Islam, State, Civil Society, and Education

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Contents

Abstract

How do Islamic institutions of learning support civil society and prepare students for life in modern democratic societies? The chapter examines the significance of Islamic education, first, organizationally for the associational life and, second, culturally for the promotion of civic values in various Muslim societies. The pairing of "Islamic education" and "civil society" can appear counterintuitive in light of the increasingly heated public debate about radicalizing effects of Muslim schools. The situation is exacerbated by the relative paucity of studies on Islam and civil

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society when compared with the scholarly interest in questions of civil society and democratic reform in non-Muslim countries. Over the past years, however, a number of western scholars have demonstrated that civility and public sphere have been anything but absent in the history of Islamic civilizations, including structures to limit the powers of the state and the promotion of independent associational life. In addition, the more recent resurgence of Islam in societies around the world has seen efforts to reinterpret Islamic resources in support of participatory politics and public civility. Reflecting the socio-political processes of Islamic resurgence and democratization, the Muslim educational scene displays a wide spectrum of ideological positions concerning the role of religion in politics and public life. Drawing, among others, on cases from Egypt, Iran, and Indonesia, the chapter argues for a careful case-by-case approach that incorporates both the circumstances under which Islamic educational institutions contribute to education for civility and that enables a fresh perspective on the contentious questions of, first, the role of Islam in education and, second, the role of Islam and Muslim institutions in modern societies.

Keywords
Islam · Education · Civil society · Islamic education

Introduction

The connection this chapter draws between civil society and Islamic education first originates from the recognition of the significant role Islamic schools play in the associational lives of Muslim communities as well as of the relevance Islamic education has for the promotion of civic values and, second, from the concept's widespread resonance among many in the Muslim community, including Muslim educators, for both politics and practice. For anyone interested in the conditions under which Islamic education promotes (or hinders) democratization, pluralism, and human rights, civil society remains a useful heuristic to examine the political dynamics of Islamic education because it draws our attention to both institutional and normative dimensions of Islamic educational practice and how they influence the course of politics. Finally, approaching the relationship between Islamic education and other sociopolitical institutions in terms of civil society, challenges both the claim of Islamic exceptionalism and dominant conceptions of civil society. Civil society in all its definitional ambiguity has become a truly global term. Questioning how the concept functions in and relates to Islamic educational traditions may broaden interpretations of civil society and make the concept more useful in cross-cultural analysis.

Civil Society as a Contested Idea

Among democracy-promotion advocates, civil society has become a cornerstone of functioning democracies. Following the success of prodemocracy social movements in toppling communist governments of Eastern Europe in the late 1980s, influential scholarly theories emerged that posited the centrality of civil society to the

transformation of authoritarian regimes into healthy democracies (e.g., Diamond 1999; Gellner 1994; Putnam 1993). This optimism that civil society at last would succeed where state-centric and market-driven approaches of the preceding decades had failed was mirrored in European and the United States' foreign policy. The Center for Democracy and Governance at the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), Great Britain's Westminster Foundation for Democracy (WFD), and the European Union's European Initiative for Democracy and Human Rights (EIDHR) are examples of institutions that saw an outpouring of state funds directed at civil society assistance programs in the 1990s. Following the attacks in Washington, DC, and New York City on September 11, 2001, the promotion of democracy across the Middle East became an explicit foreign policy goal for the United States. The creation of the Middle East Partnership Initiative (MEPI) provided the institutional infrastructure through which the Bush administration launched ambitious programs in countries across the Middle East and North Africa (MENA). The programs assigned for civil society a central place in the mission to democratize the region. The Bush administration's assistance in creating the Ministry of Civil Society Affairs in the Iraqi Transitional Government in May 2005 demonstrates the strategic significance civil society had for the Bush administration push for democratic reform in the MENA region. What followed was an outpouring of funds for civil society organizations (CSOs) or for government-facilitated volunteering programs in areas deemed critical such as healthcare and education.

Islamic schools have become a particular focus for the international development community, foremost the United States government, in its efforts to strengthen civil society and promote democracy. Policy recommendations have variously aimed at improving school access, reforming curriculum and teaching methods, and effectively promoting secular education as antidotes to the perceived radicalizing influence Islamic education has over Muslim youths. Rabasa (2004) offers a detailed discussion of the policy recommendations upon which these programs rest see. These policies have translated, among others, into aid programs by the Agency for International Development (USAID) to initiate and support education reform in Pakistan (Rahman and Bukhari 2006, p. 331). Similarly, the Middle East Partnership Initiative (MEPI) received 180 million US dollars throughout the 2003 and 2004 fiscal years with the explicit goal to expand and improve secular education in Arab countries (Sharp 2005). In late August 2004, the United States also announced that it would provide 157 million US dollars to Indonesia over a period of 5 years in order to enhance the quality of instruction in the country's religious schools. Despite the growing significance Islamic education holds for policy and practice of democracy promotion, questions remain about the exact relationship between Islamic education and its role in civil society as a positive force for democracy.

Associational Life or Type of Society?

As is the case with other big ideas that serve as interpretive frameworks for human thought and action, civil society has multiple and at times contradictory meanings. Despite a lack of consensus in the literature on civil society about how precisely to

define the term, most current uses of the concept draw on it to describe the realm of citizen action between the individual and the state. Next to this broad view of civil society as public square or sphere are two other definitional perspectives writers on the concept frequently exhibit. The first highlights civil society as voluntary associational life whereas the second emphasizes a specific type of society constituted by norms and values that make it civil. Proponents of the former usage think of civil society as a distinctive part of the wider society. It is the part of society that is constituted by a broad array of voluntary and quasivoluntary organizations, which provide the institutional infrastructure for citizen participation and action. Advocates for the latter perspective on civil society focus their concerns on the normative principles, values, and achievements that regulate social relationships and motivate collective action. Civil society in this school of thought is the "good society" characterized by constructive social norms such as cooperation and trust that help accommodate diversity in the direction of pluralism.

