

DE-ROMANTICIZING ‘SECULAR’ POLITICAL THEOLOGY OF *DAWLA MADANEYYA* IN POST-SPRING ARAB WORLD

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ABSTRACT

The Arab Spring with its wide range imperatives brought a situation in which Islamist groups in West Asia and North Africa (mainly in Egypt and Tunisia) to acknowledge the popular political experience and thereby to reinterpret the state and democracy as the situation demanded. Establishing an absolute ‘theocratic’ state or a completely ‘secular’ state, thus, seemed a politically non-viable option. Instead of that, an effort was made to create a civil state (dawla madaneyya) by giving appropriate space for the rights of minorities and other weaker sections. Taking cues from the experience of Morsi State in Egypt (2011-12), this paper examines how did the discourse of ‘civil state’ profoundly transform the very ground on which secular-nationalist states were envisioned and negotiated in the post-Spring Arab world? This paper also traces out the genealogy of its modern state in the region and examines how secularism becomes an essential structuring condition for it.

Keywords: Modern Arab State, Arab spring, *dawla madaneyya*, Muslim Brotherhood, *Ennahada*, *Umma*, *Watan*

This paper is an attempt to understand a post-Spring initiative within the contemporary Arab political discourse—*dawla madaneyya* or civil state—envisioned by the Islamists against many of the concepts and practices associated with the secular-liberal understanding of the relationship between religion and politics. In contrast to the secular understanding that has a colonial modern genealogy in the context of modern Arab world, *dawla madaneyya* posits a very different one that goes beyond the ‘essential’ modern binary opposition of secular versus religious. The role of religion remains very visible and operative in its conceptualization, but, at the same time, despite its avowed antagonism towards secular state, *dawla madaneyya* presupposes many key secular concepts, making the concept far more hybrid in character. In Egypt, in a more delicate act of balancing, Morsi’s state endorsed the components of both ‘Islam’ and ‘democratic’ tradition and an attempt was made by them to show that Islamist ideology and democratic governance were not poles apart. Civil State in this context challenged many aspects of

‘secular religiosity’; key among them was seeing secularism as the essential component for democracy to flourish regardless of the contexts. The demands for democratization of various kinds were attempted to address by the Islamists in Tunisia and Egypt through both religious and secular means and through practices a combination of the two. *Dawla madaneyya* in that sense necessitates a whole series of effective and sensible re-orientations of the way in which democracy gathering sense; from a technique of governing to a means of constituting the body politic. (Agemben, 2011:1)

Though the constitutional debate initiated by Morsi led eventually to overthrow the regime, the debate, in fact, was an open-ended one where a healthy street level public discussion on legalities of state was taken place. Taking cues from the experiences of all Arab Spring states, Sadiki liked to see the whole debate as a part of an inevitable conflict between two competing but interchangeable sets of legitimacy; democratic and revolutionary. (Sadiki, 2013) The latter revolves mainly around a romantic politics in societies where the informal kind of politics was invalidated by fifty years of tyranny. Asad substantiated this point further with his statement that the political imagination should not be limited by the matters of legality but by a different set of criteria to evaluate what we have been witnessing in Egypt. The experiences in Egypt went beyond the procedural democratic legitimacy which often seeks formal structures, procedures and contracts that frame politics. Rationalizing political debates in such cases always fail to understand the dynamics involved in the Arab Spring.

It is no less incorrect to say that the Muslim Brotherhood’s conceptualization of civil state made a complete departure from both ‘secular’ and ‘religious’ states. This binary has been manifested in an apparent conflict between the colonially created ‘modern’ state and the local sense of identity that of belonging to *umma* along with the forms of political organization that stem from it such as Islamic *dawla*. The Islamic *dawla* represents a non-sovereign temporary political arrangement that is accountable to and responsible for the whole *umma*, not to a particular territory. The ‘secular’ state in the Egyptian context referred to a political entity created by colonial powers and supported by neo-colonial powers.

In this context, there seems to be the significance in employing the framework of post-secularism to politically analyze the character of *dawla madaneyya*. This paper is an attempt along that direction. The post-secular state does not entail the total rejection of the ongoing ‘secularizing’ process and also not a return to the medieval theological predominance. (Habermas, 2006:1-25) Instead, this perspective assumes that there is the continued existence of religious ideals in a continually secularizing environment. Secular

frameworks fail to explain religious determinants of the state; their normative presumption of the superiority of the 'secular' over 'religion' does not allow them to conduct an objective analysis.

