in postcolonial Egypt. According to Alsiefy, these regulations, which sustain male privileges, are supported by a prevailing patriarchal discourse. This patriarchal discourse is also enacted in successive "secular" Egyptian constitutions, even though the same constitutions contain articles that ensure and support gender equality. Alsiefy argues, therefore, that postcolonial Egyptian women are subject to two contradictory discourses: the first follows the international human rights system and gender equality, while the other religious and nationalist discourses restrict women's promised rights. This situation explains the contradictory positions of the "secular" state towards reforming the personal status law and feminist demands in general.

Alsiefy considered that this contradiction was the result, in part, of the secular state's manipulation of religion and religious discourse to achieve political goals. The state uses religion to legitimize its existence in a conservative society, and excludes feminist opposition, stigmatizing it as "immoral" and against the values of Islam and "authentic Egyptian family values." Therefore, she argued that the struggle of Egyptian women to remove the restrictions imposed on them and improve their mutual relationship with men is twofold. On one hand, there is the struggle against religious authority by demanding reforms in Islamic laws. On the other, there is the struggle against the despotic "secular" political regimes. These despotic regimes determine the role of religion in regulating gendered spaces and relations and use its "secular" sovereign authority to shape individuals' feelings and private attitudes in the public sphere.

Alsiefy draws on the feminist activism of Duria Shafik (1908–1975)[30] and Nawal al-Saʿadawi (1931–

30 Cynthia Nelson, *Doria Shafik, Egyptian Feminist: A Woman Apart* (Cairo: The American University in Cairo Press, 1996).

2021)[31] to shed light on these conflicting positions in the constitution regarding women's rights in the public sphere. Nonetheless, she concludes that there is a need for a new conception of an ethical system that can cope with current social and economic circumstances. These circumstances entail fostering tolerance, pluralism, and promoting gender equality in the public sphere. In this context, she presents the current discussions raised by the case of "Tik Tok girls" about the concept of "authentic family values" and "public morality" as an indication of social pressure from within the society by ordinary educated women, who are demanding reform of the relationship between the sexes, in the public and private spheres, beyond the discourse of tradition and "authentic identity." Finally, she wonders whether these pressures and discussions on women's rights and the role of religion in the public sphere could be considered a form of secularization from below.

In the Q & A session that followed, there was a discussion about the accuracy and reasonableness of the use of the term "state fundamentalism," as the translation and equivalent term to the Arabic "ʾusūliyya al-dawla," given the strong negative connotations attached to "fundamentalism" in the English language and literature. The suggestion was made to use the term "foundationalism" as a substitute in this context. Hmimnat was also asked about how present the "Islamic vs. secular" conflict is in the political scene in Morocco. His belief is that it has a relatively strong presence, and that the political system in Morocco is interested in its continued presence and an intensification of the conflict. The same issue was also discussed with regard to the situation in Sudan and Egypt. It appeared from Ibrahim's presentation that the (main) conflict in Sudan is between secularists and Islamists or Muslims. Ibrahim pointed out that the masses were revolting, in the first place, against corruption and tyranny, and for the sake of social justice, and not against Islam, or for the sake of secularization. Nevertheless, the secular(ist) parties that came to power gave priority to the secularization of the state, and contributed to creating a state of secular-Islamic polarization. Regarding the same issue in the context of Egyptian feminism, the question was around the extent to which one can say that Egyptian feminism is secular or Islamic, or that there is a conflictual division or polarization between secular or anti-religious trends and religious or anti-secular trends? In this context, Casanova's saying: "Feminism appears to have replaced communism as 'the specter' haunting all religious traditions"[32] was recalled. Alsiefy considered that Egyptian feminism did not, in general, take a negative or anti-religion stance, but rather tried to present feminist interpretations of religious texts or religion in general. This was done, for example, by the two feminists Duria Shafik and Nawal al-Saʿadawi.

VI. Closing Remarks and Discussions

In the conference's closing session, several ideas brought up in the research and sessions were discussed. I will now briefly present some of the concluding remarks and main ideas discussed in that session,

31 Nawal El Saadawi, *The Essential Nawal El Saadawi: A Reader*, ed. Adele Newson Horst (London and New York: Zed Books, 2010).

32 José Casanova, "Religion, Politics and Gender Equality: Public Religions Revisited," *UNRISD Gender and Development Programme*, Paper no. 5, September 2009.

chaired by **Housamedden Darwish**.

