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Containing the *Umma*?: Islam and the Territorial Question

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Abstract

The sociopolitical upheavals that appeared suddenly toward the end of 2010 and swept through Tunisia, Egypt, Libya, and other parts of the Middle East and North Africa caught most observers off guard and grasping for explanation. The inability to anticipate these popular uprisings may relate to a widely held understanding of the relationship between Islam and the political-territorial ordering of modernity, namely, the notion that the primacy of the *umma*—the worldwide community of Islamic believers—is incompatible with the sovereignty of nation-states. In this article, I first identify and discuss the tendency to underappreciate modern territoriality in shaping contemporary Muslim identities and then, drawing on a range of examples, illustrate how the bases of Muslim identities and the relative significance of Islam to those identities have shifted in relation to changing political-territorial circumstances.

In his account of Islam's contemporary resurgence as a social and political force, political scientist Samuel Huntington claims that the Muslim world—identified monolithically as the *umma*, that is, the transnational community of Islamic believers—constitutes a civilization that is innately averse to modern political-territorial ordering. “The idea of sovereign nation-states,” Huntington asserts, “is incompatible with the belief in sovereignty of Allah and the primacy of the *umma*” (Huntington 1996: 175). In short, Islam is cast as an all-embracing religion-as-culture, encompassing all Muslims wherever they might be, that rejects secular politics and the territorial division of its faithful. It is this centrality of religion to politics and identity, Huntington concludes, that explains the global upswing in Islamic fundamentalism, “fault line conflicts” between Muslims and non-Muslims within states, and “bloody borders” between Muslim and non-Muslim states. Such grand theorizing, tinged as it is with anti-Muslim sentiment, has provoked a wave of criticism in the social sciences that continues more than fifteen years after the appearance of Huntington's book *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of the World Order*. Not least has been the backlash from Huntington's own academic international relations (IR) community, which has challenged his arguments for Islam's exceptionalism on at least two fronts. First, IR researchers have responded with multiple empirical studies purporting to undermine notions of an undifferentiated, essentially distinct Muslim world. For instance, Fox (2005) analyzed quantitative data from the Minorities at Risk Phase III dataset¹ to show that state borders separating Islamic areas from other civilizations are statistically no bloodier than other state borders, while a study by Gartzke and Gleditsch (2006) indicated that armed conflict within Islam is more prevalent than is warfare between Islam and other civilizations.²

More forceful has been the challenge mounted by a second group of IR scholars, who assail Huntington's “moral geography” (Shapiro 1999) for its baseline presumption that nation-states universally constitute modernity's natural order. As Mandaville (2001: 2) avers, the “fairly crude, essentialising hypotheses of the ‘clash of civilisations’ variety” arise from the failure to consider the nation-state as a problem in its own right and question its underlying Eurocentric ideas of inclusion and exclusion and the secularization of public ethics. For Mandaville and other advocates of the cultural turn in IR, the worldwide upsurge in Islam as a sociopolitical force does not signify an unreflective reaction posted by a monolithic,

¹ The Minorities at Risk (MAR) Project, based at the University of Maryland, is an ongoing research project that monitors and examines communal-based conflict in all countries of the world that have populations greater than half a million. A key goal of the MAR project is to provide researchers with quantitative (as well as qualitative) data on these conflicts in a standardized manner.

² For a similar study, see Ellis (2010). For quantitative studies that present evidence claiming to confirm Huntington's thesis, see Charron (2010) and Tuscisny (2004).

antimodern religion-as-civilization. Rather, it is part of a multivocal process of negotiation within Islam and with the West to unseat the “liberal-modernist framework as the *naturalised* order of things” and, in turn, establish “an alternate vision to Western modernity, an alternate ‘Islamic modernity’” (Pasha 2003: 115–116), a more authentic political order that neither delimits the sacred from the public nor bounds itself territorially. Displacing Huntington’s “moral geography,” these scholars maintain, a new geography of globalization is giving rise to Islamism as an “authentic counter-hegemonic movement” (Butko 2004: 41) and an incipient alternative Islamic modernity. Spelling the demise of the nation-state, increasingly mobile human populations, transnational media, electronic social networking, and other forces associated with globalization are making possible the formation of a deterritorialized worldwide *umma*, which represents “a new form of postnational, political identity which is as profound as any extant nationalism” (Saunders 2008: 303).

This latter group of scholars should be lauded for their affirmation of Muslim agency and recognition of Islam’s internal debates. Yet certain aspects of their approach bear more than a passing resemblance to those found in Huntington’s neorealism. First is the contention that religion is the primary, if not almost exclusive, basis of Muslim identity and necessarily stands in opposition to national and other foundations of group identity that are considered to belong to the West. As Salih (2004: 996) points out, “the idea of Islam as the most ‘authentic’ ground for identities of Muslims around the world” reifies civilizational narratives and hardens dichotomous representations of Islam versus the West and the *umma* versus the nation. In turn, such dichotomization indirectly supplies a base of justification for Al-Qa’ida and others whose violence delineates the world into an oversimplified *dar al-Islam* (“Land of Peace”) and *dar al-harb* (“Land of War”) (Aydin and Özen 2010). Besides this notion of religion as *the* arbiter of Muslim authenticity, a second feature shared by Huntington and his detractors is the failure to examine the ideas and ideologies underpinning the modern nation-state. Quantitative empirical studies that claim to undermine the “clash of civilizations” proposition generally employ state-level data to reach their conclusions and thereby accept, with little reflection, the nation-state as a fixed unit of sovereign space. This is the same type of methodological nationalism that is decried by IR scholars who invoke the cultural turn. This latter group, however, falls short of its own call to challenge the conceptions behind the contemporary political-territorial order. In hinging their arguments on the powers of globalization and the imminent end of the nation-state, this group decisively chooses a side in the Manichaean debate over the persistence or obsolescence of the territorial state rather than considering the ways in which territory actually works as a dialectic with culture in different historical settings.

Burdened with unexamined understandings of the meaning of territory—an unproblematic array of power containers at one extreme, a hapless victim of globalization at the other—IR scholars have trouble explaining the uneven geography and temporality of Islam’s resurgence, as well as its diverse expressions. Yet it would be unfair to single out IR for its failure to consider territory as a variable that is influencing Islam today, as this tendency is prevalent across the social sciences. For example, a significant body of literature in sociology interprets the current upswing in Islamic fundamentalism as part of a global shift toward stricter forms of faith that is being seen among all major world religions. According to Manuel Castells (2010: 21–22), the worldwide upsurge in conservative Islam, like the growing fundamentalism in Christianity and Judaism, is “always related to the dynamics of social exclusion and/or the crisis of the nation-state” that results from globalization:³

An Islamic fundamentalist project [has] emerged in all Muslim societies, and among Muslim minorities in non-Muslim societies. A new identity is being constructed, not by returning to tradition, but by working on traditional materials in the formation of a new godly, communal world, where deprived masses and disaffected intellectuals may reconstruct meaning in a global alternative to the exclusionary global order.

