

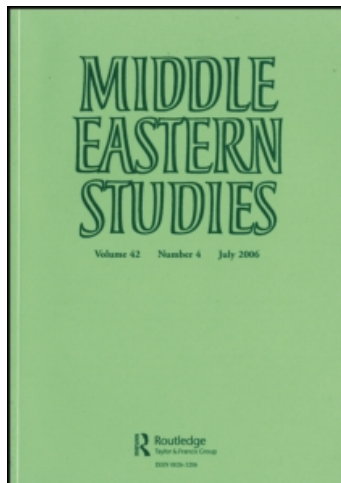
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Is *Shura* a Muslim Form of Democracy? Roots and Systemization of a Polemic

URIYA SHAVIT

Can the lack of democracy in Arab societies be explained by their religious identity? The empirical evidence suggests otherwise. Indonesia, the most populated Muslim country, has led a successful process of democratization since 1998. Other Muslim or predominantly Muslim countries are ruled by democratic regimes, some more stable than others. A ‘democracy gap’ distinguishes Arab countries, not Muslim ones. This article argues, however, that the question, ‘What does Islam say about Western democracy?’ is misleading. A more instructive one is ‘How do Muslims contextualize Islam and Western democracy?’

Islam – as a body of sacred texts and traditions created at an age when modern liberal democracy was yet to develop – tells believers nothing definite on the subject. However, modern interpretations of Islam tell much, and vary sharply in their understanding of Islam’s ideal of government. Thus, to understand the role Islam plays in the politics of Arab societies, the focus should be on analyzing these contesting interpretations and the balance of power between them, rather than on an essentialist, albeit popular and resounding, dichotomy between ‘Islam’ and democracy.

The discussion in Arab societies on Islam’s desired system of government centres on the interpretation and application of the Muslim principle of *shura*, or consultation, and its accordance with democracy. Scholars discussing *shura* and democracy draw mainly on two sentences from the Quran – ‘and seek their council in all affairs’ (3, 159) and ‘[for those] whose affairs are settled by mutual consultation’ (42, 38).¹ The context of the first calls upon the Prophet to seek counsel before making decisions; the context of the second calls upon the members of the nation to do so. Discussion of *shura* also draws, although less systematically, on several other Quranic verses, as well as prophetic traditions and traditions about the four righteous successors to the prophet.

The vast literature on *shura* and democracy that was published in Arabic in the past three decades, as the debate on democracy resurfaced in Muslim–Arab scholarship, can be categorized into four schools, each offering a different approach to the compatibility of Islam and the Western system of government: scholars and activists, most of them affiliated with the Muslim Brothers movement, who integrate some aspects of democracy and disassociate from other aspects; *jihadi-salafis* and others, who dichotomize *shura* and democracy; liberals, who consider *shura* a

cornerstone for unequivocal adoption of Western-type democracies; and regimes and intellectuals associated with them, who interpret *shura* as legitimizing the existing political order. While the four schools have entirely different visions for the political future of Arab societies, all firmly ground their theories of *shura* and democracy in Islam, all consider their theorizing to be the only legitimate one, and all are rooted in earlier phases of a bicentennial debate.

The contemporary polemic on the compatibility of Islam and democracy in Muslim-Arab writing was the focus of much scholarly attention in the West² as well as in Arab scholarship³ since the early 1990s, encouraging some heated debates not only as to whether Muslim scholars read in scriptures what is not there, but also as to whether Western scholars read into Muslim scholarship what it never intended to say.⁴ Articles and books on the subject tend to offer overviews of the debate at large. This article, examining the debate on the compatibility of *shura* and democracy only, is narrow in focus, but broad in the intellectual and political schools it covers. By centring on four different approaches to *shura* and systemizing them, the article aims to illustrate the diversity within Muslim–Arab scholarship with regard to democracy. It also aims to exemplify how conflicting sides participating in the polemic on Islam and democracy are tangled in mirroring Western and Muslim terminologies even when they endeavour to escape from doing exactly that.

Shura and its relation to democracy is the core of Islamist writings on the political future of Muslim societies. Some contemporary Islamists,⁵ mainly those associated with the Muslim Brothers movement, integrate and disintegrate *shura* with democracy. They theorize that the principle of *shura* is a Muslim duty and that when it is rightly applied, as was the case in the time of the prophet and his four righteous successors, it grants all the merits of liberal democracies – but risks none of their flaws. Therefore, the introduction of *shura* promises, in their opinion, escape from the current despotism and weakness that characterize Muslim societies. But what exactly is *shura*, and how is it different from democracy? Here, a complex set of ideas unfolds.

The origin of contemporary Islamist scholarship on *shura* and democracy traces to the end of the 19th century and to the reformist movement in Islam, led by Jamal al-Din al-Afghani (1838–97) and Muhammad ‘Abduh (1849–1905). As part of a larger intellectual project of proving that the true, original Islam practised by the prophet and his four righteous successors (unlike the frozen, distorted Islam of their times) does not contradict modernity and rationalism, al-Afghani and his students introduced the idea that the principle of *shura* rejects tyranny.⁶

Embracing Western scientific and social advances was only a means for the reformists; their end was to prove that some Western ideas and institutions are originally Muslim and thus to offer an apologia that allows, simultaneously, embracement of the West and protection from its increasing impact. ‘Abduh emphasized that implementing *shura* is an Islamic obligation rather than imitation of foreigners. He noted that Islamic law does not stipulate exactly how *shura* should be implemented, but his writing hinted at satisfaction with the limited consultative roles reserved to the assemblies of his time.⁷ One of his students, ‘Abd al-Rahman al-Kawakibi (1855–1902), the Syrian-born pioneer of Arab nationalism, declared in his book on the nature of despotism that Islam is based on the foundations of democratic government, and if Muslims only returned to its true nature, that of

equality, fraternity and consultation, tyranny will have no place among them. He offered in this context an apologia against 'foreign liberals' who claim the reason for tyranny in Muslim societies was their religious devoutness.⁸ The most influential of 'Abduh's students and a pivotal link between his ideas to those of the Muslim Brothers, Muhammad Rashid Rida (1865–1935) also utilized *shura* in rejecting the idea that religion is an enemy of democracy. He proclaimed that learning how government should operate and replacing tyranny with a *shura* regime was the greatest benefit the people of the East gained from their interactions with Europeans, a benefit that might not have been achieved were it not for these interactions; but Rida also emphasized the Muslim origin of *shura*.⁹ In the regime he envisioned, political authority was reserved to a president while religious authority was reserved to a *khalifa*; however, the president was to be nominated by the *khalifa* from a shortlist submitted by an elected assembly.¹⁰

The reformists did much to liberate Islam from traditional notions, but one thing they did not intend to do was to liberate their societies from religion as the ultimate source for political legitimacy. The underlining rationale of their efforts was the synthesizing of conflicting notions: embracing the West so that it can be repudiated; instituting rationalism in Islam, so that scriptures remain a comprehensive framework of life. This conflict forced ambiguity on their writings, including their writings on the desired system of government, and this ambiguity encouraged diversified offspring. Some early twentieth century Arab liberals who rejected Islam altogether as a source of political legitimacy, such as Ahmad Lutfi al-Sayyid, traced their ideas to the gates opened by al-Afghani and 'Abduh; but so did the founder of the Muslim Brothers. The initiation of the movement in 1928 in Egypt by Hasan al-Banna (1906–49) was largely a response to the secular-based and territorial-oriented order created in the Muslim world after the First World War. Al-Banna called for the re-institution of Islam as the sole framework for all aspects of life, including the political one, and for a revitalization of the *umma* of believers. In 'Abduh's time, Western democracy was an intellectual challenge and a political promise; by the time of al-Banna, it already turned into a flawed reality. But democratic notions and institutions were by then too firmly grounded in Muslim thought to be dismissed, and al-Banna followed the reformists' path of integrating them into Islam – adding reservations based on Egypt's experience. He wrote that Islam allows for the election of parliamentary councils and emphasized the need for these elections to be universal and fair, but nevertheless emphasized that political parties should disband because they break the unity of nations. Drawing on the commands 'seek their counsel' and 'settled by mutual consultation,' he emphasized the obligation of the ruler to respect the will of his people and their right to supervise him.¹¹

This attitude was shared and developed also by some of the radical disciples of his movement in the 1940s, 1950s and 1960s. Sayyid Qutb (1906–66), the paramount inspiration for militant Muslim thought which would develop later, clarified in some of his works that the Muslim system of government is different from all others. It is divine, complete and comprehensive, shaping society rather than being shaped by it.¹² Although rejecting any compatibility between *shura* and democracy, Qutb left ample room for acceptance of democratic principles and institutions. He wrote that during the times of the prophet and later on, the principle of *shura* was materialized by different methods, but these do not necessarily define all the methods of its

materialization, which can develop in accordance with the progress of Muslim society and its experience with previous methods. Thus, it is to be determined whether *shura* should be materialized in a general vote regarding all issues at stake, or only some of them; by representatives of the nation, by committees and organizations, or by ministers.¹³ Elsewhere Qutb wrote about the need for *shura* to reflect the opinions of the nation in its entirety.¹⁴

In no way was Qutb a democrat in the Western sense, as al-Banna was not; he stated that the principle of consultation applies only to material matters not dealt with by Islamic law, such as the art of warfare,¹⁵ and the final and most influential of his works, *Milestones*, opens with a declaration that Western 'democracy' seems to be in a state of bankruptcy.¹⁶ But in emphasizing the prospect for an inclusive system of representation and the limited power of the leader, Qutb's main concern appears to have been proving that Islam is, in fact, more democratic than regimes pretending to be democratic.