Habermas defines the concept as the continued existence of religious communities and movements in a continually secularizing environment. Asad develops the thesis of post-secularism further by analyzing the failure of secularization theories in explaining religion in contemporary life. The post-secular, according to Joas, does not mean a sudden increase in religiosity, after its epochal decrease with the rise of modernity, but rather a change in mindset of those who, previously, felt justified in considering the religious to be moribund. It does not reflect an increase in the meaningfulness of religion or a renewed attention to it, but focuses on a changed attitude by the "secular public domain with respect to the continued existence of religious communities and the impulses that emerge from them", notes Joas. Briefly put, post-secularism offers an alternative way of approaching the role of religion in conceptualizing the state and discusses the failure of secular efforts to analyze religious practices that determines a modern state with a predominance of scientific thought and rationality at the core. It also inculcates the need of reformulating the basic presumptions of religion and secularism in the light of emerging complexities in contemporary times. This paper addresses the need of re-evaluating the basic presumptions of religion and secularism in the light of Muslim Brotherhood's experience in establishing a 'civil state' which reflects both an increase in the meaningfulness of religion and renewed attention to it and a focus on popular 'secular' ideals.

Genealogy of 'Modern-Secular' Arab State

The significance of Morsi's state lies in its role to problematize the binary of the category of 'religion' and its presumed opposite, 'secular.' The experiences of the creation of civil state demonstrated a new complex relationship between religious and secular that cannot really be reduced to a conflict of 'universal democratic' principles against 'sectarian commitments' nor to one of reason versus belief. In terms of outreach, composition and ideology, the body politic envisioned by the Muslim Brotherhood remained incongruent to European concept of nation-state. Drawing up on a pre-colonial Islamic perception of politics, it also rejected the political imaginations generated by Arab nationalism as the underlying ideology.

Historically, it was believed in the modern centres of the Arab world that every society had to pass through certain historical stages and finally enter into a 'secular modern' nation-state. All social and political engineering schemes emerged with modernity in the Arab world insisted that while passing

through these inescapable stages, each society had to undergo a radical restructuring of culture in tandem with the secularization of the society by purging out its retrogressive bits. The indigenous elites acquired the control of the process of secularization of culture by internalizing a native version of the civilizing mission.

The idea of secular modern-state entered most of the Arab societies through the colonial connection. Within a short span of time the concept of modern nation-state which cannot easily be isolated from the nationalist and organizational developments that took place in Europe, marginalized all other concepts of the state in the region. The European experience was internalized further with the development of modern state structure with elaborate bureaucracies, policing strategies and mechanisms of control by which post-colonial Arab states could manage their own population in the 1950s and 60s. During this period, a deep transformation of polity affecting the relation between religion and state was taking place. The evolution of a 'secular' bureaucracy was closely paralleled even in countries like Saudi Arabia, where the *wahabi* inspired nation-building in the 1930s had followed a distinctive tribal mode. (McLachlan, 1986:92-5)

Most of the states in the Arab world, however, failed to develop into viable modern nation-states though they unsuccessfully tried to emulate the path of 'progress.' As what happened in Egypt, the state was increasingly envisioned in a more idealized form-as socialist and secular. But the reality was different as most of the states did not live up to the imaginations of political elites. The opposition to the failed state came mainly from the religious groups who were sidelined during the nation-building process. In order to overcome the situation, elites in the Arab states engaged in eliminating 'problematic' opposition.

Looking at the history, one can say that the Arab states were emerged at a time when the intellectual discourses were mostly pre-occupied either with the *umma* (global Muslim community) defined in terms of Islamic politics or *watan* (national community) defined in terms of Arab nationalism. Because of the long historical preponderance of these two concepts, Arab scholars at the initial stage did not show much of enthusiasm to endorse the concept of the body-politic based on territory, territorial sovereignty as such. (Ayubi, 2006:4, 115) With a few exceptions, the state as a concept and as an institution appeared quite alien to most of the Arab countries. As the modernization and secularization of the state did not occur at the open political domain, the role of Islamic *umma* and Arab *watan* remained operative with greater amount of social as well as religious legitimacy. The lack of social and cultural cohesion furthered the complex relations between the modern,