In focusing primarily on the forces of globalization, neglecting the local and national contexts, the comparative fundamentalisms model in sociology, like the cultural turn in IR, stumbles in explaining the highly variable spatiality of “the revenge of God” (Kepel 1994). Moreover, this paradigm is handicapped by its unwillingness to differentiate among the manifold manifestations of Islam’s resurgence, from the innocuous to the radical, as they are all grouped together under the single heading “religious fundamentalism.”

If the comparative fundamentalisms paradigm neglects local and national scales, historical accounts that aim to shed light on the current state of Islam often presume a fixity of territory and culture on the temporal scale. Bernard Lewis (1993, 2002), as a notable example, invokes the biography of Muhammad, the genealogy of the *umma* and the institution of the caliphate, and medieval Islamic legal traditions as ostensibly confirming the maxim *Islam din wa-dawla* (“Islam is religion and state”). In this view, Islam encompasses all domains of the Muslim’s life and therefore is incompatible with democracy and modern statehood. In an effort to counter such neo-orientalist conceptions of Islam’s essential difference, Ira Lapidus (1996, 2001) shows how the *umma* in various epochs has actually accommodated to being separated into different state formations, including non-Muslim states, as proof that Islam can indeed be contained in the contemporary

³ See also Lehmann (2009) and Stark and Finke (2000).

political-territorial order. But in drawing parallels from the era of the prophet and subsequent caliphates (although reaching starkly diverging conclusions), both Lewis and Lapidus operate from an ontology that, first, does not acknowledge territory as a distinctly modern actor and, second, does not recognize how the significance and meaning of territory can change over time.

The point of this article is not to argue against globalization, culture, or history as forces that are shaping contemporary Islam. Cross-border flows of currencies and humans, transnational media, and other forces associated with globalization undoubtedly undermine the functional power of the nation-state. Yet territory nonetheless retains its ideological appeal (Murphy 2010), not least for Muslim groups, as the recent revolutions in the Middle East and North Africa have made clear. The nation-state as a political-territorial ideal also retains its allure for sub-state groups such as the Kurds, Uyghurs, Palestinians, Albanian Kosovars, and other Muslim groups who aspire to control their own historical homelands instead of being included in some postnational, postterritorial social formation. The task at hand is to go beyond the perception that Islam is somehow incompatible with the nation-state, take seriously the challenge issued by the cultural turn in IR, and examine the ideas and ideologies that underpin the modern political-territorial order that condition Islam's social and political expression. This cannot be accomplished by making a fetish of globalization or culture or by historical analogy alone.

If they fail to regard the geographical assumptions made by the Huntingtons and Lewises of the world as problems in themselves, researchers are in a weakened position to understand why Islam has emerged as such a potent force on the world stage. Although a variety of factors influence the meaning of the religion, an important variable is the political-territorial environment in which it is embedded. As I will show in the next section, this relates to the historical development of the modern international system that is rooted in the mid-17th century treaties of Westphalia, which formalized the principle of territorial sovereignty. Subsequent developments in the way in which sovereignty has been justified have resulted in a coupling of nation and state, and social processes within the framework of the nation-state reinforce territorial identities. To understand the implications of Islam's increasing profile, it is imperative to examine the synergistic relationship between territory and culture and to consider how this relationship changes in different geographical and historical contexts. The fundamental purpose of this article is to show why scholars need to analyze religion in relation to the political-territorial context in which it is embedded. In light of the shortcomings outlined above, the next section examines the historical developments through which territory and culture have become coupled, expressed today as the nation-state, and discusses some key social processes that reinforce this relationship. The following section explores how the bases of Muslim identities and the relative significance

of Islam to those identities have shifted vis-à-vis changing political-territorial circumstances.

TERRITORY AND IDENTITY

Having emerged as the dominant form of social and spatial organization around the globe over the past two centuries, the nation-state today has been described as “*the* fundamental basis for defining group and individual identities” (Penrose 2002: 283). Yet while many leading scholars attribute the success of nationalism to the conditions of modernity (see, e.g., Anderson 1983; Gellner 1983; Hobsbawm 1990; Nairn 1981), few include an explicit consideration of territory and its associated bordering processes as a key factor shaping those identities. Territory is seen as somehow passive and objective rather than as an actor that actually shapes cultural attributes and, ultimately, a given national community. Part of the problem is a certain confusion surrounding the concept of territory itself, which is often viewed as a self-evident, even primordial, spatial referent. But rooted in legal and technological advances coming out of Europe’s late Middle Ages, territory as “bounded space, a container, under the control of a group of people, nowadays usually a state . . . must be conceived as a historically and geographically specific form” of political and social organization (Elden 2010: 757–758).

In this section, I provide a brief historical overview of the changing significance and meaning of territory to show how *nation*—a cultural signifier—and *state*—a political signifier—have become intertwined in the development of the modern political-territorial order. Indeed, the two terms are used almost interchangeably. Critical to this development have been shifts over time in the way in which sovereignty has been justified. I then turn to key social processes that work to reinforce this synergistic relationship between culture and territory. To understand how territory conditions Muslim group identities today, it is first necessary to consider the history of the ideas and ideologies that underpin the nation-state.

The History of Territory and the Nation-State

In medieval Europe, all sovereignty was concentrated in the Holy Roman Emperor, who, as God’s terrestrial representative, claimed ultimate authority over a complex patchwork of overlapping political-geographical arrangements that included feudal principalities, increasingly centralized monarchies of Western Europe, Italian city-states, and other forms of suzerainty. Borders were nonexistent or fuzzy at best. Amid these geographically interwoven and stratified political-geographical structures, “societies were characterised by primary identification with small units” of population and space. “For some this meant kin groups and/or

tribes as well as the village and/or lands used to support the community. For others it meant the diocese, manor, guild or town” (Penrose 2002: 283). Loyalties were also expressed vertically. Peasants, for example, were directly connected to their feudal landlords, whose loyalties in turn were tied into a hierarchy leading up to the Holy Roman Emperor. Thus group and individual identities in medieval Europe were defined first by the borders of immediate day-to-day social interactions and relationships and second by hierarchical membership in universal Christendom. Between these local and universal identities, the concept of nation, as it is generally understood today, had no meaning (Knight 1982).

By the 15th and 16th centuries, this multiscalar, overlapping political-geographical arrangement had given rise to power struggles and competing claims to sovereignty among kings, princes, nobles, and clergy that frequently erupted into conflict. England’s separation from the Catholic Church and the Protestant Reformation were both by-products of and contributors to the “break-up of a single Christian society” (Elshtain 2008: 55). The centralized midsize states of Western Europe proved most effective in mobilizing for the resultant religiously inspired warfare, which reached its apogee with the Thirty Years’ War. The hostilities were halted in 1648 with the Peace of Westphalia, a series of treaties that formalized the realist principle of *cuius regio, eius religio* (“He who rules decides the faith of his realm”).⁴ The treaties of Westphalia, cementing the legal principle of noninterference, were combined with advances in mathematics and surveying that allowed for more precise delineation of state borders. This marriage of the new political-legal principle of state sovereignty and the new political-technological feat of precise border-drawing marked the birth of the modern political-territorial order (Elden 2010).