Intellectuals leaning towards the Muslim Brothers and other Islamists draw on this rich intellectual legacy when writing on democracy since the 1970s. But they face an even more challenging balancing act between integration and disassociation of the two concepts. On the one hand, since the middle of the 1970s, and even more so since the fall of communism in Eastern Europe in 1989, liberal democracy regained some of its appeal as a 'universal system that works'. Also, with the military, economic, and social failings of Arab despotic regimes, and the growing public appreciation of Islam as a political solution, recognition has developed among Islamists since the 1970s that they would win power peacefully in free and fair elections – a political reality different to that in the 1940s or 1950s.¹⁷ For example, Sa'id Hawwa (1935–89), a prominent religious scholar and leader in the Syrian Muslim Brothers in the 1970s,¹⁸ called in one of his best known works to disregard the un-Islamic foundations of democracy because democracy is the regime that would lead Islam to power.¹⁹

However, motivations to reject democracy have also proliferated in mainstream Islamist scholarship since the 1970s. For the past half century, and even more so after the demise of Eastern European Communism and the Gulf War of 1991, suspicions as to the dangers of assimilating Western concepts and as to the West's real intentions in promoting democracy have proliferated in Muslim-Arab scholarship. The idea that a Western 'Cultural Attack' (*al-ghazw al-thaqafi*) or 'Ideological Attack' (*al-ghazw al-fikri*) aims to shatter Muslim identity as part of a grand design to re-conquer Muslim lands struck deep roots in Islamist scholarship.²⁰ Also, in the aftermath of the military coup that followed the Islamic Salvation Front winning the first round in multiparty elections in Algeria in December 1991, Islamists became increasingly suspicious as to whether the West and Arab secular regimes would ever allow them to win power peacefully.

Consequently, and attempting to bridge these conflicting realities and conclusions, some contemporary Islamists are more elaborate in both their call for an outright and candid adoption of some Western democratic norms and institutions – as well as in their rejection of vital components of these norms and institutions. Several pillars of Western democracies are embraced: the people should elect their political leadership in secret and frequent ballots; political leadership draws its legitimacy from the people and is accountable to them; no leadership should hold a monopoly on power; and basic freedoms – such as freedom of speech and freedom of association for the

opposition – must be guaranteed. However, contemporary Islamists who compare *shura* to democracy also caution against blind imitation of the West and stress that Allah's laws must not be questioned, that sovereignty is reserved for Him only, and that personal freedoms end where they contradict Islam's teachings.

Discussing *shura* and democracy, a point of departure deployed by prominent contemporary Islamists is that the two are synonymous, or, at the very least, share many commonalities. The Egyptian Islamist scholar Muhammad 'Imara (b. 1931–) writes that *shura* is 'Islam's and Muslims' democracy'.²¹ The Egyptian-born and since 1961 Qatar-based Yusuf al-Qaradawi (b. 1926–), a disciple of Hasan al-Banna, who gained a reputation as one of the most influential jurists in the contemporary Arab-Sunni world, notes the Muslim state is based on the best principles of democracy.²² A similar view is shared by the Egyptian scholar Muhammad al-Ghazali (1917–96), a founding figure in the Muslim Brothers, who was expelled from the movement in 1953 following internal leadership struggles, but maintained his status as one of the most prolific and influential Islamists. Writing about the crisis of the *shura*, he described democracy in the West as 'the *shura* there'.²³ Egyptian scholar 'Abd al-Sabur Marzuq (1926–2008) who served as chairman of the Saudi-based Muslim World League, as well as a lecturer in the Saudi 'Abd al-'Aziz University, wrote in a book lamenting the lack of democracy in the Arab world that '*shura*, or democracy', is one of the characteristics of the Muslim nation.²⁴ Hasan al-Turabi (b. 1932–), a Sudanese scholar and a leading figure in Sudanese politics since the end of the 1970s until his fall from grace with the military regime in 2004, relates several times in his essay on *shura* and democracy – ironically, after deliberating at length about language as a tool in the struggle between cultures²⁵ – that *shura* is synonymous with democracy and that it represents democracy in Islam.²⁶

Islamist scholars who equate *shura* with democracy emphasize that, being democratic, Islam calls on people to elect their leadership and that non-elected leadership is illegitimate. Al-Qaradawi notes that in the Muslim system, as is the case in the Western one, the nation elects its ruler, and the ruler cannot be imposed on the nation.²⁷ 'Imara elaborates that by *shura* he means nothing less than a system in which the nation elects its leaders, supervises them, and dismisses them should they fail in accomplishing their tasks.²⁸ People do not have a right to practise *shura*, he writes; rather, a system of *shura* is a Muslim obligation.²⁹

Shura is also, in the eyes of Islamists who equate it with democracy, in accordance with Western notions of human rights. In fact, they claim that while the West is progressive in its politics, it is still less progressive than the Arabs at the time of the righteous successors of the prophet. Al-Ghazali recalls reading an interview with President Kennedy, who was asked by American journalists if his wife's trip to Europe was financed by her or by the government. This example of free speech and accountability reminded him instantaneously of a conversation between the second Khalifa 'Umar and Salman al-Farisi, one of the Prophet's companions. Al-Farisi questioned the Khalifa's long clothing, noting all other members of the *umma* could afford only short clothes. In response, 'Umar asked his son 'Abdallah to speak to the people. 'Abdallah confessed to giving his father, being the tall man that he was, some of his own clothing. The West, concludes al-Ghazali, reached its level of freedom through bloodshed. The Muslims were given this freedom as a present from heaven.³⁰

Because they believe that democracy and *shura* share much in common, some Islamists find that it is legal and useful to adopt some structures and institutions laid down by Western democracies. Here, they are more flexible than their intellectual forefathers. Al-Ghazali reminds his readers the gates of *ijtihad* were closed for 1,000 years, a time in which Western political systems progressed while Muslim ones did not. If the *shura* there, he asks, referring to Western societies, created diverse guarantees to prevent tyranny and to allow criticism and opposition, then who benefits from not imitating Western democracy, except for the political corruption that proliferates in many Muslim lands?³¹ Al-Qaradawi suggests the same, reminding his readers that nothing prevents Muslims from adopting ideas or practical solutions from non-Muslims, as exemplified by the Prophet's adoption of the Persian trench techniques in battles.³²

A very different political reality than one of electoral politics and respect for human rights exists in many Muslim societies. Some Islamists consider this is a grave deviation from the righteous path and that it must be amended. Adding insult to injury is the fact that infidels and sinners in the West enjoy a system of what the scholars describe as *shura*, while Muslims live under tyrannies which bear no relation to the political structure ordered by Islam.³³ Al-Ghazali recalls how, when reading many years ago about General de Gaulle's peaceful retirement from France's presidency after an electoral defeat, his immediate reaction was that an Arab general would have, in de Gaulle's shoes, insisted upon holding on to power.³⁴ He invokes Egypt's disastrous involvement in the Yemen war in the 1960s as an example of a calamity that could have been avoided if decisions were taken not by one person, but by a *shura* institution.³⁵ (Marzuq, presenting the same case, invokes the retirements of the militarily victorious Churchill and Thatcher as contrasts to the Arab political reality, and the Iran–Iraq war and Iraq's occupation of Kuwait as examples of calamities that could have been avoided if only *shura* were practised.)³⁶ In making these points, scholars rationalize why Western societies fare better than Muslim ones. They make the apologetic case that adopting democracy will be in fact adoption of a Muslim system, and therefore it is not an act of imitation, but rather one of returning to the roots of Islam – that is, of returning to a system that preceded the Western one, only to be later abandoned.

While some Islamist scholars claim the Muslim system of government shares many similarities with the Western system of government, they caution it is not its duplication.³⁷ Western democracies can be taken as examples only so far as several essential distinctions between *shura* and Western democracy are made.

First, *shura*, unlike democracy, is a God-ordained system. Thus, the rights it entails are eternal. These rights are not to be compensated when circumstances change.³⁸ Al-Turabi suggests that because Western freedoms are man-given, they are nothing but illusion. Europeans, he claims, substituted one type of tyranny for other types: The tyranny of the church was substituted for that of the state, that of the state for that of the exploiting class, that of the exploiting class for that of the beastly passion. The concept of human dignity developed in the West through distancing from religion, but it is meaningful only if it has roots in religion.³⁹

The ambivalent integrators among Islamist scholars argue that unlike democracy *shura* is also not limited to the political sphere. Rather, it is a system comprehending all aspects of life, including the family (which is based on mutual agreements, consultation, and solidarity) and the economy (which is based on mutual agreement and justice, rather than exploitation and despoliation).⁴⁰ Thus, it is less artificial, and has deeper roots in society.

The most vital difference between *shura* and democracy is that the process of *shura* applies only to issues where no injunctions exist in the Quran and the sunna (the prophetic traditions). The Muslim nation, as 'Imara emphasizes, can legislate only to the extent of not legalizing the prohibited or prohibiting the legal.⁴¹ This principle draws on a basic distinction between Islam and Christianity: Islam comprehends all aspects of life, including the political, and does not recognize a separation of state and religion. Al-Qaradawi, who emphasizes this point in one of his discussions, writes that the advocacy of the idea that state and religion can be separated even among people with prestigious religious education is a clear example of the success of the 'Western cultural attack'.⁴²

Al-Ghazali recalls a university student who asked him about the first khalifa, Abu Bakr's, decision to overrule the companions' advice not to fight the *murtaddun* (Muslims who renounced their religion). He explained to the student that it was not for Abu Bakr to accept or reject that advice, because the issue is addressed in the Quran and *sunna*. *Shura* applies only where Allah did not give commands.⁴³ The American Congress legalized alcohol; the English Parliament did the same with homosexuality. But Muslims cannot legalize the prohibited or prohibit the legal.⁴⁴

Human freedoms, caution contemporary Islamist scholars, must also be regulated only within the framework set by Allah. In Western democracies, evolving against the background of tyrannies, absolute oppression was substituted for absolute freedom, which is a deceptive freedom. In Islam there exists a balancing harmony between rights and duties, individuals and society.⁴⁵ This explains why certain rights enjoyed in the West, such as absolute freedom of religion and absolute freedom of speech, are not granted by Islam. Al-Qaradawi invokes in this respect Islam's command to demolish any institution that does not conform to Allah, even if it serves for prayer. This is not a breach of personal freedoms, he insists, the reason being that these freedoms are limited to the extent that they do not clash with the foundations of faith and of society. The believers are a majority; therefore, they have precedence over the non-believers.⁴⁶

Integrating democratic principles and institutions legitimizes Islamist participation in political systems which do not make the distinctions between *shura* and democracy. A non-Muslim despotic system is one that calls for destruction from within; a flawed democratic system, which is nevertheless based on some principles interpreted as Muslim, is one that could be reconstructed from within. Islamists in Arab societies take part in electoral processes which are not Muslim: Assemblies elected do not abide by the *shari'a*, leaderships approved do not reflect the will of the people, and opposition is not allowed to organize freely. However, hope that participation ushers in an establishment of the ideal Islamic democratic system legalizes the process. Some Islamists contend that the prospect of benefiting Islam legitimizes cooperation with non-Islamic political forces. Writing on the legality of participating in non-Muslim regimes, the jailed and later expelled Tunisian Islamist

scholar and political leader Rashid al-Ghanushi (b. 1941–) points to a Muslim's duty to advance whatever Muslim goals are within his power to advance. Independence, development, compatriot solidarity, public and individual political freedoms, human rights, political pluralism, independence of the judicial system, freedom of the press, freedom for mosques and for *da'wa* activities – a prospect of promoting these obliges Muslims to participate in the establishment of a secular democratic regime, in case the establishment of a Muslim one is not possible.⁴⁷

But what if the envisioned *shura* system is established, one that follows Muslim law to the letter? What will be the structures and practices of this system? Here, in turning political theory into a political programme, or rather in turning conceptualizations of the ideal government into details, literature becomes vague. Crucial questions are obscured, or are not addressed at all.

