

Marziyeh Bakhshizadeh

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Changing Gender Norms in Islam between Reason and Revelation



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Contents

Part One:

Understanding Changing Gender Norms in the Modern Era	9
1 Conceptualizing Gender, Religion and Islam	11
2 Towards a Theoretical Model for Changing Gender Norms in the Main Streams of Islamic Thought	17
2.1 Religion in Sociology	17
2.2 The Dialectical Relationship Between Religion and Human Being: Pluralism, Rationality and the Crisis of Meaning	26
2.3 Islam and Structuration Theory: Between Individual Agency and Global Justice	31
2.4 Religion and Recognition	37
2.5 Theoretical Approach to Analysing Changing Gender Norms in the Main Currents of Islam	46
3 Methodology for Comparative Research on the Main Currents of Islam	53
4 Women's Rights in Iran and CEDAW: a Comparison	61
4.1 An Overview on the History of Women's Rights in Iran	61
4.2 The Emergence of CEDAW as a Global Norm of Gender Justice	79
4.3 Women's Rights in the Current Laws of the Islamic Republic of Iran in Comparison with CEDAW	87
5 Three Streams of Thought in the Near East and Iran and Their Views on Women's Rights	101
5.1 Women's Position in Diverse Currents of Islamic and Secular Thought in the Near East: the State of Research	101
5.2 Some Aspects of the Historical Development of the Islamic Mu'tazili and Ash'ari Schools	108

Part Two:	
Changing Gender Norms in the Main Currents of Islamic thought in Iran	113
Introduction	114
6 Revelation and Gender Norms in the Fundamentalist Perspective	115
6.1 Religion as Structure	115
6.2 Individual Agency and Human Reason	120
6.3 Global Norms of Justice and Human Dignity	123
6.4 Women's Rights in the Fundamentalist Perspective	128
7 Gender Norms Between Revelation und Human Reason in the Reformist Perspective	147
7.1 Individual Agency and Rationality in the Reformist View	148
7.2 Reformists and Global Norms of Justice and Human Dignity	169
7.3 Women's Rights in the Reformist Perspective	175
8 Seculars and Human Reason	191
8.1 Structural Approach to Religion	191
8.2 Individual Agency in a Rational Reading of Islam	203
8.3 Global Norms of Justice and Human Dignity in the Secular Perspective	205
8.4 Women's Rights in a Rational Reading of Islam	207
9 Changing Gender Norms in the Dialectical Relationship Between Revelation and Human Reason	215
9.1 The Model for the Dialectical Relationship Between Religion, Revelation, Reason and Individual Agency	215
9.2 Main Currents of Islamic Thought	217
9.3 Desert-Based Notion of Justice	219
9.4 Justice Based on Individual Self-Determination Versus Desert-Based Justice	219
Bibliography	223
Index	247

Part One:

Understanding Changing Gender Norms in the Modern Era

1 Conceptualizing Gender, Religion and Islam

Women's movements in Islamic countries have had a long and arduous journey in their quest for the realization of what is called human rights and gender equality. In some of these countries, there has not been much progress beyond rudimentary issues (see Abu Zaid 1999: 106–109). Some of the problems that the women's movement in Iran still struggles with have been challenges for over a century, and which have not yet been overcome. An example is the right to guardianship of children, which grants the privilege of managing and supervising the affairs of children below the age of eighteen to their father or paternal grandfather, leaving the mother with no legal say in the matter. Furthermore, men in most Muslim countries (including Iran) are granted the right to polygamy, which allows a man to marry up to four wives.

One reason of not being able to change such laws is that these laws have been supported by religion. The experience of many western and non-western countries shows that discriminatory laws have existed all around the world throughout history. However, the question arises here of how in some countries discriminatory laws get abrogated through proving that they are unjust and inhuman with respect to women, but in many countries whose laws are based on Islamic law, it takes a long time to achieve even a tiny amendment of discriminatory laws.

Since the source of law in Islamic countries like Iran is claimed to be Islamic law, this raises the question of whether discriminatory laws against women do in fact originate from Islam and ultimately, if Islam is at all compatible with gender equality. To deal with this topic it is important to note that Islam is not a monolithic and homogenous religious tradition. There have been different interpretations of Islam, each having diverse views on the legitimacy and applicability of all Islamic law in modern times, and consequently having various perspectives on gender equality.

The main common feature throughout all different interpretations of Islam is that of emphasizing the fulfilment of justice in society as a central aim of religion in general and Islam in particular. Fulfilment of justice is mentioned in both the Quran and Muhammad's traditions (*sunna*); however, there was no given definition of justice in either the Quran or the *sunna*.