Territorial sovereignty after 1648 found its locus of legitimacy in the head of each state. Sovereignty, no longer monopolized by a single Holy Roman Emperor, devolved to the various monarchs, who, often seen as the God’s divine representatives, claimed absolute authority within their bordered realms. This devolution of sovereignty in turn influenced the configuration of group identity. While primary identification remained tied to local spaces of immediate social interaction, membership in a universal Christendom was increasingly replaced by shorter hierarchies of vertical integration into the churches of newly sovereign states, such as the Church of England, the Dutch Reformed Church, and the Church of Sweden. (D. Kaplan 1999). This was symptomatic of the role that territory began to play in the geographical organization of politics and society, an early incarnation of the state-centered construction of society and group identity (Häkli 2001).

If the Peace of Westphalia gave rise to territory as sovereign statehood, only with later developments did territorial states come to be seen as representative of

⁴ This principle was first articulated in the Treaty of Augsburg in 1555, which halted the violence among the German princes that resulted from the Protestant Reformation.

nations. The Enlightenment, with its focus on reason and the individual, led to a situation in which royal divinity was increasingly questioned. The American and French revolutions and their concomitant romantic nationalism represented a paradigm shift in the political-territorial system. From that point, sovereignty found a new locus of legitimacy—"the people"—and "it became important to see political territories as reflections of nations" (Murphy 1996: 97). Under this new directive, the long-established absolutist states of Western Europe worked to mold nations within their already erected boundaries; it can be said that they created state-nations. For instance, Claval (1994: 41) emphasizes that the French nation that arose in this period was formulated in distinctively civic terms:

France was not conceived of as an ethnic unit. It had been built through history from a variety of groups, and the limits which had been reached during the eighteenth century were considered well-fitted to the national will, since everyone who wished to build a common future as Frenchmen lived within the same state.

One might take issue with the assertion that "everyone" within France desired "a common future as Frenchmen." But the larger point is that because states were now assumed to represent self-identifying historical cultural groups, France and other centralized states of Western Europe were compelled to encourage stronger national feeling among sometimes disparate cultural groups within the spatial extent of their territories. This process of territorial nation building was accomplished through what Paasi (1997) terms the "institutionalization of territories," which includes the standardization of national languages, the cultivation of national symbols that had emotional resonance, the development of idealized histories, and the creation of national militaries as well as other institutions. This process is common to the shifting political-territorial order and, as Herb (1999: 21) states, "is not linear or universal but a contested discourse that needs to be negotiated between different factions within the nation as well as vis-à-vis other nations." Indeed, to return to the case of France, significant portions of the country's population did not feel themselves to be French even up to World War I (Weber 1976).

The resituation of sovereignty's locus of legitimacy from state to nation had a different effect in lands to the east of the absolutist states. Cultural groups of Central Europe faced the task of creating their own territorial states. Nationalistic unification campaigns resulted in the formation of the Italian and German nation-states in the latter half of the 19th century. Unlike the French example, however, these nationalist movements were expressed in explicitly ethnic terms. Still, the cultural contents within these newly formed territories were by no means objective; each would-be nation was riven with disparate folk customs and highly uneven levels of economic development, among other cleavages. For Italy in 1870, the decision to locate its capital in Rome, rather than in one of the new country's

more economically dynamic cities to the north, was an effort to co-opt the glorious past of the Roman Empire while simultaneously drawing on the institution of the Catholic Church a key source of a national identity that would transcend regional differences, particularly the sharp cleavages on the north-south axis, and thereby create greater territorial cohesiveness (Agnew 2002). The extent of Germany's external borders in 1871 presented particular issues for the new country's state leaders and nation builders. Most glaringly, the territory was divided by religion, Protestantism being predominant in the north and east and Catholicism in the south and west. As a result, religion was deemphasized in imagining the newly minted, ethnically defined German nation, while language was elevated as a defining feature. For historical reference, the legacy of Prussia, particularly its recent military victories against France, assumed a central place in the early national development of Germany (Applegate 1999).

With sovereignty's locus of legitimacy now placed in the nation, logic dictated that territorial borders should extend to wherever a defined people dwelled. Such romantic nationalism led to a political-territorial system characterized by extreme anarchy from the middle of the 19th century and into the first decades of the 20th century (Murphy 1996). Following the German and Italian national movements, the peoples of the moribund empires east of them posted their individual claims to territory under the slogan of national self-determination. These forces reached an apotheosis with World War I, which laid those empires to rest and contributed to the appearance of many new territories on the political map of the world. At this point, sovereignty was believed to have found its ultimate locus of legitimacy in the various entities that constituted the political-territorial order; the overlapping, vertical political geography of premodern Europe had been displaced by the discrete horizontality of modernity.

In sum, during this period, three main principles of the modern political-territorial order were established: (1) *exclusivity*, that is, the surface of the earth should be divided into an array of discretely delimited territorial units; (2) *sovereignty*, that is, states have ultimate control over their territories and are free from external interference; and (3) the *nation-state ideal*, that is, territories should be reflections of historically self-identifying cultural groups (Agnew 2009; Murphy 2005).

The ascent of the sovereign nation-state as *the* political-territorial ideal after World War I had contradictory effects. First, the Wilsonian ideal of national self-determination, which was understood as the right of peoples (i.e. nations) to control their own historic homelands, discredited European rule over territorial holdings in Asia and Africa, leading to successive waves of decolonization, including that of much of the Muslim world, and consequently resulting in a proliferation of new sovereign territories on the political map (Barnsley and Bleiker 2008). This same ideal, however, contributed to the outbreak of Europe's second

great conflagration of the 20th century. After World War II, the charter of the newly created United Nations expressed its commitment to support the national self-determination of peoples, yet it also purported to uphold the sovereignty and territorial integrity of its member states. These two principles are clearly at odds, considering that the United Nations today incorporates approximately 200 members and there exist, according to one estimate, more than 800 ethnic groups who could reasonably assert their rights to national self-determination (Falk 1992).⁵ When these two principles come into conflict, most often in the form of substate minority group claims, the international community generally has remained committed to the territorial status quo. Only in extreme cases, beyond decolonization, has it recognized substate ethnonational territorial claims.

In spite of the international system's commitment to the status quo, substate groups persist in pursuing territory as the ultimate expression of their national self-determination. A brief overview of conflicts around the globe provides illustration. For the latter half of the 1990s, only two of the world's highly violent conflicts were waged between states. In that same period, between twenty-six and twenty-eight internal conflicts—mainly on secessionist grounds, that is, minority ethnonational groups seeking control of territory—were registered each year (Christopher 1999). A more recent report shows that of the world's twenty-eight highly violent conflicts in 2010, none was between states (Heidelberg Institute for International Conflict Research 2011). Again, the main reason for these conflicts was that substate nationalist movements were seeking self-determination. Notably, a great number of these secessionist conflicts have involved Muslim groups, for reasons that will be addressed later in this article.

Reinforcing Territorial Identities

As the persistence of substate territorial claims attests, the modern political-territorial ideal of the nation-state is in many ways unattainable. However, because the modern international system assumes that state leaders represent a defined "people," states are impelled to nationalize their populace, cultivating a state nationalism that corresponds to a "sense of territory" (Murphy 2002: 197). How is this accomplished? To address this question and prepare the reader for subsequent examination of the shifting character of Muslim territorial identities (and the relative salience of religion to those identities), I present two conceptual approaches.

