KULTUR, RECHT UND POLITIK IN MUSLIMISCHEN GESELLSCHAFTEN

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Béatrice Hendrich (ed.)

Muslims and Capitalism

An Uneasy Relationship?

Ergon

Muslims and Capitalism – An Uneasy Relationship?

Edited by
Béatrice Hendrich

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The Tempestuous Affair between Marxism and Islam: Attraction, Hostility, and Accommodation since 1917

Manfred Sing

The relation between Marxism and religion has been complicated and ambivalent, theoretically as well as practically, ever since Karl Marx stated in 1844 that "the *criticism of religion* has been essentially completed, and the criticism of religion is the prerequisite of all criticism."[1] Although Marxists have a long record of being atheistic and anti-religious, it is striking that academic discussions in particular often deal with Marxism as something religious or rather similar to it and even use categories from the studies of religions.[2] Marxism has been described as a "political religion"[3] staging "quasi-religious rituals,"[4] as a "messianic religion" seeking for inner-worldly salvation,[5] as a "political creed"[6] offering "opium for the intellectuals,"[7] or as a kind of dogmatic "fundamentalism."[8]

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1 Karl Marx, "Zur Kritik der Hegelschen Rechtsphilosophie. Einleitung" (1844), *Karl Marx/Friedrich Engels, Werke I*, Berlin: Dietz Verlag 1981, 378–391, 378; for the English version see: www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1843/critique-hpr/intro.htm (31.03.2017).

2 Anja Kirsch, *Weltanschauung als Erzählkultur. Zur Konstruktion von Religion und Sozialismus in Staatsbürgerkundeschulbüchern der DDR*, Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht 2016, 36f.

3 Eric Voegelin, *Die politischen Religionen*, Stockholm: Bermann-Fischer 1939.

4 For the rituals in socialist countries see for example the 1983 focus edition of the *Anthropological Quarterly* and David A. Kideckel, "Introduction: Political Rituals and Symbolism in Socialist Eastern Europe," *Anthropological Quarterly* 56: 2 (1983), 52–54; also Camelia Lelesan, "The Power of the Ritual–the System of Rites as a Form of Legitimacy in the Soviet Union," in: *History of Communism in Europe* V, The Institute for the Investigation of Communist Crimes and the Memory of the Romanian Exile (Bucharest), ed., Bucharest: Zeta-Books 2014, 193–206.

5 See for example Leszek Kolakowski, *Main Currents of Marxism: The Founders, the Golden Age, the Breakdown*, New York etc.: Norton 2008 [[1]1978]; Murray N. Rothbard, "Karl Marx as Religious Eschatologist," *MisesInstitute* (10/09/2009), https://mises.org/library/karl-marx-religious-eschatologist (25.04.2017).

6 Robert C. Tucker, "Marxism–Is it Religion?," *Ethics* 68: 2 (1958), 125–130.

7 Raymon Aron, *L'opium des intellectuels*, Paris: Gallimard 1955; Michail Ryklin, *Kommunismus als Religion. Die Intellektuellen und die Oktoberrevolution*, Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp 2008; Gerd Koenen, *Was war der Kommunismus?*, Göttingen: Vandenhoek & Ruprecht 2010.

8 Horst Heimann, "Marxismus als Fundamentalismus?," in: *Fundamentalismus in der modernen Welt. Die Internationale der Unvernunft*, Thomas Meyer, ed., Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp 1989, 213–230.

Especially in political studies after the demise of the Soviet Union, the usage of a religious vocabulary for the description of Marxist theories and politics has become a common practice, yet it remains vague and an analogy at best.[9] Thus, when Marxism is depicted as a surrogate religion and a quasi-religious ideology or worldview, the notion of a "true" or "real" religion, ideology, or worldview swirls through the air and is difficult to grasp. What the terminology reveals is that "religion" is not a neutral term, especially not in this context; rather, it serves different means and ends when used by anti-communists, Marxists, and religious practitioners: On the one hand, the notion of Marxism as religion helped to debunk Marxism-Leninism as "pseudo-religious" and thus, inter-alia also as pseudo-scientific. Conservative as well as leftist critics of communism traced its failure back to a quasi-religious veneration of the October revolution, a veneration that signals a relapse to a romantic infatuation for a doctrine, rather than a sober analysis of reality.[10] On the other hand, a reference to faith could help to explain that Marxists have endured hardship and ordeals in their endless struggle for justice because of an inner conviction one could call faith, "the strongest form of ideology;" yet, Marxist "faith" could be differentiated from other acts of faith as it has never lost its link to rationality in the way religious faith has.[11] Finally, relating the Marxist critique of exploitation to the Christian "option for the poor"[12] could also point at a common responsibility to build a better world and support a dialogue between religious believers, theologians, and Marxists, from Eastern Europe to Latin America.

Actually, references to religion can already be found in the early reception of the Bolshevist revolution. The partially-known facts paled against the meaning that was given to "the world-historical event" by critics, supporters, and sceptics. Thus, for different reasons, the reception of the revolution not only reflected a teleological understanding of history, but often bore religious or eschatological overtones. Christian opposition to socialism and communism not only long predated 1917 and saw them as a "deadly

9 Kirsch, *Weltanschauung*, 36–55.

10 See Aron, *L'opium*, Ryklin, *Kommunismus*, and Koenen, *Was war der Kommunismus?*

11 See a book written by the former politician of the SED, the PDS and The Left, Uwe-Jens Heuer (1927–2011), *Marxismus und Glaube*, Hamburg: VSA 2006, 289; also idem, "Marxismus und Glaube," *Sitzungsberichte der Leibniz-Sozietät* 87 (2006), 87–108, http://leibnizsozietaet.de/wp-content/uploads/2012/11/06_heuer1.pdf (25.04.2017). For a critique see the article by theologian and GDR politician Günther Wirth (1929–2009), "Marxismus, Glauben, Religion. Notwendige Bemerkungen zu einem Buch von Uwe-Jens Heuer," *Utopie kreativ* 201/202 (2007), 724–739.

12 On the Catholic side, the principle was articulated in the Second Vatican Council (in *Gaudium et spes*, 1965), the Latin American liberation theology since the 1960s, the encyclical *Centesimus annus* (1991) and the exhortation *Evangelii gaudium* (2013). On the Protestant side, it was for example used in the *Darmstädter Wort* (1947) by the Confessing Church (Bekennende Kirche) in Germany.

plague;"[13] for Catholics and Protestants alike, the Bolshevist regime formed the apotheosis of secularism, materialism, and a godless threat to the Christian social and moral order.[14] When the World War II alliance between the USA and the USSR broke up, Pope Pius XII (papacy 1939–1958) endorsed President Harry S. Truman's (in office 1945–1953) anti-Soviet foreign policy, "claiming its battle against communism was an extension of the church's two thousand-year conflict against evil."[15] The pro-Soviet camp, in contrast, saw the revolution as an existential moment of truth, a kairós,[16] sometimes even as the aim and end of history. A famous example of this view is the German philosopher Ernst Bloch's (1885–1977) remark "ubi Lenin, ibi Jerusalem."[17] It was not only meant as a direct criticism of the Zionist answer to the "Jewish question," but indicated that Bloch mixed Jewish messianism with his understanding of Christian heretical movements, chiliasm, and communist utopianism and saw the "Bolshevist implementation of Marxism" as a return of "the age-old fight for God … of the radical Anabaptists."[18] The British philosopher Bertrand Russell used another, more unfavourable religious analogy by comparing Bolshevists to Muslims: "Bolshevism combines the characteristics of the French Revolution with those of the rise of Islam. ... Marx has taught that Communism is fatally predestined to come about; this fits in with the oriental traits in the Russian character, and produces a state of mind not unlike that of the early successors of Mahomet."[19] Defining Bolshevism as a religion,[20] Russell confessed:

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13 See Dianne Kirby, "Christian anti-communism," *Twentieth Century Communism* 7 (2014), 126–152, 127, and the encyclical *Quod apostolici muneris* (1878) of Pope Leo XIII, which opposed socialism, communism, and nihilism. Further encyclicals, which condemned communism and socialism and declared them incompatible with the teachings of the Catholic Church were: *Quanta cura* (1864), which mainly opposed the separation of church and state; *Rerum novarum* (1891), *Quadragesimo anno* (1931), *Divini redemptoris* (1937), and *Centesimus annus* (1991).

14 Paul Hanbrink, "European Protestants Between Anti-Communism and Anti-Totalitarianism: The Other Interwar Kulturkampf?", *Journal of Contemporary History* 53: 3 (2018), 622–643.

15 Kirby, "Christian anti-communism," 135.

16 On kairós see for example Roland Boer, *In the Vale of Tears. On Marxism and Theology V*, Leiden: Brill 2014, 207–244.

17 Ernst Bloch, *Das Prinzip Hoffnung*, Gesamtausgabe Band 5/1, Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp 1959, 711. The *Principle of Hope* was written between 1938 and 1947 in American exile and published in the GDR from 1954 to 1959.

18 Ernst Bloch, *Thomas Münzer als Theologe der Revolution* (1921), Gesamtausgabe Band 2, Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp 1959, 128: „So kehrt doch gerade auch im bolschewistischen Vollzug des Marxismus der alte gotteskämpferische, der taboritisch-kommunistisch-joachimitische Typus des radikalen Täufertums erkennbar wieder."

19 Bertrand Russel, *The Practice and Theory of Bolshevism*, London: George Allen & Unwin 1920, 5 and 29; https://archive.org/details/bolshevism00russuoft (13.04.2017).

> One who believes, as I do, that the free intellect is the chief engine of human progress, cannot but be fundamentally opposed to Bolshevism, as much as to the Church of Rome. Among religions, Bolshevism is to be reckoned with Mohammedanism rather than with Christianity and Buddhism. Christianity and Buddhism are primarily personal religions, with mystical doctrines and a love of contemplation. Mohammedanism and Bolshevism are practical, social, unspiritual, concerned to win the empire of this world.[21]

Suffice it to mention that Russell's Orientalist stereotypes about Russians and Muslims had close to nothing to do with the situation of Muslims in the USSR or the reception of Bolshevism in Muslim countries, as will be shown further below.

With these examples that speak of a contradiction or an overlap between religion and Marxism, we are in the midst of socio-political struggles over meaning that cannot help us to determine what religion or the religious in Marxism "really" is; they rather show us that, at the very heart of the whole issue, lies a structural ambivalence of the relation between religion and Marxism.

In recent years, academic scholars as well as Marxists have tried to come to grips with the intersections between Marxism, religion, spirituality, atheism, and revolution.[22] Some authors are motivated to contribute to a rapprochement between Christianity and Marxism,[23] while others critically re-

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[20] Ibid, 113f: "[A] set of beliefs held as dogmas, dominating the conduct of life, going beyond or contrary to evidence, and inculcated by methods which are emotional or authoritarian, not intellectual."

[21] Ibid, 114.

[22] See the special issue "Marxism and Spirituality" of *Rethinking Marxism* 28 (2016) and the volume dedicated to the work of David McLellan: David Bates et al., eds., *Marxism, Religion, and Ideology. Themes from David McLellan*, New York, London: Routledge 2016. Also see Roland Boer, "Between Old and New: On Socialism and Revolutionary Religion," *International Journal of Žižek Studies* 10: 2 (2016), 1–22, http://zizekstudies.org/index.php/IJZS/article/view/956/949 (11.09.2017); Anindy Bhattacharyya, "Marx and Religion," *Socialist Worker* 1990 (2006), https://socialistworker.co.uk/art/8187/Marx+and+religion (25.04.2017); Dave Crouch, "The Bolsheviks and Islam," *International Socialism* 110 (2006); www.marxists.org/history/etol/newspape/isj2/2006/isj2-110/crouch.html (25.04.2017); John Molyneux, "More than Opium: Marxism and Religion," *International Socialism* 119 (2008), www.marxists.org/history/etol/writers/molyneux/2008/xx/religion.html (25.04.2017); Roland Boer, "The Full Story: On Marxism and Religion," *International Socialism* 123 (2009), http://isj.org.uk/the-full-story-on-marxism-and-religion (25.04.2017); Philip Gasper, "Marxism and Religion," *International Social Review* 63 (2009), http://isreview.org/issue/63/marxism-and-religion (25.04.2017); Alan Woods, "Marxism and Religion," *In Defense of Marxism* (2001), www.marxist.com/marxism-religion-liberation-theology220701.htm (25.04.2017).

[23] See Andrew Collier, *Christianity and Marxism: A Philosophical Contribution to Their Reconciliation*, London etc.: Routledge 2001; for a critical review see James Daley, "Salvation According to Luther and Althusser," *Journal of Critical Realism* 5: 1 (2002), 71–79. Organized religious socialists can also be visited at https://ilrs.org, the website of the International League of Religious Socialists, founded in the 1920s. "Tradi-

read a new philosophical valorisation of Christianity's and Marxism's universalism.[24] Roland Boer, author of a five-volume series on "Marxism and theology," characterized their relation as "a difficult and tempestuous love affair,"[25] when he recently finished his project. By discussing the works of Marx, Engels, and two dozen other Marxist intellectuals, Boer shows that their works bear witness to an intensive engagement with religious motives and narratives that go beyond scattered references.[26] Taking up an observation by Ernst Bloch, Boer argues that Marx and Engels developed central theoretical elements–"historical materialism," "alienation," "false consciousness," and "fetishism"–in relation and in opposition to what they saw as religion.[27]

Islam and Muslims are largely absent in these new debates on Marxism and religion, although political Islam forms a major driving force in the background of the scholarly re-thinking of the relations between politics, ideology, and religion in the 21st century. One reason for this neglect, apart from a lack of knowledge,[28] is that Marx and Engels did not discuss Islam or Muslim societies in any systematic manner. Their scattered remarks encompass some sentences on Islamic history, the "Asiatic mode of production," "Oriental despotism," and developments in colonial Algeria, Egypt, and India.[29] When Friedrich Engels, for example, wrote in 1894 that "the history of early Christianity has notable points of resemblance with the

tions of Catholicism and Communism" are listed at www.angelfire.com/md/TobyTerrar/index.html (both 25.04.2017).

24 For a critique of ideas held by the philosophers Slavoj Žižek and Alain Badiou see Nathan Coombs, "Christian Communists, Islamic Anarchists?–Part 1," *International Journal of Žižek Studies* 3: 1 (2009), 1–19, and idem, "Christian Communists, Islamic Anarchists?–Part 2," *International Zizek Studies Journal* 3: 3 (2009), 1–24, http://zizekstudies.org/index.php/IJZS/article/view/128/128 and http://zizekstudies.org/index.php/IJZS/article/view/194/194 (both 11.09.2017).

25 Roland Boer, *In the Vale of Tears. On Marxism and Theology V*, Leiden: Brill 2014, xi.

26 Roland Boer, *Criticism of Heaven. On Marxism and Theology*, Leiden: Brill 2007; idem, *Criticism of Religion: On Marxism and Theology II*, Leiden: Brill 2009; idem, *Criticism of Theology: On Marxism and Theology III*, Leiden: Brill 2011, idem: *Criticism of Earth. On Marx, Engels and Theology*, Leiden: Brill 2012; idem, *In the Vale of Tears*, 2014.

27 Boer, "The full story." Bloch writes „Niemals zu vergessen hierbei, daß ohne vorangegangene Beschäftigung mit der Religion und der sich anschließenden Religionskritik die Entfremdungslehre und Warenkritik Marxens kaum entstanden wäre," see idem, *Atheismus im Christentum. Zur Religion des Exodus und des Reichs*, Gesamtausgabe Band 14, Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp 1968, 349.

28 For sure, scholars try to fill the gaps, see for example the study on Muslims in the USSR after 1941 by Yaacov Ro'i, *Islam in the Soviet Union: From the Second World War to Gorbachev*, London: Hurst 2000.

29 For an overview of these scattered remarks see Wolfgang G. Schwanitz, "Arabischer Sozialismus," in: *Historisch-Kritisches Wörterbuch des Marxismus*, Wolfgang Fritz Haug, ed., Hamburg: Argument Verlag 2004, vol. I: 392–401, www.trafoberlin.de/pdf-dateien/ArabischerSozialismusHKWM.pdf (30.05.2017).

modern working-class movement,"[30] his remark that Islam forms a strange opposition is only a short footnote; Engels noted periodically recurring religious uprisings in Islamic history, presumably drawing on Ibn Khaldun's thesis about a permanent transition of power from effeminate, sedentary tribes in the cities to the puritan Bedouin.[31]

Another reason is that post-colonial critics since the 1970s have attacked Marxism as an inept Westernizing force, by exposing racist stereotypes in Marx's and Engels' remarks on Islam and the Middle East.[32] These attacks have been so forceful that even Marxists admit that Marx's and Engels' remarks have "proved something of an ideological embarrassment for Marxists, since their observations have often been interpreted as a justification for colonialism."[33] Some Marxists also concede that Marx's and Engels' treatment of the Middle East and Islam "regressed behind their ancestors in the tradition of European reflection on Asia."[34]

The 9/11 attacks in 2001 as well as the Arab uprisings in 2011, however, have put the relation between the left and Islam back on the agenda.[35] The question, which is differently answered by different factions of militant leftists and Muslims, is whether anti-capitalism and anti-imperialism form a sufficient basis for theoretical intersection and practical action.[36] In a simi-

30 Friedrich Engels, "Zur Geschichte des Urchristentums," Karl Marx/Friedrich Engels, Werke XXII, 447–473, 447. Here, Engels also drew the comparison that, after 300 years of persecution, Christianity–which "first appeared as the religion of slaves and emancipated slaves, of poor people deprived of all rights, of peoples subjugated or dispersed by Rome"–became the "recognized state religion in the Roman World Empire, and in barely sixty years socialism has won itself a position which makes its victory absolutely certain."

31 Ibid, footnote 1. Ibn Khaldun is not mentioned.

32 Andrej Kreutz, "Marx and the Middle East," *Arab Studies Quarterly* 5: 2 (1983), 156–171.

33 Bryan S. Turner, *Marx and the End of Orientalism*, London: George Allen & Unwin 1978, 3.

34 Perry Anderson, *Lineages of the Absolutist State*, London: New Left Books 1974, 492, quoted by Kreutz, "Marx and the Middle East," 168.