'secular' state and their 'religiously oriented' people. The prevalent concepts of state that Arabs tended to borrow from the West, therefore, were excessively formalistic at the initial state, though later on became instrumentalist. The newly established states in West Asia and North Africa, in fact, functioned as a colonial tool to make people of the region to fit into a frame of reference familiar and useful to the colonial masters. (Al-Bargouti, 2008:3)

The Egyptian political scientist Hamid Rabi's observations are particularly significant in this context. Rabi' was a staunch critic of basic conceptualization of modern Arab State. He did find futility in interpreting Islamic state in the framework of European enlightenment tradition. Nation-state emerged in the Arab world, according to him, was mainly an emulation of the Catholic model, seemingly with the mission of creating a direct unmediated relationship between the citizen and the state. (Rabi, 1980:15-6) The European model in actuality, forcing the Church to be a mute spectator and thus purging out all religious agents ended up in the hegemony of a particular religion or sect. Modern Arab states with no inspiration from the Islamic model by way of revival of the *turath* or 'cultural heritage' and guided by a distinct 'political function' (*wazifa Siyasiyya*) exemplify this mismatch.

Though not familiar with the vocabularies of 'voting', 'formal institutions' and 'organized opposition', the Islamic model was politically vital with an alternative set of concepts and ideas for political equilibrium. These concepts, Rabi suggested, include moderation, control between the Caliph, the *ulama* and the judges. So, Islamic polity, in that sense, can't translate to the state in European context with well defined territories and sovereignty. It rather connotes to an organized politico-religious community or *umma*. The libertarian aspects of European enlightenment tradition, therefore, seldom overpowered the idea of justice ('*adl*') in Islamic polity. (Hourani, 1970) While the concepts of freedom and liberty were at the centre stage of statist discourse in the West, they carried slightly different connotative meanings in the Islamic political discourse that go transcend the limits of the state and nation.

Looking at the genealogy, one can see the state in traditional form in the Arab/Islamic world as the outcome of two processes; a natural evolution of the Sultanate state and a reform process. Of which the latter was by and large a product of change in material aspects of society reflected mainly in administrative arrangements. The reformist tradition, though not completely, had borrowed substantially from the European experiences. This tradition did find its expression first in *tanzimat* which was introduced by the Turkish Sultan in order to consolidate his own authority internally and externally and later on carried forward by the European colonialists in order to expand their

imperial market and weaken the local leadership. Apart from extending the reach of imperial market, the modern state helped the colonialists to accommodate the then emerging social elites into their political constituency.

However, the modern state as an imported commodity came into being partly under colonial pressure and partly under the influence of imitating the West, failed to capture the popular political imagination and to transform the attitude of Arabs towards it. The Arab political imagination during that period was hinging more around other overarching concepts of cultural unity and political integration than the concept of state. Pan-Islamism with religio-political orientation and Arab Nationalism with linguistic-cultural bond were the two major ideologies that contested each other to gain the edge over the Arab public sphere. The former represented a comprehensive Islamic concept of *umma* while the latter was an embodiment of secular nationalism defined in terms of a more inclusive concept, *watan*. Both had lively spread as the Arabs thought of politics in terms of a non-territorial affair. The ‘foreignness’ of modern state prevented it from being identified by the people emotionally.

Though there were a lot of ensembles to state in Egyptian history, the history of state in the modern sense with territorial integrity based on sovereignty externally and legal institutions internally traces back to the reign of Muhammad Ali who came to power in 1805. He was the first to introduce the concept of citizenship and modern system of education, to build national army, compact bureaucracy and state-owned industrial networks and to create a class of political elites in Egypt. Muhammad Ali’s attempt to build a ‘modern state’ represents a balance borrowing components from both European experiences and the pattern which was prevalent with Ottoman rule. The state system continued even after his defeat in 1840s under successive regimes, but internal contradictions and threats led to the failure of the state system and eventually to the British occupation of Egypt in 1882.

