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Global Media and Communication 2012 8: 243

DOI: 10.1177/1742766512459121

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Global Media and Communication

8(3) 243–268

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DOI: 10.1177/1742766512459121

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Abstract

The concept of multiple modernities is increasingly influential in mainly Western academic circles. Although the multiple modernities thesis challenges established West-centric understandings of the modern world, it also risks praising ‘the modern’ as the end of history and our preordained destiny. Multiple modernities’ global history cannot be separated from the colonialism, slavery, wars and exploitation that have formed our modern world and its inequalities. The multiple modernities thesis also illuminates a cultural and religious battlefield in which a Western concept of linear modernity, with a ‘developmental path’ that should be followed by all countries, is highly contested. The division of societies into the dichotomous categories of modern versus traditional – a legacy of the ‘grand narratives’ of classical social theory – also creates the foundation for other divisions, including the dichotomy of the modern Christian ‘Us’ versus the traditional Muslim ‘Them’. Such West-centric history-telling is part of a field of cultural authority in which the battle over the right to shape the past and present of various societies is taking place. There is no singular model of modernity; global modernization programs and processes have taken place in a variety of cultural and political environments, creating multiple models of modernity. This article critically explores the shortcomings of the West-centric theory of singular modernity. By focusing on the modern transformation of mass communication in Muslim countries, it argues that both traditional means of mass communication, such as *manbars*, and modern media, such as newspapers and tape recorders, have been used effectively for mobilization of masses by revolutionary Muslim groups. It also argues that Islam is not incompatible with modernity or democracy, and that Islamic groups have been an integral part of modern democratic developments in Muslim countries.

Keywords

Civil society, colonialism, communication, democratic movements, mass media, multiple modernities, Muslim societies

The recent militarization of the world for the purpose of changing undesirable regimes in non-Western countries in general, and Muslim countries in particular, is frequently

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legitimized as 'the West's mission of saving' (Abu-Lughod, 2002) non-Western civilians from dictatorial regimes and as the West's 'democratic mission' of implementing democracy in non-Western countries. The 'creed of absolute violence', that is, the role of war and mass killing in social change, to use Philip Lawrence's (1999) phrase, has been an integral part of the processes of 'Western' modernization. The mission of saving through war is increasingly used to 're-write the map of the Middle East', in George W. Bush's words. Such neo-colonial wars and interventions – which are also highly mediatized, as they are often broadcast as movies with predictable outcomes – are legitimized a priori by an established discourse about the 'backward and traditional others' that is rooted in what Edward Said (1981) called an 'Oriental framework'. This discourse denies Muslims agency and presents them as passive individuals or groups trapped in their cultural and religious networks. Such a discourse of the traditional, irrational and passive East – and especially Islamic cultures – versus the modern, rational and active West has a long history in European intellectual circles and is as old as European modernity itself.

The social sciences have played a central role in establishing and naturalizing this imagined dichotomy of East/West. Many classical social scientists, such as Max Weber, divided the world into dichotomies of 'modern' and 'traditional' societies, and believed that modernity could only be developed in a Western Christian cultural environment. Other religious and political groups and communities, such as Muslims, were excluded from the modern culture. Such 'grand narratives' of classical social theory create the foundation for a selective history-telling, in which the only path to and through modernity is an imagined Western singular modernity formed by development, progress and humanism. Modernity has been purified from its dark history, including slavery and war (Joas, 2003; Lawrence, 1999), and is presented in the social sciences as a history of progress that is the property of a superior Western culture.

The 'grand narratives' of many classical scholars, including Marx, Weber, Durkheim and Tönnies, have presented modernity as a singular development that took place in Europe and occurred almost identically and equally in all European countries. However, modernity has not been a singular and homogeneous 'master process' wherever modern transformations have taken place. There is no unique European modernity, but various paths of modernization (Kamali, 2006). Modern transformations took place in different parts of the world and in various ways and, aside from their common institutional properties, generated many different institutional and cultural forms and constellations. Neither European nor non-European modernities have resulted from singular or identical developments and models. Modern transformation in Europe created a variety of modern institutions and political formations, resulting in British, French, German, Italian and Scandinavian models of modernity. Each of these models has also had different forms and conditions at different periods of time, making it difficult, if not impossible, to consider even a single country's modernization process as a linear, homogeneous process of development.

For instance, German models of modernity include several periods with distinct modern specificities. Rapid industrialization and political efforts at unification in the early 19th century had their own modern characteristics, with their main goal being to break with the feudal past. State reforms and nation building during the reign of Bismarck in the 1850s were mainly efforts to create a nation and neutralize the 'communist threat'.

Germany's defeat in World War I influenced the economic, bureaucratic and political modernization programs of the Third Reich, with their extremely monopolistic and state-centered characteristics. Finally, German modernity of the post-World War II period had its own particular characteristics. The same modern diversities can be found in other European countries, such as Britain, France and Italy. We must thus accustom ourselves to the idea that discrepancies between different social realms are the norm and that the concept of 'modernization' may be no more than a collective name for a series of changes within which many variable relations are possible and actually exist (Joas, 2003).

However, modernity as the fruit of Western civilization came to be presented in the Western social sciences as a historical phenomenon rooted in a notion of an almost homogeneous historical development of 'the West'. Arnold Toynbee, in his classic work, *A Study of History*, presented one of the most important theoretical frameworks for the essential separation of East and West. According to Toynbee's (1946) classification, 'West' refers to the Hellenic civilization, which derived from the Minoan civilization in the Aegean (c. 1200 BC) in combination with Judeo-Christian elements, without any 'Eastern' influences from the Persian and Egyptian civilizations. Contemporary social science scholars such as Samuel Huntington (1993) and Bernard Lewis (2002), in alliance with Western political parties and the media, have been trying to reproduce the stagnating historical separation between the 'modern West' and the 'non-modern East'. This is a legacy of colonialism that must be treated as an integral part of the genealogy of Western modernity (Venn, 2000).

Many questions arise regarding such problematic categorizations of human societies and of East and West themselves. For instance, why is the influence of Islam and Islamic civilization in Europe ignored? Does not even the supposed Judeo-Christian origin of the West lie in the East, that is, Palestine? Was the Moorish Empire in Europe not an Eastern Empire? Was the Ottoman Empire not a European Empire that included many of today's European countries, such as Greece, Serbia, Bosnia, Romania and Bulgaria? Such confusing theoretical construction of the differences between East and West is an inseparable part of 'Western social theory' and remains a legacy of the social sciences that has been used to legitimize colonial and neo-colonial wars and violence.

It is important to note that in today's global world, the division of people and communities, as well as classes and ethnicities, has left solid geographic ground. The velocity of economic globalization transforms divides like West/East into divisions between those who

live under the empire of real time essential to their economic activities at the heart of the virtual community of the world city, and those, more destitute than ever, who will survive in the real space of local towns, that great planetary wasteland that will in the future bring together the only too real community of those who no longer have a job or a place to live. (Virilio, 1997: 71)

Globalization of the capitalist system and the neoliberal ideology in a Western-dominated and postcolonial world has reinforced the 'warrior mentality' as an inseparable part of modernity. It seems that pluralism and value-rationality have lost their meaning in our economically globalized world, giving way to an instrumental rationality that cannot recognize any opposition to universalized Western interests. In addition, the ruling political and economic elites of many non-Western countries share the major interests of

Western countries as a result of the globalization of neoliberalism. This adds to the complexity of analyzing a world divided into West and East, or 'modern Christian West' and 'traditional Muslim East'.

