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democracy do not mix. This book epitomizes the obsession with the menace of Islam, but does not address it analytically.

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Muslim Democracy: Politics, Religion and Society in Indonesia, Turkey and the Islamic World

By EDWARD SCHNEIER (New York: Routledge, 2016), viii + 270 pp. Price PB £24.99. EAN 978–1138928121.

In the best tradition of Max Weber's theses on the Protestant ethic and its role in the evolution of modern capitalism Edward Schneider's book is a daring and inspiring attempt to assess another form of religion's impact on society. The focus here is on Islam, or, more precisely on the broad range of Islamic political thought and ideals and their impact on democracy in not less than the Islamic world as a whole. Concerned by the heated debates on Islam, violence, and authoritarianism triggered by the terrorist attacks in the United States in 2001, the troubled history of the Middle East since the invasion in Iraq in 2003, and the Arab Spring in 2011, Schneider starts with the question what the resources of 'Islamic ideals' are that might provide a solid foundation for and sustain democracies. His implicit assumption thereby is that Islamic political thought—as far as such a coherent body has ever existed—has historically been embedded and thus translated into various cultural and political contexts. An endeavour to better understand the interdependencies between Islam on the one hand and governance, democratization, and secularization on the other, is therefore by definition a comparative undertaking that seeks to contrast the different experiences of Muslim-majority societies so far. The approach Schneider suggests to realize this is not to ask whether Islam as such is compatible with democracy, but to analyse 'what features of democratic institutions and processes work' (p. 7) in specific Islam-dominated countries. Schneider's lens through which he discusses these complex developments is thus not theology, but these societies' political, and to a certain extent also social and economic, history.

Similar to other works on politics and religion on a global scale this book accommodates an impressive range of themes (the impact of colonialism, the formation of political institutions, secularization, equality-related issues, gender etc.), geographical extent (to varying degrees all Muslim-majority societies are discussed as well as India), and of historical depth (from the foundation of Islam to contemporary times). The main argument is that the often quoted 'democratic deficit' of the Muslim world is neither the product of historical changes specific only to Islamic societies nor the result of religion per se. Within their own

regions, for example, statistical differences between Muslim-majority countries and their neighbouring societies in relation to poverty, weak governments, or the inability to sustain democratic institutions are smaller than usually assumed. Islamic societies are thus not so different from other parts of the globe. The difference that do exist, however, can be explained more convincingly through variables that have little to do with Islam such as delayed decolonization, the persistence of severe poverty and inequality, disruptions in nation-building processes, and lack of civil infrastructure. Especially in relation to secularism, i.e. the continuous negotiation of boundaries between religion, politics, and the state, there is a huge variety of concepts and practices throughout the Islamic world that oscillate between more liberal approaches such as in Indonesia and authoritarian regimes that openly co-opt Islamic orthodoxy such as Saudi Arabia. In a global view, however, Schneier sees these patterns more in line with 'multiple secularisms' that characterize political systems on all continents rather than as Islam-specific evidence. Hence, what Schneier recommends is to historicize the debate around Islam and democracy more thoroughly than has been done hitherto, and to look more closely at the political, socio-economic and regional patterns that co-determined the overall performance of these societies in relation to various democratic measures.

Methodologically, the book is based on secondary sources and select newspaper reporting, both exclusively in English. Given the broad spectrum of cases analysed, the lack of primary material (in more than one language) is probably the result of the author's deliberate decision to concentrate on spread rather than quality. The consequence of this is, however, that the strength of this book clearly lies in the (theoretical and empirical) synopsis and not in the depth of the case studies. The implications of this choice are particularly visible in the first chapter on 'a brief history of the Islamic world'. This section provides an historical overview since the time of the Prophet, discusses the legacies of colonial authoritarianism, and argues that the Cold War confirmed the Islamic world's resistance towards 'outsiders', particularly from Europe and the US. The reader, however, wonders what the relevance of these selected core features of the long history of the Islamic world ultimately is to the issue of democratization. The chapters on Indonesia and Turkey are also very general. Schneier worked for some years in Jakarta with the Indonesian government on governance-related issues. He considers both Indonesia and Turkey as relative success stories of democratization in the Islamic world, which justifies in his view dedicating a chapter each to these societies within an otherwise region-based approach. Readers familiar with the past and present of these states will find hardly anything new in these chapters. More thought-provoking, however, are the comparative comments on the central role of the armed forces in Turkey's and Indonesia's political systems or the role of political Islam, which differs significantly in the two cases.

