Islam, Islamism and Secularization:
The Thoughts of Bassam Tibi

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Abstract

Prof. Bassam Tibi is a distinguished scholar holding various academic affiliations. His thoughts of Islamism and Civil Islam are intellectual responses to the western religion-politics tradition. In the West, there is a tradition of the separation between religion and state, and the teaching of Islam in the public sphere accordinglybecomes controversial. Against the grain, Tibi argues that the interpretation of Islam as din-wa-dawla, religion united with a state order, is problematic. But instead of criticizing Islam itself, he argues that it is not the problem of Islam, but an invention of Islamists or political Islamists, who support Islamization of the world. For Tibi, the so-called traditions proposed by Islamists never existed in the history of Islam, but are simply imagined. Islamists invent these new ideas and promote them as "traditions" in Islamic history to obtain the authority and authenticity of being "Islamic" in nature. Similarly, the concept of secularization is usually recognized by Muslims in a negative sense, since it confines the teaching of Islam within the private sphere. However, Tibi argues that secularization is compatible with the teaching of Islam if Muslims correctly understand the concept of secularization and Islamic traditions. The aim of this paper is to introduce the thoughts of Tibi and see how his ideas of Civil Islam can be compatible with the concept of secularization.

Keywords: Islamism, invention of Islamic traditions, secularization, cultural
    modernism and Civil Islam

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Introduction

With the tradition of the separation between religion and state or government and church, many western intellectuals trigger criticism in the teaching of Islam in the public sphere. Following this line of thought, Tibi argues that the interpretation of Islam as *din-wa-dawla*, religion united with a state order, is problematic. But instead of criticizing Islam itself like western critics, he argues that it is not the problem of Islam, but it is indeed an invention of tradition by Islamists or political Islamists, those who support Islamization of the world. For Tibi, the so-called traditions proposed by Islamists never existed in the history of Islam, but are simply imagined traditions. At best, there is a confusion of classical Islamic traditions with contemporary Islamist ones. Islamists invent these new ideas and promote them as "traditions" in Islamic history in order to obtain the authority and authenticity of being "Islamic" in nature. Similarly, the concept of secularization is normally associated by Muslims in a negative sense, since it confines the teaching of Islam within the private sphere. However, Tibi argues that secularization is compatible with the teaching of Islam if Muslims correctly understand its concept. In this paper, my aim is to introduce the thought of Tibi in detail and see how his ideas of Civil Islam can be compatible with the concept of secularization.

Bassam Tibi is Professor emeritus of International Relations at the University of Göttingen and holds various affiliations with many universities.[1] There are two key issues in all the writings of Tibi. His first concern is the politicisation of Islam, that is what he calls "Islamism" and the second one is the "reformation" of Islam. These two themes are studied in nearly every book of his but with different degree of concern. For Tibi, the emergence of Islamism is mainly due to the failure or de-legitimisation of modern Arab nationalism after the Arab defeat in the Six-Day War of 1967.[2] Islamism as a political ideology gradually emerged as an alterative to

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[1] For details of his intellectual biography, please read Yu, 88–106.

[2] For Tibi, terms such as Islamism, Islamist internationalism, political Islam, fundamentalism or jihadism are more or less interchangeable though each term

Arab nationalism in the Middle East. This political ideology in the name of Islam advocates neo-absolutism against secularism, tolerance and pluralism and proposes Islamisation of public institutions such as law, government and education. It constitutes a security threat to the region of the Middle East and to the world as a whole in that Islamism appears as a global disorder. In addition to security problem, the globalisation of Islamism also triggers a serious conflict in worldview or ideology between Muslims and non-Muslims in the name of conflict of ethnicity and dispute about the authenticity of Islam in the Muslim-minority regions. Tibi proposes that Islam must be reformed in line with cultural modernism in order to escape from this predicament.

For the theme of reforming Islam, Tibi argues that since Islam originated in the seventh century in a preindustrial culture and so it needs to undertake a religious change or reform when entering into the modern world, if not, it will continue to create serious conflicts among Muslims and non-Muslims. Therefore, in order to minimize the degree of conflict, Tibi proposes that Muslim communities must recognize and internalize the values of cultural modernism as Islamic thought and he calls this version of Islam a Civil or Euro-Islam. He believes that it can only be accomplished by what he calls the revival of Islamic rationalism or humanism.

Islamism and Modern Islam

In this section, we examine the emergence of Islamism and its impact on modern Islam. For Tibi, Islamism and the failure of Arab nationalism are interrelated and so we have to understand his interpretation of Arab nationalism and its failure in order to explain the emergence of Islamism. Second, we study the nature of Islamism and its ideas including its relations with violence and what Tibi calls Institutional Islamism. Finally, we scrutinize how modern Islam is affected by Islamism in the sense that

has its own focus of emphasis.

modern Islam as a cultural system becomes more defensive towards change in the modern world.