One such issue is the structure of the *shura* body. Should it be comprised of experts, or of anyone elected through universal suffrage? And once it exists, what should be the mechanism of its operation? Al-Turabi, for example, distinguishes in one of his works between four types of *shura*: a) universal *shura*, which is also the highest and strongest one, such as in referendums and general elections. This type of *shura* constitutes *ijma'* – a consensus within the nation, which is legally binding so long as it does not contradict the Quran and the sunna; b) *shura* based on the people's representatives in government; c) *shura* based on experts; and d) *shura* based on opinion polls.⁴⁸ Al-Turabi seems to describe here the decision-making mechanism of Western democracies, although without committing himself to technicalities such as the frequency of elections or the balance of power between legislators and head of state. But elsewhere he states that the principle of *shura* is governed in accordance to knowledge, because he who possesses more knowledge, sees things more clearly. Thus, he leaves the door open to both a theocratic and a republican form of government.⁴⁹

A similar obscurity defines the issue of political plurality. Al-Qaradawi, for example, breaks from the teachings of Hasan al-Bana in advocating a plurality of political parties. He strongly defends this position, contending its foundations are rooted in the times of the righteous *khulafa'* as well as in the reality of contemporary Muslim societies, and comparing the plurality of parties in politics to the plurality of schools in Muslim law. But he also cautions that embracing plurality does not imply embracing of disputes and contradictions, and that it is dependent on the people standing as one in regard to crucial issues such as Muslim existence, Muslim faith, Muslim law, and the Muslim nation.⁵⁰ Where should the line be drawn between the welcomed plurality and the resented one, and who should be the one drawing it? And if Islam is the benchmark for any political activity, what would be the fate of non-Muslim political parties? Al-Qaradawi does not address these questions, leaving the door open to anything between versions of the Iranian parliamentary elections, where candidates are screened in accordance to their religious credentials, to a more Western-style democracy.

The most vital issue remaining obscure goes to the heart of the distinction between *shura* and democracy. Scholars caution there is no room for *shura* on issues where the Quran and the *sunna* have ruled, but they do not stipulate who should determine what these issues are and who will hold the authority to revoke legislation deemed un-Islamic. Should this authority be a high court, or perhaps a council of scholars?

How should the authority be selected? A body entrusted with this delicate task would be the ultimate power in the envisioned Muslim state based on *shura*. Yet not a hint is given as to its desired structure.

Lack of detail does not result from scholarly negligence. Other factors are at play. One is that the more obscure a political writing is, the greater its appeal may be. Another is the delicate line between tolerable and intolerable opposition to existing regimes. To suggest political upheaval is one thing; to come forward with an elaborate political plan is another. General conceptualizations confine challenges to the less provocative realms of utopias. Here the notion of the *umma* serves scholars well: being an abstract religious-political entity, demands made for its sake must not necessarily be interpreted as applying to a specific, real, territorial state. It is only when scholars direct their demands, or even more so their actions, towards a particular regime that they become a threat.

Another reason for obscurity is the pretentiousness of equating *shura* and democracy. There is, in fact, nothing in the Quran or the *sunna* that directly supports the claim that democracy is *shura*. *Shura* implies consultation, and its interpretation as a directive to hold elections and structure a political system resembling that of Western societies is, at the very least, somewhat of a stretch. To commit that interpretation to specific mechanisms would be another stretch – perhaps one too many. Illustrating this fragility is the story of Queen Sheba's reaction to a letter she received from King Solomon (27, 26–35). 'Imara,⁵¹ as well as al-Qaradawi,⁵² invoke it as an example for the application of *shura*. In this story, the Queen asks her ministers how she should respond to King Solomon's letter, telling them she would not make up her mind before they gave her their opinion, only to be told that the decision is hers. This tells nothing more than of a traditional monarch who holds monopoly on strategic decisions – a far cry from the type of political participation 'Imara and al-Qaradawi depict in their writings on *shura*.

This ambiguity of practice also characterizes contemporary manifestos and agendas that Muslim Brothers issue. These political programmes, foreseeing the establishment of a *shari'a*-based society, praise democratic values and institutions and claim these values and institutions are derived from the principle of *shura*. However, they either chose to avoid detailing their vision of political structure or, in the rare cases when they provide detail, nevertheless avoid offering a definite answer as to what would constitute the final source of legitimization for political decisions.

An example of the former attitude is the programme of the Syrian Islamic Front, a coalition of Islamist forces dominated by the Syrian branch of the Muslim Brothers that was issued on 9 November 1980, at the height of the violent Islamist struggle against the *Ba'th* regime. The programme suggested a democratic vision for Syria, based on the principle of *shura*, and emphasized principles such as separation of power and plurality of political parties.⁵³ But, as mentioned by Abd-Allah in his study on the programme, it avoided detailing how the government or the parliament would function in future Syria – leaving the door open to a theocracy as well as to a Western-type democracy.⁵⁴

An example of a detailed manifesto is a blueprint for the Muslim Brothers' political programme in Egypt, published on 25 August 2007. The document offered a comprehensive vision for an Egypt both Islamic and democratic. It claimed that *shura* is the essence of democracy and a means for the nation to accomplish what is

in its interest,⁵⁵ and presented a long list of promises for democratic practices and values that will be guaranteed: to note only a few, a government elected by the people, political plurality and freedom of the press.⁵⁶ In the third sub-section of its third section on policies and strategies, the programme directly addressed the balance of power between religious and temporal authority. The freely elected parliament will legislate by majority in accordance with the *shari'a* on all issues the Quran did not explicitly legislate (*Ahkam Qat'iyya*). It will seek in all matters the advice of an independent committee of senior religious scholars, who will be elected in free elections by religious scholars. A law governing the qualification for participating in electing the committee of senior religious scholars will be enacted.

But who will be the final authority defining which issues were explicitly determined by the Quran? What mechanism will resolve differences of opinion between senior scholars and the parliament, should such arise on other issues? And who will enact the law that governs the election of the senior scholars' committee – legislation that, in fact, carries the potential of determining the face of that committee? The Brothers' programme shies away from explicitly untangling the web that scholars and activists also shied away from in less detailed explorations on *shura* and democracy. However, the rationale of the Islamist project suggests that in case of a clash between electoral decisions and clerical interpretations, the latter should prevail. 'Imara, no doubt one of the most ardent advocates for democratization among Islamists (and himself not a member of the Brothers), hints at this in his book on Muslims' need for cultural independence. He writes that Islamic democracy should be a 'guided democracy' – a middle ground between the absolute freedom offered by liberalism and absolute tyranny. He is careful to note that he does not envision a theocracy, but does not detail what will be the precise nature of the prescribed Islamic 'guidance'.⁵⁷

A contrasting duality of embracing Western values and institutions and, in the same breath, rejecting them, is historically *inherent* to the Islamist intellectual enterprise. That in the past 30 years Western democracy not only has greater appeal, but also generates greater fears of Western hegemony, only sharpens this conflict. A conflict exists between advocating democracy and calling for the establishment of a regime subjected to interpretations of sacred texts. But that this conflict is overt in the writing of some Islamists does not expose a 'scheme'; rather, it reflects the historically fragile nature of their conceptualizations.

Another conception, championed most vocally by *jihadi-salafi* scholars but not only by them, draws a clear distinction between *shura* and democracy, and describes their integration as heresy. This conception not only rejects the idea that some elements of Western democracies can be integrated into Islam, but also utterly dismisses the notion that any resemblance exists or can develop between Western political values or structures and Muslim ones.

Objection to the comparison between *shura* and democracy derives from two conclusions: first, any usage of Western terms risks shattering Muslim identity, and, second, it is not legal to read in the text what the text does not say. Democracy and *shura* are described as being as far apart as heaven and earth. Democracy is described as a tyranny of human beings; *shura* is described as a God-ordained regime

that when applied guarantees the best of fortunes for individuals and societies. The idea that mechanisms of Western democracy can be integrated into Muslim societies without the values associated with them is rejected. Thus, elections, for example, are viewed with great suspicion as a process transferring sovereignty from Allah to the people and inevitably leading to legalization of the unlawful.

Scholars who dichotomize *shura* and democracy address the issue in similar terms, but adhere to conflicting political agendas and are inspired by different intellectual legacies. They are divided into three main schools: *jihadi-salafis*, Islamists (mainly those associated with the Saudi regime), and intellectuals incorporated within the Saudi establishment, whose utilization of the term *shura* is discussed below.

