

Conceptualizing Power, Progress and Time: An Essay on Islam and Democracy in the Arab World

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Abstract : The MENA region has undergone many mutations throughout history. The most significant one was, yet, to happen during the colonial era, where the Arab Muslim 'cosmic' clock was recalibrated to match a more or less modern perception of time. As for modern civic and political experiences of life, they were left in a state of inertia. This article considers the problematic amalgam of traditional Islam, modernity and democratization in the Arab world, as well as the effects on the configuration of recent progressive endeavours. It is argued that the assimilation of democratic ethos - as a requisite for modernity - depends on the assimilation of power, progress and time, by what is referred to as the Umma. Drawing on postmodern and political literature, it is suggested that because of a conceptualization which draws mainly on traditional Islam, the Umma and the state in the Arab world remain in conflict while, at times, they appear to act collaboratively, either to embrace modernity or to obstruct democratization.

Keywords : Islam, democracy, Arab world, modernity

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