In Western social science, the prevailing school of thought, particularly among academics in the United States, has focused on the significance of civil society as associational life. The place of voluntary associations at the heart of civil society thinking goes back to the work of Alexis de Tocqueville on nineteenth-century America. Tocqueville viewed a strong network of voluntary organizations as the best protection from state attempts to centralize power and to wrest from its citizens individual liberties and rights. In his influential definition of civil society, Michael Walzer echoes Tocquevillian themes such as the centrality of voluntary associations for the protection and advancement of individual interests when he writes, "the words 'civil society' mean the space of uncoerced human association and also the set of relational networks – formed for the sake of family, faith, interest and ideology – that fill this space" (Walzer 1995, p. 7).

The relative prominence of the associational view of civil society, however, must not be understood as indication of an emerging consensus on the concept. What the exact scope is of associations that should qualify for admission to civil society (Do traditional associations whose membership derives from involuntary traits such as family, ethnicity, or religion constitute civil society?) or what the appropriate relationship between civil society and the state should be (What degree of relative autonomy of associational life vis-à-vis the state is required for civil society to work?) are questions that remain open to contestation and answers differ widely depending on the historical context or theoretical approach one chooses. Moreover, scholars who primarily emphasize the social role of civil society as the arena that nurtures and reinforces socially constructive values of solidarity and caring across all members of society direct attention to what Michael Edwards considers the most vexing question in the civil society debate, namely, "how *does* a strong civil society make society strong and civil?" (Edwards 2004, p. 74). Instead of somewhat naively assuming a direct relationship between participation in the formal realm of civil society and the development of values that strengthen society and enhance its civility, these critics draw attention to the need for nuanced and contextual approaches to understanding under what conditions different forms of civic participation affect the development of specific types of social norms.

A significant hindrance to understanding Islamic education's contributions to civil society has been the problematic identification of the term with the West, both as a historical phenomenon and a theoretical idea, which raises questions about the concept's explanatory power for processes in the non-Western world. While some Western scholars have pointed to the heterogeneity of Western intellectual traditions that have shaped the concept and argued that more nuanced and expansive understandings of civil society remain relevant for crosscultural analysis, especially scholars in postcolonial studies such as Partha Chatterjee (1990) have resisted any attempt at universalization as a further example in a long history of epistemic violence. Suspicion that civil society serves Western hegemonic designs are exacerbated by the shallow and ideological use of the term in the development community. The official endorsement of civil society by institutions such as the World Bank has raised concerns about the extent to which the concept has become instrumentalized to serve a neoliberal economic agenda by reducing it to a descriptive shorthand for the activities of nongovernmental organizations that advocate for liberal values and provide social services in areas previously assigned to the responsibility of the state (Beckman 1993). Hesitancy to employ the concept in the analysis of Islamic politics, however, is based on more than the contested nature of the term and relates to putative claims of Islamic exceptionalism that view Islam alone among the world's great traditions as resistant to secularization, which advocates of civil society – at least in its liberal variant – see as a crucial prerequisite for its accommodation.

Islamic Conceptions of Civil Society

Muslim organizations have taken on key roles in the civic life of many contemporary Muslim societies over the past decades. Muslim self-assertiveness has grown and with it Islamic issues have increasingly influenced public debate. Broadly speaking, we find two contrasting lines of thought in response to the question of whether this upsurge of religious expression is compatible with civil society and a democratic public culture. The first advances the pessimistic view that Islam and the societies shaped by it are generally incompatible with modern civil society (see Turner 1984).

The argument that Islam does not possess the mechanisms that make democracy work was most prominently advanced in the 1990s in the work of Harvard political scientist Samuel Huntington, who argued that the notions of individual freedom, participatory politics, and the separation of religion and state were at odds with central tenets of the Islamic worldview (Huntington 1993, p. 40). Other Western social scientists have echoed Huntington's culturalist argument of ascribing a proclivity toward religious totalitarianism to Muslim societies based on the assumption that Islamic doctrine does not allow for the separation of religion from the state (see Lawrence 1998). Islam's continued vitality and assertion in the public sphere of Muslim societies, in the assessment of social anthropologist Ernest Gellner, marked Islam as a "dramatic and conspicuous exception," an anomaly to the otherwise universal modern trend of secularization (Gellner 1992, p. 5). Focusing in a later

book specifically on the issue of civil society, Gellner (1994) went on to argue that since the development of democratic and pluralist sociopolitical structures depends on the privatization of religious belief, the development of an independent space between the state and the individual in which civil society might grow was highly unlikely in Muslim communities.

Quite different from the first group's negative assessment, another group of observers discerned that the resurgence of Islamic expression frequently was paralleled by a trend toward greater public participation in the political process. Although not every public expression of Islam promoted participatory politics or adhered to notions of public civility, Esposito and Voll (1996, p. 3) noted that "[i]n many areas, movements of religious revival coincide with and sometimes reinforce the formation of more democratic political systems." From the mobilization of a powerful Muslim prodemocracy movement in Indonesia that helped oust the autocratic New Order regime of President Suharto in 1998 (Hefner 2000) to the popular demand for democratic reform in Iran from social and political actors, including an emerging women's press (Mir-Hosseini 2002), in the wake the election victory of the reformist President Khatami in 1997 and again in the postelectoral events of June 2009, scholars in this second group have observed that debates over democratization and civil society are anything but absent from the Muslim world and frequently draw on the Islamic tradition in their commitment to tolerance, human rights, and rule of law.