First is the idea of *spatial socialization*, developed by geographer Anssi Paasi and defined as a constant process in which individuals and groups

⁵ By other estimates, this figure is conservative. White (2000: 2) cites a figure of 5,000 nations, while Minahan (1996: xvi) says the number of stateless nations in the world runs as high as 9,000.

are socialized as members of specific territorially bounded spatial entities, participate in their reproduction and “learn” collective territorial identities, narratives of shared traditions and inherent spatial images (e.g. visions regarding boundaries, regional divisions, regional identities, etc.), which may be, and often are, contested (Paasi 2009: 226).

According to Paasi, territories and identities are coconstructed through boundaries separating “us” from “them” via the process of “Othering.” These borders are not just the physical borders that are located at the edge of states. Rather, the borders of Paasi’s spatial socialization, both discursive and material, are spread—however unevenly—throughout territories and permeate everyday life (Paasi 2008). These lines of inclusion and exclusion, in their ubiquity, represent hidden power relations that are communicated foremost through institutions, including national school systems, politics, popular culture, government, media outlets, and multiple others, via practices and discourses that serve to “nationalize everyday life” (Paasi 1999: 4).

Whereas Paasi examines internal bordering processes that give shape to territories and group identities, a second conceptual approach has been developed by geographer Alexander Murphy, who is concerned with the “territorial logic of the modern state system” (Murphy 2005: 280). Because the nation-state is a political-territorial ideal that, with rare exceptions, is never met, nationalists and state leaders are compelled to develop what Murphy terms *regimes of territorial legitimation* (RTLs), defined as “the institutions, practices, and discourses that are designed to legitimate particular conception of the state” (Murphy 2005: 281). The aim of these regimes is to cultivate and inculcate a “particular sense of territory” that would contribute to a heightened sense of nationhood (Murphy 2002: 197). In the face of the sovereign nation-state ideal, however, RTLs are constrained by the geographical circumstances of states as they entered the modern international system. In light of this, Murphy (2005: 283) identifies three historical-geographical understandings of the state that are often evoked in RTLs:

1. That the state is the historic homeland of a distinctive ethno-cultural group (e.g. France, Poland)
2. That the state is a distinctive physical-environmental unit (e.g. Hungary, Australia)
3. That the state is the modern incarnation of a long-standing political-territorial entity (e.g. Egypt, Mongolia).

These arguments, Murphy emphasizes, are idealized notions of history and territory—not necessarily reflections of reality—that are employed to instill state nationalism. They are not exhaustive and can change over time.

Taken together, these two conceptual approaches show how territory and identity are deeply coupled. *Spatial socialization* shows how borders separating “us” from “them” are produced and reproduced within the territorial extent of states through institutions, symbols, and practices. The concept of *regimes of territorial legitimation* helps us to understand how state and national leaders attempt to cultivate a sense of territory among their populaces that would conform to the norms of the international political-territorial system. In the following section, drawing on examples in the precolonial, colonial, and postcolonial periods, I examine how these dynamics have played out in a range of contexts among Muslim groups.

THE CHANGING TERRITORIAL BASES OF MUSLIM IDENTITIES

Theses that posit Islam’s incompatibility with the modern political-territorial order invariably point out that the nation-state is a European import, a product of the colonial experience for most of the Muslim world. While unquestionably true, this assertion carries with it the implication that the Islamic world was free of European influence until the age of colonialism. But Muslims and Europeans, as Schulze (2000) points out, share a history of interaction, characterized by both antagonism and mutual enrichment, dating back several centuries. European encroachments in the 18th and 19th centuries, though qualitatively different from previous encounters, did not signal the arrival of an alien civilization in a previously separate Muslim world. Additionally, Zubaida (1989: 121) underscores a point made in the previous section: that although ideas and practices associated with the nation-state originated in Western Europe, they “have proved highly diffusible to all regions of the world, first to the rest of Europe and the white colonies, then to the rest of the world, colonised or not.” To argue that the nation-state is incompatible with Muslim societies but not with Buddhist, Hindu, or Christian societies is to advocate cultural exceptionalism.

In recognition of these dynamics, Halliday (2002: 25) argues that “it is fruitless to begin by posing the question of how far Islam, as a transnational religion, is compatible with the modern state or modern nation. The answer is self-evidently that it is.” He points out that Islam in its totality is just one of multiple bases of identity—along with sectarian, ethnolinguistic, and other affiliations—that form group consciousness in the modern Muslim world in the modern era, and he asserts that these various aspects of identity “shift in balance as between one and the other depending on the circumstances” (Halliday 2002: 24–25). Whereas Halliday and other modernist researchers (see, e.g., Al-Azmeh 1996; Eickelman and Piscatori 1996; Zubaida 2004) are specifically interested in the political circumstance that have conditioned Muslim identities in the age of the nation-state, their work highlights the importance of exploring how territorial cir-

cumstances have influenced Muslim group identities in the modern era. An exhaustive handling of this issue is far beyond the scope of this article. The primary aim here is simply to identify and discuss important examples of shifting territorial bases of Muslim identities, and the relative salience of Islam to those identities, in a variety of contexts as illustrative of the synergistic, historically contingent relationship between territory and identity.

The Modernity of the Umma and Precolonial Muslim Territorial Identities

Because of its importance to current debates on Islam, a proper place to begin is with a discussion of the *umma*. The term entered modern political discourse only in the latter part of the 19th century in the context of two interrelated phenomena: European colonization of territories in which the majority of the world's Muslims lived and the decline of the Ottoman Empire. Most active in propagating the *umma* was Jamal al-Din al-Afghani (1839–1897),⁶ an early champion of Pan-Islamism whose primary objective was liberating Muslims from the European yoke. He argued that Muslims had come under direct foreign control because they had retreated from Islam's essential unity, as expressed in the *umma*, and had allowed themselves to become divided by competing loyalties of sect, school, kin, and territory. To restore Islamic solidarity and thereby rid Muslims of foreign rule, al-Afghani advocated aggressive religious reform based on a return to the "pure" Islam that had been practiced in the time of the prophet and the virtuous forefathers.⁷ However, his ideas of returning to a pristine past were firmly tied to modernist ideologies. The *umma*, in al-Afghani's conceptualization, was a "nation" in the modern European sense (Halliday 2002: 26).⁸ He considered the

⁶ For a concise biography of al-Afghani and his political-intellectual development, see Keddie (1983: 3–36). See also Chapter 2 of Mishra (2012).

⁷ This movement for the return to "pure" Islam was the early embodiment of the current Salafist movement. As Schulze (2000: 18) explains of this movement in al-Afghani's time, "Corruption, it was argued, had invaded the Oriental world because Muslims had given up Islam and turned to obscure varieties of religiosity such as popular mysticism, magic and witchcraft. The return to the 'pure' Islam of the forefathers (*al-salaf al-salih*) became the target of a new intellectual movement, which was accordingly given the programmatic name Salafiya. The Salafiya movement was an Islamic variant of late 19th-century classicism . . . Like classicism, the Salafiya sought a timeless aesthetic and intellectual ideal, derived from an origin that was pure of all temporal circumstances. In the Islamic context this could only be the early Islamic period."