Failure of Modern Arab Nationalism

For Tibi, modern Arab nationalism is not simply a local or regional movement of establishing an independent state; its emergence was a consequence of "the European expansion and the processes of globalisation triggered by this expansive effort at Europeanisation of the world" (Tibi 1997: 201). It is therefore a response to or borrowing from the concept of nation in Europe. But the process of Europeanisation in the Arab world is not straight forward. It generated several effects. First, starting from Napoleon's Expedition to Egypt in 1798, when modernisation is said to begin in the Middle East, the French concepts of liberal freedom and secular democracy were also introduced as the core values of establishing a secular Arab nationalism in the pre-colonial period. However, under colonial rule, Arab nationalism became an "apologetic, reactionary, populist and frequently aggressive ideology" against colonisation (Tibi 1997: 116). Tibi articulates this change and argues that the reason for the change is the anti-colonial movement. French (and British) colonisation of the Arab world changed the direction of Arab nationalism from following French–British liberalism to anti-French, anti-British ideology offset by *germanophilia*, the positive predisposition toward German culture and ideology. However, Tibi further argues that this *germanophilia* is selective since Arab intellectuals mainly limited themselves to reflect upon the thoughts of German romanticism and populism instead of completely deliberating upon and absorbing German political thought.[3] These German-style Arab nationalists paved the way to Pan-Arabism because they follow the German romantic concept of nation: for them, the nation is a cultural community speaking a common language

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[3] For Tibi, Sati' al-Husri is one of the most influential intellectuals who synthesized the German idea of the nation and ibn Khaldun's philosophy of history into Arab nationalism.

and sharing a common historical memory and the concept of state is simply a political framework or institution, which does not deal with the existence and non-existence of the nation (Tibi 1997: 188). Understood in this way, the second result of Europeanisation is therefore the emergence of Pan-Arabism. It is the vision of making one Arab nation that represents Arab unity across the Arab world since Pan-Arabists romanticizes the Arab people as if they all shared the same language and the same historical memory. The concept of Greater Syria and the establishment of the United Arab Republic (UAR) in 1958 basically represent the spirit of Pan-Arabism. However, for Tibi, it runs counter to liberalism and the protection of individual human rights since the individual is conceived as an organic part of the nation. The rights of individual Arabs cannot run counter to the rights of the Arab nation as a whole. For Tibi, this is a kind of absolutism.

The vision for unification did not last long and went into rapid defeat of the Arab cause by Israel in the 1967 Six Day War. Tibi himself summarizes the history of Arab nationalism in the following two perspectives:

> (1) In terms of the history of ideas . . . Arab nationalism was based on a cultural revival in the nineteenth century resulting from a process of acculturation. The Arab awareness of the European concept of "nation" led to the claim of an Arab *Kulturnation*. The politicisation of this concept culminated in the call for an Arab *Staatsnation*, i.e. one Pan-Arab state. Pre-1913 early Arab nationalism was francophone and anglophone, i.e. basically liberal. Following the colonisation of the Arab East in the aftermath of the First World War a turn to *germanophilia* took place . . .

> (2) From another perspective, Arab nationalism can be looked at as an ideology of an evolving state system. In its earlier period (between the two World Wars) the Arab state system was royal in that it was carried out by

dynasties . . . They were the champions of the search for Arab unity. The early Arab state system unfolded in the years 1945-54. With the rise of Nasserism (1952) this regional system assumed a populist character . . . This change marks a transformation of Pan-Arabism from royalism to populism. The Arab defeat in the Six Day War led to a deep crisis of the regional state system and contributed to unleashing the process called the end of Pan-Arabism. (Tibi 1997: 202–03)

The final consequence of Europeanisation stimulates the emergence of three different kinds of ideology in the Middle East. For Tibi, the first movement is secular nationalism which follows upon the drive towards liberalism and human rights imported from European states in the pre-colonial period, as mentioned above. The second is what Tibi calls two forms of Islamic revival. One is traditionalist Wahhabism in Saudi Arabia and the other is the Islamic modernism represented by al-Afghani and Muhammad Abduh. Wahhabism represents an Islamic movement that seeks to purify Islam of any innovation or practice that deviates from the teachings of the Prophet Muhammad and his companions. Islamic modernism on the other hand tries to reform Islam with the use of western sciences and technology but within the confines of Islamic doctrines and worldview, which is what Tibi calls semi-modernism. The third and final ideology is the politicisation of Islam which is related to the failure of Pan-Arabism. The Arab defeat in the Six Day War led to the de-legitimisation of Pan-Arabism. Tibi argues that this politicisation of Islam changes the ideology of Arab nationalism from Pan-Arabism to Islamist internationalism (or Islamist universalism). As mentioned above, the ideology of Pan-Arabism is a selective and limited reflection of German romanticism and populism. Its theoretical foundation is so weak that "(nationalism) is merely empty phrases and a loud hullabaloo" (Tibi 1997: 213). Facing the severe crisis of the Six Day War, the whole enterprise of Pan-Arabism gradually collapsed and new solutions were needed. As Tibi indicates, "there were plenty of signs that

such a development would take place" (Tibi 1997: 214). The emergence of enlightened debates within the Arab nationalist movement in books and journals was the sign of impending change. However, it did not last long because the political oppression of the totalitarian Ba'thist governments in Syria and Iraq, and Nasser's authoritarian regime became a barrier to the transformation of the Arab Middle East. The study of Horsman and Marshall, as quoted by Tibi, shows that "in the Arab world . . . states . . . have poor human rights records, little experience in peaceful transition between regimes and few of the liberal institutions of civil society. Many are authoritarian regimes led by ruling, dynastic families . . . or praetorian regimes backed by force . . . Equally these states have achieved the least economic reform" (Tibi 1997: 216). And all these conditions eventually invited social unrest which, as Tibi argues, cultivates the soil for the rise of Islamist universalism or political Islam.