A number of studies on the civil-pluralist resources of the Islamic tradition reveal ample historical precedents of Islamic institutions and organizations that were independent of governmental control and set limits to the arbitrariness of state power (Bulliet 1999; Kelsay 2002; Lapidus 1992). Such extrastate religious organizations included the *'ulamā'* (Islamic legal scholars), many of which viewed the acceptance of administrative posts as undesirable and as a danger to their religious integrity. A similar civic independence can be noted concerning many of the Muslim mystical brotherhoods. The *ṣūfī shaykh* (spiritual master of a mystical order) often remained in cautious distance from the apparatus of the state so that the *ṣūfī* order provided its members with additional opportunities for civic organization and religious participation independent of state authority. Despite regional variations reflecting differences in the economy of power between state and society, *'ulamā'* remained mostly independent and resisted state attempts to control Islamic law. Islamic law thus provided a balance to the power of the ruler who had to rely on a parallel system of caliphal law or *qānūn* to exercise his legislative and judicial powers. The dual system of laws and courts in Muslim societies throughout much of medieval time serves as a reminder that contemporary claims by advocates for an Islamic state about the exclusivity of Islamic law – powerful and attractive as such claims may be – have little precedent in Muslim history and should better be understood as a phenomenon of the modern period. Far from a monolithic fusion of religion and state, historical studies demonstrate incidents in premodern Muslim communities of quasiautonomous associational life as well as mechanisms to protect it from state domination.

Over the last two decades, an increasing number of studies of Muslim-majority countries have been informed by civil society perspectives (Jahanbegloo 2011; Mardin 1995; Norton, 1994 and 1996; Sajoo 2002). These studies reflect not only the growing

presence of Muslim civil society organizations but also a vibrant discourse among Muslim activists and intellectuals on the subject. The observation that robust networks of Muslim voluntary organizations have been engaged in social welfare, education, and health care instead of promoting Islam on the political level has served as a corrective to the conventional wisdom that civil society has no place in Islam (Sullivan 1994). Whether the growth of Muslim civil society on the level of associational life is conducive to democratization, however, defies facile predictions. Prevailing autocratic elements in the use of state power, civil associations that advance politically regressive and socially conservative goals, as well as restrictive access and uneven representation in the public sphere, all interfere with the strengthening of democratic civility in many Muslim societies. What remains clear, however, is that the concept has engendered a vibrant debate among Muslims on the values that should guide public life.

Drawing on resources within Islamic tradition, the Muslim world has witnessed a growing discourse on civil society that has seen the articulation of alternative conceptions of the term. Although questions about the organization of associational life play a part in the debate – a debate that itself contributes to the vitality of civic-associational institutions – dominant themes to which the civil society concept is connected are deeply ethical in nature and relate to questions of how Muslim communities should respond to diversity. How to conceptualize civility and tolerance within an Islamic framework as well as how to rethink Islamic tradition in the direction of minority and human rights have moved to the center of public debate and given rise to distinctly Islamic articulations of the civil society idea (Hanafi 2002; Kelsay 2002; Soroush et al. 2000). Despite their conscious embrace of the term, these conceptions are not always, or in most cases, carbon-copies of Western or even liberal counterparts. That religious ethics are unapologetically brought into the realm of civic debate over how society should be organized, from the perspective of political liberalism, violates the liberal norm of a religion-free public sphere that is seen as a precondition to the peaceful accommodation of substantive difference. Such normative differences, however, can not only reveal the contested nature of the concept but also call into question the secular connotations that adhere to processes of democratization in Western social scientific discourse.

Islamic education occupies a prominent place in the discourse over civil society in Muslim communities, both on the associational level and in terms of the civic values it promotes. It is to these two dimensions, roughly corresponding to the two definitional strands or schools of thought on civil society discussed earlier, that the analysis turns next. The final section will revisit the contentious question of the relationship between these two core elements of the civil society idea by addressing Islamic education's contributions to broader sociopolitical processes such as democratization.

Associational Dimensions of Islamic Education

Voluntary and collective citizen action restraining the powers of centralizing institutions is the principal theme of civil society theories focused on associational life. From this perspective, a functioning civil society requires the existence of civil

formations that operate independently from the state and have the power to oppose it. As noted earlier, studies in Islamic history have shown that premodern Muslim societies had developed civil formations analogous to what modern thinkers had in mind when they described civil society as a countervailing force of checks and balances. The medieval *madrasah*, the central institution for the transmission of religious knowledge, was one such institution. From its inception in medieval times, the *madrasah*'s relationship to the authority of political rule has remained a contentious feature of Islamic institutions of learning and their role in Muslim communities. It is this relationship between Islamic education and the state that has gained renewed significance for Muslim politics with the advent of the modern nation state and its use of education for the purpose of nation-building.

Madrasah-State Relations from Medieval to Colonial Times

Beginning in tenth-century Iran, the *madrasah* served as the central institution of Islamic learning throughout the medieval Near East; and by the thirteenth century its influence had spread even farther to Southern Spain and the Indian subcontinent. In addition to providing training in the Islamic sciences, many *madrasah*s offered instruction in nonreligious or auxiliary subjects from mathematics to philosophy and medicine. The systematic organization of its curriculum, the standardization of instruction through classroom and dormitory complexes that allowed for extended periods of study, and its wide geographical distribution made it a pivotal institution in medieval Muslim society. The thirteenth century further broadened the *madrasah*'s civil significance as it saw the development of what Arjomand (1999) referred to as an "educational-charitable complex," which combined the *madrasah* with a number of previously independent institutions such as teaching hospitals and *ṣūfī* convents through which it expanded the range of services offered to the wider society.

The state's role in *madrasah* education differed throughout the medieval period in ways that reflected the relative strength or weakness of society in relation to the state. In parts of the Muslim world that boasted a strong and independent socioeconomic strata of wealthy landowners, such as the networks of patrician families in tenth- and eleventh-century northeastern Iran, the establishment and management of *madrasah*s often fell into the hands of private individuals (ibid.: 267–268). Where, as was the case in the Mamlūk Sultanate in Egypt and the Levant two centuries later, a foreign governing elite saw an opportunity to enhance its legitimacy in the eyes of the local Muslim population, rulers commonly founded *madrasah*s and maintained control over their activities (Berkey 1992). In the Ottoman Empire state patronage continued well into the nineteenth and twentieth centuries when most of the leading *madrasah*s were established and supervised by the state. By contrast, throughout most of Asia and in other parts outside of the Ottoman Empire, *madrasah*s tended to be set up by private initiative and managed by the *'ulamā'* who carefully guarded their monopoly on education against government intrusions. The major challenge for the *madrasahs* from the nineteenth century on, however, was not state intrusion in its affairs but the advent of Western colonialism.

