

## The Contending Hegemonies of Islamism: From Contextual Modernism to Reactionary Modernism

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### Research Article



### Abstract

The experiences of Islamism in the 20th and the early 21st centuries are associated with a variety of images: from fundamentalists' radical Islam (like ISIS) to moderate Islamists' democratism (like the Ennahda Movement). As we have witnessed in the aftermath of Arab Spring, this variety is continuing to affect any speculation on the future hegemonies of Islamism. Which formations can one imagine about the future of Islamism, and what variables would be of great importance? The present research hypothesizes that there might still be two potential alternatives or, in the sense of Weber, Ideal types: civil Islamic state vs. religious one. The actualization of both ties with the way of interaction of intellectual variables and social conditions. At the intellectual level, the 'approach to religion' is the matter. It means while rational interpretation of the Sharia (*Ijtihad*) would pave the way for democracy promotion under a civil conception of an Islamic state, the mythical (Fundamentalist) one, especially in combination with instrumental rationality, will lead to

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Islamic totalitarianism under a religious conception of an Islamic state. However, the actualization of any imagined alternatives is determinately intertwined with the quality of some social variables such as economic development, national sovereignty, cultural atmosphere, and political opportunity structure. The paper maintains that the experience of various Islamist movements, from the early 20th century, provides facts to justify the hypothesis. To do so, it will articulate the collected data within a 'comparative analysis' framework concentrating on 'the role of interaction between intellectual framework and the social condition' in the practice of the main typical trends in Islamism: the moderates and the radicals. Ultimately, the paper seeks to highlight 'the past' for speculating the possible 'future'.

**Keywords**

Sharia, Ijtihad, Salafism, Globalization, Islamic Fundamentalism, Islamic Democracy.

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## 1. Introduction

Two decades after the beginning of the new millennium, when we look at the ups and downs of Islam as a Muslim, we can see that most Islamic societies have faced various aspects of modernity, including its positive aspects e.g. rationality, tolerance, individual and citizenship rights, as well as economic and political development, and its negative unsatisfactory aspects, e.g. political colonialism, economic exploitation, and cultural assimilation. Both aspects of western modernity have raised various orientations in the Islamic world.

The epistemological, economic, and political components and origins of the modern world in the 19th century raised serious concerns and questions in the minds of thinkers and politicians of Islamic societies as a starting point for facing the issue of change in the Islamic world at that time. The thinkers mostly thought about the relationship between modernity as a kind of thinking and life-world and the native values and authenticity of the Islamic world. Within the religious discourse, two currents were formed: reformists who believed in welcoming the achievements of modernity to rethink the old heritage and traditionalists who believed in reviving the past and rejecting modernity.

From the end of the 20th century and especially from the 1990s onwards, the Islamic world has undergone serious challenges under the influence of the modern world and transformed at various epistemological, economic, and social levels, so that the intellectual and ideological face of the world has changed. This situation has once again questioned the experience of Islam and its relationship with modernity and its all-encompassing political order, i.e., democracy. As the evidence and events of the last few decades show, we are witnessing various actions and reactions in the two fields of Islamic revivalism and democratization: from Islamic radicalism of fundamentalists to Islamic democratic tendencies. We witnessed the simultaneous presence of the

extreme versions of both trends in the form of post-Islamism (e.g. Ennahda) and totalitarian Islamic fundamentalism (e.g. ISIS) following the Arab Spring of 2011 as a symbolic moment.

Hence, the paper aims to respond to the question of which formations one can imagine for the future of Islamism. This central question, asking about the paths that can be envisioned for future Islamist orders, leads to other sub-questions asking about the fields affecting the two trends mentioned above, their patterns, and the variables intensifying them. The paper hypothesizes that two contending paths can be imagined whose actualization is tied with ‘the way of interaction between the ideological and environmental variables: the civil Islamic state and the religious Islamic state. To explain the hypothesis, the present paper organizes data based on a comparative analysis of the contending Islamist currents (moderates and radicals) impressed by the contending framings of the relationship between Islamic values and modern norms.