Islamism as Alternative Global Order and Disorder

For Tibi, the problems of Islamism are not simply political and security concerns confined within the region of the Middle East, though it originated in this region. What Tibi most worries about is the "globalisation" of Islamism as it gradually becomes an alternative political order or ideology in conflict with the existing international political order, and finally, a cause of world disorder and social unrest. The tragic event of 9/11 is what Tibi believes to be the evidence of the challenge Islamism poses to international order (Tibi 2002: xiii). Tibi defends the legitimacy of the existing global order. For Tibi, the Treaty of Westphalia of 1648 helped bring about a new world order. First, "it established the sovereign state as the fundamental unit of international relations, and it decoupled the religious establishments from the individual states. Sovereign states, as secular entities, were henceforth forbidden to go to war over religious differences" (Tibi 2012: 33). Second, following the view of Charles Tilly in his book *The Formation of the National States in Western Europe*, Tibi argues that "almost the entire world is now the dominion of secular nation-states on the Westphalian model that

originated in Europe. This is a political reality, not, as some Muslim scholars contend, a Eurocentric idea of international relations theory" (Tibi 2012a: 33). Therefore, the separation of religious institutions and state and the secularity of the political order basically represent what Tibi calls the ideas of "international order." For Tibi, the international order is not the product of an earlier era of European ascendancy, but is potentially acceptable to all humanity. Its legitimacy is founded on the idea of what Tibi calls "cultural modernism," an idea that Tibi endorses and defends as a universal value (Tibi 2012a: 47).

How, then, does Islamism poses such a challenge to this international order? First, Islamism declares that there is a universal Islamic order or system and that has been in decline since the collapse of the Ottoman Empire in 1924. For Islamists, their vision is to revitalize this universal Islamic order so as to challenge, and even replace, the existing western one. For Tibi, Napoleon's expedition introduced the ideology of modern secular nationalism (no matter how it later developed in the Arab world) and the collapse of the Ottoman Empire led to the modern nation-state as the parallel institutional reality. However, the revival of Islamism has ended such transformation. The proponents of Islamism qualify the secular nation-state as an "imported solution" from the West and call for an Islamic state or system as an Islamic solution. Finally, the synthesis of the universal Islamic order and anti-western ideology produces an Islamic ideology as an alternative global order (or disorder in the view of Tibi) in conflict with the secular international order that has developed from the Westphalian model. Seen in this light, we can argue that what Tibi tries to do is to articulate the view of Islamism "travelling" around the world since its nature is universal and it is globalized as an international ideology regardless of its context or origin. He transforms the discourse of regional revival in Islamic ideology in the Middle East into a universal discourse of Islamismagainst the legitimacy and secularity of the world order. But what are the nature and ideas of Islamism? In the following, we articulate the arguments of Tibi when discussing the nature of Islamism, its relations with violence and what Tibi calls institutional Islamism.

Invention of Tradition

Borrowing the notion of "Invention of Tradition" from historian Eric Hobsbawm, Tibi uses it as a principal marker of the nature of Islamism. Hobsbawm defines invention of tradition as "a set of practices . . . of a ritual or symbolic nature, which seek to inculcate certain values and norms of behaviour by repetition, which automatically implies continuity with the past" (Hobsbawm & Ranger 1992: 1). Tibi follows his thesis to indicate that there are in fact many Islamic traditions or discourses invented by Islamists. The so-called traditions proposed by Islamists never existed in the history of Islam, but are simply imagined traditions. At best, there is a confusion of classical Islamic traditions with contemporary Islamist ones. For Tibi, Islamists invent these new ideas and promote them as "traditions" in Islamic history in order to obtain the authority and authenticity of being "Islamic" in nature. In his recent book *Islamism and Islam*, Tibi gives a thematic review of Islamist inventions of Islamic traditions in several areas as follows:

1. the interpretation of Islam as *nizam Islami* (stateor order);
2. the perception of the Jews as the chief enemy conspiring against Islam, because they are believed to be pursuing a "Jewish world order" in conflict with the Islamist goal;
3. democratisation and the place of institutional Islamism in a democratic state;
4. the evolution from classical *jihad* to terrorist jihadism;
5. the reinvention of *sharia*; and
6. the question of purity and authenticity, which determines the Islamist view of secularisation and de-secularisation. (Tibi 2012b: 6)

Tibi argues that "the first step in the Islamist invention of Islamic tradition is to establish a new understanding of Islam as *din-wa-dawla*:

religion united with a state order. When Islamists speak of *al-hall al-Islami* (an Islamic solution), they mean not democracy but rather a remaking of the existing political order in pursuit of the Islamic *sharia* state" (Tibi 2012b: 31). For Tibi, this situation is what he calls politicisation of Islam. Before we go to study the above themes individually, we need to know the meaning of this phrase. Tibi uses the notion of politicisation of Islam or religion together with another two, namely, the religionisation of politics and culturalisation of conflict (Tibi 2008: 114, 163). For Tibi, all these three notions are problems of Islamism in our present age. The first two notions can be explained by the same principle and we will discuss the notion of culturalisation of conflicts later in the subsequent section. In addition to the confusion of classical Islamic traditions with modern-day Islamist ones, we can say that politicisation of Islam and religionisation of politics represent another type of confusion, that is, the confusion between the spheres of politics and religion. For Tibi, Islam should be understood as a private religiosity, a personal ethics or set of guidelines for spirituality but Islamists make Islam a universal, divine political order or ideology, which in turn challenges the existing secular international order, as mentioned above. And the religionisation of politics refers to the return of the sacred or revitalisation of Islam in all aspects of politics (in the area of Islamic law, Tibi calls it a "shari'atisation of the state," the claim of divine Islamic law that covers all areas). It is only another perspective to indicate the confusion between spheres of politics and religion.

