

Articulating “Responsibility” as a Prerequisite for the Arab Spring

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Abstract

In delineating the causes behind nonmilitant uprising and revolution in the Middle East, I propose that the import, the Arabization and Islamization of the term *responsibility*, as a key catalyst. Although the concept of responsibility is fundamental to the message of Islam, it is alluded to by an assortment of terms that seem to have fallen out of the day-to-day vernacular of Arab communities. The adoption of the term *mas’uliyah* has served to express this fundamental concept. Furthermore, given its origin in post-Enlightenment Western political philosophy, the term provides a rare conceptual bridge between regions termed Western and Middle Eastern, in addition to being a linguistic vehicle capable of coarticulating modern Western and traditional Islamic thoughts. In this article, I trace the Arabization and Islamization of the term *responsibility* to nineteenth-century *nahDah* literature and its current establishment in different Islamic currents and schools. Moreover, I explain the utility of the term to express authentically Islamic vocabulary that has been forsaken in political terminology of the past two centuries.

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I propose that the presence of this now familiar term was instrumental in articulating the necessity of political change in a manner that resonated with millions of Arabs educated according to a modern Western model of education. Finally, I predict that the term *responsibility* will allow for a “new kinda *fiqh*” appropriate for an activated citizenry.

Introduction

On January 18, 2011, Egyptian activist Asmaa Mahfouz posted a vlog on Youtube.com exhorting her fellow Egyptians to take to the streets on January 25th and protest the corrupt government of Hosni Mubarak. Her video today is considered one of the main mobilizers that lead to the success of the protests.¹ Her call included a warning that those who observe the protests idly behind their computers and TV sets are responsible for the harm that will occur to those who decide to take part and participate:

Your presence with us will make a difference, a big difference. Talk to your neighbors, your colleagues, friends and family and tell them to come. They don't have to come to Tahrir Square, just go down anywhere and say it, that we are free human beings. Sitting at home and just following us on news or Facebook leads to our humiliation. Leads to my own humiliation! If you have honor and dignity as a man then come. Come and protect me, and other girls in the protest. If you stay at home, then you deserve all that's being done to you, and you will be guilty, [and you will be *mas'ul*], before your nation and your people. And you'll be responsible [*shayel mas'uliyah*] for what happens to us on the street while you sit at home.²

On February 12 2011, Egyptians returned to Tahrir Square in humble triumph, to clean up after eighteen days of protest that indeed forced President Hosni Mubarak to step down.³ With brooms, garbage bags, and disinfectant, it was almost a spiritual-civic act of repentance and baptism ingraining a new mode of citizenship, long sought after and long struggling to be expressed. “Yesterday, Egypt gave birth to a new baby.” a participant said, “Right now we're not sure what it is going to grow up like but we all have a responsibility to do our best.”⁴

Responsibility features in the Arab Spring as a self-evident concept and authentic term. Used by activists to mobilize protesters and by protesters to explain their actions, it may therefore come as a surprise that the term is relatively novel both in English and in its Arabic translation, *mas'uliyah*. The coinage of the term in the West and its incorporation in the East encapsulates the modern interaction of both as it is received by populations in a tip-of-the-tongue state on both sides.

The Emergence of Responsibility

Origins in the West

Richard McKeon maps the three dimensions in which “responsibility” is currently used to (1) an external dimension in legal and political analysis in which penalties are imposed on actions and officials are held accountable, (2) an internal dimension in moral and ethical analysis in which one is cognizant of the consequences of an action, and (3) a comprehensive or social dimension in social and cultural analysis in which “values are ordered in the autonomy of an individual character and the structure of a civilization.”⁵ Despite these analyses being the subject of ancient discussions, the term *responsibility* is a modern invention that substituted the more traditional terms such as *punishability*, *accountability*, and *imputation*. The first appearance of responsibility recorded by Murray’s *Oxford English Dictionary* is from the *Federalist Papers*,⁶ where it is used several times including the following paragraph from Paper No. 69 published in 1788 by Alexander Hamilton (1755–1804):

The President of the United States would be liable to be impeached, tried, and, upon conviction of treason, bribery, or other high crimes or misdemeanors, removed from office; and would afterwards be liable to prosecution and punishment in the ordinary course of law. The person of the king of Great Britain is sacred and inviolable; there is no constitutional tribunal to which he is amenable; no punishment to which he can be subjected without involving the crisis of a national revolution. In this delicate and important circumstance of personal responsibility, the President of Confederated America would stand upon no better ground than a governor of New York, and upon worse ground than the governors of Maryland and Delaware.⁷

John Stuart Mill (1806–1873) later introduced the word *responsibility* in philosophical discourse as a semantic maneuver to bypass the impasse faced when discussing accountability and imputation. The deadlock encountered by these two topics arises from the unresolved discussions on freedom versus necessity and intentions versus consequences – in addition to whether the true source of moral and political criteria ought to be sentiment instead of reason, or approbation rather than duty.⁸ For Mill, it was a moot point to be avoided. Instead, he deemed it sufficient that we “believe that there is a difference between right and wrong”⁹ and that regardless of the reason behind preferring one over the other, it is a fact that whoever commits wrong will fall out of sympathy with society, and that if people become aware of one’s disposition to wrong they will actively dislike him.