35 See for example Coombs, "Christian Communists, Islamic Anarchists," and Joseph Daher, "Marxism, the Arab Spring, and Islamic Fundamentalism," *International Social Review* 106 (2017), http://isreview.org/issue/106/marxism-arab-spring-and-islamic-fundamentalism (11.09.2017). For an overview of new Marxist literature of the relation to Muslims and Islam in past and present see the links collected on the website *modkraft*, http://spip.modkraft.dk/biblioteket/undersider/article/socialists-on-religion-on-islam and http://spip.modkraft.dk/biblioteket/undersider/article/socialists-on-religion-appendix-on (both 11.08.2017).

36 Fred Halliday, "The Left and the Jihad," *openDemocracy* 2006, www.opendemocracy.net/globalization/left_jihad_3886.jsp (30.05.2017). This question mainly worries pundits of the security sector: Hendrik Hansen and Peter Kainz, "Radical Islamism and Totalitarian Ideology: a Comparison of Sayyid Qutb's Islamism with Marxism and National Socialism," *Totalitarian Movements and Political Religions* 8: 1 (2007), 55–76; Emmanuel Karagiannis and Clark McCauley, "The Emerging Red-Green Alli-

lar vein, political Islam has triggered not only the "new atheism" movement, but also a new wave of re-reading the Marxist critique of religion, since several Marxists have taken issue with "new atheism."[37] A main point raised against the "new atheists" is that they pontificate about the incredibility, irrationality, and stupidity of religious ideas without seeing them as products of social and historical conditions, not even as fruits of intellectual endeavour. Curiously enough, one of the most articulate proponents of "new atheism" was the Anglo-American self-proclaimed "anti-theist" Christopher Hitchens (1949–2011), a former Trotskyist anti-imperialist who became an advocate of George W. Bush's "war on terror." In the title of his major work *God is Not Great* (2007), Hitchens mocked the Islamic creed and pleaded for an interventionist policy in the Middle East, arguing that it had to fight "fascism with an Islamic face."[38]

Against this multi-facetted background, the following chapter aims at deprovincializing the study of Marxism and religion in several respects. Firstly, I will argue that under the umbrella term of "religion" Islam is often neglected, although its relation to Marxism is important and somewhat different from Christianity's. Secondly, a focus on the relations between Marxists and Muslims contributes to our understanding of Marxism as a global movement and sheds light on understudied parts of European, Russian, Chinese, Asian, African, and Arab histories. Thirdly, against the prejudice that issues pertaining to Islam should mainly be explained by Islam itself, this chapter brings to the forefront the impact of socialist ideas on the Middle East and discusses the hybrid forms of Arab socialism and Islamic socialism as political rivals of communism. Fourthly, against a post-colonial critique that depicts Marx–and his followers–as Westernizers importing a foreign ideology, a historical overview sketches the different forms of adoption and adaptation of Marxist ideas by different Middle Eastern groups since the late 19th century, many of whom looked–and are still looking–for a "third way" beyond capitalism and communism.

The following analysis is based on a functionalist–not a theological–understanding of religion and a relational view on what is termed religion and what constitutes its relation to various forms of Marx-inspired politics. The terms "religion," "Islam," "Marxism," and "capitalism" do not bear

ance: Where Political Islam Meets the Radical Left," *Terrorism and Political Violence* 25 (2013), 167–182.

37 The "four horsemen" of "new atheism" are Richard Dawkins, Christopher Hitchens, Sam Harris, and Daniel Dennett. For a Marxist critique see for example Molyneux, "More than Opium," and Boer, "The Full Story." For the argument that the "newness" in "new atheism" is its condemnation of Islam, which "is consistently depicted as irrational, immoral, and, in its purest form, violent," see William W. Emilsen, "The New Atheism and Islam," *The Expository Times* 123: 11 (2012), 521–528, 524.

38 Molyneux, "More than Opium."

eternally fixed meanings, but refer to each other in complex ways. This allows for a wide-ranging ambiguity, internal to each of these four conceptions, as well as for changing relations between them. Drawing on these concepts, different actors could lend support to opposing political interests, as will be shown. For practitioners on both sides of the religious/materialist divide–no matter whether they tried to delineate incompatibility, difference, congruency, or overlap between religion and Marxism–, the supposed opposition between religion and Marxism appeared to be meaningful, and they used it to carve out their own position in a cultural and at times deadly war.

In the first part of this contribution, I start with some general remarks on the ambivalent relation between Marxism and religion and move on to the status of Islam in different phases of Soviet history. Then I briefly outline the proliferation of Marxist ideas and communist parties in Muslim countries and the Middle East, before looking at the role of atheism in communist practices in some European, Asian, African, and Arab countries. In the second part, which focuses on Nasserist Egypt, I show that Muslims mainly took offence at communism because of its atheism and materialism, which is exemplified by some *fatāwā* (legal opinions) against communism issued by Sunni scholars at the Azhar. In spite of their condemnation of communism, religious scholars, however, supported Arab or Islamic socialism, a socialism without class struggle and atheism. To this end they used opposing historical reconstructions. While they traced Arab and Islamic socialism back to early Islam, they identified the roots of communism in pre-Islamic and anti-Arab religious heresies that aimed to destroy Islam and Arabism. In the short third part, I sketch different forms of interactions between the Marxist left and Islamists in the post-Nasserist and post-Soviet era. Finally, I will briefly discuss the Muslims' contribution to the emergence of capitalism, thus arguing against the notion that Marxism has basically failed in Muslim societies, a notion which is often based on the view that Islam is essentially anti-capitalist because Muslim societies have remained outside capitalist development for a long time.

The over-all aim of this chapter is to give an overview of the multifacetted relations between Marxism and Islam that ranged from attraction over co-optation to outright hostility. These relations were open for renegotiations according to political circumstances. And since the issues of religion and social justice played an important role during the Cold War, both Marxists and representatives of religions laid claim to fundamental principles like solidarity, justice, and equality and accused their opponents of a religious or materialist takeover. Drawing on the multiple examples of interactions between (orthodox and undogmatic) Marxists and Muslims, I argue that Marxism, in spite of the demise of the USSR, formed and still

forms a powerful political imaginary (about liberation, justice, equality, and political struggle) that has even inspired its political rivals and opponents.

From Marx over the Bolshevist Revolution to the Middle East

Marx and Religion

What was new about Karl Marx's analysis of capitalism was that he was critical of religious elements in capitalism as well as in socialism, meaning that he strictly avoided treating non-religious things as religious. His socialist predecessors had instead directly drawn on biblical terms–the spirit of charity–to ground their demands. Yet, in spite of Marx's approach, socialist parties and workers' movements found themselves in opposition to representatives of state and religion, who accused them of atheism, mainly because of the close relations between crown and church in Europe. This structure started to change at the beginning of the 20th century and especially after the Great War, when the alliances between throne and altar were shaken. New organizations and networks emerged that championed religious forms of socialism and tried to bridge the gap between socialism and religion. Even a number of theologians started to embrace socio-critical ideas, and socialist intellectuals of different religious background tried to combine their worldview with arguments taken from religious history.[39]

As Marx's main subject was society, his critique was not directed against religion *per se*, but at the social conditions that formed it. Marx depicted religion as an ambivalent worldview with ambivalent effects. "*Religious* suffering is, at one and the same time, the *expression* of real suffering and a *protest* against real suffering," according to Marx's famous proclamation about religion as the people's opium, "Religion is the sigh of the oppressed creature, the heart of a heartless world, and the soul of soulless conditions."[40] Marx conceded that religion is, on the one hand, "the general theory of this world, its encyclopaedic compendium, its logic in popular form, its spiritual *point d'honneur*, its enthusiasm, its moral sanction, its solemn complement, and its universal basis of consolation and justification."[41] Yet, on the other hand, it is "an *inverted consciousness of the world*" because it is directly connected with state and society, which form "an *inverted world*."[42] Therefore, Marx concluded that the struggle against religion is "indirectly the

[39] For the intellectual history of Marxist thought in Germany see Christoph Henning, *Philosophy after Marx: 100 Years of Misreadings and the Normative Turn in Political Philosophy*, Leiden: Brill 2014.
[40] Marx, "Zur Kritik der Hegelschen Rechtsphilosophie," 378.
[41] Ibid.
[42] Ibid.

struggle *against that world* whose spiritual *aroma* is religion."[43] Marx explained that the criticism of religion "ends with the teaching that *man is the highest essence for man*–hence, with the *categorical imperative to overthrow all relations* in which man is a debased, enslaved, abandoned, despicable essence, relations which cannot be better described than by the cry of a Frenchman when it was planned to introduce a tax on dogs: Poor dogs! They want to treat you as human beings!"[44]

These sentences show that for Marx the main struggle is a political and social one, not a struggle against religion. Religion can even be part of the struggle against exploitation and its religious legitimation. This is why Marx and Engels sided with the reformation against the Catholic Church, but also with Thomas Müntzer against Luther[45], with Feuerbach against theology, and with their own materialist theory against Feuerbach and transcendence philosophy. From a Marxist point of view, the same religio-political position, though partially contributing to liberation, can be judged differently when compared with other positions. Religious views and their Marxist interpretation are not absolutes, but rather stand on relational terms. Put differently: Like religion, Marxism can theoretically be understood as both an expression of and a protest against real suffering; and like religion, it practically functioned as an ideology of both revolution and domination after 1917.

That the suppression of religious freedom would most certainly amount to political failure was already discussed by Marx and Engels. In his comments to the Gotha Program of the German Social Democrats (1875), Marx rejected state intervention in religious freedom,[46] although he also underlined that the workers' party should not only have expressed its toleration of "all possible kinds of religious freedom of conscience," but should also have made clear that it wanted to strive to liberate consciousness from "the witchery of religion."[47] Similarly, Engels derided the Blanquist act to prohibit religion by decree, arguing that "persecution is the best way of strengthening undesirable convictions" and that "the only service that can still be rendered to God today is to make atheism a compulsory dogma."[48]

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43 Ibid.

44 Ibid, 385.

45 For a detailed analysis see Hartmut Lehmann, "Das marxistische Lutherbild von Engels bis Honecker," in: idem, *Luthergedächtnis 1817 bis 2017*, Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht 2012, 257–270.

46 "Jeder muß seine religiöse wie seine leibliche Notdurft verrichten können, ohne daß die Polizei ihre Nase hineinsteckt," see Marx, "Kritik des Gothaer Programms," *Karl Marx/Friedrich Engels, Werke XIX*, 13–32, 31.

47 Ibid.

48 Friedrich Engels, "Flüchtlingsliteratur," *Karl Marx/Friedrich Engels, Werke XVIII*, 519–567, 532.

Lenin followed this line of reasoning prior to the Bolshevist revolution in articles written in 1905 and 1909 respectively, arguing for the religious freedom of the party members and against including atheism in the party program, which was, by itself, avowedly atheist.[49] Although he regarded the Russian Orthodox Church as a tool of class exploitation, he held that the anti-religious struggle should always be subordinated to the party's interests (the seizure of power) because otherwise the party's enemies would seize the opportunity to divide the proletariat along religious lines.[50]

Bolshevism and Islam

Once in power, Lenin and the Soviet State dealt with the Russian Orthodox Church as a bastion of the ancien regime and persecuted its representatives relentlessly; the other small Christian churches, especially Protestant free churches, flourished during the first decade of Bolshevist rule and the Vatican signalled its willingness to agree to a concordat up to 1927.[51] As the constitution of 1918 guaranteed the freedom of "religious and anti-religious propaganda," this meant, practically, the separation of state and education from the Russian Orthodox Church (1918) and resulted in the confiscation of church property (1921), the closure of seminaries, and the persecution and killing of priests.[52] In spite of anti-religious measures that reduced the number of Russian Orthodox parishes to 500, or one percent of the pre-revolutionary number, secret religious activities continued, even before the repression softened after 1941. Although the Soviet Union should have been an atheist state by 1937 according to Stalin's plans, census material from 1937 was classified and became accessible only in 1991, because it revealed that the number of believers in the illiterate Orthodox population

49 Vladimir Lenin, "Socialism and Religion" (1905), in: *Lenin Collected Works 10*, Moscow: Progress Publishers 1965, 83–87; idem, "The Attitude of the Workers' Party to Religion" (1909), in: *Collected Works 15*, Moscow: Progress Publishers 1973, 402–413. Both articles are available at www.marxists.org/archive/lenin/works/cw (10.04.2017). Compare Crouch, "The Bolsheviks and Islam."

50 Wolfgang Heller, "Die Russisch-Orthodoxe Kirche 1917–1941," in: *Politik und Religion in der Sowjetunion 1917–1941*, Christoph Gassenschmidt and Ralph Tuchtenhagen, eds., Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz 2001, 13–46, 22.

51 See for example Gassenschmidt and Tuchtenhagen, *Politik und Religion*; Dimitry V. Pospielovsky, *A History of Soviet Atheism in Theory, and Practice, and the Believer*, 2 volumes, New York: St Martin's Press 1987/88; Crouch, "The Bolsheviks and Islam;" Kirby, "Christian anti-communism," 127; Winfried Becker, "Diplomats and Missionaries: The Role Played by the German Embassies in Moscow and Rome in the Relations between Russia and the Vatican from 1921 to 1929," *Catholic Historical Review* 92 (2006), 25–45, 32.

52 For a short overview see Glenn E. Curtis, ed., *Russia: A Country Study,* Washington: GPO for the Library of Congress 1996 on http://countrystudies.us/russia/38.htm (31.03.2017).

made up 67.9 percent, "while among the literate, the number was 79.2 percent."[53] The problem with these figures was not only that the Stalinist party program of the 1930s had declared education an important element for overcoming religion as well as for achieving the transition from socialism to communism, but that education seemed to have had the opposite effect since the percentage of believers among the literate was even higher.

The Bolshevist approach to Islam, the second religion in the Russian Empire in 1917 (16 million followers, ten percent of the population), was at first different from their treatment of the Orthodoxy because the Bolshevists regarded Muslims as colonized peoples and promised them national, religious, and cultural autonomy in order to win them over. In their appeal to the "toiling and disinherited Muslims in Russia and the East", Lenin and Stalin urged them to support "the revolution and plenipotentiary government":

> Moslems of Russia, Tartars of the Volga and the Crimea, Kirghiz, and Sarts of Siberia and Turkestan, Turks and Tartars of Transcaucasia, Chechens and Mountaineers of the Caucasus–all those whose mosques and chapels have been destroyed, whose beliefs and customs have been trampled upon by the tsars and oppressors of Russia! Henceforth your beliefs and customs, your national and cultural institutions, are free and inviolable. Build your national life freely and unhindered. You have a right to do so. (…) Not at the hands of Russia and her revolutionary government does slavery await you, but at the hands of the marauders of European imperialism, of those who converted our fatherland into their ravished and plundered "colony."[54]

In September, 1920, the Communist International organized the "Congress of the Peoples of the East" with 1891 delegates in Baku, issuing a call for a "holy war" (*jihād*) against British imperialism.[55] Upon his stay in Moscow in 1923, the Indonesian communist Tan Malaka (1897–1947), who was convinced of the compatibility of religion and communism, could not only publish books in Russian, but was also appointed the Comintern representative for Southeast Asia.[56]

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53 Kira V. Tsekhanskaia, "Russia: Trends in Orthodox Religiosity in the Twentieth Century (Statistics and Realty)," in: *Religion and Politics in Russia: A Reader*, Marjorie Mandelstam Balzer, ed., New York: Routledge 2010, 3–17, 7.

54 Council of People's Commissars "Appeal to the Moslems of Russia and the East," *Izvestija* (7 December 1917), http://soviethistory.msu.edu/1921-2/the-muslim-east/the-muslim-east-texts/appeal-to-the-moslems-of-russia-and-the-east (11.04.2017) (Slightly revised translation).

55 Brian Pearce (trans.), *Congress of the Peoples of the East, Baku, September 1920. Stenographic Report, translated and annotated by Brian Pearce*, New York: New Park Publications 1977. www.marxists.org/history/international/comintern/baku/cpe-baku-pearce.pdf (29.05.2017).

56 On this see Stephen Suleyman Schwartz, *Islam and Communism in the 20th Century. An Historical Survey*, London: Center for Islamic Pluralism 2009, 1–30, 3. www.islamicpluralism.org/documents/islam-communism.pdf (30.05.2017). See also Maka-

In the early years after the revolution, the Soviets had neither a clear idea of Islam nor a clear strategy on how to deal with it.[57] Although they confiscated the assets and lands of religious endowments (*awqāf*) in Central Asia and tried to eliminate religious influence from state, law, and schools, they temporarily backpedalled in 1922, giving up the confiscated assets for free and allowing parallel Sharia courts (for family affairs and smaller crimes) as well as parallel Islamic schools.[58] They not only lacked sufficient means to establish a region-wide secular school system, but still struggled to gain full control over Central Asian territories. From 1917 to 1926, the so-called "Muslim clergy" was allowed to convene congresses, elect the *muftī* and his *qāḍīs* in the reformed Muslim Spiritual Administration, and voice its demands; the *muftī* could also travel abroad to praise Soviet anti-colonial policy.[59]

In the "relatively pluralistic period"[60] until 1927, Soviet academic scholars offered different answers to the question of the class character of Islam and Muslim societies. While some argued that Islam was trade-capitalist by nature, since it emerged from the trading community of Mecca, others held that Islam reflected the interest of peasants and the Bedouin, and found pristine communist elements in Islam. In this context, Bandalī Jawzī (1871–1942), who descended from a Christian family in Jerusalem and had taught Arabic Literature in Kazan and Baku since the end of the 19th century, wrote a study on socio-revolutionary movements in early Islam, published in Arabic in Jerusalem.[61] Drawing on the Persian and Zoroastrian Babak's (d. 838) revolt against the Arab caliphate, he argued that remnants of this movement were assimilated by various revolutionary Shiite groups like the Ismailites and Qarmatians, which followed similar social and "internationalist" goals and in-

la's speech at the Comintern in 1922, in which he equated Pan-Islamism with "the practical liberation struggle" of "all the oppressed Muslim peoples," Tan Makala, "Communism and Pan-Islamism," www.whatnextjournal.org.uk/Pages/Back/Wnext21/Panislam.html (11.08.2017).

57 Michael Kemper, "The Soviet Discourse on the Origin and Class Character of Islam, 1923–1933," *Die Welt des Islams* 49 (2009), 1–48; idem, "Red Orientalism: Mikhail Pavlovich and Marxist Oriental Studies in Early Soviet Russia," *Die Welt des Islams* 50 (2010), 435–476; Greg Castillo, "Soviet Orientalism: Socialist Realism and Built Tradition," *Traditional Dwellings and Settlements Review* 8: 2 (1997), 33–47.