The fundamental issue that the confusion leads to is the violation of secularity that Tibi defends as the norm or reality in modern politics. Tibi separates three terms in relation to *the secular*. The first one is secularisation, which indicates a process of separation between religion and politics in society, in other words, the functional differentiation of society – religion and politics should have their own rules of rationality, types of authority and realms of activity, and should not interfere with each other. The second one is secularism, which refers to an anti-religious ideology. Tibi embraces the notion of secularisation as a social fact but does not agree to secularism in the sense that he does not propose the abolition of religion. Therefore, he

does not claim himself as secularist in this second sense. The third and final one is secularity, which is simply a state of affairs in society supporting the order of a separation between religion and politics. Tibi argues that today Islamists confuse the ideas of secularism with secularisation or secularity, viewing the separation of religion and politics as the abolition of religion. In the following, due to limited space, we will only show how these types of confusion happen in the areas of *sharia*, democratisationand institutional Islamism and, finally, *jihad*, identified above.

Before we go on to discuss Tibi's interpretation of *sharia*, we should first understand the meaning of *sharia*. The Arabic word, *sharia*, means camels or cattle entering into the watering place, i.e. a correct path (Lane 1984: 1534). In its technical sense, it refers to the law laid down by God and so the English translation is "Islamic Law." However, there is another term, *fiqh*, sometimes used interchangeably with *sharia*. It means in its verb form "to know" or "to comprehend" and its technical translation is "Islamic Jurisprudence"[4] (Al-Abdin 1995: 20). The difference is subtle. *Sharia* is the name given to the divine will of God as revealed in the Qur'an and the statements attributed to the Prophet (*ahadith*), while *fiqh* is the methodology, rule or science to deduce and infer the divine will of God from the Qur'an and other texts. This methodology includes the idea of*ijtihad* that has also been mentioned. In a strict sense, they are not identical. *Sharia* is Ultimate Truth but *fiqh* is only the method trying to establish the truth or divine will on particular issues and put it into practice in a precise historical period. It can therefore be wrong, dated and contestable and so *sharia* is not as clearly a human construct as is*fiqh*.[5] This is why Al-Azmeh argues that the application of *sharia* is meaningless as it is not a specific code or law but a general term designating good order (Al-Azmeh 1996: 12). As Nielsen says, "*Shariah*…is theological foundation and structure which the *fiqh* interprets

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[4] Also see Lane, Vol. 2, p. 2429.

[5] Though Muslim scholars debate the extent to which *sharia* itself is a human construct.

and fills in. It is thus no coincidence that the phrase used for discussing the divine purpose is the "intention of the *shariah*', rather than the intentions of the *fiqh*, for the role of the *fiqh* is to seek the implementation of those intentions" (Nielsen 1995: 27). Understood in this way, even though intellectuals and the media use these two terms interchangeably, the concept of *sharia* is more theological and ethics-oriented while *fiqh* is more legal and method-oriented.

Tibi basically agrees with the above linguistic meaning and methodological implication of the term *sharia*. Therefore, he argues against any implementation of *sharia* as if it were a codified or written law for the state. For Tibi, *sharia* is simply a set of personal and ethical guidelines. But if following the above distinction between the concepts of *sharia* and *fiqh,* then we can suggest Muslim intellectuals to use the concept of *fiqh* instead of *sharia* to formulate the new legal system for the Islamic world since *fiqh* is more flexible to new changes and adaptable to legal requirements of the modern world. However, Tibi argues against it since he does not agree that *fiqh* is flexible and adaptable to modern legal requirements. Following the study of N. J. Coulson, Tibi divides four phases of the development of *sharia*. The first phase:

> Comprises post-Qur'anic development up to the ninth century, during which an Islamic legal system was developed. *In the second phase, which lasted from the ten century to the twentieth, this law grew increasingly rigid, until it was thought to constitute divine truth, valid for all times and in no way modifiable by history*. The twentieth century, after the introduction of the European institution of the secular-state into the world of Islam, marks a third phase, in which modern states have been unable to maintain their regimes while relying on classical Islamic law. This form of law does not meet the requirements of the modern world, and this has been an element of Islam's predicament with modernity. I would

argue that the Islamic world has now entered a fourth
phase, marked by a de-Westernisation of law as political
Islam pursues its program of ideological shari'atisation
of Islam with the aim of *tatbiq al-sharia*, implementing
the law of the Islamist movement on state and society
(Tibi 2012b: 174–75) (Italics mine).

Therefore, for Tibi, instead of being flexible, the tradition of *fiqh* developed
in the second phase was growing rigid and absolute as an Islamic legal
tradition and a revival of *fiqh* therefore simply runs counter the secular legal
system. Even if Tibi sets aside the history and accepts the assumption of
flexibility of *fiqh* in the past, he also opposes the dogmatic form of *sharia*
proposed by the Islamists today and therefore it is not a revival of classical
fiqh. In addition, Tibi argues that *sharia* in the past was mostly restricted to
civil law and a penal code and there is in fact no intact and complete Islamic
legal system independent from the political influence of the Caliphs.
Therefore the shari'atisation of the state order (the fourth phase) is no more
than an invention of tradition, a complete novelty and also a confusion of
Islam with Islamism. Finally, another issue is whether it is correct to
understand *sharia* as the constitution of the state. The most important issue
for Tibi to reject the possibility to view *sharia* as the constitution of the state
is the concern of individual human rights, especially freedom of faith. Tibi
argues that the nature of *sharia* is totalitarian while the notion of modern
constitutionalism is founded on the respect and protection of individual
human rights and therefore their conceptual nature is incompatible. As he
says, "the important questions are whether *sharia* could really function as a
constitutional law and how consonant the related call for Islamisation would
be with the vision of democracy for the world of Islam" (Tibi 2012b: 65). In
the following, we will discuss how Islamists confuse the modern notion of
democracy with an Islamic notion *shura*, the private consultation among
tribal leaders.