## **2. Methodology and Theoretical Framework**

The paper organizes the library-based collected data in a descriptive-analytical method within a comparative scheme. To explain the hypothesis, the paper takes advantage of an analytical framework pointing to the interaction of intellectual variables and social conditions.

At the intellectual level, the ‘approach to religion’ is the matter. In this regard, there is a general ‘binary opposite’; that is, rational vs. mythical which, within the jurisprudential methodological discourse, can be considered close to the *Ijtihad* and Salafi approach.

Adopting the *Ijtihad* approach might facilitate the modernization of Islamic jurisprudence since it can methodically legitimize replacing the dogmatic and anti-rationalist interpretations of the religion with a rationalistic and progressive interpretation of it based on the concepts

such as *maṣlaḥa* (expediency) and *maqāṣid* (intentions). On the contrary, the myth-making aspect of the Salafi methodology leads to Islamic fundamentalism. Myth, according to Barthes, is a “fictional speech” that gives certainty to historical issues by separating them from their historical background (and reducing them in this way); it makes them a solid and immeasurable truth not attainable through logical reasoning (Barthes, 1385 SH). By rejecting the rational methods to understand the religion, the Salafists insist on the literal aspect of religious texts (*naṣṣ*), regardless of the ‘historical content’ of the religious texts (the objective of the verses and the signification of the hadiths), their methodological approach appears to be mythical thinking. Furthermore, they mythologize the common interpretation of a historical era (the primordial era of Islam) and consider it as an eternal and absolute truth that is mandatory for the next generations, without any *ijtihād*. In this way, they deprive religion of its rational purpose and turn it into an ideology to be enacted.

It means while rational interpretation of the Sharia (*Ijtihad*) would pave the way for democracy promotion under a civil conception of an Islamic state, the mythical (Fundamentalist) one, especially in combination with instrumental rationality, will lead to Islamic totalitarianism under a religious conception of an Islamic state.

However, the actualization of any imagined alternatives is determinately intertwined with the quality of some social variables such as economic development, national sovereignty, cultural atmosphere, and political opportunity structure.

### 3. ‘Post-...’ Era, Globalization, and Contending Islamism

Since the last decades of the 20th century, especially the post-Cold War era, as a result of the transition to late modernity, new foundations and stimuli have appeared for political activism. Since the 1990s, we have witnessed more multi-layered and diverse intellectual

and political-religious perspectives under the influence of intellectual-social transformations that have occurred in the world and affected the thought and practice of the Islamic revivalist currents (both moderate and radical). On the one hand, as a result of the destruction of the essentialist epistemological foundations of western modernity (e.g., rationalism, positivism, materialism, secularism, Eurocentrism, etc.), emerging issues such as identity, meaning, and values have affected the global society. On the other hand, due to the global scope of political and cultural awareness resulting from the pluralism of media and communication in the globalization processes, demands for political participation and social justice have intensified.

### **3- 1) The Islamic World in the 'Post-...' Era**

The current world in the new millennium, and consequently, the Islamic world, reflects the presence in the 'post-...' era; the time which first observes the epistemological transformation, known as post-positivism, with an epistemological revolution different from the era of positivism. A change that Alain Touraine calls transition to "a new paradigm" (Touraine, 2007). The main characteristic of this epistemological transformation is the domination of interpretive (hermeneutical) and normative-critical approaches as a matter that deconstructs the foundations of epistemic dualisms replacing the inter-subjective spaces against other-making.