This would therefore render the wrongdoer “liable to whatever they may think it necessary to do in order to protect themselves against him; which may probably include punishment.”¹⁰ Mill considers this social dynamic sufficient to make one accountable “at least to his fellow creatures, through the normal action of their natural sentiments,”¹¹ and from this pragmatic perspective, he offers a definition:

What is meant by moral responsibility? Responsibility means punishment. When we are said to have the feeling of being morally responsible for our actions, the idea of being punished for them is uppermost in the speaker’s mind. But the feeling of liability to punishment is of two kinds. It may mean, expectation that if we act in a certain manner, punishment will actually be inflicted upon us, by our fellow creatures or by a Supreme Power. Or it may only mean, knowing that we shall deserve that infliction.¹²

Thus, Mill gave responsibility a meaning based on the tradition of accountability – with responsibility meaning punishment, and by which a distinction between right and wrong is uncovered, while at the same time generalizing it beyond the expectation of actual punishment to *knowing that one deserves* to be punished.¹³

From so simple a beginning, responsibility evolved to its current pervasive presence where its definition goes beyond “responsibility means punishment” to become a principle by which one has the “obligation to fulfill certain duties, to assume certain burdens, and to carry out certain commitments.”¹⁴ In that sense, its center of gravity has shifted from the judicial plane to the plane of moral philosophy.¹⁵

Arabization and Islamization

I conducted an extensive literature search to explore the usage of the term *responsibility* in Arabic.¹⁶ Although the passive participle *mas’ul* occurs in the Qur’ān more than once, the now familiar artificial verbal noun *mas’uliyah* was virtually absent in Arabic literature until the nineteenth century. Morphologically, the term *responsibility* in Arabic is derived from the root *seen-hamza-laam*, the base for the verb *sa’ala* (he asked) and the word *su’aal* (question). The passive participle *mas’ul* is one who is asked (about) or questioned (about) something. The artificial verbal noun *almasdar alsina’iy* is derived by adding a doubled *yaa’* and a *haa’/taa’* to the end of a nonverb to create an abstract noun depicting a state or a quality, similar to the effect of the suffix *-ity* in English. By a first approximation, a *mas’ul* is one who is responsible, and *mas’uliyah* is responsibility. However, this is not entirely accurate. Responsible is derived from the act of responding, while the root of *mas’ul* connotes asking. Nevertheless, while at the core

they are derived from opposite verbs, the passive participle renders *mas'ul* to mean one who is to be questioned about something and is expected to respond – and therefore the approximation of *mas'uliyah* as responsibility is sufficiently functional.

The earliest texts in which the term *mas'uliyah* was found could be described as nineteenth century *nahDah* literature by virtue of its authors Butrus al-Bustani (1819–1883), Muhammad Abdu (1849–1905), Rifa'a el-Tahtawi (1801–1873), and Abd El-Rahman el-Kawakbi (1849–1902).¹⁷ With its origins in Syria and Egypt, the *nahDah* (Renaissance) movement flourished between 1850 and 1914, with the mission of assimilating the great achievements of modern European civilization hand in hand with reviving classical Arab culture.¹⁸

Al-Bustani, a leading pioneer of the *nahDah* movement¹⁹ appears to be the first to include the term *mas'uliyah* in an Arabic dictionary.²⁰ Announcing in 1862 his plans to compile an Arabic dictionary “the likes of which has never been conceived,”²¹ al-Bustani based *Muhit al-Muhit* largely on the *Qamus* of al-Firuzabadi, as well as al-Jawhari's *al-Sihah*,²² while introducing numerous foreign terms, among which we find *mas'uliyah*:

al-mas'ul is an *ism maf'ul* (passive participle). In the [Seventeenth Qur'anic] Chapter of ‘The Children of Israel’: “Indeed [every] pledge will be *mas'ulan* (*questioned [about]*)”. That is, requested from the pledger to fulfill and not renege. Or to “*be questioned about*”, as in questioning the reneger [about his going back on their pledge] and punishing him. From it (i.e. *mas'ul*) is [derived] the term used in Politics and Business, *mas'uliyah*, by which a person is requested [of].²³