Today, as a result of the globalization of media and communications, many social scientific, West-centric 'grand narratives' have become 'mediatized truths' about 'Us' and the 'Others'. Namely, these truths tell us that there is only one valid path to modernity and development, that is, a singular Western model of modernity that guarantees Western interests and must be followed by, or forced on, all other countries. Such a mediatized understanding of modernity leaves no room for the diversity of multiple modernization programs that are influenced by the historical, socioeconomic and cultural conditions of each country.

For example, modernization programs in Muslim countries, such as the modernization of the bureaucracy and the army in Persia and the Ottoman Empire, have created different paths to modernity that challenge the established West-centric imagination of a singular and linear modernity.¹ These countries' historical and sociocultural environments and institutional arrangements have influenced their modernization processes and the impact of these processes on various segments of society. Media is one of those areas that have been influenced in various ways by different modernization projects in different Islamic countries. For example, modernizing the governments of Iran and Turkey modernized mass communication, which prior to that time was mainly in the hands of religious groups, by creating state-controlled newspapers in the 19th century and establishing national radio and TV in the 20th century. Modern media were used to legitimize their modernization programs and marginalize the influence of religious groups on society.

Fundamentalist modernists, such as the Pahlavi Shahs of Iran (1942–79) and the Kemalists in Turkey, effectively used mass media to create what is called a 'tittytainment' (Martin and Schumann, 1997) industry to weaken the influence of religious groups and create a modern, West-oriented and secularized society.² However, the attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon on 11 September 2001 have revitalized an old and infected wound in the relationship between the 'Christian West' and the 'Muslim East'. The declaration of a Western democratic and modern crusade against 'Muslim terrorists' and the increased popularity of Huntington's idea of the 'clash of civilizations' in political discourse have even affected academic circles, which were already influenced by the Orientalist legacy of the social sciences. Many scholars have offered evidence for an Orientalist thesis that Islam is incompatible with modernity and democracy (Gellner, 1983; Huntington, 1993; Kuran, 2005; Lewis, 2002, 2003).

This article critically explores the shortcomings of the West-centric theory of singular modernity. By focusing on modern transformations of mass communication in several Muslim countries, it argues that both traditional means of mass communication, such as *manbars*, and modern media, such as pamphlets, newspapers and cassette recorders, have been used effectively by revolutionary Muslim groups to participate in modern democratic movements. It also argues that Islam is not incompatible with modernity and that Islamic groups have been an integral part of modern and democratic developments in Muslim countries.

I first examine the problems of the social scientific legacy of singular modernity. I then provide a historical overview of early modernization processes in some Muslim countries, such as Iran and Turkey, to better illuminate the concept of multiple modernities. Focusing on modern transformations of mass communication and media during various historical periods of these countries (particularly Iran and Turkey), I illustrate why the analytical tool of singular modernity is insufficient for understanding the modern history of non-Western and Muslim countries.

Multiple modernities versus West-centric narratives

Scholarly discourses of modernity presented by classical sociologists such as Marx, Durkheim and even Weber assumed that:

the cultural program of modernity as it developed in modern Europe and the basic institutional constellations that emerged there would ultimately take over in all modernizing and modern societies; with the extension of modernity, they would prevail throughout the world. (Eisenstadt, 2000: 1)

However, modern developments in general, and those occurring after World War II in particular, failed to bear out these assumptions.

Although Western models of modernity failed to find their counterparts in many non-Western countries – such as the attempts to establish a French model of political modernity in Turkey and an English model in Iran – such models lingered on as crucial reference points for modernization programs in those countries. Many modernization programs and movements in non-Western countries, such as those carried out by Kemal Ataturk (1922–36) in Turkey and Reza Shah (1924–41) in Iran, were occasionally legitimized through an anti-Western and even anti-modern discourse, although these movements and programs were distinctively modern (Eisenstadt, 2000; Kamali, 2006). For example, Ataturk's and Reza Shah's modernization programs were legitimized by a strong nationalist and anti-colonial discourse as a way to revive each country's glorious pre-Islamic past. The authoritative modernizations³ of Ataturk in Turkey and Reza Shah in Iran generated a paradoxical discourse of modernization in which Europe was divided into the categories of the old colonizing Europe, such as France and England, and the new anti-colonial Europe, such as Germany and Italy. Such a division of Europe was based mainly on the destructive colonial interventions of England and France in both Turkey and Iran during and after World War I. It was also a strategic effort to use the growing conflict between 'new Europe' (Nazi Germany and Fascist Italy) and 'old Europe' (England and France) to advance the national interests of Iran and Turkey.

While modernizing governments in Iran and Turkey employed anti-Western and nationalist discourses against the 'old Europe', they simultaneously articulated a discourse of progress and modern development that legitimized closer connections to the 'new Europe'. Authoritative modernizations in Turkey and Iran combined socioeconomic and cultural modernization with political dictatorship at a time when models of non-liberal democratic modernities such as the modernities of Nazi Germany, Fascist Italy and the socialist Soviet Union, increased in popularity and provided political refer-

ences. The army and the bureaucracy occupied central positions in launching such modernization programs.

The history of modernization in Turkey and Iran (as well as in many other countries, such as China, Japan, the Soviet Union and Argentina) demonstrates that modernity and Westernization are not identical. However, Western models, such as the British and French models of modernity, have been, and continue to be, points of reference for many non-Western countries, including Turkey and Iran. This is generally a consequence of the colonial and postcolonial world order, which continues to enforce West-centric development agendas in non-Western countries such as Iraq, Afghanistan, Egypt and Libya as a way to guarantee the reproduction of Western countries' socioeconomic and political privileges.

The modern era, starting in the late 15th century in some European countries (Wallerstein, 1974), entailed a radical transformation of the established ideas – in particular religious and traditional beliefs such as Catholicism – that underpinned the legitimacy of the political order. The unquestioned became questioned by human agencies engaged in modern revolutions and riots against divinely legitimized kings and their political orders. New groups of people who had historically been considered a passive mass became active agents of history-making and modern social transformation. Revolutions and social movements, such as the French Revolution of 1789, became major agents in changing the socio-political formations and established institutions of societies. New boundaries, political spheres and collective identities, such as nation-states and nations, were constructed. Such transformations entailed revolutionary Jacobin thought, namely a belief in the equality between citizens and individual rights. This view was influenced on the one hand by Enlightenment philosophy, and on the other by the belief, grounded in the American Revolution, in the primacy of politics in creating social change and realizing those rights. The belief that societies can be reconstituted by political means became an uncontested truth guiding modern revolutionary movements all over the world (Eisenstadt, 2000; Kamali, 2001). This modern invention provided the ground for the creation of new political ideologies and various modern states, including liberal (England), socialist (Russia/the Soviet Union), Fascist (Italy) and national-socialist (Germany) states.

The contradictions inherent in various models of modernity and their political organizations, such as liberal and fascist states, are in fact the contradictions of modernity itself. One of the most critical points in the construction of modern ideologies and political ideas in Europe, influenced by Enlightenment philosophies, was the separation of universal and pluralistic visions. This was a separation between 'a view that accepted the existence of different values and rationalities and a view that conflated different values and, above all, rationalities in a totalistic way' (Eisenstadt, 2000: 8). In Weber's (1968) words, this was the sovereignty of reason or instrumental rationality (*Zweckrationalität*) over value-rationality (*Wertrationalität*).

Many of the modern ideas and organizations that flourished in some Western European countries already had a long tradition in what are usually called non-Western countries. For instance, the Islamic governance of the Ottoman Empire influenced Western European countries' models and ideas of modern governance and modern army organization. The Ottoman military conscription and tax system are two such areas of Islamic

influence. The idea of Western exceptionalism, which created a 'unique West' as discussed by many Western classical social scientists such as Max Weber, is a Eurocentric reconstruction of modern history (Kamali, 2006). In fact, the modernization of Western countries went hand-in-hand with colonial and imperialist wars both within and outside of Europe. As Lawrence (1999) observes, the Western mission of modernizing other countries has been accompanied by colonization, genocide and the oppression of many people in the world.