⁸ Al-Afghani's singular definition of the *umma* as "nation" is representative of the nationalist habit of, if not all-out inventing traditions (Hobsbawm 1983), then at least reviving and radically reinterpreting traditions. In fact, for centuries, the term had been used with several different meanings. The word *umma* appears in the Koran more than sixty times, with at least a dozen separate meanings, and is used often in the *hadith* (sayings and acts of the prophet), again with multiple meanings (Dallal 1995: 267). While the most important usage of the term in these foundational texts appears to address the community of believers who were led by the prophet while he was in

German nation, which had recently come together across lines of religious schism, a model for the *umma*'s unification.⁹ Consolidating the Islamic nation, as al-Afghani recognized from the German example, could be accomplished only through a state or a confederation of states. Therefore in his campaign to unify the *umma* under the authority of a single caliphal ruler, he sought collaboration with Sultan Abdulhamid (Hourani 2008: 103-129). Hence, although the *umma* is said to be incompatible with the political-territorial ordering of modernity, the term itself, as it is commonly understood today,¹⁰ was developed and defined within the framework of modernist territorial ideas and ideologies.

Pan-Islamism arose in various places, including Egypt, the Ottoman Empire, British India, Iran, and tsarist Russia. A considerable exchange of ideas, literature, and transnational activism took place among these various movements. But in the final account, as Mandaville attests, Pan-Islamism "failed miserably" in its goal of creating a united *umma*. He attributes the failure to the fact that the "*umma*, simply put, was too abstract," and instead Muslim groups "opt[ed] for nationalism over Islam" as a focus for resistance to European colonialism (Mandaville 2011: 9). Mandaville is correct in his assessment of Pan-Islamism's record, but his analysis suffers from two mistakes, one ontological and the other factual. To start with the former, his focus on civilization and culture as driving politics, not the other way around, forces Muslims to make a zero-sum choice between nationalism and Islam, when the two are in fact not mutually exclusive. As for the latter, it is clear that a number of Muslim groups self-identified in modern national terms before they were brought under European colonial rule. This can be illustrated by looking at two points in the career of al-Afghani.

First, al-Afghani's Pan-Islamist ideas were developed in the 1870s, while he was active as a religious reformer and modernizer in Cairo. By that time, Egyptians already had a strong national feeling separate from other Arabs, as Lapidus (1988: 622) explains:

Even before nationalism became a self-conscious doctrine, Egyptian writers spontaneously identified Egypt as the *watan*, motherland. The homogeneity and

Medina, the *umma* is also used in reference to other faith communities, state formations, kin groups, and even all living creatures. To shift analysis from text to practice, the *umma* was used in these multiple ways in pronouncements made by *khulafa* (Muslim rulers, literally "successors") until the caliphate was abolished in 1924 (Halliday 2002).

⁹ The ideology of Pan-Germanism was an early political-intellectual movement that contributed to the Germans' ultimate unification. Indeed, as Landau (1990) discusses, Pan-Islamism should be seen as part of a broader milieu of 19th century unification movements and related intellectually and politically to Pan-Germanism, Pan-Slavism, and Pan-Hellenism.

¹⁰ As an example, Ataman (2003: 90) asserts that "all Muslim ethnic (linguistic, cultural, territorial and racial) groups are considered one nation or one political entity. The *umma* is the name given to this political, cultural and religious entity."

isolation of the country, its long history of central government, and its distinctive cultural past encouraged a consciousness of Egyptian identity.

With the country only nominally associated with the Ottoman Empire, Egyptian nationalism was on par with Islamic reformism as the country's dominant ideology. Nationalists recognized Egypt as a modernist Islamic country, but according to Hourani (2008: 193), al-Afghani and other Islamic reformers could not accept "the idea of an Egyptian nation, entitled to a separate political existence" because it "involved not only the denial of a single Islamic political community, but also the assertion that there could be a virtuous community based on something other than a common religion and a revealed law." This analysis of Egypt in the 1870s indicates, first, that modernist ideas underpinning the nation-state were well established among a significant portion of the population before British occupation began in 1882—they were not simply grafted on or developed as a reaction to Europe—and, second, that al-Afghani's conceptualization of the *umma* was worked out not just as a reaction to European colonialism, but also as a response to nationalism among Muslims he encountered while in Egypt.

On the eve of British occupation, after al-Afghani had moved on to other lands to spread his Pan-Islamism, patriotism was on the upswing in Egypt, as could be seen in the popularity of *Al-Watan* ("Motherland"), one of the country's first important unofficial newspapers (Ayalon 1987: 27–28). The all-subsuming Pan-Islamist definition of *umma* proffered by al-Afghani was rejected by the sheikh of Al-Azhar University in Cairo, who, in his "*Risalat al-kalim al-thaman*" ("Essay on Eight Words"), defined the term to mean not only a community that was defined by religion, but also a community that could be defined by territory and/or language. Notably, Egypt was among his few examples of a territorially defined *umma*. British occupation did not create nationalism in Egypt. Rather, as Hourani (2008: 193) writes, British rule "fused Islamic modernism with Egyptian nationalism" in a united nationalist front. By the close of the 19th century, under the conditions of external occupation, modernist Islam was eclipsed by a secular nationalist definition of Egyptian identity and politics. This understanding of national community grew in strength until the country emerged as an independent nation-state in 1922. Thus in the case of Egypt, we see how preexisting territorial conditions, that is, centralized institutions, a modernizing state, and a distinct sense of territory and culture, gave rise to a national identity that was only strengthened, not created, under foreign rule.

By the time al-Afghani arrived in Istanbul in the 1890s, his Pan-Islamism could do little to stem the Arabism that had arisen in the core of the Ottoman Empire. Arab nationalism was shaped by a specific set of changing political-territorial circumstances that began with the territorial modernization of the empire, launched in the mid-1800s, that replaced the traditional Ottoman system of

decentralized governance with institutions of centralized administration. Carried out in tandem with the standardization of laws and education, the empire's centralization had as one of its goals the construction of a unified Ottoman identity (Deringil 1998). This process of territorial modernization and nation building produced unintended consequences, sharpening local and regional identities under the umbrella of a vaster imperial identity. By the second half of the 19th century, a new generation of educated Arabs in the Fertile Crescent had begun to express grievances that arose primarily in reaction to the Ottoman government's recognition of Ottoman Turkish as the sole official language within the core of the empire. Muslim and Christian Arabs together sought territorial autonomy—something akin to the Ottoman substates of Egypt, Tunisia, or Algeria—within which Arabic would be the official language (Lapidus 1988). Hence we see territorial modernization giving rise to a proto-national group defining itself ethnolinguistically and seeking territorial expression of its culture.