During the colonial period, the *madrasah* became increasingly marginalized as a result of colonial education systems modelled on European schooling that for the most part sought to circumvent the traditional Islamic institutions of learning. Reactions within the Muslim community varied from acquiescence to direct opposition to colonial rule. Expansive networks for the diffusion of extrastate authority and relative autonomy from government control made the *madrasah* a vehicle for political mobilization against the colonial government rule. In some instances, such as the Banten peasants' revolt in West Java in 1888, the resistance took the form of armed rebellion. In other cases, however, *madrasahs* became the base for social reform movements that aimed not so at an armed struggle to transform the institutions of the state but one that took the aim at increasing popular piety and empowering the wider Muslim public through education. India's Deobandis and Indonesia's Muḥammadīyah were two of the most successful movements based on *madrasah* reform still in existence today (Metcalf 1982; Shihab 1995). These new associational networks at times could consciously emulate practices of European voluntary associations, including Christian missionary groups and their focus on education and medical services. As the example of the Muḥammadīyah shows, reformist educators also would expand the *madrasah* curriculum to include non-religious subjects taught in the colonial system.

Despite indigenous education reform movements in parts of the Muslim world, Islamic institutions largely emerged weakened from the colonial era. Marginalized by colonial administrations and increasingly deserted by local elites for whom Western-style schooling promised greater chances of economic success, the newly emerging nation states that succeeded colonial rule continued to bypass Islamic schools and relied heavily instead on inherited colonial institutions to develop their own national systems of education. Rulers of countries that had evaded colonialization such as Afghanistan, Iran, Saudi Arabia, and Turkey also introduced Western-style educational reforms that led to the marginalization of indigenous systems of education. How to relate to this new political formation of the nation state and what role, if any, Islamic education had to play in the national education systems have remained significant questions for the *madrasah*.

National Education in Postcolonial States

The national education systems that developed in the postcolonial Muslim world at the outset did not make any sustained attempts to draw on indigenous institutions such as the *madrasah*. Political elites generally favored Western-oriented models, partially because many within the political leadership of the new nations had been educated in European-style colonial schools and regarded Islamic schools as insufficient to the task of initiating students into the new culture of citizenship. Sporadic state efforts could be seen to employ some of the more prestigious Islamic schools in the nation-building process, such as the nationalization of Egypt's Al-Azhar in 1961, but mostly Islamic institutions continued on the path paved during the colonial era. They functioned as a separate system from the state schools serving mostly, as in

Pakistan, rural communities where they provided access to education for the poor. As a result, the state systems developed largely along secular lines. Islamic education continued to exert its influence in the private sector but only marginally shaped the curriculum and educational routines of state schools.

The growth of state-based education, as the example of Morocco shows, coupled with a shifting public perception in favor of secular schools and the social mobility they promised, precipitated dramatic drops in enrolment for many Islamic schools (Eickelman 1985). State failure, however, to meet the increasing demand for education that its own educational campaigns had created ensured that Islamic schools continued to play a role in the civic sphere of most states. This role increased considerably with the resurgence of Islamic piety that swept the Muslim world in the 1970s and 1980s.

Reasons for the unprecedented global revival of Islamic expression varied from country to country but had to do with the failure of secular nationalist and socialist regimes to deliver on their promises of prosperity and progress as well as with geopolitical developments, from the Arab-Israeli War and oil embargo of 1973 to the Iranian Revolution of 1979, that revived pride in Islamic identity. Rapid urbanization without the state's accompanying infrastructure services left increasing numbers of citizens on the margins of society. It was within a climate of socioeconomic transition and disruption that the number of *madrasahs* grew steadily and the public demand for Islamic education increased. The *madrasah* alongside other civic institutions, foremost the mosque, provided religious and much-needed social services and offered particularly disenfranchised urban residents' new opportunities for public participation and interaction. Robert Hefner (2005, p. 20) highlights the voluntary nature of this resurgent Islamic associational life – in which the *madrasahs* were a foundational element – stating, "described in the language of modern political theory, the resurgence was primarily an affair of civil society, not the state." How, then, did the state react to this extraordinary mobilization of civil society?

State efforts to bring together private Islamic and public education accelerated in response to Islamic revival, chiefly following two strategies: governments, on the one hand, increased the proportion of religious instruction in state schools and, on the other hand, began to standardize curricula for Islamic schools in the private sector. In exchange for adopting state curricula, and thus being brought more closely under state supervision, *madrasahs* could receive financial subsidies and state recognition of their degrees. As result of these developments, remark Daun and Walford (2004, p. 2) in a comparative analysis of national case studies, "the Islamic educational arrangements are rather similar across Muslim countries." They include: national education systems in which Islamic education is part of the otherwise secular state schools (e.g., Egypt, Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, Malaysia, Indonesia); systems where privately owned Islamic schools to varying degrees are subsidized and state regulated (e.g., Saudi Arabia, Turkey, Afghanistan, Indonesia); as well as education systems with Islamic schools run by civil forces and not linked in any way to the state (e.g., Guinea-Bissau, Senegal). While Islamic education in many countries of Sub-Saharan Africa occurs outside of the state sphere, most countries in the Middle East, North Africa, and Asia exhibit a combination of these systems (ibid.: 20).