　　To some extent, Tibi uses the similar rationale to argue against the
confusion between the notion of modern democracy and the notion of

shura in Islamic tradition. The former is a recent addition to Islamic thought, i.e. invention of tradition, while the latter is simply a tradition of intertribal consultation among the leaders of ethnic groups starting from the pre-Islamic period which was not adopted by the Umayyad and Abbasid dynasties. Nowadays democracy is not restricted to the consultation of a limited number of leaders but is concerned about the wills or decisions made by majority of people or citizens through voting. Again, their conceptual nature is not compatible. However, Tibi accepts that there are populist Islamists who are different from totalitarian Islamists. Populist Islamists are more concerned about the legitimacy endorsed by citizens in their vision of an Islamic state, while totalitarian Islamists restrict the power to God alone and claim God as the only legislator, which, for Tibi, will ultimately lead to the totalitarian rule of the state. Therefore the populist Islamists' ideal of *shura* as a governmental system is more compatible with the notion of democracy nowadays and if this interpretation is right, then we can say that populist Islamism also relates to what Tibi calls institutional Islamism.

Tibi distinguishes two directions or pathways of Islamism. Both share the same ultimate goal in establishing an Islamic state and the same Islamic worldview of seeing unbelievers in opposition to believers. But one is "peaceful and represent(s) a movement willing to participate within a democratic format" (Tibi 2008: 10). Tibi calls it institutional Islamism, while the other is jihadism, which uses violence or terrorist actions to accomplish its goal. For Tibi, the "democratic feature" of institutional Islamism is superficial and instrumental since its worldview and goal pursuits are still Islamist in nature. In my opinion, Tibi is worried about the political stability of the states with institutional Islamism as a guiding principle. This Islamist way of thinking may finally abandon democratic values if democracy is only used as a tool and there is no commitment to the culture, value system and worldview underpinning the operation of modern democracy: these are also the ideas of cultural modernism that Tibi proposes and defends as universal and legitimate in modern society. Therefore, Tibi is not optimistic about the future political development of so-called democratic Islamic states such as Turkey if they continue to view modern democracy only as an instrument:

this is what Tibi calls "creeping Islamisation." Understood in this way, the use of violence is the crucial element distinguishing terrorist jihadism and *jihad* in Islamic tradition. Before studying the concept of *jihad* in Tibi's interpretation, we should first seek a general understanding of *jihad* in Arabic.

The semantic meaning of the Arabic term *jihad* has no relation to holy war or even war in general. It simply means to strive, exert oneself, or take extraordinary pains. *Jihad* is defined classically as "exerting one's utmost power, efforts, endeavours, or ability in contending with an object of disapprobation" (Firestone 1999: 16).*Jihad* can therefore apply to different areas. In the area of *sharia*, the concept of *jihad* will become *ijtihad*, a term shares the same linguistic roots in Arabic and which basically means a process of making an independent effort for a sound legal judgement. Another example is the notion of gender *jihad*, which refers to the pursuit and struggle for the equal right and status between men and women. Further, in Islamic tradition, *jihad* can be divided into greater and lesser *jihad*, the former referring to the spiritual struggle for the purification or conquest of one's own desires and the latter with a lower significance referring to the physical struggle. Understood in this way, *jihad* does not necessarily equate to the use of physical violence or fighting. It is a linguistic mistake to translate the term *jihad* as "holy war," but this mistake serves also to reduce or ignore its multiple meanings in different contexts.

There is no doubt that Tibi understands very well the multiple meanings of *jihad* in Arabic, but when discussing the concept he is more concerned with the implication of war in the Islamic tradition. To put it simply, he defines the classical understanding of *jihad* as regular war for Islamic expansion against non-Muslims, with the purpose of spreading the faith of Islam. This kind of war "is subject to binding rules that also limit the targets. In contrast, contemporary jihadism is a pattern of the new irregular war waged as global *jihad* by those Islamists who subscribe to violence for fighting against the West and its believed Islamic allies. It is a war without rules" (Tibi 2008: 41). Therefore, global jihadism is also an invention of tradition and confusion between the classical *jihad* and jihadism.

Crisis of Modern Islam

Before we go to study the crisis of modern Islam, we have to distinguish between cultural and civilizational levels of crisis and conflict. Tibi explains that

> in my study of International Relations I focus on culture and view it as a local system underpinned by a social production of meaning. Seen from this angle, cultures are related in each case to a socially relevant set of values pertinent to a local framework. In my enquiry into civilisations I look at cultures that have family resemblance and therefore tend to group together to form one civilization. Mostly, civilization is defined in terms of a shared view of the world. (Tibi 2012b: 169)

The study of culture therefore becomes a detailed case study of a particular region and civilization is a study of shared worldview within one region. Conflicts of worldview can also be studied within one civilization and at the level of "inter-civilization." The conflict in Turkey between Islamism and secularism, for example, is one within Islamic civilization, while the conflict between Islam and Europe is inter-civilizational (Tibi 2012b: 111). Inter-civilizational conflict is the concern of this book and so, in the following, though we will discuss some regional issues, our concern with the crisis of modern Islam will be at the inter-civilizational (worldview) level.