Although, it is impossible, in this multiple relativized epistemological field, to conceive a fixed and inviolable basis for knowledge, this epistemological skepticism simultaneously means doubting the desirability of a single language (meta-narrative) for reporting the world affairs. Therefore, in a positive sense, it can provide a context for the speaking of "other" civilizations and intellectual interactions by removing the norms, values, and lives of the worlds in the margins, and as a result, giving rise to inter-cultural constructs. The developments

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of post-positivism have led to the opening of the debate on critical epistemology, interpretation, and science of history in Islamic societies to strengthen the idea of “evaluative Islam” (Cooper et al., 1378 SH, p. 36).

In this regard, we can mention the late generation of the thinkers of the Islamic world, whose works are indebted to this epistemological assimilation of the ‘post-...’ era; works in which the necessity of modernizing Islam is tied to issues such as preserving the native (national and Islamic) identity and creating a balance between the political, intellectual and cultural worlds. Among the Iranian thinkers, we can name Abdolkarim Soroush, Mohammad Mojtahed Shabestari, Seyyed Javad Tabatabai, Davood Feirahi, etc.; and in the Arab world, we can mention Mohammed Abed al-Jabri, Nasr Abu Zayd, Mohammed Arkoun, etc.

### **3- 2) Janus-Face of Globalization**

Since the last decades of the last century, we have witnessed the multi-layered phenomenon of globalization, accompanied by fundamental changes in the foundations of the social organization and actions of individuals, societies, and groups: the erosion and collapse of borders, the increase of interdependence at the global level, the increase in the volume of global communication, the increase of transnational and international institutions, etc. (Albero, 1999, pp. 5-6; Martel, 2010, pp. 67-69).

Although the compression of time and space in the age of globalization creates the basis for more inclusive cultures and identities and increases the intercultural commonalities and the global consciousness of humans, this ‘increasing opportunity for the action of common cultures’ is under the influence of the ever-increasing integration of societies as one side of the coin of globalization.

The other side of the coin of globalization is the ‘intensification of the appeal to the elements of identity in a specific cultural sector’

(Golmohammadi, 1380 SH), because the technological and media revolution has provided a field for different cultures and values by making a kind of global public sphere. In this way, the change of the human experience and life-world on a global scale has led to the general desire for participation and recognition of specific identities, identities that were marginalized in the past under the influence of the game of ideologies. This situation can be understood as the Janus face of globalization, a two-face process that Roland Robertson interprets as “the universalism of the particular and the particularism of the general” (Robertson, 1992).

### **3- 3) Contending Framings of Modernity**

Considering the position of the Islamic world in the ‘post-...’ era and the Janus face of globalization, as Esposito and Voll note, the universalistic process of democratization and the particularistic process of Islamic revivalism both express the “spirit of the times” in the Islamic world, emerging in a dynamic world context (globalization) (Esposito & Voll, 1996). The democratic trends and efforts to implement the native modernity, as well as principalism and identification against the global trend, are two forms of identity resistance and cultural rethinking in the Islamic world.

Considering that there are a large number of religious movements in the world today (Islamic, Christian, Jewish, Buddhist, etc.), it can be claimed that any kind of identity and religious revival, or cultural particularism can welcome the conditions caused by the weak ontology, the spirit of pluralism, and doubting the old beliefs (Ahmed, 2004). In the pathological sense, it can also be the uncompromising action of the religious movements, which is interpreted as a criticism of the shortcomings of globalization. This point can be better understood in the context of the discussion about two conflicting



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trends evident in the contemporary Islamic world: contextual modernism and reactionary modernism.

#### **4. Contextual Modernism and Islamic Democracy**

Islamic modernist currents, relying on finding the importance of the marginalized life-worlds, seek to create a balance between the Islamic cultural-political values and the prevailing global norms. This political-intellectual stream, in search of establishing a compromise between the general and the specific, thinks about cross-cultural and hybrid structures such as native modernity and Islamic democracy.

