Youth and Revolution in the Changing Middle East, 1908–2014

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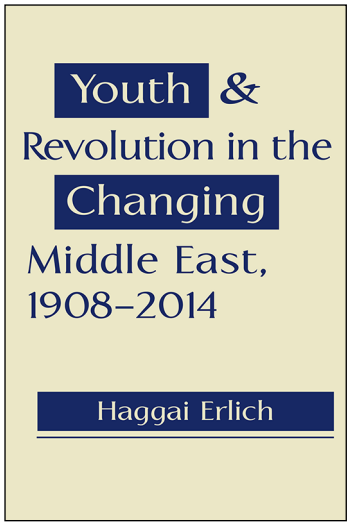

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The Birth of "Youth" in the Middle East

In the first decade of the twentieth century, most people were quite unfamiliar with the term, "the Middle East." The region that we understand as referenced by that term was still "the Ottoman Empire" or, for many, "the Land of Islam." However, a series of great changes was already in motion. Not that previous eras had been motionless; on the contrary, they were as dynamic as all other periods in human history all across the globe. But our interest here is in the modern developments that, throughout the previous century, led to today's reality in what we now know as the Middle East. In this respect, there were at least eight major changes, or points of new departure, that brought us to where we are today.

The first appeared in the years 1906–1909 with the emergence of pioneering groups of modern nationalists. These included the young officers in the Ottoman army, nicknamed the Young Turks; the founders of the first nationalist political parties in Egypt; and the members of secret societies in greater Syria, who aimed at the fulfillment of a renewed Arab identity. They, and others such as the leaders of the 1906–1911 Constitutional Revolution in Iran, were sowing the seeds of nationalist movements that would write much of the story of the new era.

The second change was much more visible even as it was taking place. World War I (1914–1918) ended with the collapse of the Ottoman Empire and the emergence of today's Middle East, a region comprised of new states and defined by new international boundaries. Turkish and Arabic speakers went their different ways. Modern

Turkey under the leadership of Kemal Atatürk underwent secularization and turned toward the West. New political entities—Lebanon, Syria, Iraq, Palestine, Egypt (which had existed de facto since 1805), and Transjordan (later Jordan)—began acquiring new lives around new systems and new institutions under British and French occupation. Iran remained independent and connected to the new Arab Middle East only indirectly.

The third change occurred throughout the 1920s, a decade that came to be known as "the liberal age." In most of the new Arabic-speaking states, Western-style constitutions were declared. Politics was organized around competing parties and lively parliamentarianism, all inspired by the hegemony of democracy in the West and the prosperous local economy. Minorities were tolerated and thrived, and universities were established in Cairo and Beirut, their graduates hired by the machineries of the rapidly expanding new states. The landowning elites, who dominated party politics, led a nonviolent struggle for independence.

The fourth change began with the economic crisis of the early 1930s, and the subsequent entrance into extraparliamentarian politics of new social layers; the post–World War II liberation from foreign rule; and the emergence of pan-Arabism as primarily embraced by the educated middle class. Together, this led to the Nasserite and Baathist revolutions of the 1950s and 1960s in many of the major states. Namely, the removal of the old elites and their party politics by army officers, who were ideologically in favor of pan-Arab unity and the creation of a secular, authoritarian, socialist, pan-regional Arab state stretching from the Atlantic Ocean to the Persian Gulf. The spirit of the period was dominated by the idea of the realization of the Arab World through a victorious social and scientific revolution.

The fifth change followed the collapse of pan-Arabism in the aftermath of the Arab defeat at the hands of Israel in June 1967. From around 1969–1970 the separateness of the different states was reemphasized at the expense of the dream of pan-Arab unity. In practically all Arab states (with the exception of Lebanon) power fell into the hands of authoritarian and dictatorial figures. These men and their successors—often their own children—ruled until the Arab Spring of 2011. They paid lip service to Arabism but went on building their different states, ensuring stability and continuity through oppressive and sometimes corrupt means.

The sixth change accompanied the fifth. Following the demise of secular, revolutionary, pan-Arabism, Islam returned as a political ideology. As it spread it energized the urge to revive pan-regional pride and to protest against the dictatorial means of the various regimes, as well as against the hegemony of Western values and power. A variety of movements claiming to work in the name of Islam adopted diverse strategies, and bridged—and continue to bridge—state boundaries, regions, and continents.