For Islamists who dichotomize *shura* and democracy, a primary motivation for participating in the debate is their fear that other Islamists, for example al-Qaradawi and al-Ghazali, who consider themselves at the front line against the Western cultural attack, have unintentionally become instrumental in this attack. For example, Muhammad Qutb (b.1919–), Sayyid Qutb's brother, who found shelter in 1972 in Mecca after his release from jail in Egypt, emphasizes in his prolific writing since the 1970s that democracy is the equivalent not of *shura* but of *jahiliyya* (the pre-Islamic time), for it reduces religion to the sphere of rituals only.⁵⁸ Echoing the words of his brother Sayyid in one of his earliest and most influential works,⁵⁹ he rejects the assimilation of non-Islamic political terms into Islamic discourses. He argues that the penetration of non-Islamic terminologies into Islam as part of the effort to defend Islam is, in fact, a sign of Muslim defeat. By integrating democracy into their discourse, he cautions, Muslims incorporate ideas that are not Islamic. Whatever the imaginary resemblance between Islam and man-made regimes may be, the basic difference between Allah's order and a human order controlled by human desires must not be forgotten.⁶⁰ A regime acceptable to Islam is only a regime that is governed solely by Allah's law and that respects the principle of *shura*.⁶¹

Another example of this conception appeared in a lively polemic that was published in 1985 in the opinion columns of the Saudi-owned Arab daily published in London, *al-Sharq al-Awsat*, as to whether *shura* is the Muslim word for democracy. Muhsin 'Abd al-Hamid, one of several participating scholars who cautioned against equating the two, explained that every civilization has a point of view, or an ideology, which is based on interrelated principles. Ideology, he argued, can only be clarified through particular terminology, and thus an essential link exists between a civilization and its terminology, which cannot be severed without that civilization's disintegration. According to al-Hamid, generously narrowing a broader chronological progression, the comparison between *shura* and democracy draws on the tradition of the 1950s; back then, many scholars, including Islamist scholars, attempted to find a Muslim equivalent for Western terms, because they did not comprehend at that time the dangers posed to their civilization by such equations.⁶²

The main focus for Islamists dichotomizing *shura* and democracy is what they describe as the latter's two unlawful foundations: people's sovereignty, exercised in electing the governing and legislating bodies, and personal freedoms, granted and guaranteed in constitutions and legislations. They argue that *shura* restricts itself only to matters where *ijtihad* (the process of interpreting the sacred texts in light of changing conditions) is permitted, while in democracy nothing is sacred and

anything can be determined by vote; they also argue that democracies allow for personal freedoms that Islam outlaws. The distinction that in Islam some matters are not for humans to legislate is made also by the Islamists who compare *shura* and democracy. But for the dichotomizing scholars, legislation is rebellion against God, and heresy in personal and social conduct are the very essence of democracy.

‘Abd al-Hamid, for example, argues that Islam respects human dignity; and, indeed, it allows people a distinguished role in running society’s affairs and encourages opposition to be heard. But although there are some similarities between democracy and *shura*, the two contradict each other. In a democratic system, state and religion are separated, and it is impossible to outlaw political parties which oppose Islamic principles, as Islam ordains; furthermore, people are granted the personal freedom to commit immoral acts. The Muslim system of government and the Western one can and should therefore not be confused.⁶³ Joining the polemic in *Al-Sharq al-Awsat*, Muhammad Mahmud Mandura, an Egyptian teaching at the Saudi King Saud University, wrote that Islam prohibits conversion to other religions, interests, mixing of men and women, prostitution, and homosexuality. All of these are legal in the West, where personal freedoms, rather than God’s word, are sacred. Thus, *shura* cannot be compared to democracy.⁶⁴ Fikri al-Jaziri, another scholar participating in the same debate, noted that abortions, forbidden according to religious law, are legal in the United States because women wanted them to be so; democracy, as opposed to *shura*, is a system of government that grants complete sovereignty to human beings, forgetting that sovereignty and basic legislation are for Allah only. Thus, according to al-Jaziri, democracy, though it may be a nice word, should not be rejected because it is foreign or flawed, but because its essence contradicts Islam.⁶⁵

In *jihadi-salafi* writings similar ideas are invoked, only the tone is sharper and the political programme behind it more radical. The term and its political agenda call for elaboration. *Salafiyya*, identified in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century with the reformism of Muhammad ‘Abduh and his students, is associated today mainly with puritan groups, which preach strict, literal interpretation of the Quran; a conservative social agenda; relentless efforts to bring Muslims to piety in life and to bring non-Muslims to Islam; and elimination of Western impacts on Muslim societies. The term is used by some interchangeably with the term *Wahhabiyya*.⁶⁶ *Jihadi-salafis* are a branch of *Salafiyya*. They call for violent jihad against Muslim regimes that do not adhere to Islamic laws. This branch traces its political ideas to the works of Sayyid Qutb, who legitimized the use of force against Muslim regimes that do not apply Muslim law to the letter.⁶⁷ Although in theory *jihadi-salafis* share the same puritan mindset of the Saudi regime, they are in strong opposition to, among others, the House of Saud, which they believe is subjected to Western interests and values and betrays Islam.

The rationale for *jihadi-salafi* rejection of democracy is connected to the broader reasons for the rise of their violent movements since the 1970s. Democracy, failing to bring Islam to power in its Western as well its radical-revolutionary forms, was shunned altogether for the same reason that the non-violent, grassroots struggle was shunned: it did not seem to work in favour of their agenda. Qutb’s call for the creation of a Muslim vanguard that would lead to the reinstitution of a true Muslim regime⁶⁸ was increasingly developed into a conception empowering the individual

true believer and disregarding the ignorant masses, conceding any hope that they can revolutionize society. This romantic conception left no room for popular mechanisms, not even the narrow one of Qutb's own writings.

Preaching against democracy, 'Isam Tahir (alias Abu Muhammad al-Maqdisi) emphasizes that democracy is *shirk* (heresy). Al-Maqdisi, a major source of inspiration for other *jihadi-salafis*, is a Jordanian of Palestinian origin who fought with the Afghan Arabs against the Soviets and left for Jordan in the aftermath of the Gulf war. He was later linked with the 1995 bombing of a military communication centre in Riyadh as an inspiration for the attack (as was Osama Bin Laden), and has been in and out of Jordanian prisons since the middle of the 1990s in connection with terrorist activities.

Al-Maqdisi resents the notion of the Muslim Brothers that democratic processes allow their societies to come closer to being ruled by the *shari'a*. Democracy is more than a system of government, he argues; it is a religious rival to Islam, with constitutions that legalize what the Quran has prohibited, constitutions which insist on doing so even if the will of the people calls for Allah's word to be respected.⁶⁹ He invokes a prophetic saying against those who drank wine but called it other names; Islamists, he writes, can describe democracy as anything, but its true nature – people enacting legislation, even though legislating is for Allah only – cannot be concealed.⁷⁰ In an essay warning against equating democracy and *shura* as a means of legalizing the prohibited, he writes that Muslim groups claiming that by advocating 'democracy' they are advocating freedom of speech, and thus the spreading of Islam, are wrong: their manipulation of words cannot change the nature of democracy itself.⁷¹

'Abd al-Mun'am Mustafa Halima (alias Abu Basir), a Syrian exile in London, argues against paralleling *shura* and democracy because, he argues, a lie disguising itself as truth nevertheless remains a lie. *Shura* is an Arab word appearing in the Quran more than once; democracy is a defiled Western word, which has no place in Arabic and in Allah's religion.⁷² As al-Maqdisi, he is also deeply suspicious of Islamists who claim that they borrow from democracy only the concepts that do not contradict Islam. He writes that in theory and in practice, Islamists who integrate democracy into their discourse legalize the prohibited. In one of his examples for this point he quotes Sheikh Ahmed Yasin who, when head of the *Hamas* movement in the Palestinian territories, said he would respect the will of the people even if they give power to the Communist party.⁷³

Adhering to a vanguard mentality, a much narrower, literal definition of what *shura* stands for is applied in this context. Abu Basir emphasizes that consultation in Islam is a process reserved to experts, while in democracy the masses – whatever their knowledge of the subject in question may be – have a say.⁷⁴ A rather romantic notion is invoked in the writing of Abu Mus'ab al-Zarqawi, a leader of an al-Qaeda associated terrorist organization in Iraq, who was killed by American forces on 7 July 2006. He argues that in democracy, the majority must be respected even if it advocates blasphemy; but according to Islam, a Muslim must observe the Quran and the *sunna* even if the whole of humanity opposes him.⁷⁵

Jihadi-salafis emphasize the unlawful rights granted by democracy. Freedom in Islam and freedom in democracy represent for them completely conflicting bodies of principles, as evidenced when they describe Western democracies as Sodom. For example, al-Zarqawi writes that freedom of speech in democracies allows the

defaming and doubting of religion, a principle Muslims cannot accept, and freedom of organization allows the operation of organizations and political parties even if they are heretics, another principle Muslims cannot accept.⁷⁶

There is a measure of irony in the efforts to repudiate any connotation of Islam to democracy. The West is rejected as a benchmark for political progress, but because the West is the main focus in the discourse, its standing as a benchmark appears only to strengthen. There is much deconstruction and little construction; a clear analysis of what *shura* is *not*, and very little detail of what *shura* should be. This concentration on deconstruction leaves many questions unanswered. For example, if parliaments are illegal and *shura* is no more than a process of consultation, what should be the mechanism or the structure of consultation? Who should decide which experts are qualified? How will the leader be elected? And if the individual Muslim should insist on his beliefs against the rest of humanity when the rest of humanity contradicts Muslim law, how can anarchy be avoided? In most texts, these questions, and others, are not addressed.

The incorporation of *shura* in the praxis of *jihadi-salafi* movements does little to dispel uncertainty, due to the secrecy of their operation and their lack of sovereignty on any actual public. For example, al-Qaeda's formal governing body is a *Shura* Council, but it is unclear how this council functioned and what its authorities were prior to the 11 September attacks. In the aftermath of the attacks, it is unclear if it functions at all. In Iraq, a loose umbrella coalition of six jihadi organizations, including that of al-Zarqawi, termed itself *Majlis Shura al-Mujahidin fi al-Iraq* (Shura Council of Jihad Fighters in Iraq). As is the case with al-Qaida's council, the name indicates the organization's commitment to Muslim principles and to their institution once it gains power, but does little to resolve the many questions *jihadi-salafi*'s writings on the practice of *shura* left unresolved.

The term *shura* is also being used in the contemporary debate in Arab societies on the desired system of government by scholars and activists whose main concern is the introduction of Western-type democracy in Arab countries. These scholars are suspicious of synthesis and compromises between Muslim and Western terminologies, noting that these have resulted in the past in abandonment of pluralistic politics altogether. Their aim is rather simple: that Arab societies go through the same political transformations as Latin American, East European and other societies have experienced since the mid-1970s. While this goal has found more resonance in intellectual circles since the mid-1980s,⁷⁷ and even more so since the collapse of communism in Europe in 1989, it still enjoys little advocacy in most Arab societies, where Islamism has become more deeply rooted and where suspicions abound as to the real intentions behind calls to return to the liberal democratic model – a model which failed Arabs in the past.

It is in relation to these suspicions that some liberals invoke *shura*. Ironically, liberals are in agreement with *jihadi-salafis* in their narrow, literal interpretation of *shura* as a form of consultation rather than a comprehensive system of government resembling Western democracy. However, basing their scholarship on a greater call for a progressive, rational, and humanistic understanding of Islam's place in society, some liberals consider *shura* a possible cornerstone for future

democratic progress. They consider *shura* a term flexible enough to expand and lead society to adoption of Western-type democracies. The inherent logic of such expansion and usage (although not openly recognized) is that Muslim-Arab societies are deeply religious and deeply suspicious of the West's intentions. To advance democracy, a Muslim context is required. But this context is measured in relation to its possible contribution to the acceptance of Western institutions and values.