The case of Caribbean colonization and modernization by Britain is one of many comprehensive illustrations. As Sidney Mintz argues:

In the view espoused here, Caribbean peoples are the first *modernised* peoples in world history. They were modernised by enslavement and forced transportation; by 'seasoning' and coercion on time-conscious export-oriented enterprises; by the reshuffling, redefinition and reduction of gender-based roles; by racial and status-based oppression; and by the need to reconstitute and maintain cultural forms of their own under implacable pressure. These were people wrenched from societies of a different sort, then thrust into remarkably *industrial* settings for their time and for their appearance, and kept under circumstances of extreme repression. Caribbean *cultures* had to develop under these unusual and, indeed, terrible conditions. The argument here is that they have, as a result, a remarkably modern cast for their time. (Quoted in Scott, 2004: 191)

Any effort to understand modernities in general, and the 'modern West' in particular, without analyzing the role of colonialism, the slave trade and modern wars in the modern development of Europe becomes a selective and self-celebrating presentation without much historical evidence. After all, Nazism and Fascism were as modern as liberalism and communism. They all shared a belief in the primacy of politics in changing social institutions and creating new citizens. They believed that society could be totally reconstructed by political means. Thus, the history of Western modernities should be told in an all-inclusive way, encompassing even the brutal colonial past and present. Various models of modernity developed in a world undergoing colonial and imperialistic wars that created a new world of inequalities and injustices between those considered 'Us' and those categorized as 'Others'. Without analyzing the role of colonial and modern wars and occupations of the past in the development of multiple models of modernity, we cannot understand and analyze today's global socioeconomic and political orders in a proper way. We are living in a world formed by what Walter Mignolo (2011) calls a 'colonial matrix of power' that controls knowledge. Such a matrix contains two elements, namely the rhetoric of modernity and colonialism. Modernity is constantly named and celebrated in terms of progress, development and growth, while colonialism (poverty, misery, inequalities, injustices) is silenced or named as a problem to be solved by modern societies (Mignolo, 2011).

The following section illustrates the development of multiple modernities by focusing on particular socioeconomic, political and cultural properties in the Muslim countries of Iran and Turkey.

Early modernities and the divergence of civil society

The concept of civil society is neither merely a Western invention nor merely a modern one. It existed in the pre-modern era as a political space between the political leaders and

organizations on the one hand, and family, tribe or other 'natural' social entities on the other. It is based on civic organizations and associations – sometimes called civic society, to use Putnam's (1993) term. The concept of civil society is therefore much older than modernity, and can be found as far back as in the ancient world, articulated by Socrates and Aristotle, among others. Islamic thinkers and political leaders of the 11th and 12th centuries also recognized the concept and function of civil society and the public sphere (Eisenstadt et al., 2002; Kamali, 2006). Even the Prophet of Islam, Muhammad, was aware of the concept and recognized the important role of civil society in Islamic governance, which he addressed in Arabic as *Al-ijtima al madaniya*. Civil society had an important function for the Islamic governance in its huge and diverse European and non-European territories (Kamali, 2006).

Pre-modern civil society in Muslim countries, such as the Ottoman and Persian Empires, consisted mainly of two powerful indigenous groups, the ulama (religious leaders) and the *bazaris* (merchants gathered in the bazaars). A balance of power and influence existed between the Islamic state and civil societies in those countries in pre-modern times. However, as a result of early modernizations and increasing trade and international relationships with new European powers, the balance of power and the cooperation between the state and civil society changed. The Ottoman Empire and Persia were drawn into a web of international relations, trade and commerce that reinforced modernization efforts and created new groups and classes in the two countries. Such changes created a new and West-oriented civil society that challenged the indigenous one.

Since the early 16th century, almost simultaneously with some European countries, the Ottoman and Persian Empires developed modern ideas about the political system and recognized a need for new organization and rationalization of the army and the bureaucratic system. Persia started to free itself from centuries of Arab occupation and establish a new Persian regime, the Safavid Empire (1501–1722), in the early 16th century. To institutionalize their independence from the Sunni Arabs, the Safavids adopted the Shi'i branch of Islam and made it the state religion of Persia. The pre-Islamic model of the Persian kingdom was thus combined with the Shia theory of the Hidden Imam.⁴ Shi'i religious leaders, the ulama, gained a prominent position in Persian society. However, their role changed during the reign of one of the most powerful kings of the Safavids, Shah Abbas the Great (1588–1629), whose secularization programs pushed the ulama out of the government and political institutions. To survive in Persian civic society, the ulama institutionalized a lasting and historically substantial relationship with the other influential group in Persian society, the *bazaris* (merchants and shopkeepers of the bazaars). The alliance between the ulama and the *bazaris* comprised the core of Persian civil society until the Constitutional Revolution (1905–09).

The Safavids modernized the Persian army using Portuguese weapons experts. The army showed its capacity for 'absolute violence' by crushing internal opposition and defeating the powerful and reputedly undefeatable Ottoman army. Although the Safavids created a modern military armed with modern weapons and established a 'Royal Squadron' (*Ghezelbash*) recruited from the most highly trained men, mobilizing the masses for military service and wars normally could not take place without the support of the ulama. Thus, the ulama and the *bazaris* continued to play an important role in Persian civil society. The ulama mobilized people for wars and the 'defense of the *Shi'i*

land of Persia' (Kamali, 1998), while the *bazaris* paid the major costs of the wars (Kamali, 1998, 2006).

Other modernization efforts also more or less depended on the cooperation of the ulama and even the *bazaris*. These included the early 19th-century military reforms (*Nezam-e jadid* or 'New Order') of Persian Prime Minister Abbas Mirza (d. 1833) and the modern administrative reforms of another Persian Prime Minister, Mirza Taqi Khan-e Amir Kabir (1848–51). Although modern reforms and secularization weakened the cooperation between the state and the ulama, the ulama's strong position in civil society forced the government to seek their support for modern reforms. The ulama supported the reforms because they had an interest in strengthening the only Shi'i country surrounded by Sunni Ottomans and Christian Russia (Algar, 1969). The other group of indigenous civil society, the *bazaris*, was also mainly positive about modern reforms because, as the national bourgeoisie, any weakness of the Iranian Shi'i state at a time of increasing European colonial and imperialist influence could harm its economic interests. Such mutual interests of the government and the indigenous civil society groups created a suitable basis for early modernization programs (Kamali, 1998).

The Ottoman modernization programs were also influenced by the Ottoman Empire's particular socioeconomic, political and cultural properties. The tradition of Sunni Islam and the Sultanate system, in which the Sultan enjoyed both political and religious leadership, accorded the Ottoman Sultans much more power than the Persian Shahs. Although the Sultans were dependent on the ulama's recognition of their divine power, they considered themselves the leaders of the world's Muslims, and more or less the heirs of the Prophet. Although both the Sultans and the Shahs depended on the ulama's religious support, the Ottoman Sultans fulfilled a religious role as the caliphs of the Muslim world, while the Persian Shahs were political leaders who protected the Shi'i country against threats from Sunni and Christian neighbors, but could not exercise religious leadership. The separation of the authority of the mundane (the Shah) from the divine power (the ulama) in Persia started during the reign of one of the most powerful Safavids, Shah Abbas the Great (1587–1629). It was reinforced by the later Persian king, Nader Shah Afshar (1726–46), continued during the reigns of subsequent kings, and reached its zenith during the reign of the last Shahs of Iran, the Pahlavis (1924–79), who changed the name of the country to Iran in 1922.