The seventh change was the return of Iran and of Turkey to the heart of developments in the region, which was related to the return of political Islam in the Middle East. Iran, which prior to Khomeini's 1979 revolution had been quite marginal to the story of the Arab Middle East, became a major actor, striving for dominance. Turkey, following internal social changes and public frustration with the European response to Kemalism, turned back to Islam and Middle Eastern affairs toward the beginning of the twenty-first century. The intensive involvement of Iran and Turkey would appear to have redefined the Middle East in a number of different ways.

The eighth change, the Arab Spring, revived the notion of an Arab sphere but has not yet redefined it. The chain reaction of popular protest that swept both the town squares and the rural regions of a number of the main Arab states proved largely effective in ending the era of authoritarian rulers in the Middle East. Three years on, we may conclude that the power of the masses, of the various social, ethnic, religious, and ideological sectors, did away with some forty years of Arab dictatorships. The era of absolute rulers seems to be over, but no one can say how future historians will label the new era that has just begun.

Both optimists and pessimists are free to indulge in prophecies, but this book is about history. It attempts to reexamine the eight changes just described by discussing two interrelated dimensions whose origins lie somewhat earlier than the twentieth century. The first is the role of youth in transporting modern history through these main junctures. The second is the role of higher education—itself shaped and reshaped throughout the changes presented above—in creating and shaping new generations of youth before they stormed into history, heralding new eras. It is to these dimensions that we now turn.

The Traditional World: Childhood, Yes; Youth, No

Since the early twentieth century, the Arabic word *futuwwa* (youth) has conveyed vitality, forcefulness, and hope. Many movements that tried to lead in a new direction, to recruit the masses to their struggles for national unity and liberation, came together under the term futuwwa or derivatives of it. *Al-shabab* (the youngsters) expresses similar characteristics, and this term and its derivatives have also been adopted by movements of various types. During the twentieth century, educated youngsters, primarily those 17–25 years old, the ages defined by the great sociologist Karl Mannheim as conceptually formative, coalesced occasionally into "historical generations"—a concept to be addressed below—that took on fundamental outlooks that differed from those of their predecessors and initiated or actively contributed to the major changes. As a result of demographic and other developments, in the second half of the twentieth century, the youth became ever more numerically dominant. At the start of the twenty-first century, hardly a single major aspect of the development of Arab and Islamic society can be described without reference to the stratum of educated youth and young adults. Two-thirds of the region's population is now aged 25 or younger, and the future of the Middle East lies in what this age group does.

This was not always the case. In the traditional Islamic world, from its early beginnings through to the start of the modern era, there was no clearly distinct social stratum that could be defined as youth or adolescence. In contrast, childhood *was* a separate age group, and the research literature points to the enormous moral attention paid to children in their tender years and early teens, to their needs, and to their connection with their parents' world. According to Avner Giladi, for instance, attitudes to childhood in Islamic Arabic writings were as rich as in any other human society, reflecting the close bond of love between parents and their children, constant interest in children's development, and systematic efforts to protect them.[1] However, the notion of youth, in its sociological sense of a distinct and functional age group of adolescents, only came about during the late nineteenth century with the development of modern and professional education. In the traditional Islamic world, futuwwa (and other terms that referred to youth) was hardly a positive concept. It referred to youngsters from poor neighborhoods trying to protect themselves,

young members of popular or marginal groups, and the qualities of daring soldiers on the one hand or criminals and troublemakers on the other.[2]

In his analysis of the Islamic Arab family in the Middle Ages, Theirry Bianquis explains that almost as soon as a child began to show signs of adolescence, he was whisked into the world of the adults. The brighter children were sent to study the rudiments of the Quran and the hadith in a corner of the mosque; the children of the wealthy were brought into the family business; while other children became apprentices, shepherds, seasonal laborers, or joined a street gang. While children were seen as helpless beings who needed pampering, adolescents, claimed Bianquis, were viewed with suspicion. In his analysis of "the ages of life" in traditional society, he argued that this was the age at which children were channeled into one of two strata in the adult world. The children of the elite went into business or undertook religious study, quickly learning to imitate their parents or teachers. According to Bianquis, these youngsters shared none of the features of adolescence in some other cultures, and especially those of post-Renaissance Europe: they played no pranks; they did not mock their elders; they did not gather in constantly mirthful groups. While the children of the wealthy and the educated quickly and comfortably became adults, the pubescent children of the underprivileged joined the ranks of the poor, destined for lives of hardship and want, with no dignity or any real sense of family protection. A few of them—the very talented among them—were extracted from poverty by their persistence in religious studies. As mentioned, some of them joined ad hoc gangs, which preserved something of the energy of youth, but which bestowed further damage on the image of youthfulness in the eyes of those who shaped Islamic Arab culture.[3]

This précis of Bianquis' argument is, of course, quite general and mainly refers to the Arab-speaking Islamic cities of the Middle Ages. While scholars of these societies in later periods might not fully agree with this portrayal, it would be hard to argue with the contention that youth and educated youngsters—in the sense of a distinct age group with a key role in the historical development of the twentieth century—were the outcome of accelerated revolutionary processes of early modernity. Central to these processes was the emergence during the nineteenth century of a new meaning of knowledge and how to acquire it.