What happened with the formation of modern state in the postcolonial period was the total abandonment of cultural function of the state in favour of ‘purely secular’ political functions. The romance of secular modern state continued to capture the imagination of political elites in the region even after the national liberation movements gained a clear hegemony in the political realm. The growth modern nation-state system West Asia and North Africa was directly linked to the ‘secularization thesis’ developed in the west keeping separation between religion and public space. (Yasmin, 2013) Cultural and religious specificities of each society were conveniently ignored in order to build ‘modern’ states. Though at ideological front, they tried to undo the ill-effects of colonialism, offering an alternative to the colonial concept of state seemed impossible for national liberation movements. This inability led to a

compromise between the populist ideology of Arab nationalism and the realpolitik of colonially created Arab states with repressive apparatuses. Jamal Abdul Nasser, for instance, looked for legitimacy from both Arab nationalist doctrine and strong colonial 'secular' modern state and contained Islam in order to build a 'modern' Egypt.

Nasserite state was a combination of a modern secular colonially-inspired and Arab socialist state; both of these mutually conflicting ideas existed in one synthesis. Although the socialistic component of it was appealing to many in the third world, the 'secular' 'modern' hangover of Nasserite State made it alien to Egyptian society. Though the state machine and apparatuses of it were very much influential in the daily life of people, the state failed to create an emotional bond with the society. Despite the rhetoric of Arab nationalism, Nasser could not offer an alternative to the modern state modeled on European experiences. His perceptions, therefore, remained surprisingly vague about the issues pertaining to the nature and form of an Arab nationalist state.

Though initially attempted in creating an alternative state with Arab socialistic background, Nasser's statist experiments ended up with an autocratic one taking modern liberal state as its frame of reference. Unable to move far from the hangover of secular modern state, Nasserite state, in effect, maintained a strange balance between the ideology of Arab nationalism and colonially created nation-state. This mismatch between the ideology of Arab nationalism and the secular modern nation state with coercive military, as happened elsewhere in the region, manifested in a brutal suppression of popular political movements. Communists and Muslim Brothers were the two major victims of such suppression.

Although the ideology of state changed from Arab Socialism to neo-liberalism, Sadat's state exemplified how neo-liberalism and secularism are connected in a circuitous fashion, not just conceptually but practically through a mechanism of governance separating religion and state. It also illustrated the unique character of modern 'secular' Arab state in terms of its inherent commitment to the idea of authoritarianism. The neo-liberal state, adhered to the principles of separation of religion and state and control of popular religious groups, engaged in totalitarian exercise of power. The notion of 'secularism' was seen as a bid by the Sadat regime for centralization of power and consolidation of authoritarian state.

Secular state under Mubarak also carried a negative connotation of regime's consolidation of coercive and autocratic state subordination of its policy to that of the United States in exchange for financial and military aid. Military coercion was central to Mubarak's 'secular' governance. (Asad,

2012:279) On his part, Mubarak consolidated the political and economic dependence on the West re-configuring economy further, enforcing secularism and fighting Islam and traditional culture. Secularization remained to be the basic task of the government with which Mubarak sought to transform Egypt an authoritarian state with tight control. Intellectuals from both liberal and left spectrum also sided with the regime tacitly and have long supported a thorough going secularization of Egypt and crystallization of Islamist groups in the name of secularism. Most of the left and liberal critics, according to Asad, simply saw the formal separation of ‘politics’ from ‘religion’ as the solution to threat of sectarianism in the Egyptian society. Mubarak found excellent justification in authoritarianism for his attempt to crush Islamist organizations. The ‘secular’ state functioned as a guarantor of national security especially in the backdrop of American initiated ‘war on terror.’

These elements in the ideology of ‘secular’ state came under criticism because of its justification for state-sponsored violence in the post-Arab Spring period. The idea of state as the chief secularizing agent from Nasser’s period met a rejection and religious-based ‘non-modern’ or ‘pre-colonial’ concepts of state begun to emerge in response to it. The creation of the civil state by the Brotherhood offered a bid to unpack the heterogeneous elements involved in what we mean by religion and not to focus solely on abstract theological notions. Within the strict framework of ‘civil’, Morsi tried to offer an opposition to pro-western neo-liberal dictatorial regime. The Muslim Brotherhood, at the same time, did not hide that their goal was a state based on *Sharia* as the frame of reference. The biggest challenge to the creation of a civil state was the remnant forces¹ of ‘secular’ system that outlived the 25 January revolution and their supporting networks in the army, media, business, civil society and judiciary.

Digging a bit deeper, one would not surprise, why civil society movements which protested vehemently against SCAF’s threat to the revolution tacitly allowed the army to sack the first popularly elected president. Even though a variety of important civil society groups emerged or survived, transformed for last six decades, the state either went to some lengths to accommodate many within its ‘secular’ constituency or to prevent, preempt or destroy others. The ‘liberal’ middle class content of civil society at times sought patronage of state in some way or the other, though they could easily break the relationship with the Mubarak state, when the revolution happened.