The Ottoman Sultans continued to exercise religious leadership until the obliteration of the Empire after World War I. The foundation of the Sultans' political power remained religious. This made the modernization efforts of the state less problematic and more accepted by established institutions and powerful groups in civil society. However, there exists a historical division of power between the Ottomans' indigenous civil society, namely the ulama and the *bazaris*, and the state. The existence of civil societies in Muslim countries is a matter of controversy that continues to haunt any comprehensive analysis of those societies. The unverifiable denial of the existence of civil society in Muslim countries, such as that of Ernest Gellner (1983), is based mainly on Western social scientists' Eurocentrism. Such a view is evident in Max Weber's theoretical presentations of Islamic societies as characterized by patrimonial domination that rendered political, economic and legal relations unstable, arbitrary or irrational (Turner, 1974), and in which no independent agents or sphere outside of the state could exist. This

Orientalist understanding of Muslim societies has its roots in the Crusades, a time in which Machiavelli advised Christian princes to attack Muslims, whom he called 'barbarians' (Machiavelli, 1981[1513]).

The established Eurocentric assumptions in the social sciences, according to which the Ottoman state is an 'army state' (e.g. Weber, 1968), are both misleading and incompatible with the Empire's history and institutional arrangements (see Kamali, 2006 and Lybyer, 1913, among others). Weber's writings on the origin of civility in 'the West' and the lack of the same in Muslim countries, and the Marxist paradigm of 'oriental despotism' in which the despotic order is based on the lack of Western feudalism in the 'Orient', are just two examples of such established theoretical fallacies. These have been developed further by such later Western social scientists as Lapidus (2002), Gellner (1983), Beck, Giddens and Lash (1994) and Giddens (2007). Such 'speculative ventures into the unknown' (Eldem et al., 1999: 2) continue to dominate the social sciences as well as the mass media in 'the West'.⁵ In the late modern world, societies have been mediatized, fostering interdependence between institutions of knowledge production and media (Hjarvard, 2008; Schulz, 2004). The mediatization of science depends, on the one hand, on the growing importance of the media in shaping public opinion, and, on the other, on the growing dependence of science on scarce resources and public acceptance (Weingart, 1998).

I have discussed elsewhere the fallacies of such West-centric scientific and mediatized imaginations, which hinder us from conducting any comprehensive analysis of Muslim societies (see Kamali, 2001, 2006, 2008). Modernization and democratic developments in Muslim countries have a relatively long history. Multiple modernization programs, which were introduced by modernizing governments in many Muslim countries, have created many modern states and societies with distinct sociocultural properties. The lack of democracy and the absence of a free press should not be interpreted as a lack of modernity in Muslim countries, since – as China and the Soviet Union have demonstrated – modernity has nothing to do with democracy (Therborn, 1992).

The path of modernization in the Ottoman and Persian Empires, as well as in other Muslim countries such as Egypt, was shaped by the unique structural and institutional properties of those societies. The role of civil society, and in particular of the indigenous agents of civil society, has been ignored in mainstream research and debates on Muslim countries' modernization. The theoretical dualism of modernity/traditionalism led many to believe that the indigenous forces of Muslim societies, such as the *bazaris* and the *ulama*, opposed modernization and presented the main obstacles to modern changes. Although attempts at modernization in Ottoman and Persian societies were initiated mainly by the states of those countries, the indigenous civil society was also highly engaged in the modernization processes. The following section will discuss the *ulama*'s central role as agents of mass communication and political mobilization in those countries.

Public sphere and mass communication in Muslim countries

From the early establishment of political rule in Muslim societies until the 20th-century establishment of authoritative and secular modernizations, the *ulama* had a virtual

monopoly over the means of mass communication that influenced public opinion. The Friday prayers were a central pillar of such communication. During the pre-modern and early modern eras, the ulama controlled the institution of the Friday prayers, which provided a vehicle for communicating important political and social issues to the masses. The weekly Friday prayers had attracted many of those in traditional Muslim societies since the 8th century. The crucial role of the Friday prayers forced political leaders in Muslim countries to exercise control over the prayers. They often appointed the leaders of the Friday prayers, chosen from among the ulama. Important questions about the Islamic ruling system have been discussed in the Friday prayers, as one of the most important pillars of the public sphere in Muslim societies, especially since the establishment of the Islamic Moorish Empire (Eisenstadt et al., 2002).

The most important institution in the public sphere of Muslim societies was the *manbar* (pulpit). The importance of the *manbar* in propagating some political ideas, delegitimizing others and mobilizing popular support goes back to the very beginning of Islam. During the modern age, that is, in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, critical sermons and preaching against the state had, in many cases, serious consequences for the state. In Iran, for instance, both the Constitutional (1905–09) and Islamic (1976–79) Revolutions illustrated the importance of *manbars* in influencing and mobilizing people. Not only did the revolutionaries use *manbars* to propagate their ideas, but the state also used them against the opposition (Fathi, 1993). In general, *va'z* (preaching on the *manbars*) was a very effective means of mobilizing people and influencing state policy.

In the Ottoman Empire, the ulama's control of *manbars* and their leading role in the institution of Friday prayers enabled them to influence public opinion and mobilize political support and opposition. In fact, the main leader of the ulama, the *Sheykh ul-Islam*, was empowered to authorize the deposition of the Sultan. By issuing religious verdicts (*fatva*), the *Sheykh ul-Islam* could, in effect, confirm or deny the Sultan's fitness to rule. Thus did the ulama work to ensure the importance of the Islamic religion in the state and society (Zilfi, 1988). In the hands of the ulama, *manbars* were effective means of disseminating propaganda and engaging in public communication with the masses. At a time when most people could not read or write, the ulama and their preachers had an influential role in shaping public opinion. This is why political leaders, such as the Shahs of Iran, and even such religio-political leaders such as the Ottoman Sultans were dependent on the ulama's preaching and support.

The modernization of mass communication: From *manbars* to newspapers

In the 18th and 19th centuries, amid the increasing globalization of the capitalist world system, the governments of Muslim countries such as Iran, Turkey and Egypt launched bureaucratic, educational and industrial reforms. Although the reforms remained mainly apolitical, modernization and closer connections to Europe created new intellectual groups, such as students of modern schools, authors, publishers, modern merchants and manufacturers, who claimed a role in the public sphere and political decision making. In the late 19th century, such groups started to publish journals and distribute pamphlets in the hope of influencing public opinion and monitoring political change.

However, because of the limited number of those who could read journals and pamphlets, the ulama continued to play an influential role in mobilizing the masses by speaking from their *manbars* and issuing *fatvas* (religious verdicts). This influence forced many Westernized intellectuals to seek cooperation with the ulama. Yet, modernization not only created new groups and lifestyles, it also influenced the ulama and their allies, the *bazaris*. The *bazaris*, who were engaged in national and international trade, were increasingly drowning in the web of the global capitalist system. Thus, in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, Muslim countries such as Iran, Turkey and Egypt witnessed a growing differentiation of their societies, with the creation of new urban groups and classes and popular democratic ideas. These new political groups and parties necessitated political changes and new means of communication for use in a differentiated public sphere. This forced many ulama and religious groups to change their traditional attitudes and seek new means of communication with the masses.

One of the most influential ulama of that time was Seyyed Jamal al-Din Asadabadi, known as Afghani (1838–97), who published modern journals, books, political essays and pamphlets in Persia, the Ottoman Empire and Egypt. Residing in all three countries, Afghani promoted the unity of Muslims for progress and modernization. He travelled to Paris, where he published one of the first modern journals, *Urvat al-Vosgha*, and argued for the modernization of Muslim countries. The English, who did not like his mobilization of Muslims, forbade the journal to be distributed in India. They also compelled him to stop publishing the journal after he had printed only 18 issues (Kermani, 1983).