Also first published in 1870 was the *Curricula for Egyptian Hearts on the Marvels of Modern Civility and Arts* in which Rifa'a el-Tahtawi attempts to help “expand the extent of urbanity” through material he collected from “the fruits of ripe Arabic books and beneficial French compositions.”²⁴ As head of the school of languages and editor of the first official gazette, al-Tahtawi was well-positioned to import and arabize foreign terms,²⁵ and it appears that he was the first to introduce the concepts of fatherland (*watan*) and patriotism (*wataniyyah*) into Arabic.²⁶ He writes in the section on governance:

Kings in their kingdoms have exclusive rights and upon them are obligations towards their people. Among the exclusivities of a king is that he is God's vicegerent on Earth and is held into account by his Lord [alone]. [Thus] upon him is no *mas'uliyah* by any of his subjects for his actions.²⁷

El-Tahtawi continues and justifies this irreproachable status of kings explaining that they should be left to their inner conscience, endowed in them by their creator as a personal censor.²⁸ In what appears to be a response, Abd El-Rahman Al-Kawakbi later wrote in *The Nature of Despotism and the Harm of Enslavement* (first published in 1900 and currently an Arab Spring best-seller):

Who knows from where jurists of despotism derived that rulers are sanctified from *mas’uliyah*, to the extent that they deem it obligatory to praise them when just and to be patient when unjust and consider any criticism a transgression punishable by death?! O Allah, despots and their partners have transmuted your religion; there is no power but from you.²⁹

Muhammad Abdu used *mas’uliyah* in more mundane terms. In an article published in *al-Waqa’i’ al-Masriyyah* (the official Egyptian Gazette³⁰) and dated December, 23, 1880, he wrote:

The Administration of Education published a memo . . . that from now on all must exert an effort to improve the level of education and pedagogy and warning that whoever does not do so will fall under the *mas’uliyah* of the Diwan.³¹

Mas’uliyah in Fiqh Literature

From the portal of *nahDah*, responsibility has slowly made its way in to the Arabic lexicon and Islamic literature. In *fiqh* literature, the term is virtually absent in classical and medieval texts.³² Even the recent *Kuwaiti Fiqh Encyclopedia* (a project that began in 1967) does not include an entry to explain *mas’uliyah*, despite it being used to explain other terms, for example:

Mas’uliyah of the Judge: Jurists differed on the *mas’uliyah* of the judge, is he to be held accountable for mistakes in his rulings or whether it is impermissible to hold him accountable, due to many duties he is in charge of.³³

Perhaps, one of the earliest incorporations of the term in *fiqh* literature is to be found in Sayyid Saabiq’s (1915–2000) *Fiqh al-Sunna* (first volume published in 1945):

If a person bites another and the one bitten pulls away causing the biter’s teeth to fall . . . then there is no *mas’uliyah* on the [bitten], because he was not the original offender.³⁴

The first appearance of the term *mas’uliyah* in Egyptian *fatwā* issued by *Dar al-Iftaa’ al-Masriyyah* (Egyptian House of Fatwa)³⁵ appears to be

in a lengthy response by Sheikh Jad el-Haq Ali Jad el-Haq (1917–1996) in 1979 about the ruling on Egypt's peace treaty with Israel:

by the same logic, the Messenger (SAAS) defines *mas'uliyah* and lays it on the shoulders of those in charge in any position, for he says "Certainly! Everyone of you is a guardian and is *mas'ul* about his charge. The leader of the people is a guardian and is *mas'ul* about his subjects" (al-Bukhari) . . . and when we examine this treaty in light of a Muslim ruler's *mas'uliyah* [pl. of *mas'uliyah*], we find that the Egyptian president acted towards [his] people sincerely with *mas'uliyah*, to preserve his people as he preserves himself. He went to war when he found there was no alternative and after due preparation, and he negotiated and extended the hand of peace when it appeared that there was no other alternative and that he can reclaim our rights peacefully without war.³⁶

The term has also made its way into *fiqh* literature originating from the Arabian Peninsula, which is often characterized by literal interpretations committed to an earlier historical practice. Sheikh Abdulaziz ibn Abdullah ibn Baz (1912–1999), the former Mufti of Saudi Arabia, wrote in a paper titled "The Role of Youth in Islamic Movements":

Indeed the *mas'uliyah* of those in charge: leaders, scholars and intellectuals, is a great *mas'uliyah*. They must take the hands [of youth], care for them, and guide them to the [traditional] path of Islam; explain it to them so that they embrace it as tradition and practice, in order that they may proceed according to the model and application of the Shari'ah.³⁷

In a response to a question on parenthood, renowned scholar Muhammad ibn al-Uthaymin (1929–2001) used the term *mas'uliyah* abundantly. For example, in elaborating on the verse "O you who believe, save yourselves and your families from a Fire whose fuel is Men and Stones" [Qur'an 66:6], he said:

Allah explains that this address directed to believers includes an important *mas'uliyah*, which is that they protect themselves and their families from a Fire. This means that the *mas'uliyah* of family is similar to the *mas'uliyah* of the self in this regard. . . . So in the same way that upon you is a *mas'uliyah* towards yourself, upon you is a *mas'uliyah* towards your children as well, which you must fulfill and will be asked about on the Day of Judgment.³⁸

Thus, despite differences in legal school or sociopolitical vision, *mas'uliyah* has begun to be utilized in *fiqh* literature to articulate legal concepts such as culpability, accountability, and the sense of guardianship that comes with authority.