##### **4-1) The Combination of Particularism and Universalism**

In his article entitled “Beyond Ideology and Theology”, Abdul-Hamid El-Zein emphasized the fact that there is no single modernity, yet different modern traditions: ‘There is no single Islam anywhere. Rather, there are Islams in a pluralist contextual framework’ (El-Zein, 1977). Accordingly, it is possible to present a conceptual framework of Islam consistent with the norms of the modern world. It is said that in the Islamic culture, influenced by the verses of the Quran and the lives of the Prophet, the Imams, and the Righteous Caliphs, words such as monotheism, reason, responsibility, humanity, council, consensus, *ḥuriyyah* (freedom), *qesṭ* (justice), *musāvāt* (equality), etc. have facilitated this link. In this regard, the thinkers of the Islamic societies have made a significant effort to theorize and promote the idea of Islamic democracy based on Islamic concepts with the support of native interpretive-rationalist methodology (*ijtihād*).

The revival of these concepts as the real essence of Islam occurred in the context of the transformation in the understanding of religion, and its continuation also requires the creation of conditions for jurisprudence renewal. For this modernization of the Islamic jurisprudence, the *Ijtihad* approach must be taken, which can replace

the dogmatic and anti-rationalist interpretations of the religion with a rationalistic and progressive interpretation of it based on the concepts of *maṣlaḥa* (expediency) and *maqāṣid* (intentions). Such an approach can also establish a political order based on the combinative construct of the Islamic modernism that can manage the contemporary Islamic society according to the demands of today's Muslims and a mixture of global norms and Islamic values.

#### 4-2) The Idea of Civil Islamic State

Thinkers like Wael B. Hallaq emphasize the incompatibility between the Islamic law (Sharia) and the coordinates of the modern state by presenting a narrative of the emergence of the modern state based on a Hobbesian-Schmittian approach to the ontological foundations of the modern state. Assuming the death of Islamic rights in the face of the modern world (Hallaq, 2012), such perceptions of the Islamic state as an “impossible state” rule out the possibility of a localized narrative of Islamic modernism.

Contrary to this kind of pessimistic evaluation of the traditional jurisprudence in the framework of the old tradition of jurisprudence, the contemporary experts in the Islamic world, whether modernist clerics or religious intellectuals believe that by presenting new interpretations of the jurisprudence, new solutions can be achieved appropriate to the existing situation to accept and expand the democracy based on the native heritage. Specifically, we can point to the appeal of religious modernists to the concept of council from the end of the 19th century hitherto which has provided the theoretical foundations of the idea of “Islamic councilocracy” (Mirahmadi, 1386 SH, p. 302); Muhammad Husain Naini in the age of constitutionalism and Mahmoud Taleghani along with other religious intellectuals and modernists after the Islamic Revolution in Iran, and Abd al-Rahman al-Kawakibi and Yusuf al-Qaradawi, Rached Ghannouchi and Towfiq

Mohammad al- Shawi in the Arab Middle East have emphasized that the council and the rule of law were the principles of the government system in Islam.

The discourse of Islamic modernism, with the aforementioned points, has an understanding of an Islamic state that can be called a 'civil Islamic state', believing that sovereignty only belongs to God, but the people's will is a way to realize the divine rule. In this understanding of the government, the Islamic Sharia is the basis of the laws, but the legitimacy of the political authority depends on the people's consent because the civil Islamic state is based on the assumption that God has assigned the people (Ummah) to rule over themselves. In the same way, in cases where the Sharia does not have explicit rules (including in the field of politics and form of governance), the only competent source for legislation is the collective intellect of Muslims. And in this regard, Muslims can rely on the customs and reasonable norms of the time, provided that they are not contradicting with the clear rules of Islam. Thus, the mechanisms of democracy do not conflict with the desired Islamic governance while being necessary for its realization (Belkeziz, 2009)