The increasing role of the public sphere and the growing importance of influencing public opinion forced the modernizing governments to publish governmental newspapers to legitimize their policies. For example, the first official newspaper in Iran, *Vaghaye-ye ettefaghi-ye (The Events)*, was published by Iranian reformist Prime Minister Amir Kabir in 1850. Moreover, the increasing popularity of oppositional newspapers forced the king to ban non-governmental newspapers. As a result, Iranian oppositional newspapers were mainly published outside Iran. For example, the newspaper *Akhtar* was published in Istanbul in 1875, *Qanun* in London in 1890, and *Habl al-Matin* in Kolkata in 1893. The first newspaper in the Ottoman Empire, *Takvim-i Vekayi (Calendar of Events)*, which was published in 1831, was also a governmental organ intended mainly for communicating with the provinces and legitimizing the government's viewpoints and policies (Karpas, 1964). However, the Ottoman modernist intellectuals also used this new means of communication to disseminate their constitutionalist ideas. The two most influential newspapers of the time were *Muhbir* and *Tasvir-i Efkar*, published by well-known constitutionalist intellectuals Ali Suavi and Namik Kemal.

In the late 19th and early 20th centuries, published media became a cultural battlefield. As the Persian and Ottoman governments tried to legitimize their authoritative modernization programs without political change, oppositional groups used media to propagate political changes, promote democracy and endorse constitutionalism. The battlefield provoked harsh confrontations between governments and civil society groups in the early 20th century, leading to constitutional revolutions in Persia and the Ottoman Empire.

Constitutionalism, democracy and mass media

An increasing desire to participate in modern political decision making among the urban masses in general, and the petit bourgeoisie in particular, led to unrest and movements for political change in Iran and Turkey. European revolutions and democratic movements provided 'successful guidelines' for the Persian and Ottoman oppositional groups. Such civil movements were also highly influenced by the anti-colonial and anti-imperialist ideas and sentiments that dominated the public sphere in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Almost all groups within the Persian and Ottoman civil societies shared such ideas, viewing the Persian absolutist kingdom and the Ottoman Sultan as major obstacles to national prosperity and to the economic, political and administrative modernization of their countries. This provided the basis for a historical cooperation between two civil societies within these Muslim countries: the indigenous civil society of the ulama and the *bazaris*, and the Westernized civil society comprised of the new, growing urban middle classes created by socioeconomic modernization (Kamali, 1998, 2006).

Cooperation between the Westernized and indigenous civil societies was the key to creating a revolutionary movement with the power to produce political change. Constitutional revolutions in Persia (1905–09) and the Ottoman Empire (1906–08) resulted from a de facto alliance between the various civil society groups, including religious and secular groups, seeking democracy and constitutionalism. In both revolutions, mobilization of the masses occurred mainly as a result of the constitutionalist ulama's agitations from the *manbars* and the new intellectuals' oppositional newspapers and pamphlets. The ulama used *manbars* effectively to mobilize mass opposition to the king and support for constitutionalism (Fathi, 1993).

During this time, old religious ideas and doctrines changed and new ones were created, as religion and religious groups adjusted to modern ideas of governance. Such changes took place during and as a consequence of revolutionary and protest movements against dictatorship. Political protests in the Ottoman Empire, which led to the growth of constitutionalism during the 1860s, helped to change the traditional Islamic world-views of first the ulama and later other religious groups, such as the Young Ottomans. As traditional religious ideas changed rapidly, new modern religious ideas and doctrines were communicated in newspapers such as *Hurriyet* and the organ of the Young Ottomans, *Ibret* (Kuntay, 1944: 418; see also Mardin, 1962: 70).

In Iran, too, the revolutionary mobilization of 1905–06 and the post-revolutionary civil war (1906–09), which resulted in the political victory of constitutionalism in Iran in 1909, produced changes in the traditional religious ideas and doctrines that were necessary to adjust to the new circumstances. During the civil war, the prominent ulama who led the revolution changed traditional Shi'i ideas, which delegitimized any participation of the ulama in political power and struggle (Algar, 1969; Hairi, 1977; Kamali, 1998; Nai'ni, 1955). Until that time, the Shi'i ulama believed that the real political leader was the Hidden Imam (the 12th Shi'i Imam), who would appear and establish justice in the world. According to traditional Shi'i doctrine, the 12th Imam will appear when injustices increase, the world is governed by unfaithful leaders and people have lost their faith in God. The pragmatism of the constitutionalist ulama forced them to modernize the traditional Shi'i doctrine concerning the rejection of participation in political movements.

New interpretations of the Shi'i doctrine gave the ulama permission to engage in political struggle for constitutionalism.

The victory of the constitutional revolutions and the establishment of constitutional regimes in Iran and Turkey in the early 20th century established new political parties and newspapers and created a period of flourishing democracy. The public sphere harbored new actors with new agendas for modernization and change, including socialist groups such as *Hezb-e ijtemaiyon va amiyon* (the Social Democratic Party) in Iran. The lifting of governmental restrictions on political activities led to the publication of many newspapers and periodicals in major cities, such as Tehran and Tabriz in Iran, and Istanbul and Izmir in Turkey.

However, World War I and its devastating consequences for both Turkey and Iran put an end to the constitutional modernization of the two countries. Turkey's defeat in the war and its occupation by English and French forces created an anti-colonial national liberation movement that not only put an end to the occupation, but also eliminated constitutionalism. The weakness of the central government in Iran and the English plan to make Iran an English protectorate in 1917 led to the disintegration of society and paved the way for a military coup, effectively ending the constitutional modernization in Iran. Nationalist sentiment and movements in Iran and Turkey in the early 1920s helped strong integrating and modernizing regimes to seize power, beginning a long period of authoritative modernization and secularization of the two countries. The following section will discuss the authoritative modernization of such regimes and their influence on mass media.

Authoritative secular modernization and mass media

From the establishment of constitutional revolutions in Turkey (1908) and Iran (1909) until World War I, constitutional modernization predominated in both countries. However, this mode of modernization changed radically as the two countries disintegrated after the war. When World War I came to an end, the victorious countries – the US, Britain and France – pushed through the Versailles Peace Treaty, which David Fromkin (1989) described as 'a peace to end all peaces', particularly in the Middle East. Turkey was occupied and Iran's government was forced to sign a devastating treaty with Britain in 1917 – known as the Treaty of *Vosugh al-Dovla* (the Prime Minister of Iran) – to put the country under a British protectorate. The constitutional movement in Egypt was crushed by British forces in 1919 and its leader, Saad Zaghlul, was arrested and exiled to Malta, while a new state, Iraq, was formed from three former Ottoman provinces in 1922. Thus, colonial interventions and the disintegration of Iranian and Turkish society created the ground for modernizing military groups to seize political power in the early 1920s, establishing a system of authoritative modernization.

The establishment of authoritative modernizing military regimes in the early 1920s by Kemal Ataturk (1922–36) in Turkey and Reza Shah (1924–41) in Iran ended the constitutional modernization period and began a new authoritative, state-centered modernization social project in both countries. Such an approach to modernization may be characterized as modernization from the top down (Zurcher, 1993). The new modernizing states radically changed the public sphere of the two countries, reducing

the influence of the ulama, the leftists and other oppositional groups, such as the liberals. The religious groups' traditional means of mass communication, that is, *manbars*, were either eliminated or allowed to be used only for religious ceremonies. The constitutional freedom of the press was restricted, and non-governmental newspapers and periodicals were either forbidden or placed under strict control. The leaders of authoritative modernization in Iran and Turkey did not tolerate any deviance from, or challenge to, their rapid course towards modernizing their societies. The regimes centralized the flow of information by establishing state-controlled journals and radio stations to legitimize their reforms against delegitimizing religious and socialist groups' anti-West propaganda.