1. The (Relationship Between the) Descriptive Analytical Approach and the Normative Ideological Approach

In humanities and social sciences, the descriptive and normative dimensions are necessarily intertwined. The descriptive/analytical dimension is that which attempts to describe/analyze what is, while the normative dimension includes a vision of what should be. The intertwining between the two appears in the basic concepts dealt with by the conference (the civil state, the secular state, the Islamic state, the religious state), as they are thick normative concepts, par excellence.[33] The extent of the presence of the normative dimension in the approaches and contents of the papers varied, apparent and strong in some, and implicit and relatively weak in others. The concluding discussions included an emphasis on the plausibility and importance of the presence of the normative dimension in these political contexts in which research is preoccupied not only with describing what is, but is also concerned with what ought to be. On the other hand, it was stressed that the positive impact of the powerful presence of the normative dimension in approaches and researches can be associated with (greater) negative effects in the descriptive/analytical dimension of the research. As such, attention must be paid to the inherent normative dimension of research in those contexts, with an attempt to reduce its negative effects as much as possible. In order to achieve this goal, one should acknowledge the existence of the immanent normative dimension and try to control it cognitively, to prevent the abuse of judgments based on desirability or ideological biases, in a way that ensures balance, complementarity, and positive interaction, between the descriptive and normative dimensions.

2. Democracy and Ideological Exclusion between Secularism and Islamism

The papers presented have shown that ideological exclusion is not exclusive to one party, whether secular or Islamic. If the Islamic character of the state necessarily includes exclusion, in countries such as Iran, Saudi Arabia, and Malaysia, the question remained as to the extent to which this feature can exist without it leading to the exclusion of any of the citizens of that state. However, it was stressed that it is not easy to link the processes of exclusion with a state's Islamic character. The Turkish example, a state in which the Alevi Turks are subject to exclusion, was invoked to show that exclusion existed during the secular era of Ataturk, and was not a special product of the Islamic character of the ruling political forces in Turkey in the past two decades. Discussions have also shown that the secular stance on democracy, pluralism, and

33 Simon Kirchin, *Thick Evaluation* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017); Pekka Väyrynen, *The Lewd, the Rude and the Nasty: a Study of Thick Concepts in Ethics* (Oxford University Press, 2013).

freedoms is not necessarily positive, nor is the Islamic stance on these issues necessarily negative. There is no organic link between democracy and secularism, even if democracy is reduced to voting process or ballot boxes. There is no necessary incongruity or incompatibility between political Islam or the Islamic movement and democracy, even when that democracy is liberal. On this basis, it is possible to show the extent of the cognitive poverty of Manichaean ideological dualism or the "secular vs Islamic" dichotomy, as well as the extent of its negative impact on the political and epistemological struggle, for democracy and against tyranny.

3. On the Role of Religion/Religious

Proceeding from the previous two points, there was emphasis on the idea that it is necessary to not exaggerate the explanation of the Arab Islamicate reality from a cultural perspective, which overestimates the role of religion or religious culture and the explanatory power of this role, and stresses the importance or priority of the religious/Islamic-secular conflict in this regard. Despite the common tendency to understand the main political conflict, in some Arab countries, as a division and struggle between secularists and Islamists, there is a need to research the economic and political factors at play, both internally and externally. This is indicated by the discussions regarding Egypt, Sudan, and Morocco, for example. What is religion or religious is not fixed or determined once and forever, but can shrink or amplify according to different temporal and spatial contexts, and through different mechanisms and processes, such as "religionization" which refers to "assemblages of knowledge" (structures, practices, discourses) being made sense of through the modern concept of religion, "religio-secularization" referring to "the connection between religionization and secularization in the modern context," and "religio-secularism," which denotes the knowledge regime that legitimizes processes of religionization and secularization, and "religion-making" which emphasizes agency in processes of "religionization." These processes are not separate from politics and power relations. Several presentations and discussions that took place at the conference indicated the existence of an interest and/or political will on the part of a number of parties in political conflicts, in general, and of authoritarian or tyrannical authorities, in particular, to cover up political and economic conflicts and dress them in religious or sectarian clothing, or to transform them into a "religious/Islamic secular" struggle.

4. On the Concept of "Civil (State)" and its Relationship to the Concepts of Secular (State) and Islamic (State).

Despite several papers in the conference dealing with the concept of "civil (state)" and the lengthy discussions in this regard, the concept remained, at least partially and relatively, problematic and ambiguous. Perhaps its greatest practical and theoretical advantage lies in the possibility of it contributing to

overcoming the conflict between the concepts and supporters of "the secular (state)" and "the religious/ Islamic (state)." This is, for example, what happened in Tunisia following the initial success of the revolution. Furthermore, discussions included talk of the possibility of the concept becoming, in the political field, a new party in the aforementioned conflict, instead of a catalyst for its resolution. The conference in no way resolved all the problematic questions related to this concept, and this was not its goal in the first place. However, we can claim to have taken one or two steps towards a theoretical clarification of the meaning of the concept and its multiple contextual connotations. A sufficient and adequate clarification of does not only require more theoretical research and discussion, but also, and especially, more practical crystallization of the contextual meanings of this concept, as it has become, as some of the research at the conference showed, not only an important political and intellectual term but also a legal/constitutional category. The conference concluded its activities by emphasizing the need for integration between the theoretical and the practical, between descriptive/analytical and normative, between cognitive and ideological, the need for balance and for positive and constructive interaction between the aforementioned parties. We all look forward to completing the research on the topics covered through subsequent research and conferences.

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