Accordingly, various interpretations of Islam offer different definitions of justice in which women's rights and gender equality inhabit different places. A look at the current situation of women in Iran as an Islamic country shows that women are still deprived of economic, political, and cultural rights. A woman, regardless of having reached the age of majority or her social position, requires

the permission of her father or her paternal grandfather to get married. A woman still needs her husband's permission to travel outside the country; her testimony is not acceptable in a court of law in many types of crimes and when it is accepted her testimony is not equal with a man's; and her life is less worthy than a man's by making her blood money¹ half that of a man's. Women do not have the right to choose their clothing; they are banned from being solo singers; and they are barred from entering stadiums to watch matches attended by men, among other prohibitions.

The question that arises from these circumstances is whether it is possible to claim to have a just society in which women are deprived of some of their fundamental human rights. Furthermore, is it justifiable to deprive women of these rights in some societies to defend the cultural and religious lifeworld²? Are concepts such as justice, human dignity, human rights and gender equality relative concepts which have different definitions in various locales of the world? Or are these concepts universal and should they be enforced with international support, regardless of particular cultural and religious conditions? The international debate within the United Nations has resulted in establishing universal human and women's rights, as in the Convention for the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW³). In other word, these rights now are global consensus and not a Western privilege. Are they compatible with Islam and how do its most important currents relate to this?

The issues of gender justice and Islam have been debated in the social sciences and in society in general, enough to fill up whole libraries. Most authors followed a path of analyzing the provisions of the Quran on women and gender.

¹ Blood Money (*diya/diyyah*) in Islamic law is the financial compensation one must pay to the injured person when he or she intentionally or unintentionally causes bodily harm or property damage to another. It can be paid to heirs of a victim in the cases of murder, in lieu of execution (Maurer & Miresghhi 2013: 90)

² The concept of the lifeworld (*Lebenswelt*) was introduced by Edmund Husserl in his book *The Crisis of European Sciences and Transcendental Phenomenology*:

"In whatever way we may be conscious of the world as universal horizon, as coherent universe of existing objects, we, each "I-the-man" and all of us together, belong to the world as living with one another in the world; and the world is our world, valid for our consciousness as existing precisely through this 'living together.' We, as living in wakeful world-consciousness, are constantly active on the basis of our passive having of the world... Obviously this is true not only for me, the individual ego; rather we, in living together, have the world pre-given in this together, belong, the world as world for all, pre-given with this ontic meaning... The we-subjectivity... [is] constantly functioning" (Husserl 1936: pp. 108–109).

³ The Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) was adopted on December 18, 1979. It was enforced on September 3, 1981, after being ratified by twenty member states. Currently, 189 states are parties to the convention and only six UN member states have not yet ratified or acceded to the Convention. These states include Iran, Somalia, Sudan, Tonga, Palau (signed on September 20, 2011) and the United States of America (signed on 17 July 1980). Signing the convention differs from ratification. The signature does not establish the consent to be bound, while ratification indicates a state's consent to be bound to the Convention.

They have been looking at their origins, their historic contexts and their potential adaptability to modern societies. Often the interpretations remain locked into a repetition of one's own position and a polarization with other positions.

I want to propose a new perspective on this old problem. We should look not at parts and sentences of sacred texts, but rather at gender in the context of Islam as a long term tradition and living religion.

Therefore, I analyze the different interpretations of women's and human rights by reconstructing the interpretations of three core issues. The first is the issue of religion, Islamic law and the Quran. The second refers to the view of human reason – and the potential endowment of men and women with it – as well as gendered rights, especially women's rights. The third issue is the view of human rights considering Islamic teachings and the universal norms of justice. These points provide an interrelated set of issues for a comparative analysis. They are seen in their interrelationship and referred to each other in the discussion.

The different currents in Islam have developed diverse combinations between reason, revelation and modernity, as shall be argued, and the concepts of gender inequality/equality should be considered in light of these relationships. Different interpretations of Islam are demonstrated in the main streams of Islamic thought including fundamentalist, reformist, and secular streams, in a sociocultural context. According to fundamentalists, since religion is aimed at managing human society and educating the human being, it is necessary to have rules and regulations in accordance with the requirements of society as well as human nature. These regulations and laws have inevitably remained the same throughout human history. This is because human nature is unchangeable. Changes can only be made in the manners and habits of human beings in the material world. Hence, the only one capable of legislation is one who knows the characteristics and the essence of human existence. In other words, only God has the right to legislate laws for human beings. As a result, the human being requires religion and revelation to manage his individual as well as social affairs, in order to reach salvation and felicity in social and individual life (Amoli 2010). Accordingly, fundamentalists reject the idea of the flexibility of law according to time and circumstance. Human beings need to rely on eternal and absolute values, as well as on a set of laws and practices that are beyond time and the wishes of fallible people. Such eternal law, according to fundamentalists, can be found in Islamic law aimed at the salvation of human beings in this world and in the afterlife (Mesbah Yazdi 1999).