Mas’uliyah in *Tafsir Literature*

As for *tafsīr* (Qur’ān exegesis), the situation is similar as the case with *fiqh* literature, the term *mas’uliyah* is introduced in modern Qur’ānic exegeses.³⁹ A single occurrence is found in the *tafsīr* of Allameh Seyyed Muhammad Husayn at-Tabataba’i (1892–1981) known as *Tafsir al-Mizan*.

From this it appears that [Allah’s] saying: “Indeed you are slogging towards your Lord” [Qur’ān 84:6] includes an affirmation of the hereafter, for Lordship is not complete except with servitude, and servitude is not complete except with *mas’uliyah*, and *mas’uliyah* is not complete except with a return and an account of deeds, and an account of deeds is not complete without *jazaa’* (reward and/or punishment).⁴⁰

Another single occurrence is found in Sheikh Atiyya Salim’s (1927–1999) completion of the exegesis started by his mentor Muhammad al-Amin al-Shinquitī (1897–1972), *Adwaa’ al-Bayaan*:

“Nay. Indeed this is a reminder. So let those who wish, pay heed.” [Qur’ān 80:11–12]. A declaration; for the Messenger (SAAS) does not make a consideration for the wealthy or poor when calling to Allah, and the Believers must be patient with him not being empowered. For the message is to be communicated and upon [the messenger] is no *mas’uliyah* for what occurs afterwards, so he must not overburden himself for them.⁴¹

Sayyid Qutb (1906–1966) in his *In The Shades of the Quran*, uses *mas’uliyah* twice. One of these comes when reflecting on the verse “O you who believe! Enter into Islam [whole-heartedly, all of you] (Qur’ān 2:208)” and in the context of describing the community that Islam gives rise to:

Finally, it is that community that provides for each person work and sustenance, for each disabled person the guarantee of dignified life, and for anyone seeking chastity and protection a suitable wife. It is that community that considers each member *mas’ul* [with a] criminal *mas’uliyah* if a fellow member dies of hunger; to the extent that some jurists see that they must pay blood money.⁴²

The three examples cited are products of Shī‘ah, traditional Sunni, and Sunni revivalist schools, respectively. Once again, the term is used by a variety of schools and traditions. Furthermore, *mas’uliyah* is a multidimensional term that encompasses notions of worldly accountability by oneself and others, as well as accountability in the hereafter. It remains to be seen if the usage of *mas’uliyah* in Qur’ānic exegesis will shift the domain of accountability to one dimension versus the other.

Mas'uliyah in *Hadith Literature*

In the field of Hadith criticism,⁴³ the term's first incorporation may be at the hands of Muhammad Nasiruddin al-Albani (1914–1999) in his famous critique of the story of the *Satanic Verses*,⁴⁴ entitled “Hoisting of Catapults for the Destruction of the Story of the Cranes” (published in 1952). In analyzing al-Suyuti's failure to mention the defects in the story's chain of narration, he wonders “I do not know if this was an abridgment by him or by others.”⁴⁵ He then includes in a footnote,

I later found that al-Suyuti mentions [the story] in his book *Asbaab al-Nuzool* (The Reasons for Revelation) while expressing doubt about its [chain of narration]. He did well, and it is therefore clear that there is no *mas'uliyah* about this narration [on him] or others.⁴⁶

The purpose of this particular citation is to further demonstrate the employment of *mas'uliyah* in a variety of Islamic disciplines. A more detailed analysis of modern terminology in the traditional discipline of Hadith criticism will be presented elsewhere.

Mas'uliyah in *Poetry*

Finally, it seems fitting that a potential first usage of *mas'uliyah* in Arabic poetry is at the junction between intellectual *nahDah* and popular revolution against despotism.⁴⁷ In his “Speech of Death,”⁴⁸ Yemini revolutionary/poet Muhammad Mahmoud al-Zubairi (d. 1965) defames Yemen's ruler Imam Ahmad bin Yehya Hamidadin (1869–1948) saying:

He cries: Allah's Shari'ah!
 And Allah is innocent of debauchery
 If his heart saw God he would collapse
 Forsaking all *mas'uliyah*
 And hand his crown to the people
 For them to build a national government
 With their own hands