Childhood and Islamic Education: The Kuttab

The origins of Islamic education are to be found in the lifetime of the Prophet Muhammad, and its structure took shape as early as the seventh century, when the region became "the Land of Islam," a concept referred to above along with the warning not to view Islam as a one-dimensional and monolithic culture. Believers, however, saw their religion as an ordered and comprehensive assemblage of prescriptions for life that God had given to Muhammad so that he could pass them on to humanity. At first, the education system was part of this ideological definition and one of Islam's many instructions. The commonly accepted assumption—which, to its detriment, is a gross generalization—is that a one-dimensional conception of education prevailed in the Islamic world for generations, and that the values, objectives, and institutions of education in the region have remained essentially unchanged for hundreds of years—since Muhammad's time until today. This book, however, is not the place to enter deeply into this issue.

A key concept for understanding Islamic education—its values and institutions, its social and political meanings—is that of '*ilm* (knowledge). Two well-known scholars of Islam, Franz Rosenthal and Gustave von Grunebaum, defined the purpose of knowledge in Islam as knowledge of God's revelation and the mission of the Prophet Muhammad.[4] According to orthodox Islam, the objective of education is to bring man closer to an awareness of the divine revelation, to instill in him the tremendous experience of the transfer of God's word to mankind through Muhammad, and to reinforce the system of laws, traditions, and commandments that the revelation produced and left behind. Knowledge is thus a divine concept that has been tempered through a unique and unrepeatable past experience. Thus, for many believers, it is an eternal concept, a set of values created by God, a pool of holy knowledge that should not be changed or adapted to epochal changes. The shifting reality of everyday life does not detract from its wholeness; nor are social, economic, political, or military changes meant to alter it. Religious knowledge defined tradition, preserved faith, and ensured the existence of the entire Muslim world. The acquisition of knowledge was portrayed as moving closer to God; its neglect was decried as ignorance.[5]

Knowledge, 'ilm, and those who possessed it, the ulama, were positioned at the peak of Islamic holiness and were the subject of

great admiration. The learned scholar, who had learned from his predecessors—whose wisdom came from their predecessors—and passed his knowledge down to his successors, was closer to the divine revelations of the days of Muhammad than anyone else, and as such was deserving of high earthly status. As a result, throughout the history of Islam there has been a fair amount of social mobility based on learning. Children of the poor who excelled in studies could achieve greatness. Through the education system and the holiness of knowledge, it was possible to lift oneself out of the social gutter and gain prominence as a religious authority, a judge, a religious adjudicator, or a public leader. Also, one could rise through the ranks of bureaucracy and politics based on one's religious education.

As a rule, it has been argued, traditional knowledge did not encourage contemplation, research, or critique. This assertion—which like any generalization does not tell the whole truth—is especially surprising, given that in the centuries following its emergence, Islamic culture was creative and innovative. The early Islamic sages left an important intellectual heritage. They were responsible for a range of technological and scientific innovations in algebra, astronomy, and more. Furthermore, the early Islamic scholars also studied the ancient Greek and Roman philosophers so as to develop their ideas, and did so at a time when Europe was neglecting this classical legacy. However, it was repeatedly argued, this surge in creativity largely subsided after about three centuries. When the first wave of Islamic conquests was brought to a halt, having created a vast empire, it was probably convenient for the political rulers to freeze the world of thought. At this point the tradition of closing "the Gate of Ijtihad" took root—that is, the prohibition on new interpretations of the holy scriptures. According to this tradition, the first generations of Muslims were free to interpret and innovate because they had witnessed the actions of the prophet and his early successors; they had been inspired by the heavenly light, which continued for a while to shine after the divine revelation. Because the gates of heaven had been locked, it was argued, innovative thinkers could find themselves descending into heresy. Modern scholarship and new studies disagree with the assertion that this tradition actually blocked the flows of creativity,[6] but, in practice, the premodern Islamic education system, at the popular level, did remain based on this past-oriented conception of knowledge.