Muslim Brotherhood in power posited a tradition of challenge against the incommensurable divide between strong religious belief and a secular world view. The civil state they conceptualized, on its part, tried to direct others’ attention to how the religious and the secular² are not so much immutable essences or opposed ideologies.

Dialogic aspects of *Dawla Madaneyya*

Arab spring, at least for a short while, brought a situation in which people witnessed to the unpopularity of the states in the region created by the colonial powers and supported by the neo-colonial powers. The event also contributed to de-westernize the West Asian and North African politics through the embrace of non-western (mainly Islamic) ideals of democracy. Though Turkey ignited such a move making 'civil religion' more appealing as an alternate to 'secularism', Islamist parties in Tunisia and Egypt made it more popular world over.

The state envisioned in Islam, *dawla* shows the character of a doctrinal or ideological ('*aqā'id*iyya) state based on a practical merger of ethical principles with pragmatic political ideals and on a non-separation of private and public. Culture remains to be an inextricable part of such a state and through *dawla* Islam presents certain cultural ideals if not a specific political model. The Islamic state also rejects the concept of state autonomy and attempt to confine the state's function to a fixed territory and political domain. Barghouti defines it as a non-sovereign, non-territorial, temporary political arrangement that is accountable to and responsible for the whole *umma* or the whole community of Muslims, not only to a portion of it, regardless of borders and nationalities.

The linguistic origins of the word state in European context and of the word *dawla* in Arab context actually imply two different things. It is the concept of *umma* or the community, especially in its religious sense, is more important in the Islamic political tradition than any concept of the state or political system. The history of Islam characterizes this basic binary-of *dawla* and the *umma*. The question which of the two has responsibility for the enforcement of Islamic law has been perpetuated throughout the history. *Dawla madaneyya*, in its traditional sense, is considered to be a departure from the religious state, as opposed to the reformation of such a state in a new guise, or an understanding of the state as open, secular and flexible. But in wider senses of the term, the idea contemporarily denotes to a response to the challenges posed by both theocracy and secularism.

Dawla madaneyya, in theory, implies a contrast with military state or theocratic state not governed by clergies or generals but by technocrats who comply with a written constitution to protect the civil liberties of both Muslims and non-Muslims alike. (Hassan, 2013) By definition, it must be based on institutions and on consultation and the operative decision-making process should be civil in nature. Such a state rules recognizing the will of people through the categories of democratic or undemocratic, not through those of faith or of its rejection.

Dawla Madaneyya in the Egyptian context offers an alternative to the empire/caliphate and the differences are apparent in their use of *Sharia* or Islamic Law. The implementation of *Sharia* in the former context is done by the people's choice and free will. Unlike caliphate, civil state carries specific associations with democracy, constitutionalism and equality of citizens before the law. The stress here is not on the 'secular' aspects of the 'civil' but 'democratic' with strong sense of popular sovereignty.

The contemporary relevance of this term, civil state, is not just associated with the political discourse induced by the Arab Spring. Though having roots to the pre-colonial debates of the state in West Asia and North Africa, it was Muslim Brotherhood which made the civil state with Islamic background popular in the 1950s. (Hill, 2013) Idea of 'civil state' has always been attracted the wrath of other Islamic organizations mainly, *Salafis* who see 'civil state' as identical to the 'secular state' and both for them are referred to Western, opposed to Islam and therefore, illegal under Islamic legal provisions. But the Brotherhood literature inculcates that the civil state is fully compatible with Islam and Sharia. It is western-modeled secularism that, in fact, is something antithetical to Islamic jurisprudence hence not suitable for the Islamic world.

The 'secular' criticism of *dawla madaneyya* with Islamic reference revolves most importantly around the issue of *sharia* as the source of law and its inherent inability to sanction practices like the decentralization of power, plurality, and freedom of expression and public liberties. The moderate Sunni objection to the concept of *dawla madaneyya* was its alleged attempt to make the idea of rulership a religious mandate. Sunni factions see 'civil state' with Islamic background as a revival of the old shibboleths of the Brotherhood, *Hukumat e-Ilahi* considering the rulership as an organic part of religion. By insisting that rulership is fundamentally part of religion, the political process becomes an end in itself for the Brotherhood rather than a means to democratize Egyptian politics.