At this point, Sultan Abdulhamid began incorporating ideas of Pan-Islamism, which were aimed not at expanding territory, as al-Afghani had envisioned, but at curtailing Arab nationalism within his domains (Peters 2010). A second set of political-territorial changes further fueled the embers of Arab national feeling. The increasing loss of its Christian possession in the Balkans in the early 20th century left the Ottoman Empire with the pronounced character of a Turko-Arab state. By this point, writes Choureiri (2002: 654), “it was becoming increasingly obvious that the Arab educated elite, along with the local constituencies, had developed a sense of national identity that could no longer be ignored.” As the demands for territorial autonomy and language rights intensified, Ottoman officials refused any concessions and leaned more heavily on Islamism, a common religious identity that would unite the Arabs with the Turks in the territorially diminished empire, as a source of legitimacy while implementing *de facto* Turkification policies. This approach further inflamed Arab nationalist sentiment. Haarmann (1988: 186) states that this point in history signaled the arrival of a “new idea of an Arab political nationality,” defined by a common language, but it would be difficult to identify a single, unified Arab national front. If Arab Christians were generally in favor of secession, particularly with the intensification of Islamism, Muslim Arabs were more ambivalent about departing from the caliphate (Lapidus 1988). Nonetheless, it can be concluded that by the start of World War I—before European colonization—Arabs of the Ottoman Empire had developed a distinctly modern sense of nationality, if in different forms, and the desire to express it territorially.

Territory and Muslim Identities in the Post–World War I Context

After World War I, with the dismantling of the Ottoman Empire and the abolition of the caliphate, Turkey was refashioned as a nation-state under the leadership of

Kemal Atatürk, and uncolonized Iran became a nation-state under the Pahlavi regime. Each of these countries, in building its regime of territorial legitimation in the interwar years, drew heavily on pre-Islamic histories and the legacy of past statehood, billed in glorious terms, to help mold new secular national identities (Zubaida 2004). Most of the rest of world's Muslims remained under European colonization, but as Peters (2010: 102) writes,

Almost nowhere, though, did Islam play a crucial role as an ideology of anticolonial resistance. . . . The new political forces fighting for independence were grounded ideologically in secular nationalism and liberal European democracy and constitutional government.

The relative absence of the *umma* ideal in resistance to European colonization in the post-World War I context reflects both the internal and external normative powers of the nation-state. National identities were shaped internally, within the spatial extent of each colonized territory, by the institutions of colonial administration. Demands for independence, conditioned externally by the norms of the international sovereignty regime, were framed within the borders of each colonized territory in terms that invoked the Wilsonian ideal of national self-determination. The European colonialist, in the various independence campaigns, served as the Other against which the nascent territorial nations were defined.

For instance, to continue with the example of the Arab Fertile Crescent, the Sykes-Picot agreement of 1916 divided the Arab Near East into an array of new territorial states. While these states may indeed have been “artificial” (Halliday 2002: 29), the power of modern territoriality in shaping identity is seen in how anticolonialism was expressed. In the British Mandate period (1920–1948), leaders of the older generation, holding to the Pan-Arabism that had taken form under Ottoman rule, still dreamed of a single Arab nation into the 1920s and 1930s. By the 1940s, however, a new generation had been spatially socialized within the new national school systems, militaries, and multiple other institutions of each Arab state. Consequently, separate Arab nationalisms within each territorial state became the primary expression of the demand of independence. Even in Lebanon, by the 1940s, a common “Arab character” united Muslim and Christians in a Lebanese nationalism that gelled in opposition to foreign occupation (Havemann 2010: 512).

A similar pattern is evident in preexisting colonies. For instance, the Dutch East Indies remained politically divided until the Dutch centralized their control over Indonesia in 1914 with a new territorially defined system of administration. Only at this point did the colonizers begin to differentiate between “natives”—a category that, although Muslim majority, also included other religions and a multiplicity of ethnicities—and “foreigners,” that is, the European colonialists themselves. In institutionalizing these distinctions, the Dutch “confirm[ed] the

nationalist view that Indonesia had its own nationality and hence the right to independence” (Schulze 2000: 43). Although Islamist groups were part of the anti-colonial drive, it was secular Indonesian nationalism under the leadership of Sukarno that ultimately secured the country’s independence in the wake of World War II.

At the same time in British India, where the Indian National Conference began its campaign for home rule and independence in 1919, it seemed that a common Indian nationalism might similarly evolve to unite Muslims and Hindus in the face of foreign rule. However, the Muslim-nationalist Pakistani movement eventually became ascendant—but not, as a current reading might suggest, out of some innate religious aversion to political coexistence with Hindus. Rather, the rise of Muslim nationalism was due more to the British colonial administration’s earlier institutionalization of communal difference via the Indian Councils Act of 1909, which

reinforced the collective identity of religious groups by giving them the right to petition for relief of grievances and to elect their own representatives. The British identified the Muslims as a religious community; then they provided the political machinery to translate that identity into concerted group action. By the Indian Councils Act of 1909 they confirmed the existence of two separate communal electorates, Hindu and Muslim, and thus gave legal and political substance to the underlying differences of religion (Lapidus 1988: 733).

While the idea of a mass Muslim society in India before that time “had only the most tenuous basis [and] was perhaps stronger in the minds of the British than in the minds of the Muslims” (Lapidus 1988: 733), the institutionalization of religious difference conditioned the subsequent trajectory of independence on the Indian subcontinent. This led to the territorial separation of Pakistan from India in 1947, with attendant widespread intercommunal violence.

The case of Algeria after World War I illustrates how group identity can change as aspirations for opt-in (centripetal) solutions of greater representation, access, and participation within the broader French and French Algerian society shift to the opt-out (centrifugal) territorial solution of Algerian independence. Although the French had maintained a presence in Algeria since 1830, it was only after 1914 that the colonial administration created a special “Muslim” nationality to separate the indigenous Arabs and Berbers from the Christian European settlers (Schulze 2000). In institutionalizing a common indigenous Muslim identity, the French created, quite unintentionally, national movements, which at first expressed various opt-in aspirations. The Young Algerians, for instance, sought full integration into French society, while other groups sought equality in the army, education, and other civil institutions. By the 1930s, denied these rights and institutionalized as a common “Muslim” nationality, Arabs and Berbers began to

speak in more strident nationalist terms and to resist French assimilation as native Algerians. By the late 1930s, they had also begun to resist the French colonizers' efforts to divide their "Muslim" designation into separate Arab and Berber nationalities, a campaign that was aimed at weakening an increasingly radicalized indigenous nationalist movement (Lapidus 1988).

After World War II, demands shifted to opt-out territorial solutions. With this change, France's offers to enfranchise all Algerian males were, as Perkins (2010: 428) phrases it, "too little, too late"; once group demands have switched over to the opt-out territorial solution of independence, as Mikesell and Murphy (1991) have shown, it is unlikely that they will revisit opt-in solutions of greater representation, access, or participation. The Algerian revolution, beginning in 1954, was conducted by various nationalist groups, but the leading, most decisive Front Libération Nationale (FLN), although not officially Islamic, "held strong Islamic sentiments and puritanical attitudes" that were amplified in the course of fighting for Algeria's liberation, which was gained in 1962 (Lapidus 1988: 693). Thus the case of Algeria in this period shows (1) how modern institutions mold territorial identities, (2) how group identities can change in tandem with shifts from opt-in to opt-out territorial aspirations, and (3) how Islam can mix with nationalism in the course of intensified territorial demands.