58 Frank Nesemann, "Der Sowjetstaat und der Islam 1917–1941," in: Gassenschmidt and Tuchtenhagen, *Politik und Religion*, 207–234, 214–216.

59 See Michael Kemper, "From 1917 to 1937: The Muftī, the Turkologist, and Stalin's Terror", *Die Welt des Islams* 57 (2017), 162–191, 169, 171 and 172f.

60 Kemper, "The Soviet Discourse," 1.

61 Bandalī Jawzī, *Min tārikh al-ḥarakāt al-fikriyya fī l-Islām*, Jerusalem 1928; Tamara Sonn, *Interpreting Islam. Bandali Jawzi's Islamic Intellectual History*, New York: Oxford Univ. Press 1996.

fluenced many Muslim philosophers and Sufis.[62] Similar views were also expressed by the Volga Tatar Zinatullah Navshirvanov and his (anonymous) wife in 1923, who detected several forms of (primitive) communism from the times of Muḥammad up to heterodox and Sufi movements, in the revolts against the feudal systems of ʿAbbasid, Selcuk, and Ottoman dynasties; the climax of this "Sufi communist movement" was Shaykh Bedreddin of Simavna, executed by the Ottomans in 1416, whose disciples set up the "first revolutionary government of Anatolia."[63]

Under Stalin, after the Bolshevists had won the Civil War, the approach to religion in general and to Islam in particular changed fundamentally. Not only was the League of the Godless (1925) and the subsequent League of the Militant Godless (1929) established, a new law for religious communities prohibited "religious propaganda" (1929). By the end of the 1920s, the view had crystallized that Islam was "feudal" in character and had not emerged as a progressive protest movement. This theory was taught to students of colonial countries from outside the USSR via the Communist University of the Toilers of the East (CUT)[64] between 1921 and the late 1930s and after that via different universities in the Soviet Union. The scholar Liutsian Klimovich (1907–1989), member of the League of the Militant Godless in his hometown Kazan, even argued in 1930 that the Quran and Muḥammad were mere inventions.[65] Such views underpinned the increasing pressure on Islamic institutions and Muslims.[66]

By then, the Communist Party had already initiated the so-called *hücum* ("attack") in Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Transcaucasia, an unveiling campaign which started on International Women's Day, 8 March, 1927, and sought to eradicate the practice of wearing the *burqa*-like *paranja* within six months, just in time to celebrate the tenth anniversary of the revolution.[67] The Party's Women's Department (Zhenotdel), mostly com-

62 Tamara Sonn, "Bandali al-Jawzi's Intellectual History of Islam: an Original Interpretation from Azerbaijan," *Islamic Studies* 33 (1994), 203–226, 214–216.

63 Kemper, "The Soviet Discourse," 6–8, 7.

64 Students included, among others, the Syrian Secretary-General Khālid Bakdāsh (1912–1995), the Iraqi First Secretary Yūsuf Salmān Yūsuf (1901–1949), and the Turkish poet Nâzım Hikmet (1902–1963).

65 On Klimovich see Kemper, "The Soviet Discourse," 28–34; on the lecture "Did Muḥammad Exist?" ibid., 32f.

66 See Kemper, "The Soviet Discourse," and idem, "From 1917 to 1937."

67 Douglas Northrop, *Veiled Empire: Gender and Power in Stalinist Central Asia*, Ithaca: Cornell Univ. Press 2004; idem, "Hujum: unveiling campaigns and local responses in Uzbekistan, 1927," in: *Provincial Landscapes: Local Dimensions of Soviet Power, 1917–1953*, Donald J. Raleigh, ed., Pittsburgh: Univ. of Pittsburgh Press 2001, 125–145; Adrienne Edgar, "Bolshevism, patriarchy, and the nation: the Soviet 'emancipation' of Muslim women in pan-Islamic perspective," *Slavic Review* 65: 2 (2006), 252–272.

posed of Russian and other Slavic members, believed that the status of Muslim women could be elevated by this campaign.

> As late as August 1925–only slightly more than one year before the *hujum* started–the main speaker at an all-Uzbek Zhenotdel meeting portrayed unveiling as positively un-Bolshevik, arguing that ensuring the "economic and material security of women is the fundamental path for the solution of the 'woman question'" … .[68]

The campaign met with different forms of opposition and resistance and turned the *paranja* into an identity marker. It further increased the social pressures on unveiled women and led to different forms of harassment, "in which thousands of Uzbek women were attacked, raped, even murdered and mutilated", so that special laws were passed "deeming such acts 'counter-revolutionary' state crimes, and 'terrorist acts' meriting the death penalty."[69]

These reactions to the *hücum* campaign provided the pretext and set the stage for the following crackdown on the so-called "anti-progressive" Islamic institutions and their representatives. New legislative and administrative measures–like the decree for the obligatory registration of religious communities (1929)–provided the Bolshevists with the opportunity to outlaw most Islamic communities, nationalize the religious endowments, and prohibit alms-giving (*zakāh*).[70] The number of mosques decreased to 1,300 (from more than 26,000), the number of religious scholars (*ʿulamāʾ*) to about 8,800 (from several ten thousands) until 1941.[71] The Gulag system had a category of prisoners called "Arabists," whose ability to read Islamic texts in Arabic was deemed "hostile to the state;" many of the Marxist writers of Islam as well as Muslim communists perished in Stalin's terror.[72] Apart from these measures, the nationality and language policy aimed at artificially separating Muslims from each other. On the one hand, different dialects were treated as "languages," which helped to separate Turkestan into five Soviet republics in the mid-1920s.[73] On the other hand, alphabets based on Latin script–"the international script of the coming world revolution"–were imposed in the Muslim regions at the end of the 1920s, but replaced by the Cyrillic script between 1937 and 1940. Thus, Muslims were

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68 Northrop, *Veiled Empire,* 81. That "Bolshevik women were encouraged to wear the hijab to enter the villages to help educate young Muslim women" before Stalin's campaign against the veil, is mentioned by Chris Bambery, "The Moon and the Stars: Bolshevism and Islam," *Counterfire* (15.02.2017), www.counterfire.org/articles/history/18769-the-moon-and-stars-bolshevism-and-islam (11.08.2017).

69 Douglas Northrop, "Subaltern dialogues: subversion and resistance in Soviet Uzbek family law," *Slavic Review* 60: 1 (2001), 115–139, 119.

70 Nesemann, "Der Sowjetstaat und der Islam," 219f.

71 Ibid, 221.

72 Ibid, 222; also Kemper, "The Soviet Discourse," and Ben Fowkes and Bülent Gökay, "Unholy Alliance: Muslims and Communists–An Introduction," *Journal of Communist Studies and Transition Politics* 25: 1 (2009), 1–31, 14f.

73 Nesemann, "Der Sowjetstaat und der Islam," 218.

not only separated from their cultural heritage written in Arabic script, but also from the Republic of Turkey, which started to use Latin script after the language reform in 1928.[74] A growing Russification in the school system, from the 1930s onwards, additionally widened the artificial gulf to include Uyghurs and Kazakhs in China, Tajiks and Uzbeks in Afghanistan, and Azeri-Turks in Iran.

The number of Muslims inside communist party organizations in the predominantly Muslim parts of the USSR had steadily grown until the end of the 1920s. Because many shared pan-Turk and pan-Islamic ambitions, they met with growing suspicion and, as the highest ranks were reserved for Russians, they were also more likely to fall victim to the Great Purge like, for example, the Volga-Tatar Mirsaid Sultan-Galiev (1880–1940) and his supporters.[75] Sultan-Galiev, who became a Communist Party member prior to the October revolution, was active in organizing the defence against the Whites in Kazan in 1918 and 1919 and became the highest ranking Muslim in the Bolshevist party apparatus in Moscow, working together with Stalin in the People's Commissariat of Nationalities (Narkomnats), where he spoke for the Tatar Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic (TASSR), created in 1920 with Kazan as its capital. Arguing that the revolution also meant a liberation of non-Russians from their Russian masters, he worked to form an autonomous republic for Turk peoples which might also include non-Turk Muslims. In 1923 he was arrested and expelled from the party on the charges of nationalist, pan-Islamic, and pan-Turk deviations. When freed the following year, he intensified his plans to form an "International of colonized peoples," believing that "Islam was the key to throwing off the yoke of imperialism in its domain" and tried to form a "union of colonized peoples against the metropolitans."[76] He was arrested again, convicted of the same charges, and finally executed.

The German assault on the Soviet Union in 1941 instigated a religio-political course correction. After the crackdown on religious institutions in Russia and Central Asia in the 1930s, Stalin now sought a *modus vivendi* with the Russian Orthodox Church and the other religions in order to enhance the Soviet peoples' resilience in the face of the assault. For Muslims, the war had two contrary effects. Under the pretext of collaboration with the German occupiers of Crimea, the Crimean Tatars and other pre-dominantly

74 Ibid, 222f.

75 On Galiev see Maxime Rodinson, "A Forgotten Precursor," in: idem, *Marxism and the Muslim World*, London: Zed Books 2015, 133–141; Fowkes and Gökay "Unholy Alliance," 4f. On the background of the growing tensions between Stalin and Galiev see also Alfred J. Rieber, *Stalin and the Struggle for Supremacy in Eurasia*, Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press 2015, 72–80.

76 Sonn, "Intellectual History," 210.

Muslim "nationalities" from the Caucasus were deported in 1943 and 1944 to Siberia and Central Asia. At the same time, four spiritual administrations for Muslims in the USSR were created, headed by muftis, all of whom had been in exile, prison, or banishment before.[77]

With the final consolidation of Soviet rule after the war, the Bolsheviks accepted loyal religious activities within narrow limits. In Bukhara and Tashkent–towns which once were famous for having over a hundred schools for Islamic teaching (*madrasa*s)–two schools of higher education became the only legally accessible Islamic universities in the Soviet Union: The Mir-i-Arab Madrasa in Bukhara, founded in 1540, shut down in the 1920s and re-established in 1945, and the Baraq-Khan Madrasa in Tashkent (1956–1961), which was turned into the Tashkent Islamic Institute of Imam Bukhari in 1971.[78] Official religious scholars aimed to reconcile Islam with science, presented it as a bulwark of progress and peace, and portrayed Muḥammad as a reformer, revolutionary, and socialist.[79] For this purpose, the official monthly "Muslims of the Soviet East" was published in Tashkent from 1968.

As the Soviets sought to transform Central Asia into a "display window,"[80] the relationship between Islam and the Soviet Union has been described as "a growing process of give and take,"[81] since Central Asia "became the most technologically advanced region in the Islamic world"[82] since the 1950s. In spite of a similarly devastating crackdown on its religious institutions and education system, Islam, as a religion and an identity, was less competitive with communism than Christianity;[83] Communist Party members throughout Central Asia could publicly appear as self-proclaimed Muslims, although atheist ones, since Muslim identity was treated as part of an ethnic or national marker.[84]

The Reception of Marxist and Bolshevist Ideas in the Middle East

The adoption and reworking of Marxist ideas in the Ottoman Empire, the Middle East, North Africa, and Muslim-majority countries happened in

77 Nesemann, "Der Sowjetstaat und der Islam," 226.
78 Ashirbek Muminov, Uygun Gafurov, and Rinat Shigabdinov, "Islamic Education in Soviet and post-Soviet Uzbekistan", in: *Islamic Education in the Soviet Union and Its Successor States*, Michael Kemper, Raoul Motika and Stefan Reichmuth, eds., London: Routledge 2010, 223–279, 250f.
79 Seyfettin Erşahin, "The Interpretation of Islam under the Soviet Regime," *Journal für Religionskultur* 77 (2005), 1–19.
80 Schwartz, *Islam and Communism*, 13.
81 Paul Froese, "'I am an Atheist and a Muslim': Islam, Communism, and Ideological Competition," *Journal of Church and State* 47: 3 (2005), 473–501, 487.
82 Ibid.
83 Ibid, 498.
84 Ibid, 497.

several stages that can be divided into the period before World War I, the interwar period, the Cold War, and the period after the demise of the USSR. As the Eastern Mediterranean formed an internationalized labour market since the mid-19th century, workers and worker movement activists were formative in spreading Marxism and Anarchism at the turn of the century, often inspired by their European co-workers and European–mainly British, French, Italian or Greek–anti-imperialists.[85] The interwar period saw the formation of communist parties in most Arab countries or countries with a Muslim-majority population. The 1960s and 1970s were characterized by the formation of a new left and the Sino-Russian conflict, both of which also left their imprint on the Middle East. In the 1990s, Marxists tried to revise their policies, while the formation of a "new new left" has taken shape in recent years.[86]

The first socialist and Marxist organizations in the late Ottoman period were founded as underground groups by members of non-Muslim minorities.[87] After the Young Turk Revolution in 1908, Avraam Benaroya, a Sephardic Jew from Bulgaria and member of the Bulgarian Social Democratic Workers' Party, formed the most powerful workers' movement, the Socialist Workers' Federation, in Salonika, which included all ethnic and nationalist

85 Ilham Khuri-Makdisi, *The Eastern Mediterranean and the Making of Global Radicalism, 1860–1914*, Berkeley: Univ. of California Press 2010; Joel Beinin and Zachary Lockman, *Workers on the Nile: Nationalism, Communism, Islam and the Egyptian Working Class, 1882–1954*, Princeton: Princeton Univ. Press 1987; Joel Beinin, *Workers and Peasants in the Modern Middle East*, Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press 2001.

86 See Jacques Couland, Ziba Moshaver and William Hale, "Shuyuʿiyya," *Encyclopedia of Islam*^{2} IX, Leiden: Brill 1997, 517–524; Anne Alexander, "Communism in the Islamic World," in: *The Oxford Handbook of the History of Communism*, Stephen A. Smith, ed., Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press 2014, 268–284; Sami A. Hanna and George H. Gardner, eds., *Arab Socialism. A Documentary Survey*, Leiden: Brill 1969; Tareq Y. Ismael, *The Communist Movement in the Arab World*, London: Routledge 2005; Orit Bashkin, *The Other Iraq. Pluralism and Culture in Hashemite Iraq*, Stanford: Stanford Univ. Press 2009; Roel Meijer, *Quest for Modernity. Secular Liberal and Left-Wing Political Thought in Egypt 1945–1958*, London: Routledge 2002; Hanna Batatu, *The Old Social Classes and the Revolutionary Movements of Iraq: A Study of Iraq's Old Landed and Commercial Classes and of its Communists, Baʿthists, and Free Officers*, Princeton: Princeton Univ. Press 1978; Faleh A. Jabar, "The Arab Communist Parties in Search of an Identity," in: *Post-Marxism and the Middle East*, idem, ed., London: Saqi Books 1997; Sune Haugbolle, "Bassem Chit and Revolutionary Socialism in Lebanon," *Middle East Topics and Arguments* 6 (2016), 65–74.

87 These groups were the Hunchak (1887), founded by Armenian Marxists, the Dashnak, founded by Armenian Socialists and Nationalists, the Bulgarian Social Democratic Workers' Party (1891) and the Internal Macedonian Revolutionary Organization (1892), see Yavuz Köse, "'Ich bin Sozialist, gib mir die Hälfte deines Vermögens.' Rezeption des Sozialismus und Kommunismus in spätosmanischer Zeit (1870–1914)," in: *Judaism, Christianity, and Islam in the Course of History: Exchange and Conflicts*, Lothar Gall and Dietmar Willoweit, eds., München: Oldenbourg 2011, 105–122, 111; also see George S. Harris, *The Origins of Communism in Turkey*, Stanford, Calif.: Hoover Inst. on War, Revolution and Peace 1967.

groups;[88] he later also played a key role in the foundation of the Communist Party in Greece in 1918. In Egypt, the drive for equality and full citizenship made Syrian Christians–Faraḥ Anṭūn, Shiblī Shumayyil, and Niqūlā Ḥaddād–and the Coptic intellectual Salāma Mūsā the foremost advocates of socialism in the Arab world in the opening decades of the 20th century.[89] Generally speaking, the members of religious and ethnic minority groups (Jews, Berbers, Armenians, Kurds, Alawites, Druze, and Shiites), who suffered discrimination from the state or the social majority, were often over-represented in socialist and communist parties in North Africa and the Middle East since they were inclined to openly downplay religious or ethnic identities in politics and rather underlined the communalities of all human beings or internationalism.

While communist groups that came into being from Morocco to Indonesia after the Bolshevist revolution remained relatively small in membership in the 1920s, they began to attract broader support in the emerging middle class (students, lawyers, journalists, and teachers) since the 1940s.[90] Migrant workers, teachers, and students also spread leftist ideas in the Gulf region since the 1940s.[91] After strikes in the Saudi oil industry in 1953 in 1956 and a harsh crackdown, they were forced underground or into exile, but managed to maintain transnational networks. As the situation in every Arab country was different, and the conditions for Marxist activities changed over time, phases of toleration and co-optation followed phases of persecution, which made the Marxists adopt parliamentarian, authoritarian, clandestine, and armed tactics.[92]

Mostly, the communist party of the colonial power was a key link between the local groups and Moscow.[93] That the Soviet, French, and British communist parties were ideologically dogmatic, but politically pragmatic often created difficulties for Marxists in colonial countries. This became visible in their hesitant support for the national independence movement in Algeria and Palestine and, more generally, in their backing-down on their own interests for the sake of geo-political deliberations by their Soviet or European counterparts. For example, the largest Egyptian communist organization, *al-Ḥaraka al-Dimuqrāṭiyya li-l-Taḥarrur al-Waṭanī* (HADITU,

88 Köse, "'Ich bin Sozialist'," 113.

89 Donald M. Reid, "The Syrian Christians and Early Socialism in the Arab World," *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 5 (1974), 177–193.

90 Alexander, "Communism," 273.

91 Toby Matthiesen, "Migration, Minorities, and Radical Networks: Labour Movements and Opposition Groups in Saudi-Arabia, 1950–1975," *International Review of Social History* 59: 3 (2014), 473–504.