Reformists aim to present an interpretation of Islam in which Islamic laws are compatible with modern concepts, such as human and women's rights. They apply different internal religious methods to address such modern concepts in *sunna* and the Quran. In this way, they offer an interpretation of Islam based on an egalitarian notion of justice, which is not only compatible with human rights and gender equality in general, but also acknowledge such concepts as essential for Muslim society.

Secular Muslims have emerged from the reformist view. It seems that reformists are gradually leaning towards more recognition of human reason and individual agency. According to this view, all people living in the modern era have different ideas and worldviews from people in traditional societies (Malekian 1381/2002). They do not aim at finding the modern concepts in *sunna* and Islamic law, but rather they believe that modern life needs modern means, which do not necessarily originate from *sunna* or the Quran. Such concepts are outcomes of human reason and are required to achieve justice in the modern era. They reject the text-based definition of being Muslim and emphasize the role of faith, spirituality and religious experience (Mojtahed Shabestari 1389/2010); therefore, I would call this school of thought *secular Muslim*.

The categorization of various interpretations of Islam is of crucial importance, for it provides a better understanding and knowledge of Islam, both in the Islamic and non-Islamic world. Globalization and the advancement of global communication no longer restrict Muslims and their issues to the Islamic world. On the one hand, the categorizing of different interpretations of Islam widens the space for discussion about Islam in the public sphere in the non-Islamic world, rather than to be silent on the topic out of fear of condemnation and being labeled an Islamophobe. On the other hand, it challenges the orientalist perspective that reduces Islam to an alien and aggressive religion, incompatible with modern views and concepts, such as human rights and gender equality, and generalizes all Muslims as retrogressive, fanatical and bigoted. This orientalist perspective, however, is also sometimes based on one of the most visible and prevalent interpretations of Islam, which legitimatizes its violence and opposition to human rights and gender equality through referring to some verses mentioned in the Quran, some parts of the prophet's tradition (*sunna*) and Islamic jurisprudence (*fiqh*).

This book aims to investigate the different interpretations of Islam to find out which interpretations are compatible with the global norms of justice and human dignity, and hence in accordance with women's rights and gender equality. It also reflects, according to those interpretations, that a belief in the concept of gender equality is not against religious faith and being Muslim.

Accordingly, Chapter Two presents different definitions of religion in sociology and introduces the debate on the secularization thesis. Then I proceed with an explanation of fundamentalism as a reaction to secularization. After a brief historical overview of the most important concepts, the chapter discusses the theories of Peter Berger and Thomas Luckmann about religion, in order to investigate the dialectical relationship between society and human beings and accordingly, the dialectical relationship between individual agents and religion. It also examines how this dialectical relationship can be disrupted, which causes a crisis of meaning, in that religion is unable to offer a value and meaning system to satisfy the human needs of meaning and spirituality. The dialectic relationship between individual agent and religion, and their roles in building identity in modern society, is further investigated through the Structuration Theory

of Anthony Giddens. It is followed by a discussion of the theory of recognition and its contemporary advocates, including Axel Honneth and Nancy Fraser, which allows for the discussion of the concept of justice and its relation to the concept of self-realization. The proceeding section deals with the question of how a practical aspect of recognition theory as a concept of cosmopolitan norms of justice incorporates in international conventions such as the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) and Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), as discussed by Seyla Benhabib.

I propose a theoretical model through synthesizing these theories, which aims to support a theoretical analysis of main streams of Islamic thought as well as provide an outline for expert interviews with representatives of each group of Islamic thought, which took place during the empirical research phase. According to this theoretical model, this study aimed to investigate the main currents of Islamic thought in three subjects. The first group deals with the concept of the individual and human reason, and aims to present the perspectives of each stream of Islamic thought on the equality of men and women. The second concept is that of religion as structure. The definition of religion and the approach to the Quran and *sunna* as the source of revelation and Islamic law shall be debated here. The third concept is perspectives on the UDHR and CEDAW and their acceptability in different interpretations of Islam. These points provide a theoretical model for a comparative analysis in second part of the book.

The methods applied in this research project, including comparative and documentary methods as well as the qualitative method of expert interviews, are introduced in Chapter Three. The methods of sampling the representatives of the main currents of Islamic thought, the designing of the guidelines of the interviews as well as the methods of analyzing the interviews are explained in this chapter.

Chapter Four offers a brief history of the rise and fall of women's rights within Iran's legal system since the beginning of the constitutional revolution in Iran between 1905 and 1911, when women were deprived of socio-political rights, through to the era of Reza Shah, who tried to modernize the country by banning Muslim women from wearing the veil. It is preceded by a brief summary of the struggles of women for their suffrage and the establishment of the Family Protection Law (FPL) in the reign of Mohammad Reza Shah, and the regression of some women's rights in both public and private realms after the revolution of 1979, claimed as being based on Islamic jurisprudence. The historical overview of changes in women's rights ends with a synopsis of the situation of women in different eras of presidency in Iran after the revolution, until the first era of presidency of Hasan Rouhani (August 2013–2017).