Territory and the Contemporary Contours of Muslim Identities

If secular nationalism was the main basis of Muslim territorial identity in the face of the colonizing European Other, the postcolonial era has seen far greater variability in the ideas and ideologies underpinning territorial identities. Two poles of ideology that surfaced in the Arab Near East provide illustration. The first was the nationalism of Pan-Arabism, which, after being muted in the British Mandate period, resurged in the late 1950s and early 1960s with attempted unions first between Egypt and Syria (1958–1961) and then between Egypt, Syria, and Iraq (1963). Later ventures in unifying Arab territories included efforts between Egypt and Libya (1973) and between Syria and Iraq (1979) (see Farah 1997). All of these attempts turned out to be unqualified failures.¹¹ Rather than forging new, enlarged Arab territories, the ethnonationalist ideologies—explicitly secular, generally socialist—that informed Pan-Arabism were employed within the borders of the newly independent states. For instance, Saddam Hussein enforced Baathism to unite Shiite and Sunni Arabs within the borders of Iraq. More concerned with

¹¹ Yemen, formed by the merger of North Yemen and South Yemen in 1990, is an exception. The two parts of the country were united on Yemeni nationalist terms, not under the banner of Arabism or Islamism. However, considering the country's continuing political struggles and division along the north-south axis, the case of Yemen is a very qualified "success," an exception that, for most intents and purposes, proves the rule (Halliday 1997).

bridging potential sectarian cleavages between the Arabs of Iraq, Hussein in effect never considered Kurds part of the Iraqi national community,¹² a factor that contributed to Kurdish substate nationalism in the country's north.

The second pole, Islamism, initially came to prominence in the postcolonial age as a reaction to the era's virulent Arab nationalism. The Muslim Brotherhood, for example, became a force in Egypt as a response to Nasserism. The group's most famous ideologue, Sayyid Qutb, denounced Arab and Egyptian nationalism in a Cairo courtroom in the early 1960s as follows: "The ties of faith are stronger than the ties of fervent patriotic feeling that relate to a region or territory [T]he homeland is not the land but the group of believers or the whole Islamic *umma*" (quoted in Castells 2010: 15). As this quote indicates, the Muslim Brothers and other Islamists of this period, however at odds with Arab nationalists, shared with them a declared desire to rearrange the region's territorial configuration. But much like the ideologies underpinning Pan-Arabism, Islamist ideologies became organized within the borders of individual states. Their relative salience likewise was conditioned by the political-territorial circumstances in each state. For instance, Hamas, an offshoot of the Muslim Brotherhood, was formed in Palestine as a response to political-territorial circumstances affecting Muslim Palestinians, and Hezbollah was formed in Lebanon as a response to issues related to Lebanese Muslims. Their ideologies speak of the *umma* in its entirety, but these and other Islamic movements are in fact localized and shaped by their separate territorial contexts.

The fate of Pan-Arabism and the Pan-Islamist sentiments expressed by the likes of Qutb and others in this era is, on one hand, a reflection of the international sovereignty regime's commitment to maintaining the status quo; on the other hand, it is a testament to the degree to which the institutions of territory had taken hold in the internal organization of society and politics among Muslims in the postcolonial era. The changing balance in the relative weight of these two poles—ethnicity and Islam—in the formulation of territorial identities in the postcolonial era is not limited to the Arabs of the Fertile Crescent. The case of post-1947 Pakistan, exceptional in that its subsequent partition ran counter to the international community's dedication to upholding the status quo, illustrates the diverging fortunes in the balance among the territorial bases of Muslim identities.

¹² Hussein tried to justify his 1991 invasion of Kuwait by adding Islamism to his Pan-Arabism. Neither, of course, worked. As Halliday (2002: 30) attests, "In Kuwait, in contrast to almost all other modern occupations, no collaborator puppet regime could be established as there was simply no support for the Iraqi move." This response by the Kuwaiti people, Arabs who shared a religion with Hussein, illustrates attachment to territory trumping common ethnicity or religion. The near unanimity of the international community in censuring Hussein's invasion reflects that community's commitment to upholding the territorial status quo.

Muslims of British India, influenced by the colonial administration's institutionalization of communal difference, justified their independence separate from India primarily on religious grounds. But Islam was not enough to keep the western and eastern parts of the newly formed Pakistan together (Uddin 2006). Although Muslim Bengalis played an instrumental role in the formation of the Muslim League and its campaign for a united, independent Pakistan leading up to 1947, the issue of language became a central grievance compelling East Bengal to separate from the four provinces of West Pakistan. Urdu was the *lingua franca* and was seen as the language of Islam in the highly ethnically (and intrareligiously) diverse West Pakistan. Soon after Pakistan gained independence, politicians in Islamabad sought to make Urdu the sole official language for the entire country, the goal being to unite the new nation in both language and religion and thereby to bring it more in line with the nation-state ideal, as established in the European context. However, East Bengalis, forced to learn Urdu, "saw their ethnicity as coming under attack by West Pakistanis" (Uddin 2006: 120), which led to "East Pakistanis, regardless of religion, establish[ing] more of a common bond based on ethnicity" (Uddin 2006: 121). Two decades of resistance to what was seen as ethnolinguistic assimilation by the overbearing West Pakistan led to war and, not long after, to the establishment of an independent Bangladeshi nation-state in 1971. Thus in the course of a few of decades, ethnicity, defined primarily in linguistic terms, came to outweigh religion in defining what was to become the nation of Bangladesh.

A country in which 90 percent of the population is Muslim (mostly Sunni) and almost everybody natively speaks Bengali, Bangladesh perhaps comes closest among the world's Muslim-majority states to approaching the nation-state ideal in which linguistically and religiously defined ethnocultural borders are assumed to match political borders. (Azerbaijan, where ethnicity outweighs Islam in the balance of territorial identity, is another example that approaches this ideal.) This contrasts with the extreme diversity, both ethnolinguistically and intrareligiously, of Pakistan, which was explicitly defined as an Islamic state and where religion remains a primary basis of territorial identity. Neighboring Afghanistan has similar dynamics. The *umma* ideal also tends to hold greater sway in the balance of Muslim group identities in territories that play host to high ethnic and inter-religious diversity, as is seen in postcolonial Malaysia, Indonesia, Nigeria, and Sudan.

Changes in the balance of territorial identities in the post-World War II context are not limited to the formerly colonized Muslim lands, as can be seen in the cases of Iran and Turkey. Neither of these countries was formally colonized, and both defined themselves in the early decades of the 20th century as nation-states that were the modern embodiments of historical political-territorial units, the former drawing on the legacy of the pre-Islamic Persian Empire, the latter as the

rump of the Turkish-dominated Ottoman Empire. While both countries early on were overtly nationalistic in a strict ethnic sense, reflecting the post-1914 milieu, neither approached the ideal of ethnic homogeneity. In recent decades, Islam has become a stronger basis of national identity in these countries, first, of course, with the 1979 Iranian Revolution. This momentous event, coming soon after most of the Muslim world had been decolonized, has been interpreted as proof of Islam's innate incompatibility with the nation-state and has colored much subsequent analysis.