Two main institutions have been central to the Islamic education system throughout its history. The primary institution was that of the *kuttab* (sometimes known as the *maktab*). A network of kuttabs began to emerge as early as the end of the seventh century. At first they belonged to the mosques and played an important role in diffusing Islam throughout the new Islamic empire. The elementary education offered in the kuttab was only for boys. Kuttabs for girls were very rare,[7] and women were usually denied institutionalized access to Islamic knowledge as defined above. (The issue of girls' education and recognition of women's right to knowledge—and the abilities and rights that it confers—would wait until the beginnings of the modern nationalist movements of the nineteenth century.[8]) The basic knowledge imparted by the kuttabs was rote learning of the Quran, both oral and written, and memorizing the religious commandments, customs, calendar, fasts, and other religious practices. Although the kuttabs were to be found all across the Islamic empires, and although they all taught similar materials, there was no "state-sponsored" network of kuttabs. Like the mosques that usually hosted them, the kuttabs were not institutionally and directly tied to the political or bureaucratic system of the state. They were mostly the outcome of local and often private initiatives and were kept going by donations from mosque-goers and the *waqf* system, that is, assets that could not be sold and whose profits could only be used for a defined purpose, such as the mosque or the kuttab.

Studying at the kuttab was not obligatory. The pupils tended to be boys aged 7–11 (though sometimes there were also much older pupils), who spent from two to five years there. There were no classes, in the sense of age groups and distinct study levels.[9] (In a way, the kuttab was like a Jewish heder, and its physical appearance resembled the Jewish educational institution found in Eastern Europe, North Africa, Yemen, and other Islamic countries.) The children sat in a semicircle on mats and mattresses or next to low tables. Under the authority of the teacher, the *'alim* or the shaikh (the term *mu'allim* only came into use much later), children of all ages sat and listened to the knowledge imparted to them from the Quran and the commandments. Most kuttab teachers were not senior religious figures and were not from the social elite. The kuttab system offered children only the most rudimentary knowledge, which taught them how to live as adults in keeping with the fundamentals of the religion

and its decrees. It offered no professional training or any kind of education that might prepare them for everyday life. Professional skills were acquired through work, mostly in apprenticeships, or as assistants or trainees. The rote learning in the kuttab did not encourage independent thought. Memorizing the Quran was extremely difficult, as even Arabic-speaking children scarcely knew any literary Arabic. Even among non-Arabic speakers, the Quran was studied in its classic language, and only a few pupils would have understood it. Only in later years did kuttab teachers start explaining the Quran to their pupils in their native tongues—Turkish, Persian, and so on. In 1781, a few schools in the Ottoman Empire began teaching the Quran in Ottoman Turkish as well as in Arabic.

A closer look at the kuttab system reveals a degree of diversity. In Egypt, for instance, there were times when grammar and Arabic poetry were taught. In Muslim Spain, Arabic composition was taught in an orderly fashion. In Persia, the pupils would learn poems in the local language. However, as a rule, the kuttabs were rather similar to one another. They reflected the traditional religious view of knowledge, and, as generation succeeded generation, scant changes were discernible. Most of the graduates of the kuttab knew enough in order to pray, but only a few were able to use their knowledge in everyday life and for practical purposes. From the mid-nineteenth century the kuttab began to change, as it was forced to compete with the Western-style schools that were being established at that time. In Egypt, initial attempts were made to adapt the kuttab to the demands of modern society and to incorporate it within the new national education system, which I will discuss later. In 1835, a government supervisor was appointed to oversee these schools, and in 1846 this supervision was carried out by the new Ministry of Education of the Ottoman Empire.[10]

Madrasa Without Youth

In the premodern Land of Islam there was no intermediary school education system whatsoever. The stage of study that had been familiar in Greek and Roman culture, and that had been revived in Western and Central Europe during the sixteenth century, did not exist. Intermediary school education—when teenagers were meant to coalesce into a social group while in the early formative stage of their

lives—did not begin to develop in the region's Islamic societies before the middle of the nineteenth century. A graduate of the traditional Islamic kuttab set out into the world in his early teens, making the transition from childhood to adulthood without experiencing the stage of adolescence. Nor was he equipped with an organized set of knowledge that might provide him with practical help in life. As noted, everyday and professional knowledge—in agriculture, handicrafts, trade, soldiering, clerical work, and the like—was acquired from one's family, from a guild, or on the job (in the fields of management, there was usually a system of ranks with exams enabling one to rise through them).

However, although there was no intermediary school education, Islam did have a system of higher education. At its center was the madrasa[11] (an institution not dissimilar to the Jewish yeshiva[12]). The first madrasa was Al-Nizamia, which was founded in Baghdad in 1067. The most famous madrasa is probably the Al-Azhar madrasa in Cairo. Built in 972 (three years after the establishment of Cairo), its origins precede Al-Nizamia, but Al-Azhar only began to function as a madrasa at a later stage.