The second part of the fourth chapter presents a historical overview of the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), as well as an investigation of the current state of women's rights within the legal system of the Islamic Republic of Iran. This shall be done through a comparison of Islamic law vis-à-vis the provisions in CEDAW, in order to gain a schema of the current legal situation of women in Iran.

Chapter Five introduces fundamentalist, reformist, and secular perspectives on the position of women, presented through research in various Islamic countries. It also offers some aspects of the historical development of the main streams of Islamic thought. Despite significant regional and political differences among such various Islamic perspectives, they have certain similar features which are explained in this chapter. In this way, this chapter provides an introductory explanation of current research on women in different interpretations of Islam, so that I can present the foundation and substructure of the main currents of Islamic thought through a sociological perspective. This chapter also offers a brief historical review of the most important schools of theology in Islam – Mu'tazili and Ash'ari from the second century AH (*after hijra*, approximately the eighth century AD), which is essential to gaining a better understanding of the arguments of the main streams of Islam in the modern era.

The second part of the book, consisting of Chapters Six, Seven, and Eight, provides a comparative analysis of the groundwork and fundamental arguments of the main currents of Islam – fundamentalist, reformist, and secular – applying the theoretical model presented in Chapter Two to the three core issues. To recap, these issues are religion (Islamic law, the Quran and *sunna*), individual agency (human reason), and global norms of justice and human dignity (CEDAW, UDHR). The book concludes with Chapter Nine, presenting the outcomes of this study of changing gender norms in Islam – between reason and revelation.

2 Towards a Theoretical Model for Changing Gender Norms in the Main Streams of Islamic Thought

The overarching goal of this research aims to study women's rights in four categories – family, economic, political and cultural – from the perspectives of the three main Islamic schools of thought (fundamentalist, reformist and secularist) in Iran since the 1979 Revolution. To this aim, I propose a theoretical model by synthesizing theories of the sociology of religion (Peter Berger and Thomas Luckmann), sociological action theory (Anthony Giddens' structural theory) and struggles related to universal norms of justice (Nancy Fraser, Axel Honneth, Seyla Benhabib). This theoretical model shall support a theoretical analysis of the main streams of Islamic thought, as well as provide an outline for expert interviews with representatives of each group in the empirical section of the research.

2.1 Religion in Sociology

To discuss theories of the sociology of religion, a definition of religion is required. Over the centuries, different scholars have commented on what religion is; nevertheless, there is no consensus about which definition fully encompasses this complicated concept. Some definitions have been very narrow and have tended to exclude some forms of beliefs and practices which seem to be religious for other scholars, while other definitions have been as vague and general as to include other areas of human sciences like law, psychology, philosophy, etc.

Substantive and functional definitions of religion

The various definitions of religion are categorized in two groups. First, *substantive*, which refers to the essence and nature of religion, while the second focuses on the *functional* elements of religion – what religion does. Roberts and Yaman (2012) elaborate the features of these two types of definitions. The substantive definition, as they explain, emphasizes a specific belief in a supernatural realm. The substantive definition was used in 1873 by Edward B. Taylor

(1958: 8 cited in Roberts & Yamane 2016: 3). He defined religion as “belief in spiritual beings.” He regarded the term *spiritual beings* to be more inclusive than belief in *gods* (ibid.).

Durkheim also provides a substantive definition of religion in his book *The Elementary Forms of Religious Life* (1912) as “a unified system of beliefs and practices relative to sacred things, that is to say, things set apart and forbidden – beliefs and practices which unite into a single moral community called a church, all those who adhere to them” (Durkheim 1992 (1912): 62). The substantive definition also distinguishes sacred from profane realms of experience and focuses on what the sacred is. That is the special feature of religion for Durkheim, which helps in the recognition of religion in different cultures since people’s attitude towards religious rituals differs from their everyday experiences: “the religious life and the profane life cannot coexist in the same unit of time: it is necessary to assign determined days or periods to the first, from which all profane occupations are excluded. [...] there is no religion, and, consequently, no society which has not known and practiced this division of time into two distinct parts” (Durkheim 1912 (1995): 347, in: Roberts and Yamane 2016: 4). In this way, Durkheim also recognizes the sacred attitude as a group experience; therefore, religion is a common activity (Roberts and Yamane 2012: 4–5). Accordingly, Durkheim was most concerned with the relationship between religion and society; hence, he moved beyond an individualistic depiction of religion. Substantive definitions are more focused on traditional forms of religion, and are therefore unable to explain the new ways of religiosity in complex and changing societies (ibid.: 18).