Islamic education has remained a central issue for the state across Muslim countries. Because a crucial purpose of national systems of education is to socialize young citizens into a broadly shared national culture, they need to mediate between national and other communal identities such those tied to religious traditions. It is this process of managing the discourse and practice of Islamic education in ways that promote state interests that Gregory Starrett (1998) in a masterful work on Islamic education in Egypt described as "functionalization." As Starrett's analysis demonstrated, government interests to control the public discourse on Islam did not necessarily go hand in hand with the promotion of pluralist civility. In the effort to shore up its authority against criticism from the Islamist opposition, the Egyptian regime implemented increasingly conservative Islamic education programs promoting regime-friendly messages. Instead of co-opting and uniting its opposition under the banner of the state's version of Islam now codified in textbooks and taught in schools, the efforts gave rise to a new pluralization of Islamic groupings and messages. The newly broadened space, however, has been filled more by conservative voices than by those of civil-pluralist persuasions (Wickham 2002).

Implications for the Civil Society Concept

In the context of the discussion of how Islamic education relates to the civil society concept, the preceding description of how Islamic education has been "functionalized" to serve state interests will appear problematic. Especially from the liberal perspective, which demands civil society associations remain independent to restrain the powers of the state, the concept's usefulness in its application to Islamic education is limited by processes of functionalization as well as by cooperative relationships Islamic schools have entertained with the state. Two preliminary responses can be formulated. First, it is important to emphasize that the functionalization of Islamic education is neither a new phenomenon nor one related solely to the agency of the modern state; nor has the functionalization of Islamic education always or even predominantly been narrowly political by aiming at transforming the states' political institutions. From medieval noblemen to reformist educators in the premodern period, Islamic education has served the strategic interests and ambitions of a wide range of individuals and institutions, including actors in the civil sphere. And the public ambitions to which educators relate the discourse and practice of Islamic education frequently is civil-societal in the sense that they aim for broad-based social reforms through greater popular piety and learning.

Second, the observation that Islamic schools entertain cooperative relationships with the state must not immediately make them suspect from a civil society perspective. Instead, the observation that Islamic schools will opt at times for cooperative strategies in pursuit of their collective goals questions the presumed normativity of liberalism's juxtapositioning of state and civil society as too simplistic. It is instructive here to recall Charles Taylor's observation (Taylor 1990) that even in Western democracies civil society and the state have been connected in cooperative and mutually supportive ways. Whether specifics

associational actors should be considered part of civil society may have less to do with the form of the relationship with the state than with the goals that motivate these actors and the ways in which they purse collective interests. Given its varied history and practice it is easy to agree with Robert Hefner that "the primary question today as regards Islamic education is not whether it should be drawn up into broader political projects (functionalized), but whose projects they should be and how they should engage the plurality of people, powers, and ideas that marks our age" (Hefner 2007, p. 33). It is these normative questions about the type of society that associational actors promote that will be the focus in the remaining two sections.

Islamic Education as a Source of Civility

Next to thinking of civil society as the part of society inhabited by voluntary associations and their networks, a second approach understands civil society in normative terms as provider of values such as civility and tolerance. Just how a society's associational life generates the types of norms and behaviors that make society civil has been subject to much debate. The idea that voluntary citizen action somewhat predictably produces normative effects in the direction of tolerance and caring is at the heart of Robert Putnam's influential *Making Democracy Work* (Putnam 1993). It is through involvement in voluntary associations, Putnam argued, that citizens develop what he called "social capital": an array of constructive social norms that promote cooperation, tolerance, trust, and stability. Responding to critics who noted that voluntary associations are too diverse in their orientation and could promote retrogressive political cultures, Putnam subsequently distinguished between two types of social capital associations could promote. Whereas "bonding" social capital is created by internally more homogenous groups and tends to reinforce more exclusive identities, "bridging" social capital is the hallmark of internally diverse associations that give rise to broader identities (Putnam 2000).

When considering what types of social capital Islamic education offers its students a common perception is that Islamic schools are a brake on the development of civil society because they cultivate the wrong kinds of social capital. Because the student body in Islamic schools is almost exclusively Muslim, so the assumption goes, Islamic schools nurture strong bonds of trust among Muslims but do not prepare students adequately for integration into a diverse society and thus have a negative effect on social cohesion. This perspective fails to acknowledge that there is a considerable normative diversity within Islamic educational tradition and contemporary practice. The following examination of civility-enhancing aspects of Islamic schools starts from the recognition of this diversity. In addition to reflecting some of this diversity and highlighting specifically civility-promoting aspects of Islamic schooling, this chapter will also consider the extent to which educational practices high in bonding are compatible with the development of a more open and tolerant society.

Integrative Functions of Islamic Schools

One of the basic ways in which Islamic schools help integrate students into the wider society has to do with the access to education they provide and the opportunities for social mobility such access entails. Even though these qualities do not fully correspond to Putnam's notion of bridging social capital, such integration with markets and the state can be considered a form of vertical social capital (Colletta and Cullen 2000). Especially in rural areas, Islamic schools worldwide offer access to educational services to poor communities who are underserved by state systems and cannot afford high tuition costs many private schools charge. Where Islamic schools as in Mali have undergone educational reforms to combine religious with general education and have accommodated themselves to the state system through the recognition of their degrees, they help integrate their students into their nation's wider political-economy and provide them with opportunities for economic advancement (Brenner 2007).

A second way in which Islamic schools exhibit integrative functions and broaden their students' identities, even where the student body remains exclusively Muslim and learning focused on Islamic sciences, derives from the quality of the educational networks that characterize Islamic education. Many Islamic schools are part of extended, often global networks that raise students' awareness of the wider world. Even where they are predominantly national, these networks bring together students from different regions, ethnicities, and walks of life that introduce students to diversity and enlarge their perspective. In rare cases, such as the famous Shī'ah seminaries in the Iranian city of Qum, intracommunal integration can occur because the schools' reputation attracts not only Shī'i students but also some from Sunnī communities (Farish et al. 2008, p. 18).