Although the adaptation of the moral and legal standards of Islam with the institutions of democracy is more difficult than simply retelling the principles of democracy with Islamic terms (Enayat, 1982, pp. 131-134), such ideas have been able to be the basis for the intellectual currents and political movements of Islamism seeking to negate despotism and defend democracy based on the religion within the framework of moderate political behavior. In this framework, moderation is considered to be a desirable Islamic action because it is consistent with the premise of people-based political authority. In this sense, if the establishment of an Islamic government should be based on the will of the people, then the Islamization of the society should also be bottom-up (based on the people's persuasion). As a result,

democratic Islamists tend to take advantage of (the least) legal mechanisms and influence the existing order by participating in the power structure to realize their ideas. In this framework, we have witnessed the tendency of a range of Islamists toward the idea of Islamic democracy, an idea that has shown compatibility with a variety of situations: from Islamic religious democracy to post-Islamist Islamic secularism.

The experience of the Islamic democracy in the moderate wing of the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt and the emergence of the religious democratic trend and movement in Iran after the revolution are the most prominent examples of the emergence of a kind of Islamism that has the potential to become hegemonic in the political arena as a democratic Islamist political order. With certain differences, experiences such as the hegemony of the AKP Islamists in Turkey and Ennahda in Tunisia can be mentioned as examples of Islamic secularism in which the Islamist social concerns and secular political order coexist. Islamism from this perspective is post-Islamism in the sense of assimilation from Islam as a political ideology to Islam as a social identity, i.e., the Islamists do not want to create an Islamic political order, yet to reflect the Islamic identity in the laws and institutions of the political system of pluralistic democracy (Bayat, 2013).

#### **4-3) Synergistic Variables in the Emergence of the Hegemony of Democrats**

The fact is that the growth and hegemony of such a discourse in the future requires a favorable environment inside and outside Islamic societies. Several variables in this regard can be listed as follows: a) From an intellectual-cultural point of view, along with the spread of the rationalist (*ijtihad*) approach to religion, the proliferation of the democratic discourse in society is a parallel cultural variable that plays

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a decisive role in the dominance of the Islamic democratic discourse among the Muslims.

As Esposito and Voll have elaborated on, the wide spread of the concepts and ideas related to the phenomenon of democracy lays the necessary foundations for democratic movements in the age of globalization. Following the third wave of democracy in parts of the Islamic world, especially in the last two decades, the democratic discourse has become the dominant discourse of the society, in such a way that even authoritarian regimes have been forced to speak the language of democracy (Esposito & Voll, 2013, p. 36). In this case, the efforts to extract the native heritage elements act as a supplement to the universal idea of democracy supporting fundamentalist modernism as a universal construct (a combination of universalism and particularism).

b) From a socio-economic-political point of view, the simultaneity of several variables can provide a basis for the democratic type of Islamism to be placed in a better position than the fundamentalist type. It seems that with the progress of the process of prosperity-induced economic development, the social gap leading to fundamentalist populism will decrease, and eventually the way will be paved for democratic tendencies. If the government's measures are in the process of interacting with the global constructs so that the feeling of abandoning the local-national values is reduced in the society, the power of fundamentalist agitation will be marginalized and the democratic ideas will be viewed more optimistically. Finally, the more the consolidating constructs of the rule of law are institutionalized, the more the democratic Islamism will have the opportunity to become hegemonic; this type of Islamism conducts its activities in the reformist-moderate framework and formulates itself based on the rules of the democratic game (Ahmadi, 1389 SH).

## **5 Reactionary Modernism and Islamic Fundamentalism**

As a form of identity reaction to the general trends of globalization, Islamic fundamentalist currents display the Islamic type of reactionary modernism by combining the modern instrumental rationality and traditional understanding of the religion. These political-intellectual currents, in a particularistic reaction to a common issue, fanatically emphasize the absolute preservation of the native matter and lead to radical Islamic fundamentalism.