Such usage signifies a break from earlier Arab liberalism. Pre- and post-First World War Arab liberalism called for embracing Western values and institutions and basing the system of government on the principle of people's sovereignty in its national-territorial sense. Ahmad Lutfi al-Sayyid, for example, did not look for a way to dress liberal-democratic ideas in Muslim clothing. His teachings dismissed Islam as irrelevant to politics. Other liberals rejected the political aspects of Islam from well within the fortress of religious conservatism. An al-Azhar scholar, 'Ali 'Abd al-Raziq, created a storm when he suggested in 1925 that Muhammad was not a political leader and that Islam had no specific doctrine of government.⁷⁸ Contemporary liberals who emphasize the principle of *shura* as the basis for democratization consciously chose a different path. They admit that a duplication of Western systems depicted as such *par excellence* cannot plausibly gain support in Arab societies and that an Islamic legitimization for democracy is essential.

One example of this approach is the resounding championing of Western-type democracies, published shortly after the Cold War ended, by Muhammad 'Abed al-Jabri (1935–), a Moroccan professor of philosophy whose life project is the call for rationalization of Arab thought. Al-Jabri attempted to revoke several arguments deeply rooted in the Arab discourse. Political democracy should not be suspended in the name of the need to promote social democracy, unity, or liberation from imperialism; to do so only harms the important objectives the suspension presumes to serve. Democracy also should no longer be delayed under the pretext that the people are not mature enough to practise it. Political maturity can be achieved only through democratic practice, 'just as a child can only learn to walk through walking itself'. Another point is that democracy should not be rejected because it is flawed. The choice is not between flawed democracy and utopia, but between the flaws of democracy and the flaws of tyranny. While the flaws of democracy can be amended by broadening democracy, the flaws of tyranny can only be amended by replacing it with democracy.⁷⁹

Al-Jabri believes the Arab mind has been liberated of its suspicions about democracy since the beginning of the 1980s. Democracy is the only cause one can advocate without having one's intentions doubted. However, he continues, most advocates of democracy do not possess a deep democratic conscience, and do not realize the sacrifices it requires. Islamists, who enjoy the support of a majority among the Arab public, fall into that category. Al-Jabri realizes the difference between the version of democracy Islamists desire, and the one he desires. He notes that *salafists* (in the traditional sense of the word) translate democracy as *shura*, but that already Muhammad 'Abduh did not interpret *shura* as more than non binding consultation, and so do his followers. Some Islamist movements, cautions al-Jabri, openly declare that, should they be elected to power, they would not apply a 'Western version' of

democracy. This implies that there is still much work to be done in order for democracy to take root in the Arab mind.⁸⁰

What could promote this essential process, asks al-Jabri, and answers: there is a need for Arabs to realize that Allah is one, but heads of states are not. Anything but Allah is pluralistic, and so should human regimes be. These human regimes must be based, according to Islam, on the principle of *shura*, or pluralism and participation. The meaning of *shura* and its application should thus be broadened to be in line with the modern democratic regime.⁸¹

In equating *shura* with democracy, al-Jabri is in line with mainstream Islamists. He is still in line when suggesting that the application of *shura* be adjusted to the changing times. Yet it is his underlying purpose that draws the difference. For al-Jabri, the usage of the term *shura* is a means to advance Western-type democracy in Arab societies. It is democracy, and not a comprehensive Islam in all aspects of life, that he is concerned with.

Similar advocacy of interpreting the term *shura* in a way that allows Western-type democracy to be more accepted in Arab societies is offered by Isma'il Sabri 'Abdallah, an Egyptian economist who served in Nasser's government as minister for planning, and was, during the 1960s and 1970s, an advocate of the notion that the institution of a social democracy must precede that of a political one. With the fall of communism in Eastern Europe, his historic analysis of the rise of liberal democracies in the West remained firmly neo-Marxist, but he nevertheless adopted the idea that for true democracy to take root in Arab societies, an 'inner force' desiring and struggling for democracy is essential. Democracy, he explained, is never a heavenly gift. For it ever to be achieved, all the problems Arab societies face, and all their struggles, must be judged with democracy as their benchmark.⁸²

Ardently supporting a democratic revolution, 'Abdallah nevertheless recognizes two main obstacles. One is the lack in Arab societies of such an 'inner force' that can promote democratization. The other is the lack of a historical reference such as the Athenian democracy or the utopias that in modern times promoted democracy in the West by speaking to the heart as much as to reason. To compensate for this deficit, 'Abdallah suggests developing the term *shura* so that it acquires the progressive meaning he deems it now holds in the West. He recognizes the Muslim context of *shura*, but he does not regard this context as preceding Western democracy or equating it. To the contrary: he makes the point that an interpretation of *shura* as democracy is not part of the Muslim intellectual legacy, although the door is open for it to become one. 'Abdallah does not take an interest in *shura* as a means to introduce Muslim values and institutions into society.⁸³ Its merit, as suggested by him, goes only so far as it serves to convince a people suspicious of Western democracy that it is a cause worth fighting for.

The Jordanian scholar of Arab literature and reformist intellectual Shakir al-Nabulsi sees no fewer than 20 contradictions between *shura* and democracy. He rejects the generous interpretation given to the term by some Islamists and invokes contrasts between the two, some of which could have been easily adopted by *Salafists*. Among others, al-Nabulsi notes that *shura*, as opposed to democracy, is not a comprehensive social system; that *shura* reserves sovereignty to Allah, while in democracy sovereignty is for the people; that *shura* does not separate the state and religion, while democracy forbids clerics from meddling in politics; and that *shura*

does not allow plurality of political parties, because all Muslims are one, while democracy does.⁸⁴

That *shura* is not democracy does not mean the road to democracy is disconnected in al-Nabulsi's eyes from *shura*. In another article, a sharp attack on the failures of Arab societies and their need for reforms, he laments the time wasted on the efforts to distinguish between *shura* and democracy (an effort he took part in, as shown above), ending in neither democracy nor *shura* being implemented. Instead of debating the two, suggests al-Nabulsi, an effort should have been made to build the construction required for democracy. Historical *shura* should be regarded in the context of this effort as a first step in the progress toward democracy – a first step taken by Muslims in what would have been their march to democracy, had they not stopped, and even retreated, in the Umayyad and Abbasid times, and after.⁸⁵

The liberal political plan is clear: to institute in Arab societies the democracy and human rights that are implemented in the West. There is however an inherent weakness in their choice of terminology. Their usage of *shura* is artificial: because they concede that historical *shura* bears little resemblance to Western democracy, but nevertheless make little effort to lay a theoretical construction justifying their call for expanding the one so that it becomes the other, the integration of *shura* in their discourse reads as an attempt to appease Islamists more than as an independent, authentic, and committed interpretation.

Common to Muslim Brothers, *jihadi-salafists*, and liberals is the usage of the term *shura* as a means of challenging the political status quo. While opinions on what kind of change should come about differ sharply, the need for radical change, a political upheaval, is stressed by all three groups. However, *shura* proliferates in contemporary Arab political speech also as a means to perpetuate existing political orders and strengthen them. Most Arab regimes, and in particular those of the Gulf States, claim to adhere to and apply the principle of *shura*, and some call their parliamentary-like organs *Shura* Councils. By institutionalizing non-binding systems of consultation, regimes seek to simultaneously cloak themselves with an aura of Western-style political reform and with an aura of religious legitimacy, whilst maintaining their monopoly on strategic decisions. The parliamentary-like structures of *Shura* Councils speak for reform and progression; their drawing on Muslim terminology speaks for devoutness, tradition, and freedom from external pressure. The combination of the two in largely symbolic institutions allows a response to liberal as well as Islamist calls for reform, a response that does not challenge the status quo.

There is no innovation in this careful application of *shura*. Its roots can be traced already to the early nineteenth century. In 1829, Muhammad 'Ali, the de-facto ruler and modernizer of Egypt, which was still nominally under Ottoman sovereignty, established *Majlis al-Mashwara*, an appointed consultative council holding advisory authorities only. Non-binding consultation of the leader with experts and notables was a tradition practised by Ottoman Sultans. Its institutionalization in a parliamentary Western-style council was not, and it indicated that Muhammad 'Ali saw an advantage in imitating Western political structures so long as this did not involve conceding real powers. Muhammad 'Ali's official gazette, *al-Waqai' al-Misriyya*, compared his *Majlis* to the British parliament and the French National Assembly, and

the head of his language school, Rifa'a Rafi' al-Tahtawi, used *shura* to describe the US Congress.⁸⁶ Three decades later, in 1866, Muhammad 'Ali's Westernizing grandson, Isma'il, introduced an elected council, *Majlis Shura al-Nuwwab* (the Shura Council of Deputies). This council also had advisory authorities only.⁸⁷

In Saudi Arabia *shura* was used since the early days of the Third Kingdom as a means of legitimizing the regime from a reformist as well as religious perspective. *Shura* was first invoked in relation to democracy when Ibn Saud sought international and local support for his occupation of Mecca, a crucial step in the process of reuniting most of the Arab peninsula under Saudi rule. On 26 December 1924, he declared the establishment of a 'civilian consultative council' (*Majlis al-Shura al-Ahli*), to be elected by notables and merchants.⁸⁸ The council was formed in February 1925.⁸⁹ In August 1925 the elections became more inclusive, and the council was given substantial authorities, such as on policing.⁹⁰ In describing the council, Ibn Saud and his gazette, *Umm al-Qura*, compared the principle of *shura* to Western parliaments, but emphasized its Muslim essence and celebrated its superiority. For example, *Umm al-Qura* wrote in its report on the elections for the second *Shura* Council that Western governments also function according to the principle of *shura*, but have only achieved that after bloody wars, while Islam brought the principle of *shura* to the world 13 and a half centuries ago.⁹¹ In October 1926, after Ibn Saud consolidated his power in the Hijaz and was crowned its King, Mecca's elected council was abolished. In its stead, an appointed Hijazi *Shura* Council (*Majlis al-Shura*) was established.⁹²

The *Shura* Council of the 1920s gradually became a symbolic institution. However, the term *shura*, having described both an elected and a non-elected council, remained prevalent in Saudi Arabia's political discourse. It was used by an opposition that advocated political change, and also by the regime at times when it sought to appease foreign and domestic calls for political reform by promising the widening of political participation, but without committing to actual reforms. Thus, for example, between 1975 to 1984, crown prince and later King Fahd declared a *Shura* Council would soon be established – in some instances emphasizing it would be an appointed council of a consultative nature, claiming that the lesson drawn from elections elsewhere in the world taught that elections do not represent the will of the people;⁹³ in other instances, comparing the *Shura* Council to Western parliaments and suggesting its members should be elected.⁹⁴ That the promised *Shura* Council failed to materialize time and again indicated it was a tool of political manoeuvring rather than a concrete political plan.