The modernizing states not only launched many modernization programs, including the modernization of the army, the bureaucracy and the educational system, but also secularized the public sphere to the extent that citizens were forbidden to wear religious clothes, such as veils, in public places. The mass media was effectively used to legitimize governmental reforms and eliminate religious and other oppositional groups' influence in society. However, the victory of the Allies in World War II created international difficulties for the governments of Iran and Turkey, which had good relationships with the 'new Europe', that is, Germany and Italy. The leaders could not continue their authoritative modernization programs because they were forced by the Allies to change their programs and introduce liberal changes. The following section explores the discontinuation of the authoritative modernization programs, the establishment of a new democratic period and the eventual re-establishment of authoritative modernization in the two countries.

The rise and fall of democracy and the role of mass media

The Allied victory in World War II forced the authoritative regimes in Iran and Turkey to change their modernization programs and introduce democratic reforms as a result of the Allies' intervention in the two countries. The old regimes and leaders were to be replaced by new ones who were oriented towards the winners of the war. The late 1940s and early 1950s witnessed the entrance of new modernizing elites, such as nationalists and new Islamic groups, in these countries. These new urban, middle-class groups, which made up the majority of protestors against the regimes in both Iran and Turkey, were paradoxically created by the countries' own authoritative modernization programs (Abrahamian, 1982; Kamali, 1998). Notwithstanding the anti-West and religious propaganda, these oppositional groups were highly modern in their programs and strategies to institute democratic elections and seize political power. Religious groups participating in modern politics and movements since the post-World War II democratic period are sometimes called 'religious modernists' (Chehabi, 1990). Whenever freedom of political activity occurred in any Islamic country, groups critical of the West, such as nationalist and Islamic groups and parties, succeeded in gaining substantive electoral support and becoming major political forces in those countries.

In Turkey, an Islamic party led by Adnan Menderes won the election of 1950, making Menderes the first Prime Minister with Islamic attitudes and programs in the secular

republic of Kemalist Turkey. In Iran, Muhammad Mossadeq – the leader of the National Front, an umbrella political organization for many groups, including religious groups – won the 1951 election and became Prime Minister. Democratic reforms in Iran created favorable conditions for the rise of many new publications (Azimi, 1989), and every group and party published several newspapers and journals (Aqeli, 1993). Democracy thus created a favorable situation for Islamic elites to further modernize their communication with the masses. The indigenous civil societies of Iran and Turkey, the *bazaris* and the ulama, who had been paradoxically influenced by the modernization reforms of Reza Shah (1924–41) in Iran and the Kemalists (1922–59) in Turkey, also altered their paths of communication, which were traditionally limited to preaching in *manbars* and seminars in *madrasahs* (religious schools). The religious leaders, too, started using journals, periodicals and radio interviews to mobilize popular support. However, the ulama's influence in the political life of many Muslim countries was dramatically reduced due to the relatively long period of authoritative modernization and secularization projects launched by the Kemalists in Turkey and the Pahlavis in Iran. This is one reason for the rise of many nationalist groups in Iran and Turkey with either socialist ideologies, light Islamic ideologies, or a combination of both.

However, Western powers continued to play a destructive role in the democratic and economic development of these Muslim countries. The historical experience of such countries shows that true democratic governance was incompatible with the Western powers' colonial and postcolonial interests in the Middle East. The US and England supported numerous military coups against these democratic governments and established new dictatorial regimes in many Muslim countries. For example, the democratically elected Prime Minister of Turkey, Menderes, who even won a second democratic election in Turkey in 1957, was overthrown by a military coup, arrested and executed in 1960. The national government of Mossadeq in Iran was also overthrown by a military coup, organized by the American CIA and the British MI6 in 1953, and the dictatorial regime of Muhammad Reza Shah (1941–79) was re-established (Arjomand, 1988; Kamali, 2006).

Turkey chose another path to political modernization in which the army played a central role. Whenever democratic elections took place and non-Kemalist political parties, including Islamic parties, came to power, the army overthrew the democratic government. The Turkish politicized military forces continued to be the most influential actors in Turkish political life until the late 1990s. Western political powers, in particular the US, intervened and supported all the military coups that took place in Turkey from 1960 until the late 1990s.

Paradoxically, authoritative modernization in such countries as Iran, Turkey and Egypt, which restricted democracy and freedom of the press, simultaneously developed new techniques and means of communication. Although the governments of those countries controlled the publication of journals, periodicals and radio and TV broadcasts, increasing modernization beginning in the 1970s created new possibilities, such as listening to foreign radio programs or oppositional cassettes. The growth of existing institutions of higher education and the establishment of many new universities created new arenas for political expression, where young activist and intellectual groups could distribute cassettes and published materials opposing the regime. This was equally true in

other Muslim countries. For example, through his fieldwork in Cairo, anthropologist Charles Hirschkind (2005) discovered the importance of new media, namely cassette recorders, for spreading religious messages to the public. Hirschkind argued that the secular and state-controlled media did not allow religious groups to participate in the public sphere. Thus, the cassette recorder provided a very effective means for religious groups, in particular the Egyptian ulama, to participate in public debate and mobilize popular support. The ulama's speeches were recorded and widely distributed among people.

However, new generations of youth living in rapidly modernizing countries, such as Iran, often were not attracted to mosques or religious seminars. The ulama's former popularity was thus overshadowed by that of new, modern religious groups, such as the one that met in *Hoseiniyeh ershad* in *Qolhak*, the modern neighborhood of northern Tehran, in the late 1960s and early 1970s with its charismatic non-cleric leader, Ali Shari'ati (1933–77). The significant rise of these groups illustrated the movement of political groups with religious affiliations from traditional arenas, such as mosques, to more modern parts of the city (Akhavi, 1980; Chehabi, 1990; Kamali, 1998). The mobilization of the masses through the propagation of religio-political ideas also acquired new forms, such as the use of new media. For instance, the religio-political speeches of Shari'ati – one of the most influential religious modernists – and Khomeini were effectively distributed throughout the country by means of recorded cassettes. Such cassettes were distributed in universities and among religious intellectual groups, and had a huge impact on the ideological mobilization of youth with religious affiliations against the Shah's regime (Kamali, 1998).

The situation was different in Turkey, a country that experienced many periods of liberalization and democratization during the 1960s and 1970s. New modernized and religious groups, which mainly formed new political parties with Islamic affiliations such as the Refah Party, were able to use different media, such as newspapers and cassette recorders, to mobilize democratic popular support and win elections. Islamic parties in Turkey effectively used a policy of privatizing media in the 1980s to gain political support (Keyman, 1995). For instance, privatization during the 1980s by Turkish Prime Minister Turgut Özal resulted in the success of Islamic parties, such as the Islamic Refah Party, and later, in the 1990s and 2000s, the Justice and Development Party (Yavuz, 2003).

The use of new media such as cassette recorders, newspapers and other periodicals helped to increase the popularity of modern Islamic ideas in Iranian and Turkish society. This led to the periodic electoral success of Islamic parties in Turkey and the revolutionary victory of radical Islamic groups in Iran. The establishment of the Islamic Republic in Iran, the launch of Islamic modernization programs and the role of mass media in the new regime will be discussed in the next section.

The Islamic Republic of Iran and the mass media

The Islamic Revolution in Iran (1976–79), which resulted in the establishment of the Islamic Republic, revived traditional communication between the ulama and the urban masses. In addition to modern media, such as cassette recorders, traditional means of communication, namely *manbars*, were used effectively by the ulama during the

Revolution. Cassette recorders were frequently used to mobilize people against the Shah during the Revolution. For example, the last military Prime Minister of the Shah, General Azhari, who had state power for a short time from 6 November 1978 to 31 December 1978, in a famous television interview on 28 November, accused the religious opposition of using cassette recorders to broadcast the sound of guns to falsely accuse his army of shooting and killing people.