It should be emphasized that many of the educational networks do not display inherently liberal values. Schools of the Gülen movement, for example, that originated in Turkey but now operate in about 50 countries around the world are religiously and socially conservative even though they embrace science education and have a strong global orientation. Similarly, the schools affiliated with the conservative Tablīghī Jimā'ah – the Indian-origin pietistic movement that has grown to become one of the largest international Muslim movements – are seemingly politically passive. Through their educational activities they aim at the transformation of society, not the political institutions of the state. These schools stand in stark contrast to a small but highly visible number of politically radical educational networks of which the Southeast Asian Jimā'ah Islāmīyah (JI) rose to notoriety in the noughties. At the Indonesian Pesantren Ngruki, cofounded by Abū Bakar Ba'asyir, presumed to be the spiritual head of JI, teaching materials described nationalism as inimical to Islam and a form of polytheism, put forth Islamic law as the only appropriate basis for the state, and taught students to avoid interreligious relations (Hefner 2009, p. 85–86). While it is not warranted to assume that activist orientations will inevitably give rise to violence and militancy in Islamic schools, it is clear that even schools that otherwise have integrated their curriculum and cooperate within national education systems can assign little to no positive value to religious

or ideological diversity, and in many instances socializing with non-Muslims or with Muslims who do not share the same ideological convictions is avoided on principle.

Negative attitudes or at best indifference toward diversity can be contrasted with initiatives in Muslim schools that directly relate to Putnam's bridging social capital. Aware that few, if any, of their students are non-Muslim and thus limited in their inherent capacity to bridge the life-worlds between Muslim and non-Muslim communities, a growing number of institutions intentionally have sought to provide their students with learning experiences that involve advancing relationships across different communities. Especially in instances where Islamic schools combine their educational mission with efforts at community development to address social and economic needs in their societies, interreligious and interethnic collaborations have become common as a result of encounters with members of other communities (Pohl 2006; Sikand 2008). By bringing together Muslim students with members of other groups and intentionally providing their student population with cooperative experiences, these schools are very much involved in creating and sustaining the type of constructive social norms Putnam referred to as bridging social capital.

Although as a general rule programs of interreligious collaboration remain the exception, a growing number of education systems in Muslim-majority countries have begun to more explicitly address questions of religious diversity even if their focus squarely remains Islamic identity formation and self-affirmation. How to balance commitment to Islamic identity with openness and tolerance for non-Muslim communities is a challenge these schools share with their religious counterparts in other traditions.

In a comparative analysis of religious education models in Muslim-majority countries, Leirvik (2004) discusses educational strategies in Islamic schools that have begun to respond constructively to the need for interfaith harmony and the building of mutual trust across confessional borders. Most of the efforts to create more inclusive forms of Islamic education occur along confessional lines. More and more, state curricula require Islamic education in public schools as well as private Islamic schools cooperating with the state system actively to promote civic values of tolerance and cocitizenship. While the confessional model still prevails, attempts at developing models of interfaith education can be found on a limited scope in the private educational sector as well. Leirvik's analysis points to a number of triggers for the development of more inclusive designs. Next to the experience of political change toward democratic reform and intercommunal conflict in countries such as Lebanon, Bosnia, and Palestine, he identifies the existence of international impulses as a further shaping influence on national educational programs (Leirvik 2004, p. 230). Indonesia furnishes a widely discussed case that underscores some of the salient features of this development.

Civic Education in Indonesian Islamic Schools

In the wake of democratic reforms that followed the end of the authoritarian regime of President Suharto in 1998, two of Indonesia's largest networks of Islamic schools

developed new and ambitious civic education programs. Both the state Islamic system of higher education with more than 50 campuses across the archipelago as well as the private Muḥammadīyah system had international support in their efforts from The Asia Foundation. Responding to the growing demand for citizenship education in Indonesia's transition to democracy, the development of a new civic education program aimed at promoting open and inclusive forms of citizenship. Instructional methodologies foster participatory learning and critical thinking aimed at democratizing the student's learning experience. The textbooks developed for the new courses display an open and plural orientation in their approaches to civic education by foregrounding the compatibility of core values in the Islamic tradition with democratic pluralism and civil society.

The extent to which the new civic education courses in Islamic schools manage to combine Islamic notions of citizenship with Western traditions of democratic pluralism is a defining feature of the new curriculum (Jackson and Bahrissalim 2007, p. 42). The conceptions of civil society discussed in the curriculum materials furnish an evocative example of the way normative Islamic principles are scaled up to promote respect of pluralism as well as religious and cultural rights of a diverse population. Among the terms available in the Indonesian discourse on civil society, the English "civil society" or its direct Indonesian translation, *masyarakat sipil*, are contrasted with the term *masyarakat madani*. The latter reflects an Islamic orientation that is captured in the use of the Arabic word *madanī*. Although *madanī* functions as the Arabic cognate for "civil" its connotations also directly connect it to central norms and values of Islam and the Muslim community that developed in the city of Medina at the time of Prophet Muḥammad. The late Nurcholish Madjid, one of Indonesia's leading neomodernist thinkers, in particular employed the term *masyarakat madani* to refer to the Constitution of Medina that regulated the rights and responsibilities of different religious groups in the early Muslim community (Madjid 2001). As an Islamic reference point for the conceptualization of civil society, *masyarakat madani* with its emphasis on an Islamic framework for public ethics is not identical with Western social-scientific concepts, but it is also not entirely different.

The Indonesian case is representative of but a small number of Islamic schools and education systems around the world. In any attempt at understanding the role, Islamic schools play in strengthening society in the direction of civility broad generalizations have to give way to more nuanced investigations about the specific types of values and norms Islamic schools in concrete contexts generate among their students and the wider society. Clearly it is possible to find examples of intolerant and uncivil views about non-Muslim communities as have been noted in textbooks used in the Saudi state system (Leirvik 2004, p. 225). The inherent multivocality of Islamic traditions, however, has given rise on the other side of the political spectrum to a vibrant discourse among Muslim educators on theory and practice of citizenship, human rights, and peace education that see tolerance and cooperation across the boundaries of religious communities as compatible and required by normative principles central to Islamic traditions (Castelli and Trevathan 2008; Huda 2010).