92 For the trajectories of some of the major Arab communist parties see Ismael, *The Communist Movement*.

93 Alexander, "Communism," 273.

Democratic Movement for National Liberation), had to face "stern criticism by leading figures in the British and French communist parties for its initial support for the Free Officers, partly because Soviet leaders were concerned that the Free Officers might be pro-American."[94] The British CP proposed a common front between HADITU and the Muslim Brotherhood, "which it had previously characterized as fascist."[95] With the nationalization of the Suez Canal and the Tripartite Aggression in 1956, the Soviet Union changed its assessment and declared ʿAbd al-Nāṣir (1918–1970) the leader of a "victorious national revolution."[96]

That the 20th Party Congress of the CPSU in 1956 adopted a new strategy, supporting "national independence movements" and "non-capitalist development" in post-colonial countries, made Soviet foreign policy more flexible in its search for allies, even in cases like in Egypt, where a regime which aligned itself with the Soviets, persecuted, imprisoned and tortured local communists. The new strategy also helped local communists to take the role of junior partners in authoritarian regimes that pledged themselves to state-led modernization. However, when the hopes for economic and political modernization were shaken by the 1970s, "the communist movement itself fragmented, as dissident groups critical of the alliances with nationalist regimes emerged."[97]

South Yemen was the only Arab country and–besides Albania (1944–1991), Somalia (1969–1977), and Afghanistan (1978–1992)–one of the few Muslim-majority countries under Marxist-Leninist rule (1969–1990). With Soviet blessings and at South Yemen's request, East Germany implemented what can be termed "a socialist state- and nation-building policy close to neo-colonialist aspirations."[98] Since East Berlin was tasked by the Soviet Union to develop the fields of law, governance, economy, education, media, and the security apparatus, it tried to model the People's Democratic Republic of Yemen according to its own version of a socialist state; Soviet support for its close Yemeni ally was mainly restricted to military and ideological concerns.

94 Ibid, 276.
95 Ibid.
96 Ibid.
97 Ibid, 277f. A telling example is the fragmentation of Syrian communists and Marxists since 1970.
98 Miriam M. Müller, *A Spectre is Haunting Arabia. How the Germans Brought Their Communism to Yemen*, Bielefeld: Transcript 2015, 376.

The Role of Atheism in Communist State-Building

Although militant atheism was a determining element of Soviet politics, it was not a central element of its ideology.[99] This subtlety–that atheism is only a side effect of a materialistic worldview–explains not only Lenin's flexibility, but becomes more obvious, when the Soviet practices are compared to the practices of other socialist regimes or communist parties in Muslim-majority countries. The establishment of communist regimes after World War II generally went hand in hand with the suppression of independent religious organizations, the abolition of religious courts and schools, and the cooptation of those religious scholars who survived persecution. Yet, the anti-religious rationale locally played out in different trajectories and different phases of persecution and accommodation.

In Yugoslavia, after the liberation from German occupation, the communists under Josip Broz Tito (1892–1980) subdued aspirations for autonomy among Muslims in Bosnia by means which also included massacres and expulsions in 1948.[100] Muslims were forced to choose between a Croatian or Serbian identity, and the central mosque in Zagreb was torn down. This policy of assimilation was gradually loosened beginning in 1955, and in 1968 Bosnians were recognized as a "Muslim nationality" alongside four other nationalities, while their fellow Muslims in Kosovo and Macedonia were still treated separately and counted among the respective Albanian and Macedonian nationalities. Former restrictions on religious life–like restrictions on performing the *hajj* to Mecca–were removed, Sufism was permitted to revive, the building of mosques and the opening of madrasas for religious instruction were allowed again, and children could receive religious education.[101] Sarajevo thus became a center for state-visits by politicians and religious representatives from all over the Muslim world.

In neighboring Albania, in a kind of reverse process, the first decades of communist rule were characterized by cooptation, "with the appointment of official heads of both the Sunni community and the Bektashi Sufis, who had the job of pretending to the outside world that Muslims were both well-

[99] The three defining elements of Marxism-Leninism, as formulated by Stalin in 1938, were dialectical and historical materialism (as the historical and epistemological basis), political economy (as the sociological understanding of the relations of productions), and scientific communism (as the doctrine of class struggle and revolution). These elements constituted Marxism-Leninism as a "scientific worldview," which was opposed to superstition and religion and, because of its philosophical and practical consequences, "immanently atheistic."

[100] On Yugoslavia see Durán Khalid, "Der Islam in der Diaspora: Europa und Amerika," in: *Der Islam in der Gegenwart*, Werner Ende and Udo Steinbach, eds., München: Beck ^{3}1991, 440–469, 440–448.

[101] Fowkes and Gökay, "Unholy Alliance," 18.

treated and entirely supportive of the communist government."[102] After the break with Yugoslavia in 1948 and the USSR in 1961, Enver Hoxha (1908–1985) started to rely massively on Chinese support (until 1978) and followed Mao's example of a Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution (1966–1976), declaring Albania "the first atheist state on earth," whereby all places of worship were closed, all religious communities dissolved, and religious names forbidden.[103] The Chinese Red Guards, at the same time, also mounted attacks on, among others, Muslim believers in Xinjiang (East Turkestan), destroying mosques and cultural assets, and prohibiting the study of the Quran.[104] Prior to these attacks, pressure on Muslims in Xinjiang had steadily increased after the Soviets, who had indirectly controlled the regional players since the 1930s, helped to bring the multi-ethnic region under Chinese communist rule.[105] After the takeover, the Chinese communists created the state-controlled Islamic Association of China (1953), curbed traditional Muslim activities, and facilitated the settlement of Han Chinese in Xinjiang, which earned them the charge of a "Sinicization" of the region, levelled at them by Uyghur activists and the Soviets after the Sino-Soviet split (since 1960).

The German Democratic Republic has never defined itself as an atheistic state; atheism was rather the "unloved stepchild"[106] of GDR philosophy, and the term as such was used sparsely.[107] Although the historian of philosophy Hermann Ley (1911–1990) wrote a multi-volume history of atheism, an academic research focus on atheism comparable to the USSR could not be established, and the only professorship for "scientific atheism" was a short-lived institution in the 1960s.[108] The subject as such was an import from the USSR and the bulk of publications on atheism appeared at the end of the 1950s and in the early 1960s, at the height of the Cold War.[109] Beginning in 1973, however, the state and the "churches in socialism" aimed at an arrangement, after different incidents of confrontation and attempts at rapprochement.[110] After the self-immolation of Pastor Oskar

[102] Ibid.
[103] Ibid.
[104] Thomas Heberer, "Volksrepublik China," in: *Der Islam in der Gegenwart*, Werner Ende and Udo Steinbach, eds., München: Beck ^{5}2005, 306–318, 313.
[105] On this see for example Eva-Maria Stolberg, *Stalin und die chinesischen Kommunisten 1945–1953. Eine Studie zur Entstehungsgeschichte der sowjetisch-chinesischen Allianz vor dem Hintergrund des Kalten Krieges*, Stuttgart: Fritz Steiner 1997.
[106] Manfred Lauermann, "Der Atheismus – das ungeliebte Stiefkind der DDR-Philosophie," in: *Atheismus: Ideologie, Philosophie oder Mentalität?*, Richard Faber and Susanne Lanwerd, eds., Würzburg: Königshausen & Neumann 2006, 121–147.
[107] Horst Groschopp, "Atheismus und Realsozialismus in der DDR," *humanismus aktuell* 20 (2007), 62–83.
[108] Kirsch, *Weltanschauung*, 374f. For the USSR see Konstantin Antonov, "Der 'wissenschaftliche Atheismus' in der UdSSR," *una sancta* 67: 2 (2012), 115–124.
[109] Lauermann, "Der Atheismus," Kirsch, *Weltanschauung*, 375.
[110] Lauermann, "Der Atheismus," 134; Wirth, "Marxismus, Glauben, Religion ," 734f.

Brüsewitz (1929–1976), who protested against the repression of religion, denigrating reports about him and his action appeared in the state media. In order to control the damage caused by these reports, the state changed direction and the head of the State Council, Erich Honecker (1912–1994), agreed to his only-ever reception of high church representatives in 1978. Finally, a common commemorative year for Marx and Luther, who was formerly also dubbed "the gravedigger of revolution," was held in 1983.[111]

With these examples in mind, it is therefore not surprising that–in the broader context of anti-colonial struggles and post-World War II nation-building–communist organizations in Muslim-majority countries, which did not hold political power, were instructed by Moscow not to engage in anti-religious propaganda, but to forge alliances with "progressive" bourgeois forces.[112] They adopted a rather lenient approach on religion and Islam, which appeared inconsistent or outright opportunistic. The fact, for example, that the Iraqi Communist Party had mounted an anti-religious campaign in 1929–in order to "liberate the Arab woman from the fetters of degradation and ignorance"–was already in 1935 seen as a serious tactical error.[113] In contrast, the communists in Indonesia not only tried to reconcile Marxism with Islam, but openly adopted, in 1960, President Sukarno's (1901–1970) *pancasila* (Five Principles), the first of which stipulated "belief in one God," hoping that this would appeal to Muslims or at least help "to avoid rejection out of hand as a party of atheists."[114] This did not, however, prevent top army leaders and the main Muslim organizations from calling for the annihilation of the Communist Party after an alleged attempted coup, shortly after Sukarno had declared in 1965 that Indonesia had to enter the second stage of its revolution, namely socialism; thousands of

[111] For the background of this shift see Hartmut Lehmann, "The Rehabilitation of Martin Luther in the GDR; or, Why Thomas Müntzer Failed to Stabilise the Moorings of Socialist Ideology," in: *Religion and the Cold War*, Dianne Kirby, ed., Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan 2003, 200–210; idem, "Die 15 Thesen der SED über Martin Luther" and "Zur Entstehung der 15 Thesen über Martin Luther für die Luther-Ehrung der DDR im Jahre 1983", in: idem, *Luthergedächtnis 1817 bis 2017*, 213–231 and 232–256. Also see *Der Spiegel*, "Mit Herrn Luther ist alles in Butter" (07.03.1983), www.spiegel.de/spiegel/print/d-14018281.html (12.04.2017); Axel Noack, "Das Jahr, in dem Luther zum Nationalhelden wurde" (06.03.2017), www.mitteldeutsche-kirchenzeitungen.de/2017/03/06/das-jahr-in-dem-luther-zum-nationalhelden-der-ddr-wurde (12.04.2017); Webpage *Luther2017*, "Altbischof Leich: Honecker feierte das Lutherjahr 1983 'mit einer Träne im Knopfloch'," https://www.luther2017.de/de/wiki/jubilaeum/altbischof-leich-honecker-feierte-das-lutherjahr-1983-mit-einer-traene-im-knopfloch (12.04.2017).

[112] Fowkes and Gökay, "Unholy Alliance," 18.

[113] Ibid, 15 and footnote 66.

[114] Ibid, 21.

communists were massacred without any resistance and the army moved to depose Sukarno.[115]

Another example of a pro-Islamic stance is provided by the Indian communists prior to the partition of India. When the allied powers helped the USSR to fight the German assault after 1941, the communists took sides with Britain and also preferred the All-India Muslim League to the Indian National Congress, because the latter started a "Quit India" campaign against the colonial power just at that time. While the Congress leadership was imprisoned, the communists were allowed to act freely and supported Muhammad Ali Jinnah's (1876–1948) two-nation-theory, which claimed that India was inhabited by two nations, Muslims and Hindus. On the basis of Stalin's nationality theory, the communists listed 16 Indian "nations," based on language and religion, in a resolution in 1942. They thus collaborated with the Muslim League in its aim of partition, on the grounds that Jinnah, later the first president of Pakistan, stood for secular and even anti-religious politics.[116] Accordingly, the communists also partitioned–and weakened–their own party organization by sending Muslim members to East and West Pakistan to help form communist organizations there in early 1948.

In South Yemen, the East German constitution of 1968 served as the blueprint for the Yemeni constitution of 1970; nevertheless the GDR advisers obviously saw no problem in justifying political measures by referring to religious sources. Even the inclusion of Islam as the state religion in article 47 seems to go back to the East German advice that the national front government should "harness Islam for its cause," as "Islam could be adapted to the regime's ideology in what was called 'liberation theology'."[117] The GDR and USSR cadres in South Yemen did identify clan structures and tribalism, not Islam, as the major obstacle to socialist nation-building, and although they mounted "radical measures to abolish tribalism and tradition," they came to realize that even radical leaders could not escape their collective identities and "mostly drew their political power from tribal ties."[118]

In socialist Somalia, Muḥammad Ziyād Barre (1910–1995) likewise declared the compatibility of "scientific socialism" with Islam, because both demanded the realization of justice; meanwhile, he filled all important posts with members of his own clan. Islam remained the state religion and

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115 The events and their background still remain largely in the dark.

116 See Donald Eugene Smith, *India as a Secular State*, London/Bombay: Oxford Univ. Press ^{2}1967, 142f.; for the background: Sobhanlal Datta Gupta, *Komintern und Kommunismus in Indien 1919–1943*, Berlin: Dietz 2013. After the partition, the communists changed direction several times.

117 See Müller, *A Spectre*, 261.

118 Ibid, 389f.

Islamic law was preferred to customary law, but the codification of family and inheritance laws in 1975, according to the South Yemeni example, strengthened the position of women, which led to protests among Islamic scholars, some of whom were executed.[119] The lost war over the Somali-inhabited Ogaden region (1977/78) prompted the break with the Soviet Union because it backed the socialist opponent Ethiopia together with the GDR and Cuba. This break, however, also secured new support from Western as well as Islamic financial sources for Somalia, among others from the USA, Italy, West Germany and the Arab Gulf.[120] In neighboring Ethiopia, the socialist regime (1974–1991) under Mengistu Haile Mariam (b. 1937) had meanwhile declared religious equality and freedom, yet not only pushed religion in general out of the public sphere, but also continued to politically marginalize Ethiopian Muslims.[121] The "Red Terror" (1976–78), mainly targeting rivaling Marxist-Leninist organizations, also prompted many Ethiopian Muslims to flee the country.

In the notorious case of Afghanistan, the communists' religious policy was divided into two contrasting phases: before and after the Soviet invasion. Although the People's Democratic Party of Afghanistan (PDPA) declared its respect for the principles of Islam following its seizure of power in April 1978, it also aimed "to cleanse Islam in Afghanistan of the ballast and dirt of bad traditions, superstition and erroneous belief" and to "have progressive, modern and pure Islam,"[122] in the words of President Nūr Muḥammad Tarakī (1929–1979). In practice, the regime in Kabul arrested Muslim religious leaders immediately after the coup and launched another concerted purge in January 1979.[123] It closed down religious colleges, abolished the Sufi orders, implemented confiscatory land policies, tried to reorganize the court system and failed to prevent party militants from attacking veiled women in rural areas. However, it not only alienated traditional

[119] Hans Müller, "Horn von Afrika," in: *Der Islam in der Gegenwart*, Werner Ende and Udo Steinbach, eds., München: Beck ^{5}2005, 455–468, 457f. Another reason for Islamic protests was that when Somali was declared the official language in 1972, its script was changed from Arabic to Latin.

[120] For the background see Harry Ododa, "Somalia's Domestic Politics and Foreign Relations since the Ogaden War 1977–78," *Middle Eastern Studies* 21: 3 (1985), 285–297. West Germany paid 100 Million Marks in economic aid, after Somalia allowed the West German anti-terror group GSG 9 to end the hijacking of Lufthansa Flight 181 by a Palestinian commando, which had demanded the release of Red Army Faction prisoners in Germany, in Mogadishu Airport in 1977.

[121] Müller, "Horn von Afrika," 463; Patrick Desplat and Terje Østepø, "Muslim Ethiopia: The Christian Legacy, Identity Politics, and Islamic Reformism," in: *Muslim Ethiopia: The Christian Legacy, Identity Politics, and Islamic Reformism*, idem, eds., New York: Palgrave Macmillan 2013, 1–20, 6f.

[122] John Anderson, "Islam and the Afghan Regime," *Religion in Communist Lands* 14: 2 (1986), 172–179, 174.

[123] Ibid, 175.

society, but failed to bring effective control over growing parts of the country. The Soviet invasion in late December 1979 had the immediate aim to depose Ḥāfiẓullāh Amīn[124] (1929–1979) and end internecine fighting, but also tried to soften the anti-Islamic image of the Afghan government. The newly-appointed President Babrak Kārmal (1929–1996) promised "respect for the sacred principles of Islam" in his first speech, and Islam was officially recognized as the state religion; Kārmal further decreed an amnesty for religious activists, agreed to the renovation of many mosques, subsidized pilgrimages to Mecca, and allowed the broadcasting of Quranic readings on state radio and the re-opening of many madrasas without the formal requirement that the colleges had to accept female students.[125] In this phase, the PDPA government followed the Soviet practice "to use an Islam that it could not ignore"[126] and created a Supreme Council of ʿUlamāʾ, made up mostly of young and unknown Muslim scholars, who defended its policies. Reacting to the worldwide Islamic critique of the Soviet invasion, the Soviet muftiate, responsible for the five Central Asian republics, not only formed the model for the Afghan course correction, but also became deeply involved in propaganda and diplomacy for the Afghan case.[127] On their regular visits to Kabul, Soviet Muslim leaders justified the Soviet presence in the name of Muslim solidarity, while delegations of Afghan mullahs in Tashkent praised the religious freedom of Muslims in the Soviet Union. From the mid-1980s, Afghan communists not only wished to appear respectful of Islam, but started to consider themselves true Muslims–as opposed to the *mujahidin*, whom they called bandits, criminals, counter-revolutionaries, and agents of imperialism, thus denying them any Islamic motivation.[128] In 1987, Kārmal's successor Muḥammad Najībullāh (1947–1996), the much-feared former chief of the Afghan secret service, went even further when he announced a new phase of the revolution, "the phase of national reconciliation," and recognized the *mujahidin* as "opposition forces."[129] In the course of the Soviet withdrawal, Najībullāh had all remaining references to Marxism and communism removed, and the 1990 constitu-

[124] He was held responsible for the death of his long-time comrade Tarakī in October 1979 and was killed on the first day of the invasion.

[125] Anderson, "Islam and the Afghan Regime," 176. Also compare Chantal Lobato, "Islam in Kabul: The Religious Politics of Babrak Karmal", *Central Asian Survey* 4: 4 (1985), 111–120; idem, "Kabul 1978–1988: Communists and Islam," *Religion in Communist Lands* 16: 4 (1988), 345–351.