Madrasas were set up in many Islamic cities both in and outside the Arab region. The madrasa trained the ulama, the senior religious figures, including the mufti (legal scholar, interpreter of Islamic law), the *fuqaha* (jurists, or *faqih* in the singular), the *qudat* (judges, *qadi* in the singular). The madrasa was the institution in which the fundamentals of Islam were taught at the highest level. Not only did students at the madrasa study the Quran and the hadith literature, but also sharia, the laws of Islam, and *fiqh*, the knowledge of the four legal schools of Islam. The students studied advanced Arabic and its grammar and learned other Islamic languages. They also studied exact sciences, in particular mathematics and astronomy, that the religious scholar needed in order to interpret the Muslim calendar. In addition, they learned the art of speechmaking and rhetoric so as better to preach to their congregation during Friday prayers at the mosque. Young men would thus gain a respectable and varied education at the madrasa. However, it mostly excluded external studies, that is, knowledge for its own sake, or practical, nonreligious knowledge. Studies of nature, general philosophy, and the like tended to be absent from the madrasa's curriculum. The madrasa prepared its students for positions of religious leadership; it did not prepare them for a professional life in any other way.

The curriculum at the madrasa was not formally organized. Madrasa affairs tended to be dealt with at the individual level, between the religious scholar and his young pupils. This relationship would often start quite spontaneously. Students would gather around those scholars who were endowed with intelligence and rhetorical prowess, and some of them tied their fate to the scholars' intellectual leadership. These personal relationships formed the basis for instruction. The patron-client relationship between teachers and students was central to the social organization of Islamic higher educational institutions ever since their foundation in the eleventh century. The informal character of the madrasa system differed greatly from the strictly formal organization of the European universities. All of the madrasa students belonged to and were identified as belonging to particular groups and as the students of the scholar with whom they studied. Each such class was divided into two main groups: the inner group of senior pupils who were close to the teacher and who served as teaching assistants and the teacher's personal assistants and, around them, the larger group of students.[13]

Most madrasas did not have a written and obligatory program of study, and there was no overarching system of regional or national madrasas. Similarly to the kuttab, the madrasa was materially dependent on the mosque, on an infrastructure of donations, and on the waqf. They were not an official branch of the state—neither in theory nor in practice—and by and large there was no real connection between the government and life in the madrasa.

The madrasa reflected the universal worldview of Islam, and not only in terms of scholarship. Teachers and students came from all corners of the Land of Islam and mostly returned to their places of origin. Students living at the Al-Azhar madrasa in Cairo, for instance, came from all over the Islamic world—from North and East Africa, Arabia, the Fertile Crescent, even India. Most institutions had something like student dorms and study areas known as a *riwak* (*arwak* in the plural), where the students, *tulab* (*talib* in the singular), would live and study. Upon finishing his studies, a student would not receive an official certificate from the madrasa, but rather from his *ijaza* (teacher), with whom he would most likely remain in touch for many years, as well as with his fellow students. Thus, religious and social patronage networks would be formed, which extended across the Islamic world, becoming entangled with one another, and sometimes even entering into rivalry, one with the other. Just as he arrived

at the madrasa from his birthplace, the young religious scholar would return home, or migrate elsewhere, now as a leader in his own right, performing his religious function and bequeathing the universal knowledge of Islam to local congregations.

Only very occasionally would sociopolitical activity be undertaken by madrasa students. In the second half of the sixteenth century, for instance, when the Ottoman Empire was at the height of its power, there was a large increase in the number of madrasa students. Some had the opportunity to get a clerical position, but the number of applicants was greater than the number of open positions. Just then, there was a decrease in the madrasas' income, and student living conditions deteriorated. In response, the authorities permitted the students to beg for alms in the provinces, and several groups of students got caught up in robbery sprees until regional governors sent out military units against them. As a result, between 1579 and 1583, there were uprisings by madrasa students, which were ultimately put down by the authorities.[14]

While ideological innovators and aspects of technological revival had appeared throughout the years in Islamic societies, and while the madrasas developed over the centuries, and some prepared their students for other aspects of life, the overall picture remained mostly unchanged until the modern era. At the end of the nineteenth century, modern religious scholars tried to instigate real change in Islamic education, especially in the madrasas. Their objective was to reproduce the intellectual openness of early Islam, to introduce active science studies, philosophy, and general and practical knowledge into the madrasas, and to institutionalize madrasa studies by issuing official certificates. I will return to this issue when discussing the emergence of the modern nationalist movements in the Middle East.