### **5-1) Particularistic Reaction to Universalism**

In his analysis of Nazism, Jeffrey Herf uses the term “reactionary modernism” to describe the entanglement of two contradictory aspects in a totalitarian ideology, i.e. the coexistence of anti-modern ideas (negation of the enlightenment era values such as rationalism, freedom, equality and liberal democratic institutions) and the extensive reliance on the modern instrumental reason and its products (bureaucracy, advanced industries, military technologies, propaganda techniques of mass mobilization, etc.) (Herf, 2004). The Iranian thinker, Dariush Shayegan, inspired by Ernst Cassirer, evaluates ideology as a complex phenomenon that is a mixture of contradictory dimensions of myths and rationality in a deep analysis (Shayegan, 1372 SH, pp. 12, 19). This combination of myth-making and instrumental rationality can be observed in radical Islamic fundamentalism and especially jihadi Salafism. In this ideology, reactionary modernism is crystallized as a ‘combination of traditional worldview and practical techniques arising from the modern instrumental rationality’.

The myth-making aspect of Islamic fundamentalism goes back to the Salafi methodology. Myth, according to Barthes, is a “fictional speech” that gives certainty to historic issues by separating them from their historical background (and reducing them in this way); it makes them a solid and immeasurable truth not attainable through logical

reasoning (Barthes, 1385 SH). Ideological speech, as an intellectual system pursuing ‘practical results’, is a mythical speech. For this purpose, contrary to the philosophical theory, which seeks to motivate a person to rationalize, ideology tries to arouse his ‘feelings’ by ‘simplifying the complexities of reality’ [mythical reduction of the complex reality] and presenting ‘simple solutions’. (Bashiriyeh, 1385 SH, pp. 81-82).

By rejecting the rational methods to understand the religion, the Salafists insist on adhering to the appearance of texts literally and understanding the primordial era of Islam and consider it as the only example of religiosity (Shihadeh, 2016). Regardless of the ‘historical content’ of the religious texts (the objective of the verses and the signification of the hadiths), they only refer to the ‘form’ (the literality of the texts). Furthermore, they mythologize the common interpretation of a historical era (the primordial era of Islam) and consider it as an eternal and absolute truth that is mandatory for the next generations, without any *ijtihad*. In this way, they deprive religion of its rational purpose and turn it into an ideology to be enacted. A clear example of this tradition of ‘reducing the religion to myth’ can be seen in the insistence on the ‘form or literality’ of the religious rules, which, by neglecting the purpose of the Sharia, reduce faith to the mere performance of rituals. Taking the above point into consideration, Salafism, facing the problems of the modern world, turns to a reactionary state based on its mythical and nostalgic understanding.

Due to the ideological nature of this type of religious thinking, another dimension of instrumental rationality can be observed as well which manifests itself in resorting to modern communication technologies and strategies for organizing violence, such as polarization with the purpose of mass mobilization, media propaganda of violence, etc. Accordingly, in his analysis of ISIS's terrorist actions, Slavi Žižek states that the content of their words may be old and pre-

modern, but their form and method are completely modern. Therefore, instead of being an extreme opposition to modernity, it is better to consider it as perverted modernity (Žižek, 2014).

### 5-2) The Idea of Religious Islamic State

Radical Islamic fundamentalism, by basing its political theory on a simplistic and dualistic explanation of the existing disorders, presents an understanding of the Islamic state in opposition to modernity and its related concepts such as democracy. At the base of this explanation is the concept of *Jāhiliyyah* (ignorance), dating back to books such as *Islam and Ignorance* by Abul A'la al-Maududi and *Milestones* by Sayyid Qutb. In the framework of this concept, communities where worship is not fully crystallized in their faith and legal principles are considered ignorant. Practically, all modern societies, including Islamic societies are of this category. (Qutb, 2007) On the contrary, 'the primordial Islam' appears as an ideal myth, in the light of which, all aspects of contemporary societies (including rational-democratic norms and even jurisprudential interpretations) should be rejected. Takfir is also based on this polarization, i.e., the complete acceptance of the principles of a particular belief on the one hand, and, on the other hand, rejecting another belief deviating from this path (Belkeziz, 2009).