For Tibi, there is no doubt that the crisis of modern Islam is the rise of Islamism. The latter is ultimately caused by the de-legitimisation of modern Arab nationalism. Unfortunately, the changes after the failure of Arab nationalism lead to a crisis of modern Islam instead of a renewal. Yet there are other aspects of the effect of Islamism. In the preceding discussion, we have discussed the vision of a global Islamist orderagainst the West, shari'atisation of the state order, jihadism and so on. These ideas and movements are the process of either de-secularisation or de-Westernisation and they are effects of Islamism upon the world. For Tibi, there is in fact

another effect of Islamism and this is the change of nature of modern Islam itself when facing the process and challenges of globalisation. Tibi calls it "Islam's predicament with modernism." Following the thought of Clifford Geertz, Tibi argues that Islam is a cultural system and as a cultural system, religion is defined as "(1) a system of symbols which acts to (2) establish powerful, pervasive, and long-lasting moods and motivations in men (3) by formulating conceptions of a general order of existence and (4) clothing these conceptions with such an aura of factuality that (5) the moods and motivations seem uniquely realistic" (Geertz 1973: 90). Defining religion in terms of moods and motivations and conceptions of a general order of existence helps Tibi focus on studying the model *of* reality for Muslims. The models of reality represent abstract theories and doctrines of the human perception of reality (Tibi 2005: 28). Though Tibi recognizes the diversity of Muslim cultures, he insists that there is "a specific Islamic view of the world shared by *all* Muslims" (Tibi 2005: 53). This is the understanding of history, as Tibi says:

> it can be stated that Islamic doctrine has two different understandings of history: a forward-looking option for the future and humanity, which envisages humanity becoming united under the banner of Islam; and a backward-oriented utopia, bound up with the aspiration of restoring the Islamic community of the Prophet at Medina. Both concepts determine the Islamic worldview, which is based on dichotomising the globe in an Islamic and a non-Islamic territoriality. (Tibi 2005: 59)

The above worldview or model of reality is shared by many Muslims, that is, the division of the world into *dar al-Islam* (the abode of Islam), *dar al-harb* (the abode of war) and *dar al-amn* (the abode of peace or safety). For Tibi, the significance of this division is not simply as a regional classification but as a model for Islamic universalism, which refers to the complete unification of different regions of the world under *dar al-Islam*. Here, we

have to distinguish the notion of Islamic universalism with that of Islamist internationalism. Tibi uses both terms but they are in fact completely different. The former refers to an authentic Islamic worldview shared by all Muslims while the latter is a contemporary Islamist ideology that confuses traditional Islamic universalism with its own vision of politicizing Islam as a global order today (Tibi 2012a: 58). Islamic universalism does not demand a specific state order as divinely inspired or pre-determined and therefore democratisation all over the world can also be interpreted as the program of Islamic universalism as well, if it is reformed according to cultural modernism, while the Islamist order is not, since it demands a return of the sacred in all aspects of politics and legal system, i.e. a *sharia* state. Therefore, as we have repeatedly mentioned in different themes above, the Islamist order is simply an invention of tradition. In my opinion, there are two important implications we have to consider. The first is what Tibi calls "cultural fragmentation" in relation to Islamist internationalism and the second is the universality of cultural modernism in relation to Islamic universalism.

Cultural fragmentation has resulted from the process of globalisation. For Tibi, globalisation is not simply having a McDonald's Restaurant in the Middle East or a global platform for economic activities around the world. It "does not only refer to the process linking the diverse parts of the world to one another, but also to the mapping of the world into one globalized system" (Tibi 2005: 101). In this globalized system, the states do not only share the sciences, technology and modern institutions that constitute the international system but this system also carries modern culture, values, norms and worldview that constitute international society. The modern culture underneath the international society is what Tibi calls "cultural modernism" and the ideas of this cultural modernism are well-known for westerners. They include the primacy of human rationality, secularity of society, rule of law, secular democracy, tolerance of diversity, individual human rights such as freedom of speech, publication and faith. Muslim modernists such as al-Afghani and Muhammad Abduh welcomed the achievements of sciences, technology and modern institutions from modernisation but rejected the

worldview they sprang from, i.e. cultural modernism. This means that modern institutions including science and technology are globalized but the modern worldview underpinning these institutions is not universalized. This partial adoption is what Tibi calls "structural globalisation and cultural fragmentation" or, in a more simple term, "semi-modernism."

When the Muslim world faces the process of globalisation, it tends to interpret secularity as an anti-religious ideology, a confusion between the notions of secularity and secularism, and cultural modernism as a western or imported solution. It rejects the cultural aspect of modernisation and makes modern Islam appear to be defensive and reluctant to adapt in accordance with cultural modernism. As an alternative, defensive Islamists propose their own Islamist solutions in response to the cultural requirements of international society in what Tibi calls "defensive cultural responses to global challenges." The conflict is therefore between Islamist culture and modern secular culture and this is what Tibi calls the "culturalisation of conflicts." In short, we may say that the de-legitimisation of Arab nationalism led to this defensive cultural response in relation to globalisation, and it in turn led to the politicisation of Islam or Islamism. It can be argued that the politicisation of Islam and the defensive culture of modern Islam are in fact two sides of the same coin. Both of them are the result of the de-legitimisation of Arab nationalism.

The second implication in relation to Islamic universalism is the need for cultural innovation. For Tibi, traditional Islamic universalism needs a new interpretation since "some civilisations claim universal validity for their views. It is detrimental to dialogue when a civilisation claims for itself a world mission, as did the Islamic and the western European civilisations in the past to their neighbours. In these cases there can be no real dialogue" (Tibi 2012a: 170). There is a theoretical problem. If universalism is detrimental to real dialogue, then does Tibi ask for the abandonment of traditional Islamic universalism as commonly held by all Muslims? The answer would seem to be negative! Instead, Tibi projects Islamic universalism as a religion for all people who would like to become Muslim: it is in fact the religious concept of *umma*. If this is true, then since the ideas

of cultural modernism are also held by humanity broadly, the two things are compatible. Understood in this way, when Tibi employs the term Euro-Islam, it does not mean that Islam is simply a European (regional) religion though the concept is related to the migration of Muslims in western Europe, but a Europeanized Islam free of *sharia* and of *jihad* (valid in all places and for all Muslims over the world) (Tibi 2012a: 115). Tibi sometimes uses Civil Islam as a synonym for Euro-Islam to indicate its universality. In the following section, we will discuss the significance of cultural modernism that Tibi embraces so unreservedly and its relationship to the notion of Civil Islam—the Ideal of modern Islam.