An alternative to substantive definitions of religion are *functional* definitions. Milton Yinger suggests that we focus on what religion does rather than what religion essentially is: “it is not the nature of belief, but the nature of believing that requires our study” (Yinger 1970: 11 in: Roberts and Yamane 2012: 7). William James (1979) offers a functional definition of religion through an understanding of the subjective experience of individuals involved in religious practice. In his point of view, religion pertains to “feelings, acts and experiences of individual men [sic] in their solitude, so far as they apprehend themselves to stand in relation to whatever they consider the divine” (1979: 50, quoted in Hafez 2011: 31).

The functional definition, as Roberts and Yaman explain, considers religion as a provider of “a sense of ultimate meaning, a system of macro symbols, and a set of core value systems” (Roberts and Yamane 2012: 18). Paul Tillich (1957) offers a functional definition of religion: “Religion, in the largest and most basic sense of the word, is ultimate concern” (Tillich 1959: 7–8) and “our ultimate concern is that which determines our being and non-being. [...] Nothing can be of ultimate concern for us which does not have the power of threatening and saving our being” (Tillich 1973: 14). This concept of ‘ultimate concern’ was developed by Milton Yinger (1970) as underlining the importance of meaning systems to “understand the purpose of life and the meaning of death, suffering, evil,

and injustice”, which provide human beings with a strategy to overcome the major concerns of human life, including futility and despair (Roberts and Yamane 2012: 7).

In this definition, religion can be considered as a resource to provide a meaning system with different dimensions, such as a shared world view, as well as the Ritualistic dimension (religious practice); the Experiential (religious experience and emotions); the Intellectual (religious knowledge); the Social (institutional organization of the religious community); the Ethical (formal and moral laws); and a set of routinized social expectations and patterns (Reich 2011: 283; Roberts and Yamane 2012: 12).

The considerable point here is how meaning systems are created throughout human life. Here ‘time’ plays a relevant role in the equation. As Droogers (2011) says, “disciplines and theories change in the course of time, therefore, every era will produce its particular definition of religion.” Hence, it would be a mistake to ignore the era’s conditions, such as modernism and its consequences, or the process of the secularization thesis. Talal Asad also emphasizes that the “terms ‘religious’ and ‘secular’ can be understood only in relation and opposition to each other. Thus, any redefinition of the secular necessarily involves a redefinition of the religious, and vice versa” (in Van Antwerpen 2012: 7).

Therefore, the debate on the secularization thesis has crucial significance for the definition of religion in the sociology of religion, even though it may influence that definition (Droogers 2011: 269). In what follows, the concept of secularization shall be elaborated in order to gain a broader perspective of the concept of religion in the modern era.

The definition of secularization

The term ‘secularization’ was first used by George Jacob Holyoake in 1846 to explain a social order separated from religion.⁴ The term secularization was not used directly in classical Sociology. However, it can be traced in the works of the fathers of sociology – Auguste Comte, Herbert Spencer, Max Weber, Emile Durkheim and Karl Marx. They were all convinced that the consequences of the Enlightenment and industrialization would lead to the decline of the religious. For example, Comte recognizes three stages of human society, from the theological stage to the metaphysical stage, and finally to the fully scientific stage. Eventually, science (and especially sociology) would replace religion. Similarly Weber, with the concept of *rationality*, Durkheim with the concept of *differentiation*, and Tönnies with the concept of ‘*Gemeinschaft-Gesellschaft*’ provided a basis for further developing the term ‘secularization’ by later generations of sociologists like Peter Berger, Thomas Luckmann, and Bryan Wilson (Stolz

⁴ Catholic Encyclopedia. Secularism. Available at: <http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/13676a.htm>

and Könemann 2016: 11–12; Dobbelaere 2011: 599) in the second half of the twentieth century.

The definition of secularization has changed throughout history, especially insofar as some speak of *neo-secularization*. The initial point of secularization refers to a societal level – when subsystems in modern societies differentiated from each other because of their particular function, such as economy, polity and science. Every subsystem has its own autonomy, values and norms, rejecting religious autonomy and value systems. Therefore, secularization refers to the decline of religious authority over other subsystems, an outcome of modernization, and it leads to the development of “functional rationality” (Dobbelaere 2011: 600). For example, ‘charismatic’ authority barely has a place in a rationalized political system, and a cost-efficiency basis ousts religious ethos in the economy. The development of science also induces a scientific approach to the world rather than religious explanations which impact people’s everyday life and individual minds. This ultimately means the decline of religious beliefs and practices in individual life. Therefore secularization can be considered as a process that started in a macro, societal level and continued into to micro, individual levels of analysis (Dobbelaere 2011: 600–601). However, in reality religion continues to be powerful at the individual level and also at a societal level. As Berger (1999) argues, “the world today, is as furiously religious as it ever was, and in some places more so than ever” (Berger 1999: 2).