[126] Lobato, "Kabul 1978–1988," 345. See also Olivier Roy, "The Sovietization of Afghanistan," in: *Afghanistan and the Soviet Union: Collision and Transformation*, M. Hauner and R.L. Canfield, eds., Boulder: Westview Press 1989, 48–60.

[127] See Eren Tasar, "The Central Asian Muftiate in Occupied Afghanistan, 1979–87," *Central Asian Survey* 30: 2 (2011), 213–226.

[128] Lobato, "Kabul 1978–1988," 350f.; Tasar, "The Central Asian Muftiate," 218.

[129] Lobato, "Kabul 1978–1988," 346.

tion declared Afghanistan an Islamic state. All these efforts to garner popular support and gain control of the country with an increasingly Islamic rhetoric failed and did not even save the regime's leaders like Najibullāh, whom the Taliban cruelly murdered on the grounds that he was against Islam, when they took Kabul.

The examples from different countries show that the accusation of atheism stuck to the communists in spite of phases of conciliatory policies and pro-Islamic rhetoric.

On the intellectual level, Soviet "scientific atheism" did not represent a monolithic approach to religion; it was rather compatible not only with differing practices but also with other historical and philosophical views. For example, it left some imprints on Arab and Muslim intellectuals that GDR historian Hermann Ley shared with Ernst Bloch not only an interest in early materialist and atheist tendencies in Christian Europe, but also in Ibn Sīnā (Avicenna) and Arab-Muslim philosophers. In his ceremonial address for the 1,000th anniversary of Ibn Sīnā's (980–1037 AD/370–428 AH) birthday according to the hijri calender, Bloch coined the term of the Aristotelian left.[130] Syrian philosopher Ṭayyib Tīzīnī (b. 1934), who had studied in Berlin and written his master's and doctoral thesis under the supervision of Ley in the 1960s, adapted Ley's methodological approach to the Islamic history of philosophy. Tīzīnī's approach is summarized in his book titles *Mashrūʿ ruʾya jadida li-l-fikr al-ʿarabī fi l-ʿaṣr al-wasiṭ* (*Project of a New View on Arabic Thought in the Middle Ages*, 1971) and *Min al-turāth ilā l-thawra* (*From Heritage to Revolution*, 1976). Tīzīnīs work coincided with a similar two-part work by the Lebanese Communist Ḥusayn Muruwwa (1910–1987) about *al-Nazaʿāt al-maddiyya fi l-falsafa al-ʿarabiyya al-islāmiyya* (*The Materialist Trends in Arab-Islamic Philosophy*, 1978).[131] For Tīzīnī and Muruwwa, it was clear that early Muslim philosophers had influenced thinkers in Europe and laid the basis for both a philosophical-scientific worldview and the dialectical-materialist theory.[132]

What these works express, however, is that a serious engagement with the history of early Islam was largely absent among Marxist Arab intellectuals

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130 Ernst Bloch, *Avicenna und die aristotelische Linke*, Berlin: Rütten und Loening 1952. Avicenna was also commemorated in the USSR and by the World Peace Council in 1952; the "Deutsche Post" of the GDR printed a stamp in his honour, yet giving his birth date as 952, by mistaking Hijri for Gregorian years, see https://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Datei:GDR-stamp_Avicenna_1952_Mi._314.JPG (04.09.2017).

131 Also compare the work: Maḥmūd Amīn al-ʿĀlim, Ḥusayn Muruwwa, Muḥammad Dakrūb, and Samīr Saʿd, *Dirāsāt fi l-Islām*, Jerusalem: Manshūrāt Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn 1980.

132 On Tīzīnī and Muruwwa see Anke von Kügelgen, *Averroes und die arabische Moderne. Ansätze zu einer Neubegründung des Rationalismus im Islam*, Leiden: Brill 1994, 237–260; Thomas Hildebrandt, *Neo-Muʿtazilismus? Intention und Kontext im modernen arabischen Umgang mit dem rationalistischen Erbe des Islam*, Leiden: Brill 2007, 252–265.

up to the 1970s. Bandalī Jawzī's work did not fall on fertile ground after its publication in 1928,[133] although it was later deemed to be an early precursor of writing Arab-Islamic history from a Marxist viewpoint.[134] The most prominent book on the history of atheism in Islam was not written by a Marxist, but by the Egyptian existentialist philosopher ʿAbd al-Raḥmān Badawī (1917–2002) in 1945.[135] Marxist analyses either dealt with the current problems of Arab societies and issues of contemporary history[136] or tried to apply the frame of an "Asian mode of production" to Arab history.[137] The search for another take on the history of early Islam in the 1970s primarily seems to have been a reaction to the ease with which Arab socialists, who had their heyday in Nasserist Egypt in the 1960s, blended socialism and Islam and spoke of Muḥammad and some of his companions as early socialists (see below). Muruwwa, for example, criticized representatives of Arab nationalism and Islamic socialism because of their "idealist" dealing with the heritage, by simply picking its positive sides and exaggerating them. What was needed, according to Muruwwa, was a revolutionary reinterpretation of the past, not the tendency to "modernize the heritage" (*taḥdīth al-turāth*), because lumping together modern theories and history trivialized both modern theories and historical thought.[138] Influenced by Soviet and GDR historians or works like French Marxist Maxime Rodinson's biography of Muḥammad,[139] Tīzīnī and Muruwwa tried to highlight the structural and materialist contexts of Arab-Islamic thought in history and argued—while the Islamic revolution in Iran was under way—that their interest in the past was part of the ideological struggles with bourgeois and conservative opponents.[140] Yet, their approaches did not remain unchal-

133 See Werner Ende, *Arabische Nation und islamische Geschichte. Die Umayyaden im Urteil arabischer Autoren des 20. Jahrhunderts*, Beirut: Steiner 1977, 89f.

134 See Ḥusayn Muruwwa, "Hākadhā naqraʾ Bandalī Jawzī," in: *Silsilat muʾallafāt Ḥusayn Muruwwa*, Muḥammad Dakrūb, ed., Beirut: Dār al-Fārābī 1993, 156–162.

135 ʿAbd al-Raḥmān Badawī, *Min tārīkh al-ilḥād fī l-Islām*, Cairo: Maktabat al-Nahḍa al-Miṣriyya 1945.

136 See for example the works by Anwar ʿAbd al-Malik, *Egypt: Military Society: The Army Regime, the Left, and Social Change under Nasser*, 1964, in English 1968, Mahmoud Hussein, *La lutte des classes en Égypte de 1945 à 1968*, Paris 1969, and Samīr Amīn, *La nation arabe: nationalisme et lutes des classes*, Paris 1976.

137 See Aḥmad Ṣādiq Saʿd, *Fī ḍaw al-namat al-āsyawī li-l-intāj: Tārikh Miṣr al-ijtimāʿī al-iqtiṣādi,* Beirut: Dār Ibn Khaldūn 1979; Maḥmūd al-Kurdī, *Al-Takhalluf wa-mushkilat al-mujtamaʿ al-miṣrī*, Cairo: Dār al-Maʿārif 1979; on both of them see Wolfgang Schwanitz, "Karl A. Wittfogel, das Fünf-Stufen-Dogma und die Ägypter Ṣādiq Saʿad und Maḥmūd al-Kurdī," *asien, afrika, lateinamerika* 20 (1992), 29–41.

138 See Ḥusayn Muruwwa, *Al-Nazaʿāt al-maddiyya fī l-falsafa al-ʿarabiyya al-islāmiyya*, vol. I, Beirut: Dār Farābī 1978, 10–12; see, also for a critical reading, Hildebrandt, *Neo-Muʿtazilismus?*, 254–256.

139 Maxime Rodinson, *Mahomet*, Paris: Éditions du Seuil 1961.

140 See the interview with Muḥammad Dakrūb and Iliyās Shākir, "Marḥala jadīda fi dirāsat al-turāth," *al-Ṭariq* 1 (1979), 21–79, 65–69.

lenged by the Marxist-Leninist orthodoxy. Tawfiq Sallūm, a scientist residing in Moscow, worked his way through Tīzīnī's and Muruwwa's books, highlighting inconsistencies and terminological weaknesses in the use of central terms like "materialism" and "materialist trends."[141]

After the downfall of the Soviet Union, the author Ibrahim Mahmoud of the pan-Arab Marxist-Leninist journal *al-Nahj* lamented that there had never existed a systematic Arab Marxist theory of religion or any real interest in Islam as a historical, social, or political phenomenon.[142] He argued that the treatment of Islam among Arab Marxists had either been informed (1) by the ideologically pre-conceived view that religion was irrational, (2) by Soviet Orientalism[143] or (3) by a mechanical application of Marxist terminology, for which he also faulted Tīzīnī and Muruwwa. By ignoring Islam to a large degree, Arab Marxists had failed to fulfil their own aim to change the world, which they had not even been able to understand in spite of their adoration of objective knowledge.[144]

Even in the face of the growing Islamic movement since the 1980s, the Marxist left was unable to find a common viewpoint on political Islam; leftist intellectuals could not decide whether it was a culturally appropriate or retrograde answer to neo-imperialism, whether it was reactionary or revolutionary, whether it disrupted or united Muslim-majority societies, and whether it represented the authentic will of the masses or the seduction of the mob.[145] Such discussions inside the Arab left foreshadowed similar discussions in the European left on Islam, Islamophobia, and terrorism after 9/11.

The Islamic Critique of Communism

Fatāwā *against Communism*

Islamic religious authorities have opposed Bolshevism, communism, and socialism on different occasions. In 1919, after the Soviets had revealed the se-

141 Tawfiq Sallūm, "Al-Māddiyya wa-tajalliyyātihā fi l-ʿaṣr al-wasiṭ," *al-Ṭarīq* 3 (1979), 181–194; idem, "'Al-Tārikhīyya' fi dirāsat al-turāth al-falsafi," *al-Ṭarīq* 4 (1979), 193–210; idem, "Ḥizbiyyat al-falsafa," *al-Ṭarīq* 6 (1979), 131–145.

142 Ibrāhīm Maḥmūd, "Mafhūm al-din fi l-khiṭāb alʿarabī al-mārksī," *al-Nahj* 30 (1990), 181–202.

143 For Soviet Orientalism see Michael Kemper and Stephan Conermann, eds., *The Heritage of Soviet Oriental Studies*, London: Routledge 2011.

144 The author quotes Maḥmūd Amīn al-ʿĀlim, "The central point in Marxism lies not in the critique of heaven, but of earth. Marxism is not an institution to spread atheism, but a theory of the struggle to change and renew life. From this standpoint, Marxism treats religious movements and phenomena in an objective manner."

145 See for example Alexander Flores, *Säkularismus und Islam in Ägypten. Die Debatte der 1980er Jahre*, Berlin: LIT-Verlag 2012, 159–163.

cret Sykes-Picot-Sazonov agreements, the British authorities were concerned about anti-British agitation and the activities of a nascent socialist party in Egypt and asked the Grand Mufti, Shaykh Muḥammad Bakhīt (1854–1935), to issue a legal opinion (*fatwā*), which they also wanted to distribute in other parts of the British Empire to fight Bolshevism.[146] In the *fatwā*, Bakhīt described Bolshevism as a "teaching," "school" or "way" (*ṭarīqa*), destroying all Divine laws, especially those of Islam, and legalizing bloodshed, treachery, lies, and rape, thus "causing anarchy to spread among the people with regard to all their social affairs, finances, women, children, and heritages until they become at last worse than beasts."[147] Bakhīt also held that Bolshevism roused "the lower classes against every system based upon reason, moral, and virtue"[148] and aimed at destroying human societies, the order of the world, and religion. "Accordingly, every true Muslim ought to beware of them, stay far away from their errors (*ḍalālātuhum*), corrupt doctrines (*ʿaqāʾiduhum al-fāsida*), and badly selling deeds (*aʿmāluhum al-kāsida*) because they are without the slightest doubt infidels (*kuffār*), who do not believe in any of the Divine laws and revealed religions nor do they recognize any order."[149]

The British efforts to discredit Bolshevism backfired because the public and media interest provided socialists and Marxists with the opportunity to explain their cause. Several writers–among them even Muslim reformer Muḥammad Rashīd Riḍā (1865–1935)[150]–challenged the image of an anarchic, irreligious, and immoral Bolshevism, claiming that it was not contrary to Islam or any other religion, but consistent with the religion's stance against poverty and oppression and for freedom.[151] A Marxist leaflet even argued that Bolshevism was "a power which God has sent upon earth … in order to restore to Islam its old form and its famous justice."[152] Others, like the socialist writer Niqūlā Ḥaddād (1878–1954) with a Christian back-

[146] For the political background see Tareq Y. Ismael and Rifaʿat El-Saʿid, *The Communist Movement in Egypt 1920–1988*, New York: Syracuse Univ. Press 1990, 22–25; for a partial and free English translation ibid., 163–167; for the original text: Muḥammad Bakhīt, "Al-Madhhab al-bāshifi [sic!]" (02.07.1919), *Fatāwā Dār al-Iftāʾ al-Miṣriyya* http://shamela.ws/browse.php/book-432/page-2568 (13.04.2017). That the *fatwā* was released in response to a question in *The Times* is mentioned in Couland, Moshaver and Hale, "Shuyuʿiyya," 517.

[147] Bakhīt, "Al-Madhhab al-bāshifi;" revised translation following Ismael and El-Saʿid, *The Communist Movement*, 166.

[148] Ibid., 167.

[149] Ibid.

[150] See Couland, Moshaver and Hale, "Shuyuʿiyya," 517. He added that Muslims must hope for the success of communism, although it was not in conformity with Islamic law, but neither were the activities of European governments against Islam, see Albert Hourani, *Arabic Thought in the Liberal Age, 1798–1939*, London: Oxford Univ. Press 1962, 304.

[151] See Ismael and El-Saʿid, *The Communist Movement*, 24f.

[152] Ibid, 24.

ground, argued that socialism was a social, not a religious doctrine and "had nothing to do with religion."[153]

Azhar's opposition to communism was, however, unwavering. State Muftis like Ḥasanayn Muḥammad Makhlūf (1890–1990)[154] and Shuyūkh al-Azhar like Muḥammad Shaltūt (1893–1963) and ʿAbd al-Ḥalīm Maḥmūd (1910–1978) declared from the mid-1940s to the mid-1970s that communism was irreconcilable with Islamic principles; as the main points of difference, they named its social doctrine of class struggle, its materialistic philosophy, its anti-religious stance, and its prohibition of private property.

In 1948, the Fatwā Commission of the Azhar acted on a request by the Egyptian interior ministry to take a stand on a book that presented one of Muḥammad's companions, Abū Dharr al-Ghifārī (d. 652/3), as an early communist.[155] The commission voted against the further distribution of the book, stating that there was "no communism in Islam"[156] in the general sense that the author had claimed. In its ruling, the commission clarified that Abū Dharr held a singular opinion in believing that a Muslim should not accumulate wealth beyond his own needs, an opinion which had been widely debated and found wrong during his lifetime.

Reading between the lines, one sees that the Azhar ruling was about the question of who had the right to claim Abū Dharr. The ruling opposed left-leaning nationalists, who understood Abū Dharr as a revolutionary fighting the ruling Umayyads in his time. For conservative Muslims, he simply represented an ascetic preacher and an example of Muslims' early engagement for social justice. In the 1890s, pan-Islamic intellectual Jamāl al-Dīn al-Afghānī (1838–1897) had spoken of a different, Islamic form of socialism, drawing on the principle of solidarity (*taḍāmun*) and the example of Abū Dharr.[157] Beyond isolated remarks by different authors, the work *Abū Dharr al-Ghifārī al-ishtirākī al-zāhid* (*Abū Dharr al-Ghifārī, the Ascetic Socialist*) by the Sunni author ʿAbd al-Ḥamīd Jūda al-Saḥḥār (1913–1974) marked a major breakthrough in re-claiming an Islamic version of socialism; the book, published in 1943 with a foreword by the founder of the Egyptian Muslim

153 Ibid, 25.

154 Ḥasanayn Muḥammad Makhlūf, "Ḥukm al-Islām fī mabādiʾ al-shuyūʿiyya" (31.08.1953), in: *Fatāwā Dār al-Iftāʾ al-Miṣriyya*, http://shamela.ws/browse.php/book-432/page-2568#page-2570 (11.09.2017).

155 Ende, *Arabische Nation*, 213; M. N., "Oriente in Generale. Fetwa di el-Azhar sul Comunismo," *Oriente Moderno* 28: 4–6 (1948), 80–81, the *fatwā* is partially reprinted in: Muḥammad al-Ghazzālī, *Al-Islām al-muftarā ʿalayhi bayn al-shuyūʿiyīn wa-l-raʾsmāliyīn*, Cairo: Nahḍat Miṣr ^{6}2005 [^{3}1953], 102–104.

156 M. N., "Oriente in Generale," 81.

157 Hanna and Gardner, *Arab Socialism*, 266–274. As Afghānī's essays were only published in 1931, the Lebanese Shiite Aḥmad Riḍā seems to be the first author who positively mentioned Abū Dharr's "socialist views" in passing in 1910, see Ende, *Arabische Nation*, 211.

Brothers, Ḥasan al-Bannā (1906–1949), was later translated into Persian with a foreword by ʿAlī Sharīʿatī (1933–1977), a prominent precursor of the revolution in Iran (1978/79).[158]

In August 1965, the renamed Fatwā Board at the Azhar issued a ruling stating that a communist was not allowed to marry a Muslim women, thus categorizing communism as an anti-religious religion.[159] In the *fatwā*, the scholars argued, based on quotes taken from Marx, Lenin and Stalin, that communism, while refuting any religion and Islam, was itself a "cohesive ideology" (*madhhab mutarābiṭ*) that could not be separated into "its practical order" (*niẓāmuhu l-ʿamalī*) and "its dogmatic and philosophical basis" (*asāsuhu l-ʿaqā'idī wa-l-falsafī*).