Islamic education systems were not monolithic and inflexible. There was social mobility within them, and poor but excellent students could rise to positions of leadership, mainly in the religious and social spheres. The lack of an institutionalized study program appears to have helped madrasa graduates attain a balanced combination of the uniform requirements of orthodox religion and the various and changing needs of the societies they guided. Socially, the madrasa graduates usually belonged to broad and decentralized networks of ties with their teachers and peers, in their neighborhoods, or in distant lands. Thus, as individuals, or as local groups of scholars,

the madrasa graduates were a center point of the overall structure of Islamic and Arabic societies. However, madrasa students and graduates did not become a sector of "educated youth" in the modern sense. They did not represent a young generation, neither as a social structure, nor as social or political actors with the characteristics of young men.

Modern Education and Historical Generations

Modern Education: The Concept

Despite its vitality, the world of Islam could hardly rely only on its own institutions in confronting the West, a confrontation that was renewed in the early nineteenth century. In order to successfully stand up to the modern might of Western European powers, the rulers of Islamic societies had to initiate reforms. Paradoxically, the necessity to withstand Western aggression led to the adoption of changes in the spirit of the West's institutions. Among the plethora of such initiatives, changes in education were particularly notable: structures and concepts in education, which had developed over many centuries in Europe, were borrowed, reproduced, and planted in the Islamic societies of the region.

In Chapter 2, I review these changes from the nineteenth century through World War I, but it is worth summarizing here their general significance, and pointing out the revolutionary differences between modern education—as constructed during this period—and traditional Islamic education.

First, the newly borrowed education systems were the product of initiatives by the political rulers and leaders, they were not the creation of local societies, nor did they reflect its religious conceptions. The new education systems were thus state-run. They were constructed from the top down, in accordance with politicians' visions and needs. Unlike the traditional institutions, which were hardly influenced by political or other changes, these new state-run institutions were shaped by and changed in keeping with more general historical processes. They evolved in accordance with changes in the spirit of the times, ever-changing strategic and other challenges, and the political leaders' new agendas.

Second, the new educational system was based on institutionalized schools and on patterns that had been formulated in the West and borrowed from there. The new institutions of higher education, which were, in fact, the first to be set up—primary education and secondary schools had structured classrooms and curricula and awarded graduation certificates. Studying no longer involved direct personal and continuous contact with the same scholar. Rather, it required meeting the conditions of a strict system with wide-ranging and expanding fields of study, where teachers and students were constantly replaced, and courses that were taking place on new campuses detached from the family and the comforting atmosphere of the mosque.

Third, the modern school system was not set up in order to train religious figures to lead a religious society or to prepare the young to adhere to religious decrees and norms. Rather, it was established to prepare people to serve and contribute through their new and modern professional and practical knowledge. The reforming rulers of the nineteenth century needed new people who could serve in a modern army, contribute to a modernizing economy and society, and operate within the mechanisms and service frameworks of modern state and society.

The modern education initiated by the nineteenth-century rulers thus produced young adults who were trained to be involved actively in public life. It created a new age group—the educated youth.

In the course of the nineteenth century the educated youth of the large cities began to coalesce as a sector of some standing and with its own distinct characteristics. Its dress style was new, with a Western jacket and a fez. It benefited from the early stages of leisure culture, the time and stimuli for conversations, for exchanging views about new concepts, for mutual inspiration. It was a very prestigious group, which enjoyed the traditional esteem usually bestowed upon Islamic ʻilm, on the one hand, and a newfound reverence for the achievements of Western knowledge, on the other. These were no longer the privileged sons of the old elite, nor the low-status teenaged youngsters of the traditional world. The new educated youth was seen as a new sector or class of modern students. They were viewed as free from personal, familial, or sectarian interests and as bearing the hope of future redemption for all. All this enabled the new youths to gradually attain political capabilities. In the new cam-

puses at the beginning of the twentieth century, the students would introduce a number of novel political phenomena: strikes, protest marches, mass demonstrations, and—thanks to the newly educated young officers—military coups. The years 1906–1908 saw the emergence of the first "historical generation" representing this new dynamic. Later generations, I argue, would be the product of ever mounting pressures and painful experiences—occupations, economic, social, and other crises. New "historical generations" would play a central role in the struggles over the region's identity throughout the twentieth century, and the shifts in emphasis from "the Land of Islam" to "the Middle East," to the "Arab World" and also back to "the Land of Islam." Right before our eyes, at the start of the second decade of the twenty-first century, the young generation has done so once again, and with greater vigor than ever.