Berger has revised his opinion on promoting the secularization theory and emphasizes the continuity and upsurge of religion in the modern world. In his point of view, there is no inevitable link between secularization on the societal level and secularization on the level of individual minds. Perhaps some religious institutions lost their influence as a result of modernity, but both old and new religious beliefs and sometimes institutions continue to have social and political significance. Therefore the relation between religion and modernity is not as simple as the secularization theory of the 50s and 60s would have it, when it was assumed that modernization necessarily leads to a decline of religion, both in society and in the individual consciousness (Berger 1999: 3).

Some theoreticians, such as Bryan Turner, tried to offer a more precise definition of secularization, by distinguishing ‘political secularization’ from ‘social secularization’. In his point of view, political secularization refers to the public domain and political regulation; it is a historical process of separation of church and state, defining the place of religion in public life. Social secularization deals with values, culture and attitudes which are demonstrated in forms of rituals and practices and sites in the social sphere. Therefore, while a state is able to enforce religious regulation in the political sphere, it is difficult to restrict the social functions of religion and control it in the social sphere. It is therefore important to distinguish which kind of secularization is meant within the debate on secularization (Turner 2010: 651–654).

José Casanova (2006) also explained secularization using three different definitions. First, the most popular definition: that of a decline of religious beliefs

and practice at the individual level. Second: the privatization of religion, arguing that today, “we are witnessing the ‘deprivatization’ of religion. [...] Religious traditions throughout the world are refusing to accept the marginal and privatized role which theories of modernity as well as theories of secularization had reserved for them” (Casanova 1994: 5). The third definition refers to classic theories of secularization which defines it as the differentiation of the secular spheres (state, economy, science), usually understood as ‘emancipation’ from religious institutions and norms at the societal level. Casanova argues that these definitions are differently applied in the debate on secularization in the United States or Europe. Perhaps the traditional theory of secularization is proper for Europe or more precisely in some parts of Europe, but not for the United States or for other parts of the world.

Another definition of secularization is provided by Charles Taylor. He does not reject the idea of declining practices and declared belief in many countries per se; rather he explains that such decline depends on how religion is identified. Religion as ‘historic faith’ or ‘explicit belief in the supernatural’ seems to have declined, but religion as a ‘wide range of spiritual and semi-spiritual beliefs’ or as ‘the shape of ultimate concern’ is still present. Therefore, Taylor also believes that religion has not declined at the individual level; perhaps the earlier forms of religion have been destabilized and marginalized, but religion has arisen in new forms (Taylor 2007: 426–427). Therefore, it would be more helpful to consider Pluralism and, as Berger claims, “instead of continuing the debate in terms of decline or persistence, they have identified pluralism, diversity and fragmentation as more fruitful ways of thinking about religion today” (in Fox 2010: 315–316). Many people today still believe in God and still ascribe to a certain religion without accepting the crucial dogmas in it – what Grace Davie calls ‘believing without belonging’ (Davie 1990). In this process, religion also tries to redefine and recompose itself in various ways (Taylor 2007: 513–514).

To define secularity Taylor refers to several ideas and then supplements them further. He locates the concept of the secular in earlier ideas such as in classical or medical accounts that deal with the realm of ‘earthly’ politics and ‘mundane’ vocations, contrasting the secular with the sacred. He also reflects on secularization theory and its application to the societal and individual level where religion and religious belief and participation have a decreased significance in public spaces, and are being replaced with universal, neutral rationality as a consequence of modernity. In addition, secularity results in the decreasing importance of religious belief and practice in everyday life (Taylor 2007).

But Taylor offers another definition of secularity, which is considered by some theoreticians such as James K. A. Smith (2012) as a basis for describing a new epoch, namely the ‘post-secular age’. In his definition Taylor underlines the new conditions of belief. A secular society is where religious belief and belief in God is considered as one disputable option among others for the individual. “The shift to secularity in this sense consists, among other things, of a move from a

society where belief in God is unchallenged and indeed, unproblematic, to one in which it is understood to be one option among others, and frequently not the easiest to embrace;" (Taylor 2007: 3) therefore, this definition of secularization deals with how 'plausibility structures' of modern societies make religion contestable, rather than with the waning of religion in late modern societies (Smith 2012: 163–164). Taylor claims that this new context prevents the naïve acknowledgment of transcendent and naïve religious faith.

The remarkable point is that in Islamic societies, despite the obvious influence of the secular attitude, secularity is forced to be privatized, while religion plays the central role in the public sphere. Nonetheless, secularity can be traced in different parts of the life-world, including individuality, cultural changes and religious rationality. Hence, it is essential to study secularity even in strongly religious societies such as Islamic countries (Burchardt et al. 2015: 11–12). However, clarification of different concepts of 'secular', 'secularism' and 'secularization' is required in order to apply the proper term in such societies.