The political thought of jihadi Salafism ideologues such as Muhammad Abd-al-Salam Faraj, Abu Musab al-Zarqawi, Abu Bakr Naji, etc., exemplifies the effects of this way of thinking. Unlike the democratic Islamists, believing that there are only two types of societies (Islamic and *Jāhiliyyah*) and that today's societies are all *Jāhiliyyah*, these thinkers do not parallelize the Islamic society with the methods emerging from the *Jāhiliyyah* society (customary, peaceful, and gradual methods of Islamization, such as top-down reforms, elections, etc.). Therefore, by ideologically appealing to



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religious concepts such as jihad, they suggest coercive methods to realize the Islamic government.

Based on the aforementioned insights, the government emerging from the discourse of radical Islamic fundamentalism is a religious Islamic state. In this framework, because the sovereignty belongs to God and all the rules necessary to manage the affairs of this world (from personal to social and political affairs) are in the Sharia law, the political authority is not derived from the people but rather from the knowledge of the Sharia law. As a result, instead of people's elected officials, religious rulers rule, rulers who present their legitimacy based on their knowledge of the Sharia rules. Also, in the framework of this theocratic understanding of the Islamic government, it is thought that there are explicit rules for all matters of life. Hence, no interpretation is possible based on the collective reason and customs to prepare appropriate laws to respond to the needs of the Muslims and govern over the Islamic societies. As a result, the mechanisms of democracy are rejected as a form of governance arising from the universal rational norms (Belkeziz, 2009). The product of such an understanding of Islamic governance is a theocratic government in terms of content. However, its form can appear under different names: Islamic caliphate, Islamic emirate, etc.

Such ideas have been the basis for the currents of thought and political movements of Islamism seeking to negate modernity and fundamentally defend the Islamic government. In this framework, we have witnessed the tendency of a range of Islamists toward the idea of an Islamic caliphate, an idea that has emerged in various situations, from opposition to governance.

The experience of the violent activism of the extremist faction of the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt in the fight against the Egyptian regime for transition to an Islamic government, the emergence of terrorist organizations affected by it, such as the Egyptian Islamic

Jihad, and the transnational terrorism of Al-Qaida are the prominent examples of the radical Islamist currents from the position of the opposition of the existing governments in the Islamic world and the West showing their capabilities in taking counter-hegemonic measures.

Taliban and ISIS, with differences in thought and action, displayed more diverse positions of radical Islamist activism: from the anti-hegemon position to the hegemon one. In the ideology and performance of these two examples of Islamic radicalism, the attempt to Islamize the society (through the Islamic government) has been the scene of the crystallization of anti-rational, anti-modern, anti-democratic, and violent themes of the literalistic approach to the Sharia with different degrees. In both cases, we have witnessed that the perception of the Islamic government is completely incompatible with the norms of the modern world, and in fact, is a reaction to them.

### **5-3) Synergistic Variables in the Emergence of Fundamentalist Hegemony**

The hegemony of such a discourse is likely in a situation where there is a favorable environment for it inside and outside Islamic societies. Several factors affecting it can be listed as follows: a) From an intellectual-cultural point of view, along with the spread of fundamentalist attitudes towards religion, the discrediting of the democratic discourse in society is a parallel cultural variable that can be an important catalyst in the dominance of the Islamic fundamentalist discourse among Muslims, especially by relying on the possibility of merging the fundamentalist speech with the anti-colonial identity speech in the form of a kind of religious populism.