The victory of the Revolution initially led to the abolition of governmental restrictions on freedom of speech. Almost all political parties, old and new, used the temporary freedom to propagate their political ideas and to mobilize popular support. The liberal government of Mehdi Bazargan, the first Prime Minister of the Islamic Republic, guaranteed freedom of the press. However, the radical clergy around Khomeini saw freedom of the press as a threat to the Islamic regime. Initially forced to cooperate with Bazargan's government, the radical clergy unofficially mobilized paramilitary groups and launched systematic attacks on the free press as well as on the distributors of non-governmental newspapers and journals.

After the victory of the Revolution in 1979, Khomeini and his supporters effectively used television to mobilize popular support and exclude all other groups from access to visual communication. Television and radio carried daily broadcasts of Khomeini's various speeches and declarations. Radical clergies' speeches on *manbars* were regularly viewed on national television. The religious leadership extended its control of the media to newspapers as well and began banning critical sections of the press. The occupation of the American Embassy in 1979 by the 'Muslim Student Followers of the Imam's Line', a radical religious group that was against the liberal government of Bazargan, marked a devastating starting point in post-revolutionary Iran. The political dictatorship returned in its new religious mantle. Members of oppositional groups were executed and jailed. Using Iraq's military invasion of Iran in 1981 as a pretext, the Islamic regime put an end to the fragile democratic period after the Revolution. The religious leadership of the Revolution tightened its grip on the free press and launched systematic attacks on their offices. The attacks targeted even critical journalists who worked for government-controlled newspapers such as *Keyhan* and *Etela'at*.

Like all other modern revolutions, the Islamic Revolution and post-revolutionary government in Iran started 'eating its own children'. Many revolutionary groups and individuals who were active in fighting the Shah's regime were arrested and executed. The Islamic Revolution created a modern totalitarian regime, as modern as Nazi Germany and Soviet Russia (Kamali, 1998). The Islamic regime adopted an organized system of totalitarian rule and oppression that tolerated no political opposition. It succeeded in modernizing the Shi'i theory of governance and making it compatible with republicanism and its institutions, including the office of president, the parliament and the election process. In fact, the Constitution of the Islamic Republic has been compared with the French Fifth Republic's Constitution, which it has been found to closely resemble (Abrahamian, 1993).

The short post-revolutionary period of political freedom and freedom of the press in Iran was based mainly on a coalition between the radical clergy and the liberals who controlled the state. The coalition ended when radical clergy occupied the American Embassy in Tehran and forced the liberal government to resign. There followed a period

of totalitarian rule, in which the free press was eliminated, from 1980 until the revival of civil society in 1997, the year Muhammad Khatami (1997–2005), a liberal clergyman, won the presidential election. The consequences of Khatami's presidency for the free press will be discussed in the next section.

The role of newspapers in the post-1997 Iranian Islamic Republic

The victory of Muhammad Khatami in the 1997 Iranian presidential election marked a turning point in the history of the Islamic Republic of Iran for a variety of reasons.

On the one hand it was an indication that Iranians wanted a change in the way they had been governed over the past twenty years. More importantly, though, the election demonstrated people's willingness to bring about this change through a peaceful and democratic, rather than revolutionary, manner. (Jahanbakhsh, 2001: 177)

One of the most important results of the election and the Reformist victory was an increase in freedom of speech, which led to the establishment of many new liberal journals and newspapers, including *Jame'eh* (*Society*), *Rah-e nov* (*New Path*), *Zan* (*Woman*) and *Bahar* (*Spring*). The liberal press that emerged provided the major support for Khatami and his programs of social and political liberalization. The conservative clergy, and, in some cases, even the 'spiritual leader', Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, became targets of criticism by the liberal press. Demands for radical change, including changes in the Constitution of the Republic, increased. Some reformists began claiming that even the position of 'spiritual leader' of the Republic should be decided by free and democratic elections.

This, however, was more than the conservative clergy could stand. The Islamic Republic's modernization, inspired by the authoritative modernization regimes of the Chinese and even the Shah, sought economic modernization without political democracy. The clerical and conservative leaders of this modernization began major attacks on the reformist press and journalists. In early 2000, the judiciary, which was controlled by the conservative clergy, launched a series of arrests, bringing several journalists from the liberal and reformist press to court and shutting down their publications.

The country's 'spiritual leader', Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, then intervened on the question of 'freedom of the press'. In a speech on 20 April 2000, he attacked the reformist press, triggering a sweeping crackdown. He stated, '[T]here are 10 to 15 newspapers writing as if they are directed from one center, undermining Islamic and revolutionary principles, insulting constitutional bodies, and creating tension and disorder in society' (*Keyhan* newspaper, 21 April 2000). He accused the free press of becoming the voice of 'the enemy', and trying to overthrow the Islamic system (*Keyhan* newspaper, 21 April 2000). The reformist-dominated Parliament tried to abolish many of the harsh laws against the press, but on 6 August 2002, Khamenei issued an order that forbade Parliament from considering a new press bill which had been prepared by the reformist Prime Minister to increase freedom of the press. Khamenei described the bill as a threat to national security.

The battle for control of the press intensified as a result of the attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon in the US on 11 September 2001, and later, following the war in Afghanistan. The conservative clergy used the new colonial policy of the US and its allies as a pretext to increase their control over the Iranian public sphere and politics. In 2005, the conservative clergy's candidate, Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, was elected the new President of Iran. He tried to do away with the 'Khatami legacy' by ordering the judiciary to place even more restrictions on the press.

As a result of the lack of access to a free press, new media – such as the Internet, SMS and social media – became almost the only means of communication that remained outside the government's control.⁶ Although during the first four years of Ahmadinejad's presidency, the reformists were pushed back and silenced, the presidential election of 2009 revitalized many reformist groups in civil society, who gathered around the oppositional candidate Mir Hussein Mosavi, the leader of *Jonbesh-e sabz* (the Green Movement). Lacking access to a free press, the Green Movement effectively used new media instead. In particular, the frequent use of SMS proved to be an effective means of mobilization for various demonstrations in Tehran and other major cities. Short mass electronic messages invited people to demonstrations and provided information about the time and place for gatherings.

Although the conservative clergy and Ahmadinejad succeeded in crushing the opposition and re-establishing control over the state apparatus, they were not able to control the almost free distribution of oppositional news and articles through satellite TV stations such as The Voice of America (Persian section) and BBC-Persian, as well as through the Internet, Twitter and Facebook. New media will undoubtedly continue to play an important role in the opposition to the Islamic Republic's modernity model.

Building on the Islamic liberal tradition of the reformist President Khatami (1997–2005), the Green Movement provided an alternative to the Islamic Republic's modernity. According to such totalitarian Islamic modernity, socioeconomic and military modernizations were legitimized by an interpretation of Shi'i doctrine, which saw democracy as unnecessary for the development of the country. Accordingly, the Islamic Republic of Iran is not anti-modern or non-modern, but a model of totalitarian modernity that harbors oppositional liberal religious groups who believe in the compatibility of Islam, modernity and democracy.

Final remarks

In both Western and non-Western countries, modernity has never been a single homogeneous phenomenon, nor has it followed a linear developmental path. The West-centrism of the social sciences is one of the most important sources of the imagination of the *uniqueness* of 'the West' and its modernity.

There is neither a 'unique West' nor a 'Western modernity'. There are several paths to and through modernity that have created many modern constellations and societies. Such developments can best be understood with the theoretical tool of multiple modernities, which recognizes the heterogeneity and diversity of one of the most global processes in human history: namely, the globalization of modernity and its various institutions.