A watershed in the usage of the term *shura* came following the dramatic events of August 1990. Hundreds of religious scholars and officials were outraged by the regime's invitation of American troops to defend the Kingdom against possible Iraqi aggression. The strategic decision signalled a break of trust with the regime. The protestors ultimately issued in March 1991 a petition (entitled *Khitab al-Matalib*, or 'The Letter of Demands'), which called for the Islamization of the Kingdom. The most radical demand of many it presented was the establishment of an independent *Shura* Council that would rule in all domestic and external affairs of the country according to Muslim law.⁹⁵ Their interpretation of *shura* called for purification from anything Western and for the rule of religious scholars rather than of temporal leaders. The regime realized the audacity of this demand, but its hands were tied at

first. Because *shura* was never clearly defined by the regime, and because the promised *Shura* Council was not established, it was impossible to declare that the petition crossed a red line.

After some hesitation, the regime responded, taking monopoly on the application of *shura*. On 28 February 1992, King Fahd announced a regulation for the establishment of a *Shura* Council.⁹⁶ Some Western scholars analyzed the establishment of the council as a limited reform the regime undertook in order to appease the opposition.⁹⁷ So did some American officials.⁹⁸ In fact, the *Shura* Council served the opposite aim. The council, as devised by the regime, was an appointed institution, authorized to give non-binding advice only, and lacking the veto power the '*ulama*' demanded. By establishing it, the regime could claim it allows a measure of public participation in running the affairs of the Kingdom while defining clearly how it interprets *shura* and marking any other interpretation as illegal and un-Muslim, subsequently closing the loophole through which the opposition, by defining *shura* as necessitating radical reform, undermined its legitimacy. *Shura*, as defined by the regime in hundreds of speeches, articles, and books subsequent to the announcement on the establishment of the council, was a Muslim concept different to Western electoral systems and identical to the current political order in the Kingdom. To note two examples, King Fahd declared in a newspaper interview that democracy was a regime unfitting for Muslim societies, which, he said, are ruled by *shura* – a regime characterized by consultation, openness of the ruler toward those he rules, and the ruler's complete responsibility for his people.⁹⁹ An essayist in the daily '*Ukaz*' argued that the Muslim system of government is better than Western democracy because it is divine and comprehensive; the absence of elections and political parties, the essayist further argued, proves that Saudis have internalized the real principles of *shura* and the creed it is based upon.¹⁰⁰ These ideas remained prevalent in Saudi official descriptions of the *Shura* Council in years following.¹⁰¹

While the Saudi regime and intellectuals affiliated with it focused on their celebration of the *Shura* Council's drawing a distinction between *shura* and democracy, Western and domestic demands for liberalization were their marginal target. A more important one was the religious opposition. By defining a strictly consultative council, devoid of any real authority and not controlled by religious scholars, as a manifestation of the political regime ordained by Islam, the regime warned the religious opposition that demands for a different kind of council would be deemed in the future not only an attack on the political order, but on Islam itself.

Since its inauguration, the Saudi *Shura* Council remained an appointed and largely symbolic institution and did not gain any authority in running the affairs of the state. This has been recognized, although hesitatingly, as an inherent flaw even by some of its members.¹⁰² Structurally the council developed only in a technical sense: the number of members increased from 60 in 1993 to 150 today, and on August 2008 the Saudi press announced a plan to increase it further to 180 members.¹⁰³ The importance of the council for the House of Saud remains in allowing – simultaneously – a façade of increasing the political participation and an aura of Muslim legitimization.

In Bahrain, *shura* was used in the past two decades for the very same purpose – cloaking the regime with a reformist aura and Islamic legitimacy whilst refraining

from conceding its monopoly on strategic decisions. However, the break from a meaningful parliamentary life to a largely consultative system which uses the term *shura* was much sharper in Bahrain than it was in Saudi Arabia.

The Bahraini constitution, adopted on 26 May 1973, almost two years after the Emirate gained its independence, awarded the Emir vast power.¹⁰⁴ However, a measure of independent power was granted to the national assembly, composed of 30 elected representatives and the government ministers: the constitution stipulated that if the Emir refuses to ratify a bill but parliament confirms it by a majority of its members, then 'the Emir shall ratify and promulgate the bill within one month from the date of the re-confirmation' (article 35, d),¹⁰⁵ thereby denying him ultimate control of the process of legislation.

Indeed, this measure of independent power proved volatile, and only two years after the first Bahraini parliament was elected, quarrels on disputed legislation and policy decisions led the Emir, 'Isa Al Khalifa, to dismiss parliament, suspend some civic rights granted by the constitution, and imprison opposition members.¹⁰⁶

In December 1992, responding to increasing calls for the re-establishment of parliament, the Emir chose instead to establish a *Shura* Council of 30 members – granting it a consultative role only. This action did little to appease the opposition or to bestow a reformist aura on the regime. With the death of Emir 'Isa in 1999, his son, Hamad Al Khalifa, promised political reforms and was quick to deliver them – in the form of a National Action Charter, approved in a national referendum and followed by amendments to the constitution.

The reforms were hailed by Bahraini officials as revolutionary, historic, and a new dawn of democracy.¹⁰⁷ In fact, they signalled a retraction, rather than expansion, from the authorities granted to the elected parliament in 1973, creating a new parliamentary system that assures the head of state does not lose his grip on the legislative process. The amendments called for a bicameral system, consisting of two houses of parliament – an elected house of deputies (*Majlis al-Nuwwab*) and a *Shura* Council (*Majlis al-Shura*) whose members are selected by the King (formerly the Emir). Laws would come into effect only if approved by both councils and the King (article 70, amended) and a veto by the King would be overruled only if both councils re-confirm it by a two-thirds majority (article 35, d, amended)¹⁰⁸ – thereby giving a council solely selected by the King, and carrying the term *shura* in its name, complete control over the process of legislation.

The National Charter praised this retraction drawing on the Muslim term *shura* as well as on Western examples.¹⁰⁹ Thus, the Bahraini regime sought more legitimacy from the liberal as well as the Islamist side while, in practice, institutionalizing new organs which did little to amend a political status quo that left the House of Khalifa with a monopoly on power.

Unlike Bahrain, the *Shura* Council in Oman does not signify a retreat from an initial phase of limited parliamentary democracy. It is, however, another example of a governmental organ that developed in a structural-technical sense only, remaining devoid of any actual authority, and serving the regime in presenting itself as promoting political reforms as well as the Muslim tradition.

A Consultative Council (*Majlis al-Shura*) was first established in Oman in 1991, replacing a former consultative council that existed since 1981. The head of state,

Sultan Qabus, gradually increased the participatory component of the council. In its inception in 1991, its 59 members, representing administrative regions, were selected by the Sultan from three-candidate lists issued to him by regional committees of dignitaries. By 2004, the council members were elected in a general, universal and regional election.¹¹⁰ What has not changed, however, was that the council could do no more than review laws ('with the exception of those laws which public interest requires should be submitted directly to His Majesty the Sultan') and advise in their regard.¹¹¹

The case of Qatar is different. There, Emir Hamad Al Thani, in power since disposing his father in 1995 and tirelessly cultivating an image as the Arab world's reformist and entrepreneurial leader, initiated a new constitution, which was approved in a national referendum on 29 April 2003. The constitution called for the establishment of a *Majlis al-Shura* consisting of 45 members – 30 elected and 15 appointed. The council was to replace an appointed and ineffective *Shura* Council that had existed since 1962, and was to become the Emirate's legislative organ (article 76). It was even given the authority to overturn a veto by the Emir by a two-thirds majority (article 106, 3) although the Emir was given the right to dissolve the council (article 104) and also to issue orders to stop the implementation of laws 'when absolutely necessary' (article 106, 3).¹¹² Alas, seven years on, the council, holding the promise of limited though meaningful participatory politics, is yet to be established.

Some radical Arab regimes find *shura* instrumental too. Egypt's *Shura* Council was established as the upper house of the Egyptian government following a referendum on several amendments to the constitution, held on 19 April 1979, under the presidency of Anwar al-Sadat. Two-thirds of its members are elected, and one-third is appointed by the president. Its approval is needed for amendments to the constitution, for legislation on a range of issues, including the press, the judiciary and the political system, and for treaties of peace and alliance (article 194). It also reviews economic and social policies (article 195).¹¹³ Structurally it grants the president another measure of controlling decisions made by the People's Assembly, which was and still is largely controlled by the regime. It also creates another organ through which functionaries close to the regime may be rewarded. The council allowed the regime to cloak itself with a more Islamic, national-territorial and liberal-reformist identity, rather than the Pan-Arab and socialist-radical orientation it had during the reign of Nasser. The council describes *shura* as one of the principles of government in Islam. It also argues that it serves as another link in the long progression of the materialization of this principle since Muhammad 'Ali's days.¹¹⁴ In praising its contribution to the Egyptian democratic progress, one of its members equated it to the American Senate and to other Western councils, while also rooting it in an Egyptian parliamentary history that began in the days of Muhammad 'Ali.¹¹⁵

Yemen's *Shura* Council was established in May 1997 as a body of 59 experts appointed by the president, 'Ali 'Abdallah Salih. In August 2000 Salih proposed several amendments to the constitution, which were approved in a national referendum in February 2001, including increasing the number of the council's members to 111 and defining some of its authorities. Amended article 125 stipulated that the *Shura* Council will discuss strategic, administrative and financial issues and will cultivate the press, civil society and the local councils. Article 127 stipulated the

council and the parliament (*Majlis al-Nuwwab*) will vote together, upon the president's request, on matters which are their responsibility¹¹⁶. The creation of the *Shura* Council did not subject the elected parliament (where Salih's party enjoys an absolute majority) to the veto power of an appointed body. However, the clauses defining its jurisprudence were phrased vaguely enough to allow expansion or reduction of its roles in accordance with the regime's needs, and its establishment awarded the regime with a controlled parliamentary organ which can be used for legitimizing strategic decisions as well as for benefiting supporters.