Youth and Historical Generations

The essence of the argument presented in this book is that one of the main forces behind the changes in the twentieth-century Middle East has been intergenerational struggle. We are not using the term "generation" in its narrow sense of an age group, but rather in the sense of "historical generations" (or "political generations") as defined by leading sociologists of knowledge. As argued by Karl Mannheim and José Ortega y Gasset, a "historical generation" is one whose members consolidated their world view following a shared foundational revolutionary experience that took place during the formative years of their transition from adolescence to adulthood.[15] In their view, a generation is a cultural structure that develops in the context of shared experience—real or imagined—and responds to the same collective needs. New historical generations are a product of constitutive, formative experiences from dramatic events or rapid changes. While the old generation responds to such changes using its established set of concepts, the young are conceptually formulated in light of those changes. Only rapid, significant, and dramatic changes can bring a new political generation into being. Ortega y Gasset was an anxious observer of 1920s Europe, when the masses broke their way into the field of politics. In his view, the scars of World War I and the force of its horrors, along with the development of the media and what he saw as political permissiveness and too great a degree of

openness, created the social mechanism and patterns of mass culture characteristic of fascism and communism. For Ortega y Gasset, the entrance into politics of the spontaneous masses implied the tempering of true democracy in the West, which had been the product of the optimistic generations from before that awful war. It came at the expense of the liberal ideal, based on the enlightenment of the elites, a culture of restraint, and the centrality of law.

Mannheim, who was also interested in the cultural, ideological, and social dimension, demarcated the conceptually formative years of the members of a new generation, asserting that the age at which the modern individual was shaped anew was generally between 17 and 25 years. The sociologists of knowledge have added that new historical generations tend to burst forth into the political and cultural sphere suffused with a shared foundational experience, but that its response to that experience may not necessarily be constant. For instance, the young Europeans who had survived World War I split into militant nationalists, on the one hand, and sworn peace lovers, on the other. Naturally, each historical generation tries to shape reality in accordance with its new concepts. While the silent majority adapts to the reality created by its predecessors, an active minority organizes itself, usually through new political frameworks, challenging the values of the old generation and striving to implement its worldview so as to change reality. "The phenomenon of generations" wrote Mannheim "is one of the basic factors contributing to the genesis of the dynamic of historical development."[16]

According to the sociologists mentioned above, and possibly because of the centrality of materialist outlooks and class struggles, such intergenerational dynamism was not a primary driving force in the history of Europe. However, there most certainly were episodes when it was of importance. For example, historian Lewis S. Feuer pointed to a distinct dynamic of generational units in the Russian intelligentsia during the conflict-ridden period between the mid-nineteenth century and the revolutions of 1917. These age groups, explained Feuer, arose one after the other in Russia, as each group developed ideas that contradicted the dominant traditional worldview. Feuer argued that the efforts of these groups to bring about change failed, but each such failure led to the formation of new groups that reached maturity just as their predecessors were failing. Given these failures, each group adopted ever more radical positions.

Among the Russian intelligentsia, said Feuer, the intergenerational differences were so acute that one of the most important status symbols at the time was one's generational affiliation.[17]

As mentioned, the state of crisis and the failure of the old conceptual system in Central Europe between the world wars was a catalyst for the emergence of a historical generation. Generally speaking, we could add that the "flower children" of the 1960s in Western Europe and the United States constituted a new "historical generation," whose new concepts challenged earlier attitudes and left their mark on those societies. The advent of the flower-child generation and the campus protests from California to Paris also inspired a great deal of research, which in turn offered insights and new concepts regarding generational dynamics. Some sociologists have preferred the term "cohort"—originally a unit within the ancient Roman army—defined by US researcher Norman Ryder as "the aggregate of individuals (within some population definition) who experienced the same event within the same time interval."[18] According to Ryder, successive cohorts differ from one another in terms of their education, their socialization, and the historical experiences of their members. Young adults are shaped by war, immigration, urbanization, and technological change. Although the recent interest in our time has produced a wealth of new insights, it would seem that Mannheim and Ortega y Gasset's basic observations are still relevant. Our discussion of historical generations and political generations later in this book will be based on the premises set out by those pioneers.[19]

In the twentieth-century history of a changing Middle East, the emergence of historical generations—the bursting forth into the public sphere of educated young adults in favor of a new set of ideas and concepts—was an important dimension in the region's sociopolitical dynamics. In the following chapters, I follow the shifting emphases in different periods and in light of the role of the educated youth as the active representatives of the generations that took shape anew during significant events: historical generations that heralded change and helped bring it about. In the transition from the Ottoman "Land of Islam" to the "Middle East" of separate states and "a liberal age"; at the junctions of change that brought about the concept of an "Arab world"; and in the shifts as the secular and socialist "Arab world" gave way to the political revival of Islam, to the rejoining of the Turks and the Iranians, as well as to the rising expectations from an

Arab spring—in all of these transitions the youth of new historical generations played a crucial role.