Given the historical experience of the Middle East, the inclination towards Islamic fundamentalism was rooted in the failure of the modern ideologies of the Cold War era. In this sense, to understand the cause of the mass appeal of jihadi Salafism for a part of Muslims,

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the influence of the fundamentalist intellectual education must be taken into account along with the fact that those who had experienced the failure of other ideologies claiming emancipation, theoretical openness and practical determination of radical Islamists, considered it a remedy for their frustration. Today, one of the factors that can provide opportunities for validating the fundamentalist challenges against democratic norms is the wave of discrediting democracy due to the emergence of populist authoritarian currents on the world stage.

b) In evaluating the fundamentalists' tendency toward political radicalism, one should not ignore the role of contextual developments, because, from a genealogical point of view, a fundamentalist ethos is not necessarily the same as a terrorist because he/she has evolved and has contingently fostered the desire for violence and terrorism (Abdollahi Ziyaedini, 1399 SH, p. 183). In the analysis of this metamorphosis, we can point out the simultaneity of several socio-economic-political variables causing the fundamentalist type of Islamism to be placed in a better position than the democratic type.

It seems that with the increase in economic inequality and social gap, fundamentalist populism will be increased while decreasing the favor for democratic tendencies. Also, if the government's performance in the face of the global processes leads to the prevalence of the feeling of political dependence and cultural transformation in the society, the democratic trends are more exposed to cynicism and suspicion, leading to the cultural reaction of the fundamentalists. Finally, as the basic structures of the rule of law get weaker and the authoritarian and monopolistic governance get stronger, the opportunity for the moderate and democratic Islamists to act increases, and the radical Islamism becomes the dominant attitude acting in a revolutionary framework and breaking the rules as a pseudo-democratic construct (Ahmadi, 1389 SH).

## Conclusion

Like the initial encounters of the Muslim world with the western modern civilization in the 19th century, the age of ‘post-...’ and globalization has brought contending orientations on the compatibility and incompatibility of Islamic values with modern norms (more especially, democratic rules) and, consequently, led to the divergent activism of Islamist movements. This variety is continuing to affect any speculation on the future hegemonies of Islamism, as we have witnessed in the aftermath of Arab Spring; that is, the simultaneous presence of the extreme versions of both the discourses in the form of post-Islamism (e.g. Ennahda) and totalitarian Islamic fundamentalism (e.g. ISIS).

This double-edged situation has been more seriously experienced because the Janus-faced effects of new global conditions contain the opportunity for activism of both the contending trends: a) Islamic democratism which thinks of a ‘civil Islamic state’ based on contextual modernism emanated from a combination of Islamic values (the particular) and democratic norms (the universal). b) Islamic fundamentalism, which aims to construct a ‘religious Islamic state’, is built on a kind of reactionary modernism driven by rejecting the modern norm while utilizing modern technics.

As the experiment of the contemporary Islamist movements in the 20th and early 21st centuries has witnessed, the ground for activism and, ultimately, the actualization of gaining hegemony for one of these alternatives will be interconnected with ‘the way of interaction between the ideological and environmental variables.

From the perspective of the ideological variables, the problem is related to ‘the type of dominant attitude towards Sharia’. If the dominant attitude towards the Sharia among the Islamists is a rational approach (*ijtihad*), the Islamists’ tendency will be towards the models of Islamic democracy (from religious democracy to Islamic secularism).

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On the contrary, if the dominant attitude towards the Sharia is a literalistic (fundamentalist) approach, there is a tendency among the Islamists towards the Islamic caliphate models. Interacting with the instrumental aspect of modernity, the Islamic caliphate models lead to a kind of Islamic totalitarianism.

From a socio-economic-political point of view, the simultaneity of several variables plays a significant role in providing conditions in favor of each trend. It seems that the decrease of the social gap due to the progress of prosperity-induced economic development eventually will pave the way for democratic tendencies rather than fundamentalist populism. But if the government's performance in the face of the global processes leads to the prevalence of the feeling of political dependence and cultural transformation in the society, the democratic Islamic trends are more exposed to cynicism and suspicion, leading to the cultural reaction of the fundamentalists. Ultimately, the more the consolidating constructs of the rule of law are institutionalized, the more democratic Islamism will have the opportunity to become hegemonic.

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