Shura has also been employed by radical regimes even when not institutionalizing it. For example, in 1992, with the breakdown of its Soviet communist ally, the Syrian regime realized its socialist credentials as a socialist popular democracy (*Dimuqratiyya Sha'biyya*) were shaken. Thus, it aggressively canonized a definition of democracy as a system that varies from society to society in relation to their singularities, and of itself as reflecting the uniqueness of Syrian society's heritage and values. In this context, the largely ceremonial vice-president of the republic, Muhammad Zuhayr Masharqa, defended the idea that there is not one universal model for democracy, and that democracy has been sanctified in the Arab and Muslim civilization, through the Quranic verses commanding *shura* and through the teachings of the prophet and the conduct of his four righteous successors.¹¹⁷ These words, alien to the regime's notably Marxist terminology of the past, highlighted its need for new sources of ideological legitimacy in a time of crisis.

An analysis of the debate on *shura* and democracy exemplifies how diverse Islam is in Arab societies. Interpretations of *shura* and plans for its application serve conflicting parties: liberals, who envision the establishment of Western-type democracies; *jihadi-salafis*, who denounce Western democracy and seek to purify Muslim societies through violent means from any Western influence; regimes, which aim to legitimize the current authoritarian political order; and the Muslim Brothers' and other Islamists, who seek to integrate some aspects of the Western political system but reject other aspects.

For those who believe in the universality of liberal democracy, this rich spectrum is encouraging. Indeed, it disproves the notion that there is something 'essential' in Islam that contradicts the Western system of government. Diversity in theorizing does not mean, however, that all sides of the debate are equal. Most Arab regimes hold a firm grip on their societies. Islamists are, in most Arab societies, the popular alternative political force. The *jihadi* branch of *salafism* has a proven potential to shake regimes and their Western allies. Liberals, on the other hand, lack a popular base as well as political or armed base. They have little prospect of independently turning their political vision into reality.

That *shura* is interpreted in sharply contesting ways illustrates diversity within Islam. That in Arab societies *shura* is the main reference in the debate on democracy tells of Islam's dominance in these societies. Islam does not offer a definite answer to which system of government Arab societies should have, but the struggle for defining what Islam stands for will determine the political future of these societies.

Notes

1. *Al-Quran*, translated by A. Ali (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1993).
2. To note only few examples: J.L. Esposito and J. Piscatori, 'Democratization and Islam', *Middle East Journal*, Vol.45, No.3 (Summer 1991), pp.427–40; R. al-Solh, 'Islamist Attitudes Towards Democracy: A Review of the Ideas of al-Ghazali, al-Turabi and Amara', *British Journal of Middle Eastern Studies*, Vol.20, No.1 (1993), pp.57–63; G. Kramer, 'Islamist Notions of Democracy', *Middle East Report* (July–Aug. 1993), pp.2–8; J.L. Esposito and J.O. Voll, *Islam and Democracy* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996).
3. For example, H.I. 'Ali, *al-Tayyarat al-Islamiyya wa Qadiyyat al-Dimuqratiyya* (Beirut: Markaz Dirasat al-Wahda al-'Arabiyya, Oct. 1996).
4. For example, D. Bukay, 'Can There Be an Islamic Democracy?', *Middle East Quarterly*, Vol.XIV, No.2 (Spring 2007), pp.71–9.
5. The term Islamists is not applied in this article as a normative definition, but rather as the commonly used heading for individuals and movements who call for the reinstitution of Islam as the sole and comprehensive framework of life and for the resurrection of a united religious-political Muslim nation, but refrain from using violence.
6. On al-Afghani's advocacy of representative government based on *shura*: *Al-A'mal al-Kamila li-Jamal al-Din al-Afghani* (Cairo, n.d), pp.473–9.
7. 'Abduh articulated these ideas in three articles he published on 12, 24 and 25 Dec. 1881: 'Fi al-Shura wal-Istibdad' (On Shura and Tyranny), 'Al-Shura' and 'Al-Shura wal-Qanun' (Shura and the Law): M. 'Imara, *al-A'mal al-Kamila lil-Imam Muhammad 'Abduh* (Beirut: al-Mu'assasa al-'Arabiyya lil-Dirasat wal-Nashr, 1972), pp.350–66.
8. 'A. al-R. al-Kawakibi, 'Taba'i' al-Istibdad wa Masari' al-Isti'bad', in M. 'Imara (ed.), *al-A'mal al-Kamila li-'Abd al-Rahman al-Kawakibi* (Cairo: n.p., 1970), pp.342–55.
9. M.R. Rida, 'Manfi' al-Urubiiyyin wa Madarihum – al-Istibdad', *al-Manar*, Vol.10 (1907), pp.279–84.
10. E. Tauber, 'The Regime of the Muslim State According to Rashid Rida', *HeMizrah HeHadash*, Vol.XLI (2000), p.45 (in Hebrew); M.R. Rida, *Al-Khilafa* (Cairo: al-Zahraa' lil-'Ilam; al-'Arabi, 1994; first published 1922), pp.38–41.
11. H. al-Banna, 'Nizam al-Hukm', in *Majmu'at Rasa'il al-Imam Hasan al-Banna* (Beirut: Dar al-Andalus, 1965), pp.358–83; about the need to disband political parties see also p.192.
12. S. Qutb, *Nahwa Mujtama' Islami* (Beirut and Cairo: Dar al-Shuruq, 2nd edition, 1975), pp.62–3, 68, 136–8; S. Qutb, *Ma'rakat al-Islam wal-Ra'smaliyya* (Beirut, Cairo and Jeddah: Dar al-Shuruq, 4th edition, 1975), p.86.
13. Qutb, *Nahwa Mujtama' Islami*, p.141
14. Qutb, *Ma'rakat al-Islam wal-Ra'smaliyya*, pp.73–4, 84.
15. Ibid., p.72
16. Sayyid Qutb, *Ma'alim fi al-Tariq* (Dar Dimashq, n.d.), p.3.
17. For this assessment see also H. 'Ali, p. 163.
18. I. Weisman, 'Sa'id Hawwa and Islamic Revivalism in Ba'thist Syria', *Studia Islamica*, No.85 (1997), p.133.
19. S. Hawwa, *Junud Allah* (Cairo: Maktabat Wahhaba, 2nd edition, 1995), pp.122–3.
20. The foundations of the concept that exposes an 'organized Western cultural attack' on the Muslim world in other than militaristic means were first laid by Muhammad Rashid Rida and were later developed by Hasan al-Banna. In the 1960s they were popularized by the Egyptian journalist Muhammad Jalal Kishk in a series of books, and since the 1970s they have been a common thread in much of the Arab Islamist writings on the West. For example: Y. al-Qaradawi, *Al-Hulul al-Mustawrada wa Kaifa Jannat 'ala Ummatina* (Beirut: Mu'assasat al-Risala, first printing 1971, second printing 1974); M.A.A. Marsi, *al-Thaqafah ... Wal Ghazw al-Thaqafi fi Duwal al-Khalij al-'Arabiyya* (Riyadh: Maktabat al-'Ubaykan, 1995); M. 'Imara, *al-Ghazw al-Fikri – Wahm am Haqiqa?* (Cairo: Dar al-Shuruq, 1997).
21. M. 'Imara, *al-Islam wa Huquq al-Insan Darurat La Huquq* (Damascus and Cairo: Markaz al-Raya, Dar al-Islam, 2004–5), p.61. The book was first published in 1985.
22. Y. al-Qaradawi, *Min Fiqh al-Dawla fi al-Islam* (Cairo and Beirut: Dar al-Shuruq, 2001), p.36.
23. M. al-Ghazali, *Azmat al-Shura fi al-Mujtama' al-'Arabiyya wal-Islamiyya* (Place of publication and name of publisher not mentioned, Oct. 1990), p.69.