The early development of the theory of multiple modernities (e.g. Eisenstadt, 2000) did not recognize either the colonial past or the current postcolonial or neocolonial order of the world. Such a view of modernity leaves many questions of the modern era unanswered. Colonial wars, violence and postcolonial oppression perpetrated by militarily and economically strong Western countries have left an indelible imprint on the global modernization process. It is thus almost impossible to understand either modernity itself or related global developments without analyzing the ways in which such events have created an unequal world divided between the haves and the have-nots. Although the West-centric social sciences have created a well-established imagination of the 'uniqueness of the West' and its singular modernity over a long period of time, no country – Western or non-Western – ever developed a modernity model on its own without interacting with a globalizing world that does not stop at national borders. In other words, the modern bourgeoisie and the global capitalist system, as Marx (Marx and Engels, 1908) observed, will 'batter down all Chinese walls'. However, this happens in different ways and takes different forms in different socioeconomic and cultural contexts.

Multiple forms and constellations of modernities and the political struggles over socioeconomic models and political forms of modernity require distinguishing between the idea of a single modernity and its institutional varieties that have been discussed in this essay. The modern is not necessarily democratic, as in the case of German Nazism, the Soviet Union, Chile under Pinochet, Iran under the Pahlavis and Turkey under the Kemalists. Notwithstanding considerable differences, these regimes were neither non-modern nor anti-modern. They were all socioeconomic and political regimes with different understandings of modernity and with a strong belief in the very modern idea of the role of political means for the reconstruction of society in accordance with their various understandings of modernity.

Although many movements that developed in non-Western societies since the 19th century have articulated strong anti-Western or even anti-modern themes, they were all distinctively modern (Eisenstadt, 2000). Such movements are dominated by modern properties, such as a belief in the reconstruction of societies by political means and the breakdown of all traditional legitimization of the political order. For example, modern Islamic movements believe in seizing political power to reconstruct society in accordance with their revolutionary ideas. Moreover, Islamic groups' participation in new political movements is legitimized by reformulations and modernizations of traditional religious interpretations. Khomeini's theory of *Velayat-e faqih* (Rule of the Islamic jurists on behalf of the Hidden Imam) and the acceptance of republicanism as a legitimate political system are examples of the modernization of the traditional political doctrine of Shi'ism.

To understand modernity is to view it as a heterogeneous process comprised of many sociocultural programs, realized by leaders and intellectuals with various understandings of what is modern. As demonstrated in this essay, modernity and Westernization are not identical. Although Western models of modernity have influenced many leaders of authoritative modernities in non-Western countries, they have not been accepted by the people of such countries as unchangeable blueprints. Rather, Western models have often been reinterpreted, reformed, localized and selectively applied in new sociocultural environments in Islamic societies.

Modern social movements and revolutions have created a belief in the possibility of bridging the gap between the mundane and transcendental orders. Religious groups, including Islamic groups in Iran and Turkey, have participated in modern social movements and constitutional revolutions since at least the late 19th century, reinterpreting religion to legitimize their participation in revolutionary movements and justify the seizure of political power. In other words, religious groups, as conscious human agencies, participated in modern social and revolutionary movements and established new political systems, such as constitutionalism and republicanism.

The uneven modernization of Muslim countries discussed here is not the result of the existence of non-modern or anti-modern Muslim groups. Rather, it is the result of a colonial past and a present postcolonial global order forced on many non-Western countries. Many Muslim countries, with support from and in alliance with Western countries, have played a destructive role with respect to genuine democratic developments in Muslim societies. Muslim societies are not a *tabula rasa* that today can be developed in accordance with Western models of modernization in general, or through the exclusion of their indigenous civil society groups in particular. As the constitutional movements in Iran and Turkey illustrate, Muslim groups had already participated in modern social movements for decades.

A further historical bias based on the discursive dichotomy of the modern and democratic West versus the traditional and despotic 'Muslim world' is the imagination of the lack of democratic progress in the latter. This is often articulated through claims of the lack of civil society in Muslim countries. In fact, as discussed in this work, civil society has a long history in Muslim countries. The failure of democratic movements to establish democratic regimes is partly a result of the colonial and postcolonial interventions in those countries, and partly due to the internal conflicts between the two civil societies of those countries, namely the indigenous (modern-religious) and the Westernized (modern-secular) civil societies. Recent neocolonial wars and interventions have made constructive cooperation between the two civil societies even more problematic.

Islamic political groups used mass communication to mobilize the masses in modern revolutionary movements. The ulama, religious leaders who actively participated in modern revolutions in Muslim countries such as Iran and Turkey, have reinterpreted and modernized traditional Islamic doctrines. *Manbars* were the main means of mass communication for the ulama in the early 20th century, during the constitutional revolutions in the two countries. However, due to the authoritative modernizations of the Pahlavis and Kemalists in Iran and Turkey, both the ulama and other religious groups learned to use such new media as newspapers, periodicals and cassette recorders to politically mobilize the masses. Modernization increased the central role of mass media and communication technology in the cultural battlefield of multiple modernities.

In many Muslim countries that are controlled by a West-oriented modernizing elite, the breakdown of state-controlled media is leading to the increasing influence of Islamic groups, both on civil society and on the polity of Muslim countries (Eickelman and Anderson, 1999). The recent civil movements in many Muslim countries, known as the 'Arab Spring', are proof of this claim. Even for the Islamic government of Iran, new forms of media are challenging the state monopoly and creating opportunities for free

communication between various oppositional groups and masses, including oppositional liberal Islamic groups.

In the past, the introduction of radio, TV, cassette recorders and social media provided (and continue to provide) new opportunities for all parties in the cultural battlefields of Iran and Turkey to legitimize their own views of modernity. The media permeates contemporary society and, thus, this battle is so highly mediatized today that the media may no longer be conceived of as separate from cultural and other social institutions (Hjarvard, 2008). As the governments of these countries still control radio and TV today, oppositional groups frequently make use of digital recorders, the Internet and Facebook to mobilize protest movements. This is a fight over cultural authority between different standpoints towards and through modernity. This fight will continue as long as there is no understanding – either in Muslim countries such as Iran and Turkey, or in Western academic and political circles – of the possibilities of multiple modernities. Recognizing the coexistence of various views on modernity, both religious and secular, will help develop sustainable modernity programs and stable and democratic societies in Muslim countries.

Funding

This research received no specific grant from any funding agency in the public, commercial, or not-for-profit sectors.

Notes

- 1 The concept of ‘singular modernity’ used in this paper reflects Weber’s view (1968) of a historically unique constellation of cultural values and social institutions generated by processes of rationalization. The term ‘modernization’ refers to the variety of economic, political, institutional and cultural changes and processes that create multiple modernities.
- 2 The term ‘tittytainment’ was coined first by Zbigniew Brzezinski, the security advisor of US president Jimmy Carter (1977–81), to express the thought that a mixture of ‘intoxicating entertainment and sufficient nourishment’ can ‘tranquelize the frustrated minds of the globe’s population’ (Martin and Schuman, 1997).
- 3 The term ‘authoritative modernization’ refers to a model of socioeconomic and cultural modernization launched by dictatorial modernizing elites, such as the Kemalists in Turkey and the Pahlavis in Iran. Such elites excluded democratization of the political system from their modernization programs.
- 4 The Hidden Imam refers to the 12th and last Shi’i imam, whom the Shi’is believe is hidden and will appear someday to carry out justice in the world.
- 5 ‘West’ here refers both to Western countries themselves and their global allies in the world. Many of these allies are in Muslim countries, where they control the mass media and educational systems. Such Westernized groups actively reproduce for the Western imagination a particular view of the ‘Muslim world’.
- 6 Although the government tried to control access to the Internet, many young people used illegal programs to bypass Internet filters and get free access to information.

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Biography

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