Notes

1. See Giladi, *Children of Islam*.
2. Cl. Cahen, "Futuwwa," pp. 961–965.
3. Bianquis, "The Family in Arab Islam," esp. 633–636.
4. Rosenthal, *Knowledge Triumphant*; von Grunebaum, *Modern Islam*, pp. 191–204.
5. For more on the concept of knowledge in Islam, see Goldziher, "Education (Muslim)"; Shalaby, *History of Muslim Education*, pp. 161–162; Tritton, *Materials on Muslim Education*; Tibawi, *Islamic Education*, pp. 23–46; Siddiqui, *Knowledge: An Islamic Perspective*, pp. 1–17.
6. See, for instance, Hallaq, "Was the Gate of Ijtihad Closed?"
7. Peirce, *Morality Tales*, pp. 251–275.
8. There is currently a broad revolution underway regarding women's education, to which I return toward the end of the book.
9. See more in Landau, "Kuttāb"; and Heyworth-Dunne, *An Introduction*, pp. 2–14.
10. See Winter, "Ma'arif."
11. On the madrasa and its history, see Makdisi, *The Rise of Colleges*; Pedersen, Rahman, and Hillenbrand, "Madrasa"; Leiser, "Notes on the Madrasa"; Makdisi, "Madrasa and University"; Heyworth-Dunne, *An Introduction*, pp. 15–28.
12. Ephrat and Elman, "Orality and Institutionalization of Traditions."
13. Litvak, "Teachers and Students"; Berkey, *The Transmission of Knowledge*; Ephrat, "Madhhab and Madrasa."
14. Inalcik and Quataert, *An Economic and Social History*, pp. 415–416.
15. Mannheim, *Ideology and Utopia*, pp. 237–280; Mannheim, "Problems of Generations," in *Essays on the Sociology of Knowledge*, pp. 276–322 (on ages 17–25, see p. 300); Ortega y Gasset, *The Modern Theme*; Eisenstadt, *From Generation to Generation*; Schuman and Scott, "Generations and Collective Memories."
16. Mannheim, "Problems of Generations," in *Essays on the Sociology of Knowledge,* p. 320.
17. Feuer, *The Conflict of Generations*, chap. 4.
18. See Ryder, "The Cohort as a Concept," and his encyclopedic article "Cohort," p. 549; compare them to the article "Political Generations" by M. Rintala in the same encyclopedia; see also Spitzer, "The Historical Problem of Generations"; Moller, "Youth as a Force in the Modern World"; Emmerson, *Students and Politics*; Ericson, *Radicals in the University*; Flacks, "The Liberated Generation"; Mali, *Wars, Revolutions, and Generational Identity.*

19. Israeli sociologist Yonathan Shapira in his book, *An Elite Without Successors*, analyzes the generational dynamics of the Jewish community in Palestine during the British Mandate. Drawing on Mannheim and Ortega y Gasset's observations, he writes: "Social revolutions are usually the outcome of crisis, and ideological change is one of the most important aspects of any revolution. Studies of revolutions have shown that most of them were organized by age groups comprised of young adults, which we can treat as generational units as defined by Mannheim." Shapira concludes that the founding generation of the Zionist movement, with its forerunners and pioneers, was such a "historical generation," but subsequent generations did not create a new, revolutionary and challenging world of concepts, p. 57. This book will not discuss the issue of historical generations in Israel. For literature, see the following Hebrew-language studies: Anita Shapira, "From the Generation of the Palmach to the Candle Children," pp. 129–142; Yaacov Katz, "The National Jewish Movement: A Sociological Analysis," in *Problems of Identity and Legitimacy in Israeli Society*, ed. R. Kahana and S. Kupperstein, Jerusalem, 1980, pp. 18–32; Beilin, *Sons in the Shadow of Their Fathers*; Yuval Dror, *Communicating Vessels in National Education: The Story of Zionism*, Jerusalem, 2007; H. Herzog and S. Zelniker, *Generations, Spaces, Identities, Culture and Society in Israel*, Jerusalem, 2007; B. Kimmerling, *Between State and Society*, Vol. 1, Tel Aviv, 1995, especially p. 192.