The Utility of the Term in Postcolonial Arabia

It was important to go at lengths and trace the appearance of *mas'uliyah* in a variety of fields and intellectual currents in order to emphasize that the once foreign term has been assimilated into the Arabic and Islamic discourse. It is also important to emphasize that the concept of responsibility is by no means new to the Muslim context and is traditionally ex-

pressed through a myriad of terms such as *tabi`ah* (consequence), *wajib* (obligation), *hisaab* (accountability), *shahādah* (witness), *`ahd* (covenant), *amanah* (trust), *imāmah* (leadership), and *khilāfah* (vicegerency). These terms have limited technical definitions as well as elaborated moral connotations. For example, *khilāfah* not only refers to the highest office of authority following the death of Prophet Muḥammad (ṢAAS), but also to an Ummatic imperative to be agents of God on earth (see Qur’ān 2:30 and Qur’ān 10:14). Similarly, *shahādah* refers to witnessing in the legal sense, but also to bearing the responsibility of receiving revelation and being a witness unto humanity (see Qur’ān 2:143). Thus, the concept of responsibility is central to Islam by virtue of the hereafter’s centrality to its message and the moral consequence of receiving divine revelation.

However, the political climate in the post-colonial Arab world was not conducive of a culture that regulates the actions of governments by appealing to the hereafter or the covenant made between believers and Allah, or the moral imperative that follows from being vicegerents on earth. Instead, these themes were rejuvenated and cultivated as part of a grassroots effort for change in response to the pangs of encountering Western modernity, while seldom used seriously and forcefully as part of the political apparatus or among the intelligentsia that informed actual political decision making.

The emergence of *responsibility* as a fundamentally a Western term fills in this terminological gap. The term is vague enough to be used without necessarily defining who one is responsible to. An elected official may be responsible to his constituency, but that constituency may be informed by their belief in a day of reckoning when choosing who to elect and holding them accountable afterwards. The governed may remind the governor that he is responsible while leaving undetermined whether they are reminding him that they would hold him accountable – or if they are appealing to his moral conscience which he must respond to, or perhaps reminding him of a day when he would stand before God.

Furthermore, the utility of responsibility appears in raising political awareness and pressing for reform without being censored as a dissonant religious message in a supposedly secular political culture. In fact, it fits perfectly in secular discourse. Through this compatibility, the Arab and Muslim citizen is able to express a need that arises from a perceived painful gap between a historical identity informed by a religious worldview and a present enforced by a Western dominance adamant on thwarting any Islamic Renaissance.

Responsibility-based *Fiqh*

The establishment of responsibility as political and revolutionary currency coincides with Islam-inspired political parties dominating the legislative branches newly elected in the Arab Spring (Tunisia's Ennahda Movement and Egypt's Freedom and Justice Party and al-Noor Party). If this new legislative culture persists and extends to local (municipal) forms of administration, one could expect an approach to legislation and politics in general that seeks to derive its legitimacy from both religious appropriateness and pragmatic success. Within this attempt to combine piety with realpolitik lies an opportunity for a "new kind of *fiqh*" to develop. The main features of this jurisprudence are an Islamically authentic focus on responsibility, a religiously justified interest in prosperity, and an openness to public participation – thus allowing for a form of pop-*ijtihad* (or vulgar *ijtihad*) to be practiced by the common citizen. The hallmark of this *fiqh* is the tension between responsibility and material prosperity. More on this to follow.

Spheres of Responsibility

The theoretical framework for such a responsibility-based *fiqh* could be found in Hadith:

Certainly! Everyone of you is a warder (a shepherd) and is *mas'ul* (to be questioned about; responsible) for his ward (flock). The leader of the people is a warder is to be questioned about his ward. A man is the warder of his household and is to be questioned about his ward. A woman is the warder of her husband's household and of his children and is to be questioned about them. The slave of a man is a warder of his master's property and is to be questioned about it. Surely, everyone of you is a warder and is to be questioned about his ward.⁴⁹

The importance of this hadith is that it establishes several overlapping spheres of responsibility, allowing one to extrapolate and consider each individual a shepherd responsible for one or more relevant flocks. Significantly, the hadith is phrased in a manner that preserves the vagueness of responsibility. One may argue that the meaning intended is that, in the hereafter, everyone will be questioned by God about what they were entrusted to guard during their lifetime. This interpretation is consistent with the Qur'ānic verse cited by al-Bustani above when defining *mas'ul*. In modern practice, however, the hadith is used with additional dimensions. We have already seen how Sheikh Jad al-Haq cited the hadith in the context of responding to a question about President Anwar Sadat's peace deal with Israel. To cite this hadith and then state that "the Egyptian president acted

towards [his] people sincerely with *mas’uliyah*, to preserve his people as he preserves himself” is to refer to responsibility as a “sense” that informs a person’s fulfillment of duties. In his *Epistles*, Hassan el-Banna stresses the two dimensions of responsibility when he writes in his letter on government and under the subtitle, “The *Mas’uliyah* of the Ruler”:

The ruler is to be questioned by Allah and by the people, and he is hired by them and a worker for them, and the Messenger of Allah (SAAS) says, “Certainly! Everyone of you is a warder and is to be questioned about his ward.”⁵⁰

Importantly, all treatment of responsibility in the rest of the letter focuses on the single dimension between the ruler and the people. In this sense, the hadith above provides an authentic Islamic grounding for *mas’uliyah* per se and could be used effectively while shifting its center of gravity back and forth between the hereafter and this worldly life.