> While Islam did not permit a Muslim woman to marry someone from among the People of the Book (*ahl al-kitāb*)–Christians and Jews–although they believe in God, His books, His prophets, and the Last Day in general, then why would it allow a Muslima to marry someone who does neither believe in divinity, nor prophecy, nor resurrection and judgement?[160]

This ruling meant, as State Mufti ʿAbd al-Ḥalīm Maḥmūd explained in another *fatwā*,[161] (1) that a Muslim man is also not allowed to marry a communist woman, (2) that, if a communist dies, he or she cannot be buried in a cemetery for Muslims, and (3) that a communist can neither be heir to Muslim relatives nor bequeath them anything.[162]

In 1976, during the anti-leftist campaign under president Sadat, Maḥmūd also sent a letter to leaders of Arab states and asked them to contribute financially to the expansion of al-Azhar, arguing that it had always fought "'deviant' (*munḥarifa*) tenets such as socialism, which represented 'a danger for Muslim countries.'"[163] Like his predecessor Muḥammad Fahhām, who had declared student demonstrators "unbelievers" in 1972, Maḥmūd wrote that "communism is impiety (*kufr*) and those who support it have no faith."[164] He also argued that every communist who pretended to be a Muslim should be considered a "hypocrite" (*munāfiq*).[165] That "they take the book of Marx for their Qurʿān, Marx for their prophet, and communism

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158 On this work see Ende, *Arabische Nation*, 212. The Persian version was published as ʿAbd al-Ḥāmid Jūda al-Saḥḥār and ʿAlī Sharīʿatī, *Mardi az rubẓah: Abū Ẕarr Ghifārī*, Tehran: Shabdiz 1977.

159 ʿAbd al-Ḥalim Maḥmūd, *Fatāwā ʿan al-shuyūʿiyya*, Cairo: Dār al-Maʿārif [4]1990, 70–72, 87–88.

160 Maḥmūd, *Fatāwā*, 72.

161 Ibid, 91–94 (undated).

162 Ibid, 93f.

163 Malika Zeghal, "Religion and Politics in Egypt: The Ulema of Al-Azhar, Radical Islam, and the State (1952–94)," *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 31 (1999), 371–399, 378.

164 Ibid, 381; Maḥmūd, *Fatāwā*, 9.

165 Ibid.

for a religion (*din*),"[166] proves that "atheism is a part of communism that cannot be taken away from it."[167]

It's worth mentioning that the 1965 *fatwā* was issued just months before thousands of communists were massacred in Indonesia and the second largest Muslim organization in Indonesia, the Muhammadiyah, spread a ruling declaring that the extermination of communists ought to be considered a religious duty.[168]

The Islamic Support for Arab Socialism

Curiously enough, these *fatāwā* against communism were valid or even issued during ʿAbd al-Nāṣir's turn to Arab socialism (1961–1970), which made the Soviet Union Egypt's most important international partner. This political reorientation towards socialism and the Soviet Union was not an Egyptian exception, but went hand in hand with the practical and ideological implementation of Arab socialism in other Arab states in the 1960s.[169] What was exceptional, however, was that the turn to socialism also went hand in hand with the nationalization of al-Azhar through Law no. 103 in 1961. While the Azhar scholars had already had to consent to the expropriation of *waqf* land and the abolition of Sharia courts in the 1950s, they now had to accept state control of their most important institution and were summoned to support an explicitly leftist socio-political agenda.

The astonishing rapprochement between the *shuyūkh* and ʿAbd al-Nāṣir was possible because both sides moved towards each other and legitimatized each other's ambitions, yet without pursuing congruent aims. Before the revolution of 1952, al-Azhar's antagonism to both the British and the Egyptian parliament turned it into a royalist bastion.[170] The parliament's attempt to gain control of the Azhar budget in 1927 was thwarted by the opposition of the king and the *shuyūkh*; parliament in return discriminated against

166 Ibid, 11.
167 Ibid, 9.
168 Fowkes and Gökay, "Unholy Alliance," 22; Bernard Johan Boland, *The Struggle of Islam in Modern Indonesia*, The Hague: Marinus Nijhoff 1982, 145f. The Vatican had already in 1949 excommunicated communists and their aides, see Kirby, "Christian anti-communism," 142.
169 The following states pledged themselves to Arab Socialism: Syria (1963–), Iraq (1963–2003), Algeria (1963–1988), South Yemen (1967–1970), Libya (1969–2011), Sudan (1969–1981), and Tunisia (during the 1960s). For an overview see Schwanitz, "Arabischer Sozialismus," and Ingrid El Masry, "Arabische Sozialismen im Vergleich. Praxis, Scheitern und Spätfolgen in Ägypten, Syrien und Irak," in: *Sozialismen. Entwicklungsmodelle von Lenin bis Nyere*, Joachim Becker and Rudy Weissenbacher, eds., Wien: Promedia 2009, 160–174.
170 Daniel Crecelius, "Al-Azhar in the Revolution," *Middle East Journal* 20: 1 (1966), 31–49, 32.

Azhar graduates when they applied for government positions and held up appropriations for the Azhar budget so that the king had to subsidize al-Azhar from his private treasury.[171] With the 1961 law, ʿAbd al-Nāṣir's government not only managed to radically re-organize the Azhar and its university, but it also tried to gain control over the religious field as such and an ever-increasing number of thousands of mosques affiliated with the Azhar.[172] State control of Islamic institutions and the Azhar's consent thereto were achieved because the government increased the Azhar's budget more than four times from 1952 to 1966 alone, which allowed the Azhar to double its student enrolment, increase the salaries of its scholars, offer scholarships, and increase the number of foreign missions sevenfold.[173] At the same time, the number of faculty not only dropped from 298 to 170 between 1959 and 1968, but its composition was radically transformed, replacing older staff reluctant to accept the changes by younger reform-oriented graduates.[174] These measures were accompanied by a press campaign criticizing traditional religiosity by stating that "from the beginning, Islam was a profession of work. The prophet used to work like everybody else. Islam was never a profession."[175] Even the Shaykh al-Azhar, Maḥmūd Shaltūt, publicly admitted that the *ʿulamāʾ* had to live "for the sake of Islam and not by means of it."[176] The demand, taken up by the Azhar's journal and its various spokespersons, was that the *ʿulamāʾ* should inculcate the new revolutionary thought and teach Islamic Socialism to the masses.[177]

The ideological meeting point between the Azhar and Arab Socialism can be described as both an area of intersection and a grey area. Much to the dismay of the Soviets, who tried to lecture ʿAbd al-Nāṣir on socialism and convince him to release imprisoned Egyptian communists,[178] Arab socialism was defined as "pre-eminently pragmatic"[179] and thus in contradistinction to the "immutable and rigid doctrine"[180] that the Soviets derived from their Marxist-Leninist philosophy and applied to their society. Propo-

171 Ibid, 33.
172 Tamir Moustafa, "Conflict and Cooperation between the State and Religious Institutions in Contemporary Egypt," *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 32 (2000), 3–22.
173 Ibid, 6.
174 Ibid, 5f.
175 Quoted by Zeghal, "Al-Azhar," 375. Also compare Crecelius, "Al-Azhar," 40.
176 Ibid, 42.
177 Ibid, 43f.
178 Rami Ginat, "Nasser and the Soviets. A Reassessment," in: *Rethinking Nasserism: Revolution and Historical Memory in Modern Egypt*, Elie Podeh and Onn Winckler, eds., Gainesville: Univ. Press of Florida 2004, 230–250.
179 Sami A. Hanna and George H. Gardner, "The Scribe on Ishtirākiyyah, 1961: Arab Socialism and Communism," in: *Arab Socialism*, idem, eds., 335–343, 335.
180 Ibid.

nents of Arab Socialism not only ruled class struggle out and expressed their respect for individual freedom and private ownership, but also stated that "one of the basic differences between Arab socialism and Communism resides in the faith, in spiritual values and in God."[181] On different occasions, ʿAbd al-Nāṣir explained that the prophet Muḥammad had established "the first socialist nation" because Islam was not only a religion, but also stood for social justice. Although he laid claim to a "scientific socialism," this was neither a "materialist" nor a "Marxist" socialism: "We did not say that we departed from religion … but we said that our religion is a socialist religion and that Islam in the Middle Ages fulfilled the first socialist experiment in the world."[182]

Loyal intellectuals followed this understanding that Islam and socialism basically meant the same. For example, the writer Maḥmūd Shalabī produced a book series on socialism as practised by Muḥammad, his wife Khadīja, the aforementioned Abū Dharr, as well as by the caliphs Abū Bakr, ʿUmar, and ʿUthmān, thus demonstrating that "we have an independent socialism, springing from our history, our beliefs and our nature."[183] The playwright ʿAbd al-Raḥmān Sharqāwī (1921–1987) depicted Ḥusayn b. ʿAlī (d. 680) as a revolutionary and Muḥammad as "the prophet of freedom." Similarly, the writer Aḥmad ʿAbbās Ṣāliḥ (1930–2006), editor of the Nasserist journal *al-Kātib*, described the struggle between the right and the left and the struggle for social justice as a continuous trend since early Islam.[184]

Under these premises, some Azharīs were ready to condone an Islamic version of socialism. Since the late 19th century, conservative religious scholars and Islamic intellectuals following al-Afghānī had argued that Islam possessed its own different kind of socialist teachings, which they called "mutual social responsibility" (*al-takāful al-ijtimāʿī*) and "social justice" (*al-ʿadāla al-ijtimāʿiyya*)[185] in order to distinguish them from modern social-

181 Ibid, 339.

182 See Yvonne Yazbeck Haddad, *Contemporary Islam and the Challenge of History*, Albany: State Univ. of New York Press 1982, 231 (note 50).

183 Maḥmūd Shalabī, *Ishtirākiyyat Muḥammad*, Cairo: Maktabat al-Qāhira al-Ḥaditha 1962, 72, quoted after Charles Tripp, *Islam and the Moral Economy. The Challenge of Capitalism*, Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press 2006, 99 (footnote 67); also compare Menahem Merhavy, "Arab Socialism and Ecumenical Tendencies in Egypt 1962–1970," *British Journal of Middle Eastern Studies* 43: 4 (2016), 472–485, 477–479. For the other works see Shalabī, *Ishtirākiyyat Abī Bakr*, Cairo: Maktabat al-Qāhira al-Ḥaditha 1963; idem, *Ishtirākiyyat ʿUmar*, Cairo: Maktabat al-Qāhira al-Ḥaditha 1964/65; idem, *Ishtirākiyyat ʿUthmān*, Cairo: Maktabat al-Qāhira al-Ḥaditha 1968; idem, *Ishtirākiyyat Abī Dharr*, Beirut: Dar Jil 1974.

184 Aḥmad ʿAbbās Ṣāliḥ, *Al-Yamīn wa-l-yasār fī l-Islām*, Beirut: Al-Muʾassasa al-ʿArabiyya li-l-Dirāsāt wa-l-Nashr 1972.

185 See Sayyid Quṭb's eponymous work *Al-ʿAdāla al-ijtimāʿiyya fī l-Islām*, Cairo 1949.

ism.[186] The dean of the Sharia Faculty in Damascus, Syrian Muslim Brother and founder of the "Islamic Socialist Front" in 1949, Muṣṭafā Sibāʿī (1915–1964), went so far as to speak of *Ishtirākiyyat al-Islām* (The Socialism of Islam) in 1959. Yet, he made it immediately clear that Islamic socialism must not be confused with other socialist or communist ideas, since it broadened the concept of socialism to include "all material and moral aspects of life."[187] Sibāʿī enumerated ten types of *takāful* in Islam and 29 laws that regulate their application.[188]

Taking up and developing the term *takāful*, prominent Egyptian Azharīs, starting with the reform-oriented Shaltūt down to the anti-progressive Muḥammad al-Bahī (1905–1982),[189] depicted Islam as "the religion of socialism."[190] What these *shuyūkh* argued was that the state is allowed to become a command system worthy of obedience insofar as those in command are rightly guided,[191] or as long as property "is guarded by all for the benefit of all,"[192] as Shaltūt remarked. With their secular counterparts, these religious scholars shared "an optimism, but also a naiveté"[193] about both the benefits of state power and administrative efficiency that should restore harmony to a society riven by differences. Although the *shuyūkh* presented Islam as a "third way"–in the words of Muḥammad al-Ghazāli (1917–1996): "communism is the enemy at the gates and capitalism is the enemy within"[194]–, they legitimized, with utilitarian arguments, a state invested with wide and absolute authority. Inadvertently, they succumbed to state socialism, although they had argued against the danger of materialist philosophies, communist or capitalist, by invoking the socialism of Islam.[195]

Therefore, the claim of Islamic scholars and secular intellectuals that Islamic or Arab socialism represented a "third way" beyond capitalism and

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[186] See for example Hamid Enayat, "Islam and Socialism in Egypt," *Middle Eastern Studies* 4: 2 (1968), 141–172; Sami A. Hanna, "Al-Takāful al-ijtimāʿī and Islamic Socialism", *The Muslim World* (1969), 275–286; Hanna and Gardner, *Arab Socialism*, 49–79; Merhavy, "Arab Socialism."

[187] See Hanna and Gardner, *Arab Socialism*, 150, also 67f. On Sibāʿī see Youssef M. Choueiri, *Islamic Fundamentalism. The Story of Islamist Movements*, London: Continuum 2010, 75–79; Ruth Roded, "Lessons by a Syrian Islamist from the Life of the Prophet Muhammad," *Middle Eastern Studies* 42: 6 (2006), 855–872.

[188] Hanna and Gardner, *Arab Socialism*, 150–169.

[189] On his changing positions see Enayat, "Islam and Socialism," 155f.

[190] See for example Aḥmad Sharabāṣi and Aḥmad Farrāj, *Al-Islām dīn al-ištirākiyya: min mukhtārāt al-idhāʿa wa-l-tilifizyūn*, Cairo: Dār al-Qawmiyya 1961; Maḥmūd Shaltūt, *Al-Islām wa-l-takāful al-ijtimāʿī*, Cairo 1960.

[191] Tripp, *Islam and the Moral Economy*, 81.

[192] Shaltūt, *Al-Islām wa-l-takāful*, 20f., quoted after Tripp, *Islam and the Moral Economy*, 87.

[193] Tripp, *Islam and the Moral Economy*, 90.

[194] Ghazzālī, *Al-Islām al-muftarā*, 14, quoted after Tripp, *Islam and the Moral Economy*, 97.

[195] See ibid.

communism did not find the unanimous support of religious scholars. A critic of the Nasserist state like Sayyid Quṭb (1906–1966), imprisoned by the regime and finally executed, argued that such a justification of state activities with reference to the public interest and Islamic values merely represented "a modern form of 'idolatry'."[196] In Pakistan, 113 religious scholars even signed a *fatwā* against "Islamic socialism" in 1970 and declared Zulfikar ʿAli Bhutto (1928–1979) an unbeliever.[197] Accordingly, when the socialist regimes from Algeria to Iraq had degenerated into authoritative regimes by the end of the 1960s, Muslim intellectuals everywhere looked to redefine the idea of an Islamic society founded on Islamic values, for the most part demanding a clear break with state socialism and advocating the virtues of private entrepreneurial activities guided by Sharia norms.[198] They started to opt for a more Islamically "third way," which was "neither East nor West," in the diction of intellectuals like Sayyid Quṭb and ʿAlī Sharīʿati or Āyatullāhs like Bāqir al-Ṣadr (1935–1980) and Rūhollāh Khomeini (1902–1989). The authoritarian character of Arab socialist regimes not only divided Islamic intellectuals, but also Marxists, and both groups came to revise their support.

Communism as Heresy

The incompatibility of communism with Islam was not the only argument on which Sunni religious scholars and Muslim intellectuals drew to ground their rejection of communism. Other–nationalist and religious–aspects also played a role in their arguments against communism and for Arab or Islamic socialism. Firstly, communism strongly appealed to religious and ethnic minorities, who longed for radical social change; this made it possible in turn to discredit communism as an anti-Arab movement. Secondly, while Sunni scholars or intellectuals claimed that Islam possessed authentic socialist ideals, which were much older and better than modern socialism,

196 Ibid, 92.

197 The People's Party slogan was "Islam is our religion, democracy our ideology, and socialism our economy." Bhutto's party won the Pakistani elections after the breakaway of Bangladesh in 1972; after protests by the Muslim League and a military putsch he was sentenced to death and hanged. See Munir D. Ahmad, "Pakistan: The Dream of an Islamic State," in: Carlo Caldarola, ed., *Religion and Society. Asia and the Middle East*, Berlin: De Gruyter 1982, 261–288, 268; Nasim Ahmad Jawed, *Islam's Political Culture: Religion and Politics in Predivided Pakistan*, Austin: Univ. of Texas Press 1999, 115; Syed Mujawar Hussain Shah, *Bhutto, Zia, and Islam*, Larkana: Shaheed Z. A. Bhutto Publications 2014, 89f, 247–249, http://bhutto.org/Acrobat/Bhutto_Zia_and_Islam.pdf (24.04.2017).

198 Tripp, *Islam and the Moral Economy*, 97 and 100.

they traced communism back to a fifth century Zoroastrian heresy, thus claiming that it was a pre-Islamic as well as non-Muslim doctrine.

ʿAbd al-Nāṣir's turn to Arab socialism had a nationalist downside that accompanied and partly overshadowed the socialist one. The engagement for Arab unity, rooted in pan-Arab nationalism, had already found its expression in the Egyptian constitution of 1956. The preamble stated that the Egyptian people–realizing that it forms "an organic part of a greater Arab entity"–was aware of its "obligations toward a common Arab struggle for the glory and honor of the Arab nation;" the first three articles proclaimed that Egypt was an independent Arab state, Islam its state religion, Arabic the official language, and the Egyptian people "an integral part of the Arab nation."[199] These principles were reaffirmed by the proclamation of the constitution of the United Arab Republic, issued in 1964.[200] The interior and exterior dimensions of Arab nationalism displeased the Soviets as well as the communists in Egypt and Syria. Several years of ideological and political disagreement culminated with Khrushchev's only lengthy visit to Egypt in May 1964.[201] Khrushchev argued with ʿAbd al-Nāṣir that it was impossible to reconcile Arab nationalism and socialism and that workers and peasants should unite across borders, not with Arab "feudal lords and capitalists."[202] ʿAbd al-Nāṣir defended his position by stating that the division between the Arab peoples had been only recently imposed by imperialism and that Arabs were already united by a common history, consciousness, and language so that "all the factors and bases for unity are in fact existing."[203]

As Hanna and Gardner have pointed out, some Arab nationalists even saw communism as a modern form of *shuʿūbiyya*, a movement among non-Arab Muslims, which refused to recognize the privileged position of the Arabs during the time of the ʿAbbāsid Empire.[204] As communists in Arab

[199] Middle East Institute, "The New Egyptian Constitution," *Middle East Journal* 10: 3 (1956), 300–306, 300. The constitution of 1923 neither mentioned the Arab character of the Egyptian state nor of its people and only mentioned Islam as state religion and Arabic as official language in Article 149, see Dustūr Miṣr 1923 on https://ar.wikisource.org/wiki/%D8%AF%D8%B3%D8%AA%D9%88%D8%B1_%D9%85%D8%B5%D8%B1_1923 (21.04.2017).