By re-interpreting the concept of 'civil', Muslim Brotherhood articulates that *madani* or civil in the Arab Islamic context is something that is not opposed to the role of religion in public life. In that sense 'civil' can not necessarily be often employed as a kind of euphemism for *almani* or 'secular.' The latter in the specific historical and political milieu of West Asia and North Africa shows a tendency to take on a more military anti-religious meaning, whereas, the concept of 'civil' does not dissociate completely from religion and indicates a more neutral and acceptable area of secular. As articulated by the Muslim Brotherhood, there is an apparent difference in meaning between 'secular' and 'civil' here as *dawla madaneyya* is defined not in terms of its non-

religious attributes but as something that stands sharply against the tyrannical rules of any sort. Simultaneous to maintain aspirations for a non-military state, the term 'civil state' envisages an absence of complete hegemony of a single religion in the political affairs. With the use of 'civil' in opposition to military, what the leaders of Muslim Brothers had in mind was to create a united front of both 'religious' and 'secular' forces against the tradition of 'secular' state with repressive apparatuses. The second related connotation of the 'civil state' according to Morsi was that of a 'democratic' or 'constitutional' state. While defining his vision of state, Morsi articulated that the state would be "the Egyptian national, democratic, constitutional, legal and modern state."³ Such a state, he went on to say that "is ruled by the people through an elected parliament that represents the popular will." (Ibid) In that sense, the state should be discussed in terms of its open and flexible structure that could ensure the political independence, plural religious identity and cultural specificities of the Arab world. (Ramadan, 2012)

The 'civil' in this sense does not insist on the separation of religion from the political sphere, but on accommodation of a multi-religious base for the polity. As Tariq Ramadan argued, the term has been adopted by the Islamist groups in the context of Arab Spring in part to distance from 'secularism' on the one hand and from Iranian-style 'theocracy' and their old call for a pure 'Islamic state' on the other. President Morsi himself has expressed that the 'civil state' dissociates equally from 'secular' and 'theocratic-religious' government in principle and practice. Brotherhood maintains the view that a civil state functions as an alternative to secularism and the hegemonic rule of one religion, both of which they argue, are the products of western political culture. The civil state with Islamic references, in Tariq Ramadan's words comprised threefold response-religious, cultural and political and cultural- to the imposition of western models.

What Brotherhood conceptualized was a civil state based on Islamic references, with three completely independent authorities: the parliament, judiciary and the government. People regardless of religion and class are the paramount source of the power in such a state based not on theocratic concept. Islam, according to Morsi, confirms the independence of these authorities. Although, the Islamic framework to a great extent controls the government and behavior of the state, the notion of Islam cannot be imposed on the people from the top. To quote Morsi: Islam has to be initiated, created and agreed up on by the people. Calling it a civil, democratic state guaranteeing equality and justice, Brotherhood stressed that Egypt is not following an Iranian model and has no intention of implementing, or attempting to implement, a theocratic state modeled on Iran.⁴

The re-conceptualization of the state and democracy in the new context had also echoed in the statements of many scholars who are subscribed to the ideology of *ikhwan* all over the world. Yusuf Al-Qardawi, a prominent Islamist ideologue associated closely with the movement, made it clear that it is incorrect and unjust to say that Brotherhood in Egypt is establishing a theocratic state. “The call of Brotherhood is for an Islamic civil state that by no means will end up in theocratic rule.”⁵ The same had resonated in the words of the leader of *Ennahada* in Tunisia, Rachid Ghannouchi interpreting religious texts in a way that is compatible with the idea of secularism and civil state. He objected the notion that Islamic principles and civil state are poles apart. Ghannouchi’s only objection is to secularism as a philosophy of state. There is nothing essentially wrong with secularism as a ‘procedural measure’ that helps a nation with cross-cultural base to build a consensus.