Bonding Versus Bridging

When assessing the contributions that schools with a strong identity-based orientation make to the development of civil society, it is important not to overdraw the division between bonding and bridging social capital by assuming that high levels of bonding are incompatible with high levels of bridging ability. The effects that internally homogenous groups organized around their own interest have on their members' normative dispositions is rarely straightforward as Robert Post and Nancy Rosenblum (Rosenblum and Post 2002) argue. Many of these groups may still follow internally some of the deliberative procedures that animate democratic citizenship; still other groups whose internal structures are less egalitarian give voice to otherwise marginalized positions, which in turn can lead to greater openness on the part of their members to engage in collaborative activities with outsiders once they are assured that their positions are being represented and heard publicly.

What lies behind the inclination to dismiss the contributions Islamic schools make to civil society is the normative assumption central to political liberalism that democracy requires a religion-free public sphere. It is the secular underpinnings of the liberal conception of civil society that qualify religious and other identity-based groups as suspect and insufficiently qualified to play a public role in the political process of democratic societies. These normative assumptions about the relationship between religion and civil society will be considered in the final section as part of the larger discussion of Islamic education's contributions to broader sociopolitical goals of democratic consolidation and sustainability.

Islamic Schools as Schools of Democracy

Even though scholars can disagree over the exact relationship between various types of associations and their abilities to strengthen democratic institutions, that democracy depends on an underlying set of civic values and that civil society is the "school" where these democratic norms, attitudes, and behaviors are learned, practiced, and reproduced is a central feature of the civil society idea. Despite empirical evidence of instances in which Muslim educators are quite capable of connecting their educational programs to civic norms of tolerance, trust, and equality, a general skepticism remains that Islamic schools can be viable schools of democratic citizenship. Suspicion arises from the observation that many Islamic schools unapologetically insist on the public relevance of religious education and push for participation in politics and public affairs. Only a minority proposes positions that could be considered politically radical. However, from the perspective of a civil society concept tied to the normative presuppositions of political liberalism, even the insistence that Islamic ethics remain relevant in the public arena where they can be brought to bear on political debates violates the differentiation of society into separate spheres and the subsequent demand to relegate religious ethics to the private realm.

Reassessing the Secularization Paradigm

The liberal dictum of a religion-free public sphere was most compellingly elaborated by the great philosopher of political liberalism John Rawls who stipulated that a democratic polity out of necessity "takes the truths of religion off the political agenda" (Rawls 2005, p. 151). The idea, however, that all but secular manifestations of religion are in unavoidable tension with democracy is not new. It has been carried through much of Western thought since the time of the Enlightenment and has been a staple of modern social theory from the empirical predictions of Durkheim and Weber to the normative prescriptions of political liberalism as expressed in the work of Rawls and his influential strand of political philosophy. Critical voices on the question of secularization began to assert themselves with the late 1980s (Keane 1988). A growing body of scholarship has since emerged that raises questions not only about the empirical veracity of the secularization paradigm but also about its normative dimensions. Scholars such as Jose Casanova (1994), David Martin (1990), and even earlier proponents of the secularization paradigms such as Peter Berger (2008) begin to examine not only the desecularizing tendencies in many parts of the world but also the often desirable contributions religious movements make to democratization processes.

Reassessment of the secularization paradigm has produced new ways of conceptualizing the religion-democracy relationship. Whereas before religiously based arguments were configured as a violation of democratic norms and detrimental to the political process, now the spectrum has broadened to include those who urge they should be understood as part of a necessary and legitimate negotiation process over the appropriate role of religion in democratic societies (Na'īm 2008). Others counsel patient accommodation based on the historical examination of European democratization processes. As the case of nineteenth-century Belgium demonstrates, the integration of religious actors and their institutions into the democratic system was not the result of their forced exclusion from public debate but rather came after a long history of political negotiations in which religious communities participated in the democratic bargaining process to enhance their self-interest and made strategic choices that ultimately led them to accept democratic rules (Kalyvas 1998). What is more, a growing body of scholarship points to the desirable and beneficial effects the inclusion of theological discourse in public debate can have on public support for democracy precisely in those instances in which religious communities are uncertain about the compatibility of democracy with their religious worldview (Driessen 2010).

The change in attitude toward public religion is most striking in the work of Jürgen Habermas who decades after his work on the concept of the public sphere more recently has abandoned exclusively secularist conceptions and now counsels engagement with religious language. Asserting the right of religious people to bring their religiously grounded convictions to bear on issues in the public sphere, Habermas specifically points to the pivotal role of religious tolerance as "pacemaker for multiculturalism, correctly understood, and for the equal coexistence of different cultural forms of life within a democratic polity" (Habermas 2008: 257).

Religious Frameworks as "Thick" Motives for Tolerance

The critical role of religious tolerance in building democratic and pluralistic societies has become the focus of a new strand of scholarship inquiring into the sources of religious tolerance and the types of institutions in society that promote its development. Religious institutions, chief among them religious education, have received special attention for the task of nurturing tolerant and inclusive identities. Among the body of scholarship on education for religious tolerance, the work of the Oslo Coalition on Freedom of Religion and its special research project on Teaching for Tolerance and Freedom of Religion and Belief has been particularly impressive in its global scope (R. Jackson and McKenna 2005). Next to questions about the sources from which ideas of tolerance can be derived, the concept of tolerance itself has received critical attention.

Insistence that religious education plays a productive role in the development of religious tolerance is based on the recognition that tolerance cannot be derived from itself but instead must be rooted in concrete ethical traditions. Among the central difficulties with liberalism's insistence on tolerance, based on the recognition of the right of individuals and groups to religious freedom, is that it amounts to little more than an abstract rule. Abstract moral imperatives, to use Michael Walzer's (1994) distinction, cannot provide more than "thin" motives for toleration because they do not go beyond a passive form of respect that simply lets the other be. What is required instead is the development of "thick" motives for tolerance grounded in the cultural specifics, complexities, and nuances of existing ethical traditions.