The Companions as a Source of Responsibility-based *Fiqh* and expanding *Siyasah Shar’iyyah*

Additional theoretical foundation for a responsibility-based *fiqh* could be found in the opinions and decisions of the Companions, as Caliphs or advisors, after the death of Prophet Muḥammad and before the emergence of *Madhahib* and legal methodologies.

The decision of Abu Bakr as-Siddiq to compile the loose parchments of Qur’ānic text into one single manuscript (c. 633) and Uthman ibn Affan’s order to prepare standard authorized copies (c. 653)⁵¹ were two monumental decisions that could be interpreted in light of a sense of responsibility in a vacuum of a revealed ruling or prophetic example. Similarly, Umar ibn Al-Khattab’s decision to ban marriages of Muslims to Christian or Jewish women (despite the Qur’ānic approval), to render triple pronouncements of divorce literal and not a metaphoric exaggeration, and his decision to depart from the Prophet’s example and not distribute conquered lands among the army, could all be interpreted as informed by his responsibility toward unmarried, married Muslim women and the commonwealth of future generations, respectively.

These examples are usually cited in the field of *siyasah shar’iyyah* (Sharī‘ah-inspired public policy, or Sharī‘ah-compliant politics). However, the scope of *siyasah shar’iyyah* is likely to expand in emerging democratic societies. If lawmakers are elected and monitored by the public then legislation is a thoroughly public affair. The expansion of *siyasah shar’iyyah* coupled with the multiple spheres of responsibility lends itself to the idea

that a citizen is a civil mujtahid (one who exerts an effort to derive a legal ruling) in the capacity that allows the individual to fulfill his or her responsibilities.

Closing Remarks on How Responsibility Augments *Maqasid*-based *Fiqh*

Of the intrusions of an invasive modernity, imported Western legal systems were the most threatening projectile. With a gaping wound that Islamic jurisprudence has been slowly and painfully healing around, Western legal philosophy has become a de facto graft in the Muslim tradition. Via retrospective justification posed as pre-description, modern Islamic legal methodology originating from the *nahDah* of Muhammad Abdu and Rashid Rida (1865–1935) has developed today into what has been described as a dominantly utilitarian methodology.⁵² By rendering legal reasoning to a practice increasingly sensitive to social needs and necessities, at the expense of a traditional commitment to literal dictates of revelation, the Abdu-Rida synthesis has developed to a current divine-intent/human-needs (*maqasid/maslahah*) based-*fiqh* freed from the restrictions of medieval tradition and caught in a commitment to natural law.”⁵³

Responsibility enters with the potential to augment and correct this effectively utilitarian *fiqh* and correct its path. Left to its current state of development, the Abdu-Rida synthesis remains deficient in that it lacks any objective criteria by which the validity of a human need or necessity is to be judged. Responsibility does not provide such criteria. Rather, it competes forcefully in the domain of subjectivity. By appealing to the material and spiritual welfare of future generations and the necessity of a sustainable *fiqh* – and, more importantly, the *fear and trembling* that comes with a personal commitment to God, responsibility acts to keep a check on a benefits-based *fiqh*.

The Arab Spring coincides with Islamic political parties coming closer to bringing an Islamic society into light and *meeting the dictates of Islam*. At the same time, the methodological vehicle adopted (and by which they became compatible with the political *zeitgeist*) is committed to successfully *meeting the needs of society*. At this junction, Soren Kierkegaard (1813–1855) comes to mind with his philosophy of responsibility. I share with him an analogous fear that religious utilitarianism will make being Muslim easy, “with the danger that easiness would become so great, that it would become all too easy.”⁵⁴ Out of love for humankind, one hopes that responsibility would make difficulties everywhere!