[200] For the 1964 constitution see Hanna and Gardner, *Arab Socialism*, 386–408, 387f.

[201] During his visit to the USSR in 1955, ʿAbd al-Nāṣir frankly announced "our anti-communist principles," explaining that communism was atheist and controlled by Moscow. The Soviets articulated their ideological and practical criticism on several occasions. During the formation of the Egyptian-Syrian unity (1958–1961), Khālid Bakdāsh, the leader of the Syrian CP, fled to Eastern bloc countries and published an article criticizing ʿAbd al-Nāṣir's policy, see Ginat, "Nasser and the Soviets," 238–241.

[202] See Sami A. Hanna and George H. Gardner, "Al-Shuʿūbiyyah Up-Dated", in: *Arab Socialism*, idem, eds., 80–97, 93. Also compare Ginat, "Nasser and the Soviets," 242f.

[203] Hanna and Gardner, "Al-Shuʿūbiyyah Up-dated", 94.

[204] Ibid, 80–97.

countries recruited an over-proportional number of their members from ethnic and religious minorities, the dichotomy was not only between an internationalist worldview, pejoratively labelled as *shuʿūbiyya*, and a pan-Arab nationalism, positively called *ʿurūba*.[205] A difference also existed between the Arab-Sunni majority, who merged socialism with Arab nationalism and Islam, and the ethnic and religious minorities, who had a problem with either the nationalist or religious component of this merger. Thus, the criticism of communism revived an old Sunni belief, going back 500 years, that there was a close relationship between non-Arabs and heretical Islamic groups.[206] This idea also gave rise to a Sunni form of red-baiting that tried to relegate communism to the field of religious heresies.

Especially from the mid-20th century onwards, the expression *shīʿī–shuyūʿī* ("Shiite–Communist") was used in the Arab world "to discredit political, economic, and social demands of Shiite communities"[207] who began to strive for emancipation in Iraq and Lebanon. In his 1919 *fatwā*, Shaykh Bakhit had traced Bolshevism back to Mazdakism, a gnostic movement in the fifth century, which stood for antinomianism and a just distribution of women and wealth.[208] Bakhīt mainly drew on sources hostile to Mazdakism, of which quite a few had survived in Arabic. His interest in the movement was neither singular nor new: "The rise of communism and socialism in Europe has spurred special interest in the movement, and Mazdakism has received considerable attention."[209] The first systematic academic study of Mazdakism as an early kind of Oriental socialism was provided by the German Orientalist scholar Theodor Nöldeke (1836–1930) in 1879.[210] Yet, the Ottoman press, reporting about the Paris Commune in 1871, was already drawing parallels to Mazdakism and to the Assassins.[211] The pan-Islamist al-Afghānī also traced the ideas of socialists, communists, and nihilists back to Mazdak in his treatise on the "refutation of the mate-

[205] Ibid, 94.
[206] Ende, *Arabische Nation*, 233–241, 235f.
[207] Siliva Naef, "*Shīʿī - Shuyūʿī* or: How to Become a Communist in a Holy City," in: *The Twelver Shia in Modern Times: Religious Culture and Political History*, Rainer Brunner and Werner Ende, eds., Leiden: Brill 2001, 255–267, 255.
[208] On Mazdakism see Ehsan Yershater, "Mazdakism," in: *Cambridge History of Iran: The Seleucid, Parthian and Sasanian periods*, vol. III, 2, idem, ed., Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press 1983, 991–1024; idem, "Mazdakism," in: *Encyclopedia of Religion*, vol. 9, Lindsay Jones, ed., New York: Thomson Gale ^{2}2005, 5800–5802.
[209] Yershater, "Mazdakism," 991.
[210] Theodor Nöldeke, "Orientalischer Socialismus," *Deutsche Rundschau* 18 (1879), 284–291, https://archive.org/stream/DeutscheRundschau0181879#page/n287/mode/2up/search/Socialismus (21.04.2017).
[211] Christoph K. Neumann, "Mazdak, nicht Marx: Frühe osmanische Wahrnehmungen von Kommunismus und Sozialismus," in: *Türkische Wirtschafts- und Sozialgeschichte von 1071 bis 1920*, Hans Georg Majer and Raoul Motika, eds., Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz 1995, 211–225.

rialists,"[212] written in Persian in 1881 and later translated into Arabic and Turkish; in it, he tried to prove that materialists were responsible for the ruin of several extinct civilizations. Even in recent literature on communism, the reference to Mazdak is still mentioned.[213] Quite similarly, but with a positive undertone, the above-mentioned Palestinian Marxist Bandalī Jawzī from Baku constructed a line from Mazdak over Babak to Shiite revolutionary movements.[214]

The liberal Egyptian writer Aḥmad Amīn (1886–1954), an Azhar graduate, took a more intricate–and for Shiite communities more insulting–approach in his works on the beginnings of Islam, *Fajr al-Islām* (1928) and *Ḍuḥā l-Islām* (1933–36), by connecting Abū Dharr's views not only with Mazdak's socialism, but also with the allegedly Jewish convert Ibn Saba'.[215] Thus, he repeated the age-old Sunni prejudice that the Shia was a refuge for everyone who wanted to subvert Islam with Jewish, Christian, Zoroastrian, or Indian doctrines. This exposition not only connected Abū Dharr, a hero of Shiite historiography, with communism, but fed also the idea that both the Shia and communism were Jewish conspiracies. That communism was an offspring of Zionism and both were born out of Judaism, is a common anti-Semitic trope, which was also a "foundational element in Christian anti-communism"[216] and produced "one of the twentieth century's most consequential myths."[217] Its Muslim propagators, like the Egyptian liberal-conservative ʿAbbās Maḥmūd ʿAqqād (1889–1964), tried to prove it by referring to the vast numbers of important Jewish leading figures among Russian socialists and communists.[218] With such re-constructions–in the context of the Arab struggle against Zionism and the USSR recognition of the state of Israel–, the mark stuck with Arab communist parties, which had to tow the Soviet line, that they were national traitors.[219]

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212 See Nikki R. Keddie, *An Islamic Response to Imperialism. Political and Religious Writings of Sayyid Jamāl al-Dīn "al-Afghānī". Including a Translation of the "Refutation of the Materialists" from the original Persian by Nikki R. Keddie and Hamid Algar*, Berkeley: Univ. of California Press 1968, 160.

213 See Muḥammad b. Ibrāhīm al-Ḥamad, *Al-Shuyūʿiyya*, Riyadh: Dār Ibn Khuzayma 2002, 13.

214 Sonn, "Intellectual History," 215.

215 Ende, *Arabische Nation*, 126–128, 212 and 221.

216 Kirby, "Christian anti-communism," 127.

217 Ibid, 128.

218 ʿAbbās Maḥmūd ʿAqqād and Aḥmad ʿAbd al-Ghafūr al-ʿAṭṭār, *Al-Shuyūʿiyya wa-l-Islām*, Beirut: Dār al-Andalus 1972, 134–158 (chapter "Al-Shuyūʿiyya walīdat al-Ṣuhyūniyya").

219 For the Soviet politics regarding Palestine in this period of time see Ismael, *The Communist Movement in the Arab World*, 57–70.

Post-Nasserist and Post-Soviet Interaction between Marxists and Islamists

Paradoxically, ʿAbd al-Nāṣir's defeat in the Six-Day War of 1967 brought the issues of Palestine and Arab nationalism more forcefully back to the agenda of Arab communists than ever before. With Palestinian guerrilla groups, most of which understood themselves as radical Marxists, springing up, the Arab CPs made it clear to Moscow, in slightly different formulations, that they conceived the Palestinian struggle as an important common Arab cause because Israel had turned into an imperialist and occupying force.[220] Although the Soviets tried to moderate this positioning, they could prevent neither the fragmentation of the Syrian CP in the 1970s nor the formation of an Arab militant "new left" that supported the guerrilla tactics independently of the USSR. Even worse, Communist, Left, New-Left, and Palestinian organizations formed an alliance to fight their cause with arms in the so-called Civil War in Lebanon (1975–1990), in which they finally turned out the political losers.

With the failure of Arab socialism in Egypt (1970), the Islamic revolution in Iran (1978/79), the military defeat in Lebanon, and the end of the Cold War, the political field fundamentally changed and several new forms of leftist-Islamist interaction came into being:

(a) The Egyptian philosopher Ḥasan Ḥanafī (b. 1935) tried to resuscitate the idea of an "Islamic left" (*al-yasār al-islāmī*) in 1981, reiterating that Islam was the religion of socialism and the Prophet Muḥammad "the leader of the socialists" (*imām al-ishtirākiyīn*).[221] While he expressed his uneasiness about the use of the term "Islamic socialism" by the autocratic Nasserist state, he still yearned for another form of application, half criticizing the regime, half rehabilitating its principles.[222]

(b) The pre-revolutionary Iranian intellectual ʿAlī Sharīʿatī attempted to expose the fallacies of Marxist philosophy, but interpreted Shiite Islamic principles in a rather Marxist or Third-Worldist way.[223] Yet, he maintained that he had laid bare the authentic truth about "red" revolutionary Islam as opposed to its traditional "black" counterpart. This kind of resistance theology was also to be found among the Iranian Mujahidīn-e Khalq (People's Mujahideen), who at first fought the Shah and then the Khomeini regime.

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220 Usāma Ghazzī, "Azmat al-Ḥizb al-Shuyūʿī l-Sūrī wa-l-qaḍāyā l-filasṭīniyya: Dirāsa muqārana maʿa baʿḍ al-aḥzāb al-shuyūʿiyya," *Shuʾūn Filasṭīniyya* 12 (1972), 127–137.

221 Tripp, *Islam and the Moral Economy*, 100.

222 Ibid, 100f.

223 Assef Bayat, "Shariati and Marx: A Critique of an 'Islamic' Critique of Marxism," *Alif* 10 (1990), 19–41.

(c) In the wake of the Islamic revolution in Iran, some groups and individuals shifted from a leftist to an Islamist ideology, without changing much of their basic political orientation, like, for example, their engagement in armed struggle against Israel.[224]

(d) While all liberal and leftist opposition groups were disbanded, the Iranian Communist Party, Tudeh, supported the Khomeini regime to the verge of self-denial as "the last non-clerical group;" its Secretary-general, Nūr al-Dīn Kianūrī (1915–1999), continued to praise the achievements of the Islamic republic right up to the time of his arrest in 1983.[225] In a televised show trial, he was forced to confess on state TV that he had spied for the Soviet Union. The official Soviet reaction to his arrest and the execution of many Tudeh members was restrained and low-key (similar to the Egyptian case in the 1960s).

(e) In his New Year's message to Gorbachev 1988/89, Khomeini advised the Soviet leader to embrace Islam rather than capitalism after the impending downfall of communism.[226] Khomeini wrote that Gorbachev should understand that the cardinal mistake of communism was its disrespect for God and religion. By suggesting to the Soviet leader the authority of Muslim Sufis and philosophers like Suhrawardī, Ibn al-ᶜArabī, Molla Sadra and Ibn Sīnā, Khomeini revealed his unorthodox mystical and philosophical inclinations, which infuriated some clerics in Qom, who sent him a letter of protest. Khomeini, also annoyed about the "stupid reactionary mullahs," wrote in turn: "When theology meant no interference in politics, stupidity became a virtue."[227]

(f) Some Arab communists interpreted Khomeini's letter to Gorbachev as an invitation to "a dialogue between ideologies,"[228] especially after the end

[224] Manfred Sing, "Brothers in Arms. How Palestinian Maoists Turned Jihadists," *Die Welt des Islams* 51: 1 (2011), 1–44.

[225] Farhang Jahanpour, "The Rise and Fall of the Tudeh Party," *The World Today* 40: 4 (1984), 152–159, 154.

[226] Imām Khomeini, "A Call To Divine Unity (1989). Letter from Imām Khomeinī to Mikhail Gorbachev," Teheran 1993 [The Institute for Compilation and Publication of Imām Khomeini's Works], www.imamreza.net/eng/imamreza.php?id=430 (08.08.2017). On the background: Marcin Rzepka, "Religion, diplomacy and identity. Some remarks on the Ayatollah Khomeini's letter to Garbachev," *Orientalia Christiana Cracoviensia 5* (2013), 79–86.

[227] Quoted after Michael Axworthy, *Revolutionary Iran. A History of the Islamic Republic*, London: Penguin Books 2014, 301. Adam Lewis, "Reconceptualizing Khomeini. The Islamic Republic of Iran and U.S. Democratization Policies in the Middle East," 51–63, http://triceratops.brynmawr.edu/dspace/bitstream/handle/10066/5454/2010LewisA.pdf (24.04.2017).

[228] Karīm Muruwwa, "Ḥiwār maᶜa risālat al-Khumaynī ilā Jurbātshūf," *Qaḍāyā Fikriyya* 13/14 (1993), 149–157, 152; Karīm Muruwwa, ed., *Ḥiwārāt. Mufakkirūn ᶜarab*

of the Cold War. While their initiative fizzled out at first, several dialogue forums were actually organized between individuals and groups from a broad Islamist and leftist spectre.[229] These dialogue initiatives partly resulted in political co-operation against repressive states and their divide-and-rule politics, for example between the Revolutionary Socialists and the younger generation of the Muslim Brothers in Egypt in the run-up to the uprising in 2011. Following British Trotskyist Chris Harman's (1942–2011) slogan "sometimes with the Islamists, never with the state,"[230] Marxists started in the 1990s to explore the conditions and limits of alliances with Islamists.

(g) In their immediate reaction to the terror attacks of 9/11, communist parties in the Arab countries condemned terrorism—"wherever it came from or [for] whatever reason or pretext it [was] declared"—because of its consequences, since it "serves only the most reactionary, brutal and racist forces in the imperialist camp. Terrorism, at the end of the road, hinders the natural development of the national liberation struggle."[231]Thus, their statement made clear that the US administration "has always backed the Israeli terrorism and supported the terrorist organizations worldwide," while it now "has effectively utilized the 11 September events to realize the complete domination of the world and to continue with plundering the wealth of nations."[232] The statement did not dwell on—nor even mention—the Arab-Islamic background of the attacks, but criticized Arab governments working together with the US administration and called for internal (Arab and Palestinian) unity and for international "cooperation, collaboration, and solidarity"[233] in confrontation with the one-pole world, capitalist globalization, the war against Afghanistan, and the "genocide by the hands of Zionist gangs" in Palestine as well as in support of democracy in Arab countries, the intifada in Palestine, and the establishment of an independent Palestinian state. Such a critique of the incipient US-led "war on terror" as the utmost danger for the world precipitated the accommodation between parts

yunāqishūn Karīm Muruwwa fī l-qawmiyya wa-l-ishtirākiyya wa-l-dimuqrāṭiyya wa-l-dīn wa-l-thawra, Beirut: Dār al-Fārābī 1990.

229 Michaelle L. Browers, *Political Ideology in the Arab World. Accommodation and Transformation*, Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press 2009.

230 From the treatise "The Prophet and the Proletariat" (1994), which was translated into Arabic in 1997 and distributed by the Revolutionary Socialists in Egypt, a group, which was later to play a significant role in the uprising against the Mubarak regime in 2011. Harman's treatise is available on www.marxists.org/archive/harman/1994/xx/islam.htm (22.05.2017).

231 "A Statement [by] The Communist and Workers Parties in the Arab Countries", *SolidNet.org* (12.01.2002), www.solidnet.org/old/cgi-bin/lprf818.html?parties/0480=jordan,_jordanian_communist_party/995jordan 6f02.doc (01.08.2017).

232 Ibid.

233 Ibid.

of the global left, Islamic groups, leftist leaders of South America, and representatives of Islamic states.[234]

(h) In the wake of the Arab upheavals in 2011, the Egyptian socialist scientist Sameh Naguib (Sāmiḥ Najib) saw a chance to capitalize on the inherent social contradictions of Islamism and win "collections of young Islamists" to the left,[235] "if we are creative enough"[236] which meant that Marxists should finally leave behind "Stalinist Marxism," atheism, and "silly materialism."[237] Following Haman's analysis that the Islamists were neither natural allies nor enemies, Naguib had, since the late 1990s, criticized the dominant trend among Egyptian communists of seeing Islamists as political rivals.[238] Similarly, but with an initiative from the Islamic side, the Turkish group which calls itself Antikapitalist Müslümanlar (Anti-capitalist Muslims), publicly joined left-wing activists in the May Day celebrations in 2011 as well as during the Gezi Park protests in 2013, condemning capitalism as an "enemy of God and humanity."[239] Their indictment was not only directed against the world economy, but also against the ruling Justice and Development Party (*Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi*, AKP) in Turkey, which they faulted "not only for its moral conservatism …, but also its 'neo-liberalism'."[240] Their speaker, the theologian İhsan Eliaçık, bases his socialist inclinations not only on the Quran, but also on predecessors like ʿAlī Sharīʿati and is considered by some "the first proponent of an 'Islamic socialism' in Turkey."[241]

Conclusion: Islam, Anti-Communism, and Anti-Capitalism

Although Marxism is not a religion and religions are not ideologies, they can fulfil similar social functions. Historically, both Marxism and religions

[234] See Halliday, "The Left and the Jihad." For a Muslim voice from the Stop the War Coalition see Salma Yaqoob, "Islam and the left" (25.10.2005), www.internationalviewpoint.org/spip.php?article892 and idem, "Stop the War Coalition 15 Years On" (08.10.2016), www.youtube.com/watch?v=QCekHxM4uug (11.08.2017).

[235] "The Prophet and the Proletariat" (2011, 1:17:25 h, uploaded by John Molyneux, 13.08.2012), www.youtube.com/watch?v=juvepJnRCgQ (01.08.2017), at 30 min, 20 sec.

[236] Ibid, 34:17.

[237] Ibid, 34:25.

[238] See Browers, *Political Ideology*, 125f. and Sāmiḥ Najib, *Al-Ikhwān al-muslimūn: ru'ya ishtirākiyya*, Giza: Markaz al-Dirāsāt al-Ishtirākiyya 2006.