The concept *dawla madaneyya* in the Egyptian context involved a convergence of Islamism and secularism around the term civil. The secular/Islamic binary has already become meaningless with a complex set of reactions to the suppression and tyranny by the secularists. As discussed elsewhere in this paper, the term ‘secular’ in the Arab context was either quite synonymous with tyrannical rule or did not offer any alternative to the tyranny. In contrary to the general situation, it was actually the religious movements with its victimhood under the ‘secular’ rules of Nasser, Sadat and Mubarak, had contained space for resistance to the ‘secular’ politics. The ill-effects of globalization in the pre-Spring period had contributed further to the blurring of religious-left divide. There was a near-total absence of the state in mediating the conflict between ordinary people in the society without purchasing power and the market which made the regimes mute spectator in the neoliberal context. It was again the Islamic organizations which had been very instrumental in the struggle against both tyrannical state and the imposition of American imperialism through neoliberal politics in the Arab states.

In short, *Dawla Madaneyya* in its conceptualization recognized the public relevance of religion and religious ideas in conceiving statist discourse. But their recognition moved beyond the visibility of religion with affirming its symbolic values manifest in public rituals and rhetoric, made increased cultural influences of religion on government. It also represented a democracy that moved away from its general conceptualization as a technique of government. The dialogic aspect of it should be taken as an evidence of using democracy by the Islamists Egypt as a means of constituting the body politic. The Islamic model in this context boasted a political vitality that inspired contemporary politics and offered an alternative way of approaching the role of religion in conceptualizing the state. The entire debate led to exposing the failure of

secular efforts to analyze religious practices that determines a modern state with a predominance of scientific thought and rationality.

Conclusion

Dawla Madaneyya in its conceptualization recognized the public relevance of religion and religious ideas in conceiving statist discourse. But their recognition moved beyond the visibility of religion with affirming its symbolic values manifest in public rituals and rhetoric, made increased cultural influences of religion on government. It also represented a democracy that moved away from its general conceptualization as a technique of government. The dialogic aspect of it should be taken as an evidence of using democracy by the Islamists Egypt as a means of constituting the body politic. The Islamic model in this context boasted a political vitality that inspired contemporary politics and offered an alternative way of approaching the role of religion in conceptualizing the state. The entire debate led to exposing the failure of secular efforts to analyze religious practices that determines a modern state with a predominance of scientific thought and rationality.

The creation of civil state in Egypt and Tunisia, in a sense, marked a transition of Islamist politics from the principles of revealed religion to the experiences and patterns of living traditions. This slice in history also proved that Islam and civil are not opposite to each other, but with shared concerns against tyrannical rule. But from the line of traditional secularist thinking, the establishment of 'civil state' by Muslim Brotherhood was conceived as yet another cycle of events leading to the expansion of Islamist forces. Many left intellectuals from inside and outside the Arab world, focused on explaining what they saw as something anomalous to the 'democratic' rule. This perspective was based on a misconception being held by the liberals and leftists alike that the genuine democratic sense in the Arab world is limited to a narrow set of secular elites. Secular paradigm in its conventional form seemed to be not sufficient enough to make sense of the situation which needs to be understood within a multilayer of contexts. The experiences of Egypt realigned the debate away from the traditional binaries of religious versus secular. The new binaries emerged in its place were democratic versus anti-democratic and freedom versus tyranny.

NOTES

- ¹ The opposition, according to Asad, consisted a diverse spectrum of elites; the rich businessmen who established themselves during Mubarak's neo-liberal regime; high court judges that maintained close links with the army; ambitious politicians and ex-politicians; left and liberals; army officers and

- journalists. The left politicians disliked Brotherhood for its ideology as well as its country-wide grassroots organizational set up. See Asad (2011) the conversation by Talal Asad and Ayca Cubukcu, *Neither Heroes, Nor Villains: A Conversation with Talal Asad on Egypt After Morsi*, www.Jadaliyya.com accessed on 23 July, 2013.
- ² Secular in this context is understood not simply as the doctrine of separation of church from state, but the re-articulation of religion in a manner that is commensurate with modern sensibilities and modes of governance. See Mahmood (2013) "Is Critique Secular", *The Immanent Frame*, blogs.ssrc.org accessed on 8th July, 2013.
- ³ See Interview with Mohamed Morsi; "What to Expect from the Muslim Brotherhood", www.policymic.com/articles/380/exclusive-Interview-with-mohamed-morsi-what-to-expect-from-the-muslim-brotherhood.Morsi, September, 2012.
- ⁴ El-Arain: MB wants a civil state; Egypt will not become another Iran, www.ikhwanweb.com/print.php?id=28368.
- ⁵ Yusuf Al-Qardawi as quoted in Hassan Hassan, "Muslim Brotherhood Still fails to offer a 'civil state' solution".

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