Notes

1. “Asmaa Mahfouz & the You Tube Video that Helped Spark the Egyptian Uprising,” http://www.democracynow.org/2011/2/8/asmaa_mahfouz_the_youtube_video_that.
2. “Meet Asmaa Mahfouz and the vlog that Helped Spark the Revolution,” <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SgjIgMdsEuk>. translated by Iyad El-Baghdadi, subtitled by Ammara Alavi. The quotation cited is between two minutes and fifty seconds and three minutes and thirty-five seconds.
3. “Egypt after Mubarak: A clean start,” <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-middle-east-12441506>.
4. Ibid.
5. Richard McKeon, “The Development and Significance of the Concept of Responsibility,” *Revue Internationale de Philosophie* 2 (1957): 5.
6. Ibid., 8. McKeon cites the *Oxford English Dictionary*’s reference to the Federalists Papers. However, he writes that it refers to Paper 64 by Alexander Hamilton, when in fact, it is written by John Jay.
7. Alexander Hamilton, James Madison, and John Jay, *The Federalist Papers*. (New York: Penguin Group Signet Classic, 2003), 414–15.
8. McKeon, “The Development and Significance of the Concept of Responsibility,” 20, referencing John Stuart Mill, *An Examination of Sir William Hamilton’s Philosophy* (New York, 1884), col. 2, 288–89.
9. John Stuart Mill, *An Examination of William Hamilton’s Philosophy* (Longman Green and Co, London, 1865), 507.
10. Ibid., 508.
11. Ibid.
12. Ibid., 506.
13. McKeon. “The Development and Significance of the Concept of Responsibility,” 22.
14. Paul Ricoeur, “The Concept of Responsibility: An Essay in Semantic Analysis,” in *The Just*, trans. David Pellauer (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 12.
15. Ibid.
16. I conducted the digital search in June 2011 using online text repositories and libraries by querying with various spellings of *mas’uliyah*. Details of the search will be mentioned below.
17. The works of these authors were queried after recognizing the absence of the term in classical and medieval Arabic literature. The

- hypothesis that *mas'uliyah* is the Arabization of the modern term *responsibility* and therefore would be introduced and/or used by *nahDa* writers was confirmed. The individual writings (or complete works) of mentioned authors were downloaded in searchable text format or queried using Digital Assets Repository (DAR), <http://dar.bibalex.org>. The Arabic works of Jamal el-Din el-Afghani were not accessible in digital form and therefore were not included in this survey.
18. Abdullah Laroui, *The Crisis of the Arab Intellectual: Traditionalism or Historicism?* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1976), 180.
 19. A. L. Tibawi, *Arabic and Islamic Themes: Historical, Educational and Literary Studies* (London: Headkey Brothers, 1974), 228.
 20. I queried the following dictionaries, using the website <http://www.baheth.info/>: *al-Ubab al-Zakhir* by al-Hasan bin Muhammad al-Saghani (1181–1252), *Al-Qamus Al-Muhit* by El-Fairuzabadi (1329–1414), *al-Sihah fi al-Lughah* by Ismail al-Jawhari (d. 1002, 1008 or 1010), *Maqayees al-Lughah* by Abul-Hussien Ahmed ibn Faris (d. 1004,) and *Lisan al-Arab* by Muhammad ibn Manzur (1233–1312).
 21. “On the final page of his *Kitab Miftah al-Misbah* (Bierut, 1862), p. 144.” A. L. Tibawi, *Arabic and Islamic Themes*, 242n6.
 22. *Ibid.*, 243n3.
 23. B. Al-Bustani, *Muhit al-Muhit* (Beirut, Lebanon: Maktabit Libnan, 1987), 390.
 24. R. El-Tahtawi *Manahij Al-Albab Al- Misriyah fi Mabahij Al-Adab Al- 'Asriyah* (Cairo, Egypt: Maktbat sharikat alragha'ib, 1912), 5.
 25. John D. Donohue and John L. Esposito, *Islam in Transition: Muslim Perspectives* (Oxford: University Press, 1982), 11.
 26. *Ibid.* Endnote 1: “The concepts of fatherland (watan) and patriotism (wataniyyah) were new to Muslim thought. Tahtawi appears to have been the first to introduce them into Arabic.
 27. El-Tahtawi, *Manahij Al-Albab Al- Misriyah fi Mabahij Al-Adab Al- 'Asriyah*, 353–54.
 28. *Ibid.*
 29. A. Al-Kawakbi, *Taba'i` al-istibdad wa masari' el-isti`bad* (Beirut, Lebanon: Dar el-Nafa'is, 2006), 54–55.
 30. Y. Haddad and Muhammad Abduh, “Pioneer of Islamic Reform,” in *Pioneers of Islamic Revival*, ed. Ali Rahnama (London: Zed Books, 1994), 32.