[239] Mustafa Akyol, "Why Turkey has 'Anti-Capitalist Muslims'", *Al-Monitor* (17.07.2013), www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2013/07/turkey-anti-capitalist-muslims-gezi-social-justice-activism.html (01.08.2017).

[240] Ibid.

[241] Ceyda Nurtsch, "The Koran and social justice. Interview with Turkish theologian Ihsan Eliacik", *Qantara* (15.01.2014), https://en.qantara.de/content/interview-with-turkish-theologian-ihsan-eliacik-the-koran-and-social-justice (01.08.2017).

have served as tools legitimating revolt as well as oppression, liberation as well as exploitation, and armed resistance as well as genocidal violence. As ambivalent systems of thought, they are open to divergent interpretations that can converge, partially intersect, and fundamentally clash with each other. Although Marxism and religion are based on different forms of political, social, and cultural capital and their adherents follow different interests, their relation is not wholly determined by what represents their inner core or their adherents' interests; their relation depends instead on the interpretations of actors and their ability to read, understand, and influence the social and political circumstances.

As the previous pages have shown, the relations between Marxism and Islam can not only be characterized by permanent ups and downs, but also by different views of what characterizes Marxism, Islam, or religion. The relations between Marxism and Islam appear different in the logic of state policies, religious authorities, and party organizations. They are differently analysed by politicians, religious scholars, and intellectuals, dependent on their own power position, their view of the state apparatus, and their attitude towards the Marxist critique of the role of religion in society. These views further involve different interpretations of the history of early Islam and also touch on the history and status of religious and ethnic minorities in Muslim-majority societies. Anti-communist *fatāwā* that portrayed communism as a dogmatically anti-religious religion took neither the practical flexibility of many individual Marxists and communist organizations into account nor the different phases of conflict and accommodation; they also cast a veil of silence on the support that several religious scholars lent to Arab or Islamic socialism.

While communism was deemed un-Islamic by many Muslim scholars, Marx-inspired socialist thought could still combine with nationalism and political Islam, as it did, for example, in Nasserism, during the Iranian revolution, or in parts of the Arab uprisings in 2011. In these moments, it inspired the masses and adopted religious overtones beyond a narrow Islamic sense, rather representing utopia in the making, for, according to Ernst Bloch, "where there is hope, there is religion."[242]

In light of the previous pages, two questions finally deserve attention. The first question is about the extent to which the complex, at times even contradictory web of relations between Marxism and religion can be incorporated into a reasonably coherent narrative, encompassing the periods before, during, and after the Cold War. The second question is whether the difficulties of communism in Muslim-majority countries can be explained by Islam, either because Muslim societies proved ill-suited to Marxism or

[242] Bloch, *Atheismus im Christentum*, 23.

because Marxism proved ill-suited to Muslim societies. In other words: Does Islam lack an original capitalist development and therefore represent a better, authentic form of anti-capitalism?

(1) The historical trajectory: Although Marx and Engels were against the suppression of religious freedom, Marxists and socialists, in practice, found themselves in their struggle against bourgeois and capitalist society in opposition to religious institutions. As the Great War shattered the alliance of throne and altar, a greater number of religious scholars and intellectuals of different religious background turned to socialism–in spite of the outright anti-religious Soviet policy. During the early years of the Bolshevist Revolution, communists capitalized on anti-colonialist sentiments among "peoples of the East," and many Muslims responded by joining their ranks inside and outside the Soviet Union.

During the Cold War, both the US-Americans and the Soviets competed with each other to win the hearts and minds of Muslims. The Soviets continued their anti-colonial efforts and sent ambassadors from Central Asia, until their strategy to "help" Muslims suffered shipwreck with the intervention in Afghanistan. The US administrations since Truman forged an anti-communist alliance with the Vatican and, with their growing global role, tried to expand anti-communism, that was underpinned by Christian "values", into a global religious movement against the Soviets and their allies. These efforts contributed to "a significant religious dimension to the Cold War."[243] In the attempt to contain Soviet influence, US foreign policy also relied on Islamic anti-communism, for which anti-communist *fatāwā* are a telling example. The US policy failure, exemplified by the Iranian revolution and al-Qāʿida's turn on the West, has resulted in an atmosphere of cultural struggle against Islam in Western societies that, at least partly, recalls the early Soviet cultural struggle against religion.

Apart from this, both capitalist and socialist countries with their respective academic cultures saw Islam as detrimental and a hindrance to development; for different reasons, they believed that, with the march of progress, Islam would finally retrench. Although Western scholars generally pledged themselves to uphold religious freedom vis-à-vis Soviet atheism, they were mostly convinced that consumer culture would also subvert the status of religions in modern societies, while Soviet scholars knew that

[243] Gavin Bowd et al., "A century of anti-communisms: a roundtable discussion," *Twentieth Century Communism* 6 (2014), 22–58, 42f. More generally on this see Dianne Kirby, ed., *Religion and the Cold War*, Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan 2003; Luc van Dongen et al., eds., *Transnational Anti-Communism and the Cold War. Agents, Activities, and Networks*, Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan 2014.

"remnants" of religious cultures had survived in spite of an atheist education system.[244]

Communist and Marxist actors in Arab and Muslim societies had a tough act to follow, in their societies as well as in relation to inimical and friendly foreign powers. Therefore, the post-colonial political left often looked for a "third option" as a way-out in order to balance its own aspirations with internal and external pressures. In the inter-war period, a choice for communism could be understood as a "third way" beyond the colonial system and nation-state system. Against the background of the Cold War, Arab socialism, merging socialism with Islam and nationalism, posed as a non-aligned "third way" beyond the capitalist and the communist bloc. With the crisis of Arab socialism in the 1970s, the Iranian revolution, and the Soviet intervention in Afghanistan, the "third way" underwent an Islamic rebirth as a kind of Islamic antithesis to both the materialist West and the atheist East.

In spite of the shifting political grounds, Marxists and non-Marxists have always been keen to politically stand on the "right" side. In this respect, the difference between "atheism" and "religion" also functioned as a marker for pro- and anti-communism. Dissidents like Bloch and Third Worldists called into question such a stereotypical boundary-drawing in the inter-war, respective Cold War period. With the end of the Cold War, the markers of "atheism" and "religion" lost their politically defining meaning to a considerable degree, which is visible in the recent confrontation between Marxists and "new atheists" and in forms of interaction between leftists and Muslims. At the same time, it has not become easier to decide where the "right" side for the left lies.[245] This is visible in nearly every controversial issue connected with Islam, from headscarf to political violence, which divides different groups on the left.[246] The only form of consensus, on which the left is able to agree, is that rightist populist movements want to capitalize on Islamophobia. Therefore, a united "global left" with a "common lan-

244 Jacques Waardenburg, "The Study of Religion during the Cold War: Views of Islam," in: *The Academic Study of Religion during the Cold War. East and West*, Iva Doležalová, Luther H. Martin, and Dalibor Papoušek, eds., New York: Peter Lang 2001, 291–311. Compare also Michael Kemper and Artemy M. Kalinovsky, *Reassessing Orientalisms. Interlocking Orientologies during the Cold War*, London: Routledge 2015.

245 The statement by British Trotskyist John Molyneux at the end of his essay on Islam may serve as an example here: "To put the matter as starkly as possible: from the standpoint of Marxism and international socialism an illiterate, conservative, superstitious Muslim Palestinian peasant who supports Hamas is more progressive than an educated liberal atheist Israeli who supports Zionism (even critically);" see Molyneux, "More than Opium."

246 For parts of the European left see Gilbert Achcar, "Marxists and Religion – yesterday and today" (Marxismes et religions, hier et aujourd'hui, 2004), *International Viewpoint* (16.03.2005), www.internationalviewpoint.org/spip.php?article622 (07.06.2017).

guage" is not in the making,[247] nor does the moral condemnation of exploitation that is today often shared by religious institutions–from the Pope to the Azhar–express a utopian leftist-religious consensus. From a Marxian viewpoint, moral condemnation–as opposed to structural analysis and class struggle–leaves everything untouched and affirms the *status quo*, since it is based on the same norms and laws that have helped, or at least not prevented, the production of capitalist conditions, which are nevertheless "morally" condemned; moral condemnation in secular or religious guise is part of the "inverted world" that Marx wanted to be overthrown.[248]

Having said this, the Marxists' discord in their search for global unity–their "plurality in unity"–should not be seen as a major weakness, but as an inevitable outcome of their aspirations, something all too familiar for theologians. "The best thing about religion is that it makes for heretics,"[249] Ernst Bloch wrote in his *Atheismus im Christentum* (1968), after his forced retirement in 1957 and after having left the GDR in 1961. Not just Bloch's own experience suggests that his saying also holds good for Marxism and its heretics.[250] Marx had complained about the rivalries between anarchist and socialist groups in France and declared that because of them he no longer considered himself a "Marxist."[251] Thus, the inevitable tendency to heresy reflects the potential richness and overload of a tradition which aims to analyse and overthrow all social conditions and relations.

(2) *Islam vis-a-vis anti-communism and anti-capitalism*: With the demise of the Soviet Union, Marxist and non-Marxist intellectuals took stock of Marxism-Leninism, and especially with Marxism in the Arab world. While some pointed out general theoretical deficits in Marxist theories (the neglect of cultural diversity or gender, ecological, and emotional issues), others examined practical and tactical failures–the half-hearted support of liberation

[247] See Susan Buck-Morss, "Can there be a Global left?," in: *Thinking Past Terror. Islamism and Critical Theory on the Left*, idem, London: Verso 2003, 92–112. The US-American philosopher delineates how a global left should aim to speak across cultural rifts and idioms to find a "common language" beyond Euro- and Islamocentrism, which would allow it to form a political opposition against the ravages of global capitalism and the "clash of civilizations" (Huntington).

[248] This is one of the main arguments in Henning's criticism of the normative misreading of Marxist thought, see Henning, *Philosophy after Marx*. For a recent criticism of the rights discourse by the "loose left" see Luciana Bohne, "The Terrorism of Moral Indignation," *Counterpunch* (11 August 2017), www.counterpunch.org/2017/08/11/the-terrorism-of-moral-indignation (07.09.2017).

[249] Bloch, *Atheismus im Christentum*, 23: „Das Beste an der Religion ist, daß sie Ketzer schafft."

[250] Lauermann, "Der Atheismus," 133.

[251] See Rudolf Walther, art. "Marxismus," *Geschichtliche Grundbegriffe. Historisches Lexikon zur politisch-sozialen Sprache in Deutschland*, Otto Brunner, Werner Conze and Reinhart Koselleck, eds., Stuttgart: Klett-Cotta 2004, Vol. 3, 937–976, 950.

struggles from Algeria to Palestine, the adherence to Moscow's rigid dogmatism, false political alliances or petty bourgeois politics.[252] If we add that self-proclaimed Marxist groups, which were not always acknowledged by Moscow as truly Marxist, hailed political violence, defended terrorist tactics, and sponsored suicide bombing in the Middle East, then it seems that close to nothing is right with Marxism in Arab or Muslim-majority countries. In other words: it appears to be more detached from reality than any "religion" could ever be.

Basically, two opposing explanations have been offered for this alleged failure: either Muslim societies were not suitable for Marxism or Marxism was not suitable for Islam.

The first form of explanation is represented by post-colonial critics, who located the problem rather inside Marxism than inside Muslim societies, claiming that Marxism was based on racist stereotypes and Orientalist premises.[253] In *Orientalism* (1978), Edward Said attacked Arab Marxism as both a Westernizing and self-Orientalising force.[254] He also asked "why many forward-looking Muslims still regard Marxism as alien to much in their lives" and why "Marxists in the Muslim world have never successfully translated Marxism from nineteenth-century European categories into modern Middle Eastern ones."[255] For critics following Said, both the "Asiatic mode of production" and "Oriental despotism" were categories that obviously manifest the main contradiction between Marxists' universalism and their particular criticism of non-European countries.

As an example of the second explanation, Max Weber noted in the introduction to the *Protestant Ethic*: "Just because the world has known no rational organization of labor outside the modern Occident, it has known no rational socialism."[256] The various historical socialistic and communistic experiments in the world, he wrote, had little to do with the modern conflict of the large-scale industrial entrepreneur and free-wage workers: "Thus there could be no such problems as those of socialism."[257] Max Weber's statement can be interpreted as a way of saying that the Middle East was

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252 See, for example, Wolfgang Schwanitz, "Zehn Schwächen im marxistischen Denken. Ein Angebot zum Nachdenken," *asien, afrika, lateinamerika* 18 (1990), 932–933; Ismael, *The Communist Movement*, 102–123.

253 See for example Kreutz, "Marx and the Middle East."

254 Edward Said, *Orientalism*, New York: Pantheon 1978, 325. For a re-evaluation see Manfred Sing and Miriam Younes, "The Specters of Marx in Edward Said's *Orientalism*," *Die Welt des Islams* 53: 2 (2013), 149–191.

255 Edward W. Said, "*Europe and the Middle East* by Albert Hourani, *Marxism and the Muslim World* by Maxime Rodinson, *What is Islam?* by W. Montgomery Watt", *Arab Studies Quarterly* 4 (1980), 386–393, 389f.

256 Max Weber, *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*, New York: Charles Scribner's Sons 1958, 23, quoted by Hanna and Gardner, *Arab Socialism*, 21.

257 Ibid.

not conducive for the application of Marxism. The Syrian dissident Marxist Yāsīn Ḥāfiẓ (1930–1978),[258] maybe involuntarily, reflected Weber's take by arguing that all Arab countries were stuck in the middle of the road between tradition and modernity. He coined the composite terms *ta'akhkhurākiyya* ("backwardialism" from backwardness and socialism) and *ta'akhkhurāliyya* ("backwarditalism" from backwardness and capitalism) for socialist and capitalist Arab states, meaning in the first case that socialist regimes had merely adopted socialist slogans to cover their traditionalism, and in the second case that capitalist transformations in the oil monarchies had merely scratched the surface of a traditional society.[259]

What speaks against both the "Saidian" and "Weberian" explanations is not only the near-complete spread of communist and socialist groups in Muslim-majority countries since the end of the 19th century; the number of workers' strikes, the death tolls and personal tragedies also bear witness to a political imaginary, provided by Marxism and Bolshevism, that has even been adopted and re-worked by nationalists and Islamists. Whether the reference to socialism was used to call for anti-colonialism, to legitimate state power or to invoke the spectre of social disorder–it was a central prism for political struggles for several decades.

Thus, both the post-colonial critique of Marxism's Eurocentrism and Weber's focus on industrial capitalism in Europe can nurture the (mis-) understanding that they attest either a European or Islamic exceptionalism. Islam might then appear to be not only a non-Western, but also an anti-capitalist force. Yet, neither Euro-centric nor Islamo-centric perspectives that separate Islamic history from the Western European capitalist development are correct. The idea that (industrial) capitalism is an exceptional formation in socio-economic history, and that it only developed in Europe, is a claim that downplays external influences, predecessors in long-distance trade, and the importance of Euro-African-Asian trade connections under Muslim control from Late Antiquity to the 18th century. "Not only did the Muslim world know a capitalistic sector," as French Marxist historian Maxime Rodinson has argued, "but this sector was apparently the most extensive and highly developed in history before the establishment of the world market created by the Western European bourgeoisie."[260] Muslim societies were neither lacking capitalism nor untouched by the dynamic develop-

[258] Ḥāfiẓ broke with the Syrian Baath Party after 1967 and formed the Revolutionary Socialist Workers Party (*Ḥizb al-ʿUmmāl al-Thawrī al-Ishtirākī*) with members of the Marxist wing of the Baath Party. He was arrested because of his political views and upon his release in 1968 moved to Beirut.

[259] Yāsīn al-Ḥāfiẓ, "Ittijāhāt al-taṭawwur al-ʿarabī al-muqbil," in: *Al-Hazīma wa-l-idiyūlūjiya l-mahzūma*, *al-Aʿmāl al-kāmila 4*, idem, Damascus: Dār al-Ḥaṣād ^{2}1997 [1976], 151–193, 174.

[260] Maxime Rodinson, *Islam and Capitalism*, New York: Pantheon Books 1973, 56.

ment that has been described as characteristic for European cities. Muslims provided mathematical, commercial, and financial instruments which formed part and parcel of trade and capitalism in Europe. Italian trading cities did not invent capitalism, but adopted many instruments from other, often Muslim, Mamluk or Ottoman, merchants who had already made "big money."[261]

Claiming the birth of ("true") capitalism for Western Europe or the birth of ("true") anti-capitalism for Soviet Russia is neither a natural nor a neutral act. It lays claim to originality, authority, rationality, modernity, class consciousness, and liberation. Re-claiming parts of capitalist history for Muslims means demonstrating that Islamic commerce and European capitalism were genealogically inter-connected. In the same vein, European, Arab, Marxist, Christian, or Islamic forms of anti-colonial resistance, with all their errors and successes, were also genealogically interwoven with the rise of European imperialism and the demise of Muslim empires.

In this sense, this chapter should have made clear that the features of Muslim-majority societies made their members neither particularly susceptible to anti-capitalism and anti-communism nor immune to them. Rather, Marxist and Muslim actors dealt differently with each other according to the changing local, regional and global conditions and the means at their disposal. Thus, episodes of persecution and hostility coexisted with phases of accommodation and alliance, depending on whether the actors prioritized their differences or communalities and whether they legitimized the struggle against each other or against a common enemy.

[261] For this discussion see John M. Hobson, *The Eastern Origins of Western Civilisation*, Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press 2004; idem, "Islamic Commerce and Finance in the Rise of the West," in: *The Role of the Arab-Islamic World in the Rise of the West. Implications for Contemporary Trans-Cultural Relations*, Nayef R. F. Al-Rodhan, ed., New York: Palgrave MacMillan 2012, 84–115; Jairus Banaji, "Islam, the Mediterranean and the Rise of Capitalism," *Historical Materialism* 15 (2007), 47–74; Nelly Hanna, *Making Big Money in 1600. The Life and Times of Ismaʿil Abu Taqiyya, Egyptian Merchant*, Syracuse: Syracuse Univ. Press 1998; Kerem Nisancioglu, "The Ottoman Origins of Capitalism: Uneven and Combined Development and Eurocentrism," *Review of International Studies* 40 (2014), 325–347; Murat Çizakça, *Islamic Capitalism and Finance: Origins, Evolution, and the Future,* Cheltenham: Elgar 2011.