24. 'A.S. Marzuq, *al-Ab'ad al-Gha'iba fi Azamat al-Khalij* (Misr al-Jadida: al-Markaz al-'Arabi al-Dawli, Jan. 1990), p.13.
25. H. al-Turabi, *Qadiyyat al-Huriyya wal-Wahda, Al-Shura wal Dimuqratiyya, al-Din wal-Fann* (Jeddah: al-Dar al-Saudiyya lil-Nashr wal-Tawzi', 1987), p.52
26. Ibid., pp.53, 54, 56, 66, 69.
27. Al-Qaradawi, *Min Fiqh al-Dawla*, p.36.
28. 'Imara, *al-Islam*, pp.60–61.
29. Ibid., p.45. Also H. al-Turabi, *Nazrat fi al-Fiqh al-Siyasi* (Um al-Fahim: Markaz al-Dirasat al-Mu'asira, 1997), pp.43–4; al-Qaradawi, *Fiqh al-Dawla*, pp.144–6
30. Al-Ghazali, *Azmat al-Shura*, pp.35–6.
31. Ibid., p.69
32. Al-Qaradawi, *Min Fiqh al-Dawla*, pp.137–8; also Y. al-Qaradawi, *Al-Khasa'is al-'Ama lil-Islam* (Cairo: Maktabat Wahhaba, Aug. 1977), p.39.
33. Marzuq, *al-Ab'ad al-Gha'iba*, pp.13–14; al-Ghazali laments that the man on the streets of Cairo, Baghdad or Damascus enjoys less freedoms than his brothers in London, Paris or Washington as undignifying for religion, al-Ghazali, *Azmat al-Shura*, p.72.
34. Ibid., p.41.
35. Ibid., p.47.
36. Marzuq, *al-Ab'ad al-Gha'iba*, pp.14–16.
37. Ibid., p.36; al-Turabi, *Nazrat*, pp.121–2.
38. Al-Qaradawi, *Al-Khasa'is*, p.87.
39. Al-Turabi, *Nazrat*, pp.43–4.
40. Ibid., pp.45, 122; 'Imara, *al-Islam*, p.61.
41. Ibid., p.61.
42. Al-Qaradawi, *Min Fiqh al-Dawla*, p.14.
43. Al-Ghazali, *Azmat al-Shura*, p.42.
44. Ibid., p.46.
45. Al-Turabi, *Nazarat*, pp.43–5; Y. al-Qaradawi, *Malamih al-Mujtama' al-Islami alladhi nanshuduhu* (Beirut: al-Risala, 1996), pp.258–61.
46. Al-Qaradawi, *Al-Khasa'is*, p.33.
47. R. al-Ghanushi, 'Hukm Musharakat al-Islamiyyin fi Nizam Ghayr Islami', in 'A. al-Tamimi (ed.), *Musharakat al-Islamiyyin fi al-Sulta* (London: Liberty for the Muslim World, 1994), pp.16–17.
48. Turabi, *Nazarat*, pp.117–18.
49. H. al-Turabi, *Tajdid al-Fikr al-Islami* (Jedda: Al-Dar al-Saudiyya lil-Nashr wal-Tawzi', 3rd edition, 1993), p.87.
50. Al-Qaradawi, *Min Fiqh al-Dawla*, pp.151–60.
51. 'Imara, *al-Islam*, pp.45–6.
52. Al-Qaradawi, *Malamih*, pp.135–46.
53. 'The Program of the Islamic Revolution', in U.F. Abd-Allah, *The Islamic Struggle in Syria* (Berkeley: Mizan Press, 1983), pp.213–20.
54. Ibid., p.146.
55. 'Barnamij Hizb al-Ikhwan al-Muslimin', p. 7, available at <http://www.islamonline.net/arabic/Daawa/2007/08/ikhwan.pdf>
56. Ibid., pp.13–24.
57. M. 'Imara, *al-Istiqlal al-Hadari* (6th October City: Nahdat Misr lil-tiba'a wal-Nashr wal-Tawzi', 2007), pp.197–9.
58. M. Qutb, *al-'Almaniyyun wal-Islam* (Cairo: Dar al-Shuruq, 1994), p.65.
59. S. Qutb, *al-'Adala, Ijtima'iyya fi al-Islam* (Cairo: Dar al-Shuruq, 2006, first published in 1949), p.78.
60. M. Qutb, *Waqi'una Mu'asar* (Cairo: Dar al-Shuruq, 2006, first publication 1997), pp.489–92.
61. M. Qutb, *al-Tatawwur wal-Tabat fi Hayat al-Bashr* (Beirut and Cairo: Dar al-Shuruq, 1985), p.248.
62. M.A. al-Hamid, 'al-Farq al-Jawhari bayna Nizam al-Shura wa Mustalah al-Dimuqratiyya', *al-Sharq al-Awsat*, 15 March 1985, p.14
63. Ibid., p.14
64. M.M. Mandura, 'al-Dimuqratiyya Mabda' Yukhalifu al-Islam', *al-Sharq al-Awsat*, 19 March 1985, p.14.
65. F. al-Jaziri, 'Al-Dimuqratiyya laysa hiya al-Shura', *al-Sharq al-Awsat*, 4 March 1985, p.14.

66. H.B.A. Al Sakaf, *Al-Salafiyya al-Wahhabiyya* (Beirut: Dar al-Mizan, 2005), pp.13, 19–20.
67. S. Qutb, *Ma'alim fi al-Tariq*, pp.75–112.
68. Ibid., pp.9–10, 21–3, 30–31.
69. A.M. al-Makdisi, 'Al-Dimuqratiyya Din', available at <http://www.tawhed.ws/r?i=8&c=1791>
70. Y.A. Halala, 'Al-'Unf Farida wal-Dimuqratiyya Shirk' (Interview with Muhammad al-Maqdisi), *al-Wasat*, 29 July–4 August 1996 (No. 235), pp.11–14.
71. A.M. al-Maqdisi, *Al-Dimuqratiyya Din*, available at <http://www.tawhed.ws/r?i=8&c=1795>
72. A. Basir, *Hukm al-Islam fi al-Dimuqratiyya wal-Ta'adudiyya al-Hizbiyya*, available at <http://www.tawhed.ws/r?i=1478&c=5306>
73. Ibid., <http://www.tawhed.ws/r?i=1478&c=5307>
74. Ibid.
75. A.M. al-Zarqawi, *Al-Dimuqratiyya wa-ltastabina sabil al-Mujrimin*, available at <http://www.tawhed.ws/r?i=3800&PHPSESSID=6fb4f97bbadb194a967ff2f181f8>
76. Ibid.
77. A landmark in the resurrection of liberal democracy as an intellectually valid system of government for a minority of Arab scholars has been the conference on the Crisis of Democracy in the Arab Homeland, organized by the Centre for Arab Unity Studies in Cyprus in November 1983. For the conference proceedings see *Azmat al-Dimuqratiyya fi al-Watan al-'Arabi* (Beirut: Markaz Dirasat al-Wahda al-'Arabiyya, 1987). In the early 1990s the liberal discourse developed further, most resoundingly in forums and publications of the same Centre.
78. 'A.'A. al-Raziq, *al-Islam wa Usul al-Hukm* (Matba'at Misr: 1925), pp.57, 72; see also an interview with al-Raziq printed in the daily *al-Siyasa*, as quoted by Muhammad al-'Imara in his apologia against al-Raziq, *al-Islam wa Usul al-Hukm li-'Ali 'Abd al-Razik* (Beirut: al-mu'asasa al-'Arabiyya lil-Dirasat wal-Nashr, 1972), p.92.
79. M.A. al-Jabri, 'al-Mas'la al-Dimuqratiyya wa al-Awda' al-Rahina fi al-Watan al-'Arabi', *al-Mustaqbal al-'Arabi*, Vol.157 (March 1992), pp.6–7, 11–12.
80. Ibid., pp.8, 11–12.
81. Ibid., p.14.
82. I.S. 'Abdallah, 'Mustaqbal al-Dimuqratiyya fi al-Watan al-'Arabi', *al-Mustaqbal al-'Arabi*, Vol. 137 (July 1990), pp.9, 13–14.
83. Ibid., pp.9–11.
84. S. al-Nabulsi, 'limadha Nusirru 'ala al-Dimuqratiyya la al-Shura wa ma al-Farq bayna al-Shura wal-Dimuqratiyya?' Published in *Elaph*, 19 Jan. 2004, available at <http://www.elaph.com/ElaphWeb/Archive/1074499236651712300.htm?sectionarchive=Culture>
85. S. al-Nabulsi, 'Al-'Arab Bayna Tahadiyyat al-'Asr wa 'Awa'iq al-Taghyir', published in *Elaph*, 13 May 2005, available at <http://www.elaph.com/ElaphWriter/2005/4/54941.htm?sectionarchive=ElaphWriter>
86. A. Ayalon, *Language and Change in the Arab Middle East: The Evolution of Modern Political Discourse* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1987), pp.110–26.
87. J.M. Landau, *Parliaments and Politics and Egypt* (Tel Aviv: Israel Publishing House, 1953), pp.7–22.
88. 'al-Da'wa lil-Shura', *Umm al-Qura*, 26 Dec. 1924, p.2.
89. 'Majlis al-Shura al-Ahli', *Umm al-Qura*, 10 Feb. 1925, p.1.
90. 'Intikhab al-Majlis al-Ahli', *Umm al-Qura*, 1 Aug. 1925, 'Intikhab al-Majlis al-Ahli', *Umm al-Qura*, 8 Aug. 1925, pp.3–4.
91. 'Wa Shawirhum fi al-Amr', *Umm al-Qura*, 8 Aug. 1925, p.1.
92. A. Sa'ati, *Al-Shura fi al-Mamlaka al-'Arabiyya al-Saudiyya* (Cairo: n.p., 1992), pp.55–64; F. Hamza, *Al-Bilad al-'Arabiyya al-Saudiyya* (2nd edition, n.p., 1968), pp.102–3.
93. F. al-Qahtani, *Sira' al-Ajniha fi al-'Aa'ila al-Saudiyya al-Malika* (London: Al-Safa Publishing and Distributing, 1988), pp.238–41.
94. S. Miligan, 'Inside the Court of King Fahd', *The Sunday Times*, 2 Dec. 1984, p.15.
95. *Al-Sha'b*, 21 May 1991, p.3.
96. *Ukaz*, 2 March 1992, special supplement.
97. S. Handerson, *The New Pillar: Conservative Arab Gulf States and the U.S. Strategy* (Washington: The Washington Institute for Near East Policy, 2003), p.61.
98. A.A. Hamed, *Empty Reforms: Saudi Arabia's Basic Laws* (Washington: Human Rights Watch, May 1992), p.52.

99. 'Ukaz, 29 March 1992, p.5 (the interview was originally given to the Kuwaiti daily *al-Siyasa*).
100. M. al-Jahni, 'Nizam al-Shura wa Dimuqratiyyat al-Gharb', *'Ukaz*, 19 May 1992.
101. For example, the address of the Council's Speaker, Dr. Salih bin Humayd, in the conference 'Shura, Democracy and Good Governance', held in Riyadh on 19–20 December 2005, by the 'Center for the Study of Islam and Democracy' in collaboration with 'King Faisal Center for Islamic Studies and Research'.
102. F.M.S. Al Saud, *Decision Making and the Role of Ash-Shura in Saudi Arabia* (New York: Vantage Press, 2003), pp.103–44.
103. M. al-Ghamidi, 'Ziyadat A'da' al-Shura al-Saudi ila 180 wal-Mustasharat ila 11', *'Ukaz*, 4 Aug. 2008, p.1.
104. The constitution declared that the Emir's 'person should be immune and inviolable' (article 33, a), authorizing him to appoint and dismiss the prime minister after the 'traditional consultations' (article 33, b), giving him the right to dissolve parliament (article 65), and stipulating that 'he alone shall ratify and promulgates the laws' (article 35, a). See Bahrain – Constitution, available at <http://www.eur.nl/frg/iac/armenia/constitu/bahrain/bahran-e.htm> (accessed 17 Feb. 2002).
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111. 'Shura in Oman ... A Quarter Century of Public Participation and Decision-Making', available at Oman's Ministry of Information internet site: <http://www.omanet.om/english/government/shura.asp>
112. Qatar's constitution, available at <http://www.qatarembassy.net/constitution.asp>
113. Constitution of the Arab Republic of Egypt, available at <http://www.sis.gov.eg/En/Politics/Constitution/Text/040703000000000001.htm>
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117. M.Z. Masharqa, 'Ab'ad fi al-Tajriba al-Dimuqratiyya al-Suriyya', *al-Ba'th*, 15 Nov. 1992.