The Ideal of Modern Islam—Cultural Modernism and Civil Islam

After discussing the crisis or dark side of modern Islam, we now turn our focus to the positive side of modern Islam that Tibi proposes. Tibi argues that Islam in our time must be reformed according to the spirit of cultural modernism. Therefore, we first study the universal nature of cultural modernism and then the reformation that he proposes to connect Islam with this cultural modernism. Finally, we will discuss the extent to which this reformation can gain authenticity or legitimacy in Islam.

First of all, we have to understand the theory behind the universality of cultural modernism for which Tibi argues. He draws upon the thought of Norbert Elias, the influential German sociologist, who proposes the idea of the civilising process. Tibi states that "Elias enthrallingly reconstructs the European civilising process, showing the unique character that *may* lie behind Europe's ability to conquer the whole world, and thereby to establish a claim to universality for its own civilisation . . . To be sure, Elias's approach has nothing to do with the Eurocentric history . . . " (Tibi 2005: 18). Here we do not need to know the reasons why European civilization is so unique in history in order to become the model of a universal civilization. Instead we need to know that, for Tibi, following the "civilising process" idea of Elias, there are "spill-over effects (globalized effects) of the European 'civilising process' [that] have taken place in the context of the European

colonial expansion" (Tibi 2012a: 46). He further argues that "the wheel of history cannot be turned back, and the universalising and globalising effects of European expansion and its civilising process are now features of our present realities, like it or not" (Tibi 2005: 100). Therefore, the ideas produced by European civilization are no longer Eurocentric but universal for all humanity and this is the universal nature of cultural modernism. In addition, within the one civilising process, Elias argues that "the contrasts in conduct . . . are reduced with the spread of civilisation; the varieties of nuances of civilized conduct are increased" (Tibi 2005: 100). For Tibi, this is the basic concept of cultural pluralism. The diversity of conduct must be within the limits of a single universal cultural modernism.

For Tibi, the ideas and movements of Islamism today fall outside the limits of cultural pluralism and therefore Islamism cannot be endorsed under the excuse of pluralism or tolerance. Why cannot the ideas of cultural modernism be universalized over the world? Tibi considers that Francis Fukuyama's idea of the "end of history" fails to articulate the gravity of the challenge of modern Islamism, underestimates the potential for conflict in the future and so weakens people's attention to its possible destructive power. Tibi is more pessimistic than Fukuyama. Instead of an optimistic end of history, what Tibi tries to articulate is the severity of conflict during the path to this end and what Muslims or humans need to do if they want to actualize a positive outcome from conflict. For Tibi, it is cultural fragmentation or semi-modernism that creates the conflicts between Islamism and cultural modernism. Fragmentation slows down or even terminates the universalisation of cultural modernism. For Tibi, cultural fragmentation exists even in Europe and the current situation is not promising if Muslims there cannot embrace wholeheartedly the following concepts:

1. Democracy: not only as the electoral procedure of voting (balloting), but rather as a political culture of civil society that entails the acceptance of the related core values.
2. The separation between religion and politics

(secularity, not to be confused with the ideology of secularism): secularity does not advocate atheism or the abolition of religion. One can be secular (a separation between faith and politics) and at the same time be a faithful Muslim. This is no contradiction.

3. Individual human rights in the understanding of entitlement: in Islam there are *fara'id* (duties), not *huquq* (rights); one should beware of this confusion.

4. Pluralism of cultures and religions in society,that puts all religions on equal footing: Islam should not be placed above other religions, as Muslims commonly seek to do.

5. The issue of tolerance: the sort of tolerance referred to here not in the Islamic understanding of treating Jews/Christian monotheists as protected minorities or *dhimmi* (second class believers), but rather based on equality within the outlined requirement of pluralism. By current standards, the notion of dhimmitude in Islam is an expression of discrimination, not of tolerance, as Muslims would like to observe.
(Tibi 2009 ch. 6, ch. 7)

To rescue modern Islam from the fragmentation and to actualize the end of history, Tibi proposes the revival of Islamic rationalism or humanism. If there is a revival of Islamic rationalism, then Tibi believes that cross-civilisational bridging or dialogue can be reached. What is Islamic rationalism? Tibi argues that starting from the late ninth century, the period of medieval Islam, Muslim rationalists or philosophers such as al-Farabi, Ibn Sina and Ibn Rushd had already adopted Hellenistic humanism. For Tibi, "the substance of humanism is enlightenment which is the worldview that a

human is, as a subject, capable to determine the self" (Tibi 2012a: 93). The rationalisation of a worldview that was founded on Hellenisation produces Islamic rationalism. The blooming of Islamic rationalism is due to the willingness to engage in cultural borrowing from other intellectual sources such as Greek, Persian, Syrian, Egyptian and Indian cultures so as to develop, improve and enrich its own Islamic civilization in numerous areas such as literature, philosophy, mathematics, medicine, astronomy, alchemy, architecture and so on. Unlike today, when Islamists argue for the purification of Islam against western influences, Muslim rationalists at that time eagerly welcomed and absorbed Greek, Persian and other foreign influences into their own science and worldview and they also tried to separate the domains of religious knowledge and science in order to preserve each in its proper place.