Secularism is defined as "a political doctrine" (Asad 2003:1) that refers "to the arrangements of the institutional separation of politics/the state and religion as well as to their ideological legitimizations" (Wohlrab-Sahr and Burchardt 2012: 880). The concept of secularization refers to "sociological process models addressing processes of functional differentiation, religious decline, and privatization of religious practice" (ibid.). Secular as "an epistemic category" (Asad 2003:1) is considered as "an analytical term for the culturally, symbolically, and institutionally anchored forms of distinction between religious and non-religious spheres and material spaces" (Wohlrab-Sahr and Burchardt 2012: 881). Therefore, 'the secular' is conceptually prior to the political doctrine of 'secularism' (Asad 2003:16), and is more inclusive. The concept of the secular is not confined to the relation between religion and state, but also includes other dimensions of society and the public sphere (Wohlrab-Sahr and Burchardt 2012: 881). In this regard, secularity is considered a result of social conflicts related to transforming the social sphere and religion, rather than an antireligious or irreligious attitude (ibid. 904). It demonstrates itself beyond institutionalized rules, in the public discourse and the scope of everyday life. In other words – "people's life-worlds, with their multiple forms of embodying religious and secular ways of being, knowing and sensing" (Burchardt et al. 2015: 5).

Accordingly the concept of secularity, as Wohlrab-Sahr and Burchardt (2012) explain, can take different structures in various societies. They use the concept of "cultures of secularity" as well as "multiple secularities" to refer to "new ways of thinking about the relationships between religion and secularity in modernity that go beyond secularization theories" (ibid.). Perhaps cultures of secularity do not exist all over the world; but rather depend upon social and political conditions; nevertheless, they emphasize that considering conceptual space for an analysis of secularity is of crucial importance, even in strongly religious societies (ibid.: 6). Accordingly, this book aims to investigate the concept of secularity in an Islamic context.

Fundamentalism is regarded as a reaction to secularization which is not restricted to the West and Christianity, but also to Islam. Before exploring the applicability of such ideas for religion, particularly in the Islamic world, fundamentalism shall be explained in the following section.

The definitions of fundamentalism

The term ‘fundamentalism’ is widely applied to regional, national, and even global developments which hold both religious and political dimensions, and which is traceable in all religions and in every major faith, including Christianity, Judaism, Islam, Hinduism, Buddhism and Confucianism (Armstrong 2002, Afary 1997). Fundamentalism is a controversial term, with many-layered meanings which it has attained on its uneven trajectory across cultures, interest groups and disciplines.

Fundamentalism as a term was applied in 1910 for a series of articles by conservative American Protestant Christian authors under the title *The Fundamentals*, in order to “defend biblical inerrancy; attack the so-called European ‘higher criticism’ that began to examine scriptures from purely philosophical (historical-linguistic), archeological, and anthropological perspectives; and refute or counter assorted related threats” (Shupe 2011: 478). Thus, the fundamentalists offered a narrower definition of conservative Christian orthodoxy against the efforts to reconcile traditional Christian beliefs with new developments in the natural and social sciences.

As this concept entered into the public discourse, in particular since the 1970s, it has clearly exceeded its narrow origin concerning U.S. Protestants. Fundamentalists took on political activism and identity politics that concerned events that resulted from modernism, such as the legalization of abortion, the sexual revolution, the gay rights movement, and the removal of religion from public education, or that challenged traditional gender roles, or caused moral questions (Nagata 2001). It was claimed that with modernity, human beings became more rational, and hence religion was not required anymore, or perhaps would be restricted to a private sphere of human life. Fundamentalists rejected this view of religion and tried to bring it from its marginal position back into mainstream society. This reaction was not confined to conservative Christian orthodoxy, however, but was also common in the other major religions of the world. In fact, emerging threats from Islamic groups and organizations such as the Taliban, Boko Haram, and the Islamic State, created by fundamentalists, introduced Islamic fundamentalism as the strongest stream of fundamentalism (Wenzel 2011: 180–182).

Some scholars use the term ‘fundamentalism’ to refer to religious revival movements outside the Protestant tradition, while other scholars are reluctant to use the term to refer to cultural and political movements based on religious tradition with the same features. Some scholars utilize terms such as the ‘New Religious Politics’ (Kaddie 1998); Islamism (Göle 1996; Krämer 2011); or In-

tegrism and Political Islam (see: Steinbach 2004). For some, employing fundamentalism to Islamic political movements is recalling another variant of orientalism, in keeping with the process of Othering (see Edward Said: *Orientalism*, 1978). “In Said’s view, by constructive reductive notions of ‘terrorism’ and ‘fundamentalism,’ the West has attempted to claim for itself ‘moderation, rationality’ and a specific Western ethos” (Afary 1997).

The term fundamentalist is also used, albeit irresponsibly, to address any group that takes religion seriously and even to address all Muslims, as Nagata (2001) and Emerson and Hartman (2006: 128) explain. Some studies do not distinguish reformist movements from fundamentalist movements, and identify all Islamic revival movements as fundamentalist or as part of fundamentalist movements (Wegner 2008; Köhler 2008). Some speak of ‘new-age fundamentalist reform movements’ – die neuzeitlichen fundamentalistischen Reformbewegungen – (Kienzler 2007).