Elsewhere, the theoretical and/or empirical argument on Islam and democracy is not always entirely clear. A separate chapter on 'religion, development and democratization', for example, clarifies Schneier's understanding of democracy that he mainly takes from Freedom House. Schneier applies its indices on voter

choice, civil liberties, and human rights throughout the book. This chapter familiarizes the reader on a general level with different thoughts on religion, modernity, secularism, and democratization. However, the precise argument Schneier seeks to develop for the subsequent case studies in relation to Islamic political thought remains opaque. In a similar way, the chapter on the Middle East and North Africa, which explicitly intends to explain the lack of democracy in Arab societies, identifies many fascinating factors that contributed to the lack of historical change towards more civil liberties and electoral participation. According to some observers, for example, there is little empirical evidence that Islam inclines its followers to exceptional religiosity or strong support for the fusion of religious and political authority. What is more, Schneier sees in most Arab countries no culture of authoritarianism but rather a 'politics of faith-infused authoritarian rule' (p. 93). Thus, the persistence of autocratic regimes in this region can be explained in secular terms and not through specificities in religiosity. Schneier is less convincing, however, in explaining how he weighs the multiple variables in politics and history against each other and how their interdependency has changed in particular during the second half of the twentieth century. Islam is thereby reduced to a cloak that legitimizes political authority and repression.

Particularly relevant in the contemporary history of Muslim-majority societies is the decline of the Left—moderate or communist—and its far-reaching impact on the career of democracy on the one hand and radical Islam on the other. A systematic analysis on this subject for the Islamic world (and beyond) is so far lacking. Schneier does mention the fate of Leftist movements in some case studies. The mass murder of the Indonesian Communist Party in 1965/66, for example, is briefly mentioned in the chapter on Indonesia. Also in the conclusions there is a short comment on the void these Leftist parties and movements left behind. But given the importance of these developments that took place in different, nevertheless comparable, ways in many Muslim-majority societies within a relatively short period of time during the 1960s and 1970s the topic seems underappreciated. The fate of the Left would also have been an opportunity to strengthen the otherwise rudimentary analysis of transnational connections and transfers of knowledge, ideas, and practices across national borders and even continents.

Overall, Edward Schneier has written a very readable book that provides a thought-provoking comparative synopsis of theoretical reflections on democratization, secularization, and modernity as well as empirical evaluations of Islam-dominated societies and their inherent diversity. Its main argument, that the performance of these societies in the field of democracy, civil liberties, and human rights is a result of historical, political, and economic variables, supports the view that no religion is *per se* either compatible or irreconcilable with democracy. How far religion—be it in the form of Islam, a Christian ethic, or a Hindu habitus—can be convincingly distinguished from other factors that co-determine historical change belongs to Max Weber's speculative heritage. What seems evident from Schneier's study, though, is that democratization requires above all

enabling circumstances for those pro-democratic forces that already exist in virtually every Muslim-majority country.

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Trading Worlds: Afghan Merchants Across Modern Frontiers

By MAGNUS MARSDEN (London: Hurst & Company, 2016), xv + 432 pp. Price PB £30.00. EAN 978-1849043540.

This much-awaited book is a monumental achievement of fieldwork in out-of-the-way places, across dangerous frontiers, over an extended period of time. Marsden takes us on a journey that enables us to experience alongside him the constant sense of precariousness, of living between dangerous pasts and uncertain futures, which is the day-to-day experience of his Afghan trader friends. In this densely described, argued and analysed account of cross-border trading, the central message is one of complexity; beyond that, Marsden finds ambiguity and ambivalence.

The traders who Marsden befriended are primarily Dari speakers, a dialect of Tajiki/ Persian, and many are ethnic Tajikis from northern Afghanistan, though the author is at pains to emphasize the multi-ethnic composition of the Afghan trading diaspora. The centre of the study, the city of Dushambe, is the capital of Tajikistan, an ex-Soviet Republic now an independent state. Northern Afghanistan, where most traders come from, was also the base of the anti-Taliban Northern Alliance movement and before that, of the Afghan communist party that took over the regime in Kabul after the Soviet invasion. Many traders cut their teeth in trade while students in Soviet universities or officials of the Afghan government. Inevitably they became refugees in Pakistan and elsewhere once the government was toppled in 1992 by the Taliban. Many were thus quite educated with established networks, and many opened their first small businesses in their places of exile.

Education, social mobility, and the civil war and its aftermath thus uprooted many Afghans from their tribal or peasant communities and rural livelihoods. As a result, the Afghan diasporic trading community, by now scattered worldwide, is heterogeneous both in terms of class and ethnic origin, although most are northerners. Many moved into Russian and Ukrainian cities, like Moscow or Odessa, or to other ex-Soviet republics in Central Asia; others are based in the Gulf states where the central offices of larger trading companies are often situated, and many others smuggled themselves into or managed to gain refugee status in European capitals, with larger communities emerging in the UK, mainly in London, and in the United States and Canada.