Rationalism therefore provides the soil for change and reform in the history of Islam. Later, on the eve of the Renaissance, Islamic civilization transferred back the science and knowledge to Europe and therefore ultimately transformed European civilization to become what Elias calls the model for universal civilisation. This strongly inspires Tibi to argue that cultural borrowing and mutual fertilisation between civilizations are the key for success in both Islamic and European civilizations. However, if Islamic rationalism was so successful, why did it decline in the history of Islam? Tibi blames the decline on *fiqh*-orthodoxy that "condemned rationalism as a heresy" (Tibi 2009: 247) and it blacklisted and outlawed *falsafa* (rationalism or rational philosophy in Islam) and excluded the influence of rationalism from the Islamic system of education, the curriculum of Muslim colleges and other institutions. Like the conflict between Islamism and secular Islam today, there were conflicts between *fiqh*-orthodoxy and *falsafa*-rationality in medieval Islam, which led to a crisis within Islamic civilization. Unfortunately, the result was the decline of rational tradition of *falsafa*. The similarity between the medieval and modern conflict between *fiqh*-orthodoxy/Islamism and *falsafa*-rationality /secular Islam no doubt concerns Tibi about the future of Islam. He does not want the history of decline to repeat itself and for this reason urges the revival of Islamic

rationalism in order to "establish it as an authenticity for embracing modernism" (Tibi 2009: 309).

What is the authenticity or legitimacy of being Islamic? For Tibi, it is not a concept that can be "discovered" from the Qur'an or which has been divinely pre-determined in the various Islamic traditions. It is in fact a choice made by Muslims today. Either they want: (1) to follow contemporary Islamists to Islamize the world by *sharia* or (2) Islam to be rationalized (or Europeanized) and to flourish in the contemporary world. There is no third way for Islam in the future. To be rationalists, Muslims need to abandon Islamist ideologies. For Tibi himself, instead of choosing *fiqh* or Islamism, he has taken side with rationalism and secularity and he argues that it such a choice by Muslims that will make rationalism the authentic and legitimate tradition for contemporary Islam.

Having discussed his idea of Islamic reformation, we come to study the concept of cross-civilizational bridging or dialogue as the final part of this section. For Tibi, cross-civilizational bridging can only be reached when there is a sharing of universal values. These values, mentioned above, include things such as individual human rights, secular democracy, pluralism, tolerance and civil society. Based on the foundation of these universal values, Tibi argues that Europe and Islam can reach a cross-cultural morality and a shared discourse based on rational knowledge (Tibi 2012a: 165). Tibi may not be unaware of it, but the chief purpose of his cross-civilisational dialogue is *not* to reform Islam in order to have a sharing of universal values and so become compatible with cultural modernism. Its main purpose is for conflict resolution between civilisations. As Tibi says, within the framework of conflict resolution, "a bridging between the civilisations is directed by the hope for global peace. This hope is associated with an agenda for a global democratisation . . . [T]here can be no stable world peace without fulfilling the basic requirement for it, namely global democracy" (Tibi 2012a: 162).

Understood in this way, before the bridging or dialogue, these civilizations have already shared universal values and so the dialogue itself is not a means of facilitating a conceptual transition from the Muslim traditional or even potential Islamist worldview to a rational and secular one.

This can only be done by the adoption of Islamic rationalism and so rational Muslims will abandon the Islamist worldview accordingly. The second important thing to observe is the difference between the idea of clash for Samuel Huntington and the idea of conflict for Tibi. Tibi argues that for Huntington, there is a fault-line between civilizations and so their clash is inevitable but, for Tibi, it is not a clash but a conflict and can be resolved by a revival of Islamic rationalism. But does Huntington really have no solution for conflict resolution? He proposes three requirements for countries which want to shift their civilisational identity to another one in a successful way, and conflict can be solved accordingly when both share the same civilisational identity. It is an idea similar to that of Tibi urging a revival of Islamic rationalism so as to be compatible with cultural modernism. The three requirements are:

> First, the political and economic elite of the country (which wants to shift its identity) has to be generally supportive of and enthusiastic about this move. Second, the public has to be at least willing to acquiesce in the redefinition of identity. Third, the dominant elements in the host civilisation, in most cases the West, have to be willing to embrace the convert. (Huntington 2011: 139)

In the words of Tibi, these three requirements refer to the willingness of Muslim elites and mainstream Muslims to embrace cultural modernism and abandon Islamist ideologies (i.e. a shift of civilisational identity). If they do, cross-cultural morality and rational discourse can be reached. The idea of cross-cultural bridging has already assumed something of a shift of civilisational identity (except the third condition is not mentioned explicitly) as the foundation of dialogue. Understood in this way, I do not think that Huntington would have continued to insist on the clash or fault-line between Islam and the West if Islam shifts its civilisation identity successfully like that of the West. In my opinion, there is in fact no significant difference between the idea of clash proposed by Huntington and the idea of conflict

proposed by Tibi. Finally, what both Huntington and Tibi simply want to say is that the clash/conflict between two democratic states or civilisations (like US and UK or Japan and India) is not so difficult to resolve nor is consensus so difficult to reach as compared with that of Iran and US, for example, which do not have a sharing of universal values.

Conclusion

Put it simply, his conceptual framework is to distinguish the concept of Islamism from that of Civil Islam: the former is bad and the latter is good. Having introduced the thought of Tibi in details, the present author believes that his concept of Civil Islam, which tries to rationalize Islam and thus makes Islam a secular and civil religion in the modern society, is compatible with the concept of secularization.

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