The shift away from Persian ethnic nationalism toward a more Islamic definition of Iranian nationhood should not come as a surprise when we look at the cultural contents of the territory. Persians account for only about half of the population of Iran,¹³ while about 90 percent of the country's citizenry are Shiite Muslims. Although Ayatollah Khomeini spoke in Pan-Islamist terms, his language was riddled with nationalist appeals and allusions to Iran as a "Great Nation." As Halliday (2002: 32–33) asserts, "in effect, the Iranian revolution was a Shiite revolution." The sectarianism of Iranian nationalism is evident in the ostensibly Islamic republic's postrevolutionary constitution, which specifies that its president must be an Iranian by birth and possess a "convinced belief in the . . . official school of thought in the country" (quoted in Zubaida 2004: 416), meaning that the president of Iran must be a Shiite. One should not exaggerate sectarian difference as a source of division and conflict among Muslims (Keshavarzian 2007), but as is seen in post-1979 Iran, sectarian commonality can become emphasized as a salient basis of territorial identity.

A similar dynamic colors the increasing importance of Islam as a social and political force in Turkey in the post-Cold War era. In a territory where almost everybody is a Muslim¹⁴ but only three fourths of the citizens are ethnic Turks, a major concern of Turkey's politically ascendant Islamists has been the rise, beginning in the mid-1980s, of rebellions and separatist sentiment among the Kurdish population concentrated in the country's southeast.¹⁵ As a recent study indicates, Turkey's Islamists are not as much concerned with Kurdish nationalism per se as they are with what they see as its catalyst, namely, the Kemalist legacy of defining the national community as a strictly secular, culturally Turkish entity (Sakallioğlu 1998). (In the Kemalist tradition, Kurds were classified as "Mountain Turks," thereby officially negating their ethnolinguistic difference.) Turkish Islamists contend that Kurdish rebellions would cease with the return of Islam as

¹³ Shiite Azeris account for about a quarter of the population; the rest is made up of various other ethnic groups.

¹⁴ There were, of course, large Armenian and Greek populations in Turkey before state-sponsored ethnic cleansing and population transfers in the early decades of the 20th century.

¹⁵ Ethnic Kurds, by far the country's largest minority, account for almost one fifth of Turkey's population, or about 80 percent of its non-Turkish citizenry.

central in defining the “territorial identity [and] collective unity” of the Turkish state (Sakallioğlu 1998: 79). Therefore the country’s Islamists, anxious about the territorial integrity of their *vatan* (“homeland”), position themselves as patriots in promoting religion as the basis of national identity, the glue that holds Turkey together. Their primary concern is the territorial nation, not the worldwide *umma*.

If ethnic diversity is a factor contributing to the increasing salience of religion in the balance of group identities in Iran and Turkey, this situation points to another set of political-territorial circumstances faced by Muslim groups: that of being a national minority. Although the Shiite Azeris of Iran indeed were part of the vanguard of a broad, multiethnic anti-shah alliance that led to the 1979 Revolution (Samii 2000), their participation should not necessarily be interpreted as an endorsement of the subsequent Islamization of Iranian society. Their grievances at that time centered on Persian-nationalist policies of the Pahlavi regime that marginalized their Turkic language and other aspects of ethnic Azeri culture. A recent article by Riaux provides evidence that since the late 1990s, there has been an upswing in ethnonationalism in Iran’s north in which Iranian Azeris demand greater “recognition of cultural rights” (Riaux 2008: 45).¹⁶ Similarly, Sakallioğlu suggests that the increasing salience of Islamism in Turkey has done little to stem Kurdish separatism in that country. “Kurdishness today is being made not by referring to Islam,” he contends, but rather by reference to a set of other “cultural artifacts,” that is, an ethnic identity that has already been largely shaped against the Turkish Other (Sakallioğlu 1998: 87; see also Hastings et al. 2006).

The Azeris of Iran and the Kurds of Turkey, Iraq, and Iran are minorities in Muslim-majority countries, a fact that provides some explanation as to why Islam has not factored into the expression of their territorial aspirations. The situation is more complicated for Muslim minority groups within non-Muslim territories. Palestine is a glaring example, in which the Arab nationalism of the Palestinian Liberation Organization has been challenged by the Islamism of Hamas as a response to the political-territorial circumstances faced by Palestinians. Among the ethnically Turkic Uyghurs of the Xinjiang province of western China, evidence suggests that religion may be becoming more important in the expression of their territorial aspirations (see, e.g., Davis 2008; Reny 2009). The situation in Chechnya is also illustrative of the shift toward Islam amid conditions of armed conflict over territory.

¹⁶ Reports indicate that leaders of Iran’s Azeri community, along with leaders of other ethnic minorities in other regions of Iran, have expressed their desire for territorial autonomy within the framework of a countrywide federal system. But the government in Tehran, fearful of ethnic separatism, is unwilling to consider to such an arrangement (Ahmedi 2010).

CONCLUSION

The sociopolitical upheavals that appeared suddenly in late 2010 and subsequently swept through the Middle East and North Africa took most observers by surprise and left them searching for an explanation. In spite of early anxieties that these revolutions would go the way of the 1979 Iranian Revolution (e.g., R. Kaplan 2011), the popular uprisings in Tunisia, Egypt, and Libya, among other countries, were not carried out under the monochromatic green banner of Islam or in the name of the transnational *umma*. They were conducted under the multicolored national flags of the separate states and in the name of “the people” and were formulated in starkly nationalist terms. An early, defining slogan of the revolts came from Bahrain: “We are all Bahrainis; Not Sunnis, Not Shiites.” However, in an article addressing “transnational Muslim solidarities,” which was published on the eve of these upheavals, Mandaville (2011: 7) contended that although political Islam has failed “to establish alternative political orders within the container of the nation-state . . . this does not mean we are seeing a reaffirmation of the nation in Muslim contexts today.” It is too early to say how the revolts will turn out, but at this time, a repeat of the situation in Iran in 1979 seems unlikely, although, as the case of Egypt has shown, Islam will surely factor in the national politics—in varying degrees, depending significantly on the territorial context—of a more democratic Middle East. A replication of 1989 in Europe, as has been suggested (Economist 2011), is also unlikely, given that the relationship between politics, culture, and territory is dynamic and historically contingent.

Territory and identity have become coupled as the result of historical developments in which sovereignty has devolved from godlike rulers to “the people,” understood in contemporary terms as a “nation.” Although the nation-state as the modern political-territorial ideal first took shape in Western Europe, it has been diffused throughout the world. Huntington’s opponents are correct in criticizing his failure to challenge assumptions about the modern political-territorial order. The nation-state in no way is the natural order of things, but rather is a historically contingent entity. However, it is this very historical contingency that requires an examination of the role of territory in shaping identities, including those of Muslim groups. While globalization undoubtedly makes the nation-state an increasingly leaky container, the modern political-territorial ideal nonetheless remains an important source of group identity, not excluding Muslim peoples, as the recent uprisings in the Middle East and North Africa have clearly shown. Thus an important task for researchers is to take the nation-state seriously and investigate the ideas and ideologies underpinning the modern political-territorial order that condition the social and political expression of Islam as well as other religions.

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