The search for "thick" motives for tolerance has direct implications for theory and practice of religious education. Rather than conceiving of strong commitments to specific religious traditions as a source of intolerance and trying to relativize or weaken them, the search for thick motives suggest the possibility to ground an education for tolerance on specific religious traditions by amplifying the tradition's existing resources for tolerance. Identifying values, beliefs, and examples in students' specific religious traditions and making them the basis for tolerance provides students with concrete reasons and models to draw upon as they develop, affirm, and justify tolerant attitudes toward the religious other.

The challenges Muslim educators face in negotiating strong commitment to Islam with openness and tolerance to people of other religious traditions reveal a stock of shared dilemmas and overlapping responses among educators worldwide who struggle with questions of how to prepare students for participation in diverse and democratic societies.

It is in response to foundational questions of how to negotiate commitment to Islamic identity with openness to religious diversity that Islamic education can and frequently does make two significant contributions to the promotion of democracy. First, by articulating normative Islamic frameworks that ascribe a positive value to religious diversity and enjoin civic values that correlate positively with democracy, Islamic schools not only demonstrate that democratic ideals can be accommodated in Islam but also that these ideals can be consistently derived from normative Islamic principles. Especially in societies in which Islam remains a major source of

identification, the ability to tap Islamic resources can increase societal legitimacy for these civic values. Second, and related, rather than leading to a relativistic elimination of strong convictions, Islamic educational models that afford students the opportunity to experience Islam as a resource for tolerance deepen students' Islamic identities while at the same time contribute to the development of "thick" motivations for tolerance that are grounded in and sustained by deep Islamic convictions.

In light of the growing recognition of religious education's viable and desirable contributions to religious tolerance, Muslim educators' insistence on the development of strong Islamic identities and encouragement to carry Islamic ethics into the public sphere need not immediately alarm. It is not the pursuit of public relevance or the fostering of strong confessional identities and commitments that should be cause for concern. Rather, the concern in the inclination of a numerical minority of Islamic schools on the fringes of a largely moderate educational mainstream that is disposed to thinking of Islamic identity and ethics in staunchly exclusive and narrowly political ways. While the dangers of radical educational formations cannot be denied, it is important to realize that the assertion of Islam's public relevance and the ability of Islamic schools to foster democracy-enhancing and civility-promoting values and behaviors are two independent variables. What determines this ability has less to do with whether or not Islamic schools nurture strong Islamic identities and encourage students to carry Islamic convictions into the public sphere than with the extent to which Islamic schools succeed in creating learning experiences for their students through which to perceive Islamic traditions as a source of tolerance.

Conclusions

The increased public and political relevance of Islam around the world is likely to ensure that Islamic education, as a site where interpretations and uses of Islam are negotiated, will retain a central place of contestation over the types of societies in which Muslims want to live. Whether these energies will be channeled into the direction of more democratic and pluralist public orders remains to be seen. Examining the relationship between Islamic education and politics through the prism of the civil society concept, however, offers insights into the conditions under which Islamic schools contribute to democratization processes. Two in particular deserve to be highlighted that combine insights from the different schools of thought on the civil society concept. The first concerns insights derived from approaches to civil society as a normative model and considers the significant contributions Islamic education can make to legitimating norms and ideals of democratic and civil politics within Islamic frameworks. The second draws on civil society theories that emphasize the formal dimension of civil society as associational life and considers the limitations of Islamic schools within the broader spectrum of state-society relations.

What resonates with a growing number of Muslims around the world is not necessarily the dominant liberal-democratic variant of the civil society concept but

the search for a civil social order defined in normative terms. These norms may be contested and vary from place to place, but they generally include such positive social norms as tolerance, equal rights, cooperation, and trust. Even pluralism and democracy – not understood in exclusively Western terms but defined as processes through which a greater level of popular participation and an egalitarian public order can be secured – find growing support. For Muslims to embrace civil-pluralist politics, such politics and the values that underpin them will have to be grounded in local traditions. Herein lies the first contribution Islamic education can make to reorient Muslim politics: to articulate alternative political concepts from within an Islamic framework and to shape societal consensus by incorporating Islamic-based arguments into the public discourse. From the perspective of modern liberalism, the heightened attention Islamic schools give to promoting Islamic values in the public sphere may seem inappropriate. Although tensions remain with secular liberal notions, Muslim educators' insistence that political choices be informed and shaped by religious ideals is also found in other traditions and does not reflect a form of Islamic exceptionalism (Casanova 1994). What underscores the positive potential of Islamic schools to serve as carriers of civility is that Islamic education is not only seen as imminently relevant to public life, but that this relevance also increasingly is conceived in democratic and civil-pluralist terms.

Civil elements in many Muslim communities around the world remain open to assault from uncivil elements both on the level of society and the state. It is here that a second factor, derived from civil society concepts that call attention to associational activity independent of the state, comes into relief when considering the civility-enhancing role of Islamic education. Against civil society views that juxtapose society and state, the decision by many Islamic schools to opt for cooperative rather than oppositional relationships with the state draws attention to the interdependence of state and civil society. As Norton (1994, p. 12) points out under reference to civil society in the Middle East, civil society does not replace government, but "government must play the essential role of referee, rule-maker and regulator of civil society." In other words, political and legal institution-building is required to lend permanence to civility generated in the associational realm. Where political and legal institutions provide only weak protections for civil society groups, it can be a legitimate strategy for associational activism to seek cooperative relationships with the state to advance collective goals. It is obvious that such cooperation can serve nondemocratic goals. The appropriation of Islamic education by the Egyptian and the Malaysian states has meant accommodating more conservative expressions. Saudi Arabia serves as another example where the educational sector remains firmly under the control of an undemocratic state. As with Künkler and Lerner's (2016) recent comparative study of religious education in Indonesia and Israel, however, state-support can also support, embolden, and legitimate public civility engendered in the educational realm. It is thus expedient to maintain realistic expectations about the contributions Islamic education can make to the promotion of civil society.

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