In contrast to this view of fundamentalism, other studies draw attention to the distinction between various groups of Islamic revival movements (Riesebrodt 1990: 148; Göle 2004). Riesebrodt’s (2000) definition of fundamentalism is

a specific type of religious revival movement which reacts to social changes perceived as a dramatic crisis. In such a movement people attempt to restructure their life-worlds cognitively, emotionally, and practically, reinvent their social identities, and regain a sense of dignity, honor, and respect. But, such goals are achieved in fundamentalism in ways which are different from other types of religious revival movements (Riesebrodt 2000: 271)

After the 1979 Revolution in Iran, Islamic fundamentalism drew more academic and political attention (Nagata 2001: 486). Riesebrodt (1990) regards fundamentalism in post-revolution Iran as a form of patriarchal traditionalism that, as a result of state-driven secularization in Pahlavi’s era, recalls for a return to a ‘book-centered’ religious order. Therefore, it not only renewed patriarchal controls on women and gender roles, but it also revived paternalistic authority in politics and the economy.

The first comparative study of fundamentalist movements was completed by Bruce Lawrence in 1989, entitled *‘Defenders of God: The Fundamentalist Revolt Against the Modern Age.’* As Emerson and Hartman (2006) explain, Lawrence argued in his book that “fundamentalism is an ideology rather than a theology and is formed in conflict with modernism” (Emerson and Hartman 2006: 130) In a comprehensive study named ‘The Fundamentalism Project,’⁵ the same features of fundamentalist movements were found across faiths, including; em-

⁵ The book series *The Fundamentalism Project* published by the University of Chicago Press, was sponsored by the American Academy of Arts and Sciences and directed by religion historians Martin Marty and Scott Appleby from 1987 until 1995. The project was aimed at investigating fundamentalist movements throughout the world.

bracing technological innovation; opposing relativism and pluralism; believing the absolute 'truth' lies only with them; and endowing themselves with the authorization to enact the divine will and the 'universal blueprint' for human salvation. As a result, fundamentalists see themselves as agents of a sacred power and are often intolerant of dissidents within and outside the community of believers. Regarding the texts of a tradition, fundamentalists are 'consistently anti-hermeneutical' and reject every hermeneutical interpretation of scripture (Marty 1988).

Among the fundamentalist movements, Islamic fundamentalism seeks a worldview based on a golden age, with a 'utopian and past-oriented' perspective (Eisenstadt 1996, cited in Moghissi 1999: 71; Göle 1996), seeking fulfillment of Islamic law in a contemporary society without any adjustment to the contemporary needs of human beings. Islamic fundamentalism is defined as a movement aimed at 'establishing an Islamic sociopolitical order' through fulfillment of the Islamic law; therefore the unity of religion and politics in Islamic government is defended (Moaddel 2008: 1676–7). Similar to other religious fundamentalists, Islamic fundamentalists believe that "the focus of moral authority is God and that legal codes should reflect absolute and timeless divine law" (ibid.: 1680). However, Islamic fundamentalists have often interpreted divine and Islamic laws as their political projects dictate (ibid.). Losurdo (2004) describes a characteristic of Islamic fundamentalism as protection of "the Islamic identity from contamination and interference. The point is to put an end to centuries of ruinous religious subversion. This is a protection, a kind of 'cultural cleansing,' against all Western political tendencies" (Losurdo 2004: 11).

Fundamentalism in Islam became generally known with the establishment of the Muslim Brotherhood by Hasan Al-Banna in Egypt in 1928. The purpose of creating the Muslim Brotherhood was not only to fight colonialism and liberate Muslim societies from the West, but also to replace the materialist philosophy of Europe in an Islamic country with the culture, civilization and philosophy of Islam which was presented by the first generation of Muslims (Said Aly and Wenner 1982: 340). Al-Banna, the founder of the Muslim Brotherhood, posited the dislodgment of true Islamic tradition as the cause of decadence in the Muslim community. He pointed to the Quran and tradition of the Prophet (*sunna*) as resources of Islamic rules for every Muslim and says:

Islam is a comprehensive system which deals with all spheres of life. It is a state and a homeland (or a government and an *Umma*). It is a moral system and power (or mercy and justice). It is a culture and a law (or knowledge and jurisprudence). It is material and wealth (or gain and prosperity). It is (Jihad) and *Da'wah* (or army and an idea). And finally, it is true belief and worship (Al-Banna n.d.: 7).

Therefore, Islamic principles must be implemented in all aspects of public life as well as in political, economic and ideological dimensions. This ultimately leads to a truly Islamic government, obliged to enforce Islamic law alongside