31. M. Emara, *Al-A`maal al-Kamila lil`imam Muhammad Abdu* (Beirut, Lebanon: al-Mu`assasa al-`Arabiyya, 1979), vol. 3, 37. This article titled “*al-ma`arif*” was first published in 12/23/1880 in *al-Waqa`i` al-Masriyyah*. Ibid.
32. *Al-Mawsu`ah al-Shamila* is the leading online repository of Islamic literature including a wealth of classical, medieval, and modern references in the four Sunni *madhahib* and comparative *fiqh*, the writings of Ibn Taymiyyah and Ibn al-Qayyim and the *fatwā* of *Dar al-Ifta` al-Masriyyah* and numerous renowned scholars. Two pre-nineteenth century occurrences were found using this method. The first was in al-Nawawi’s (1234–1278) *Majmoo`*. Abu-Said al-Usturkhi (d. 939) said: “He is liable, because this prohibition contradicts with the *mas`uliyah* of the trustee.” The second appears in a subtitle “the *mas`uliyah* of the man” in Ibn al-Jawzi’s (1114–1200) *Akhbar al-Nisaa`*. However, it is unclear if this was included by the author or is modern addition by the publisher.
33. *Al-mawsu`ah al-fiqhiyyah Al-kuwaytiyyah*, vol. 35, 61, http://islam.gov.kw/site/books_lib/list.php?cat=1.
34. S. Saabiq, *Fiqh al-Sunnah* (Cairo, Egypt: Dar al-Fikr), vol. 2, 486. 1971.
35. The website *al-Mawsu`ah al-Shamila* (www.islamport.com) includes the published *fatwā* of *Dar al-Ifta` al-Masriyyah*, dating back to 1895. However it does not state if the collection is definitive or representative.
36. <http://www.islamport.com/b/2/alfeqh/fatawa/%C7%E1%D D%CA%C7%E6%EC/%DD%CA%C7%E6%EC%20%C7%E1%C3%D2%E5%D1/%DD%CA%C7%E6%EC%20%C7%E1%C3%D2%E5%D1%20049.html>.
37. A. BinBaz “*Al-harakaat al-islamiyyah wa dawr Al-shabab fiha,*” in *Majallat Al-buhuth Al-islamiyyah*, vol. 7, 7. (1403 AH), www.alifta.com.
38. Transcribed from a question-and-answer session, www.ibnothameen.com/all/noor/article_6403.shtml.
39. I conducted a literature search by querying www.altafsir.com, (Royal Aal al-Bayt Institute for Islamic Thought), which includes the texts of over seventy *tafsīrs* – including classical, medieval, and modern. Importantly, the website does not include Rashid Rida’s *Tafsir al-Manar*, which I could not obtain in a searchable format but is a contender for the first usage of the term in *tafsīr*.
40. M. H. Al-Tabtabi, *Tafsir Al-mizan fe tafseer Al-quran lil-Tabtababi* (Beirut, Lebanon: Muassasat Al-`alami lil-matboo`at, 1997), vol. 20, 270.

41. M.A. al-Shinqiti, *Adwaa' Al-Bayaan fi ieedah aay Al-Quran bi-IQuran* (Beirut Lebanon: Dar alKutub alilmiyyah, 2003), 1901.
42. S. Qutb, *Fi Dhilal Al-Quran* (Cairo, Egypt: Dar al-Shuruq, 2004), vol. 1, 210.
43. I conducted a search using the website *al-Mawsu'ah al-Shamila* (www.islamport.com).
44. A reference to phrase “they are the exalted birds and their intercession is to be hoped for” supposedly included by mistake in *Surat al-Najm* before being removed. Farid Esack comments on the term in *The Quran: A Short Introduction* (Oxford: One world, 2002): “This is the title of the famous novel by Salman Rushdi (London 1988) wherein he latches onto this incident to highlight the porous borders or absence thereof between truth and falsehood, and light and darkness,”44n18.
45. N. Al-Albani, *Nasb al-maganiq linasf qissat al-gharaniq*, 7 www.saaaid.net/book/open.php?cat=2&book=767.
46. Ibid, 8n5.
47. The website www.adab.com was queried. On February 11, 2012 when the search was last conducted, the website included 58,432 Arabic poems by 648 Arab poets from Pre-Islamic to the present.
48. Although I was unable to verify the date of this poem, the fact that it was written during the lifetime of its subject localizes it to before 1948.
49. M. Al-Bukhari, *Al-jami` al-musnad al-sahih al-mukhtasar min umur rasul Allah salla Allahu `alayhi wa sallam*, no.7138 (Beirut, Lebanon, Dar Tuq al-Najahm, 1422 H), vol. 9, 61.
50. *Rasa'il al-Imam Hasan el-Banna* (Cairo, Egypt: Mawqi` Hasan elBanna net), vol. 2, 127, www.hassanalbanna.org/pages/Books/3a.pdf.
51. A. Von Denffer, ‘*Ulum al-Quran: An Introduction to the Sciences of the Quran* (London: The Islamic Foundation,1983), 44–55.
52. W. Hallaq, *The History of Islamic Legal Theories: An Introduction to Sunni Usul Al-Fiqh* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 224.
53. Ibid., 223
54. Soren Kierkegaard, *Concluding Unscientific Postscript*, ed. and trans. by Howard V. Hong and Edna H. Hong. (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1922), vol. 6, 187.