Developments in Islamic thought (H573/04)
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Introduction

The sample answers and commentary in this resource have been written by senior examiners to help illustrate how the mark scheme could be applied. Please note that this resource is provided for advice and guidance only and does not in any way constitute an indication of grade boundaries or endorsed answers. Whilst a senior examiner has indicated a possible level for each Assessment Objective, in a live series the mark a response would get depends on the whole process of standardisation, which considers the big picture of the year’s scripts. Therefore the level awarded here should be considered to be only an estimation of what would be awarded. How levels and marks correspond to grade boundaries depends on the Awarding process that happens after all/ most of the scripts are marked and depends on a number of factors, including candidate performance across the board. Details of this process can be found here: [http://ocr.org.uk/images/142042-marking-and-gradingassuring-ocr-saccuracy.pdf](http://ocr.org.uk/images/142042-marking-and-gradingassuring-ocr-saccuracy.pdf).
To what extent is the secular state a problem for Muslims?

Candidate A

The secular state is one where religion is separate from government. Laws are made by democratically elected politicians without involvement of religious leaders. Education is provided with a stress on equality under secular law. Some Muslims see this as a problem. They might prefer leaders to rule according to the teachings in the Qur’an, and to express their difference on grounds of religion through symbols of identity.

Muslims look back on the city of Madinah, led by Prophet Muhammad, as a model for them to follow. As God’s messenger, Muhammad was a perfect leader to follow. But Madinah was a tribal Arab settlement, not a ‘state’ as we would know it. Some Muslims believe that as Muhammad was both head of Islam and leader of the city, Muslims today should prefer to be led by people who are also religious Muslims. Others think that Muhammad set an example which favoured the secular state. He ordered his people to make friends and protect people of other religions which he arrived in the city. Similarly in a secular state the same law applies for the protection of all.

The law in modern secular states is created by consent of the people through democratic elections. In the early days of Islam, shura meetings were used to consult people. However, modern laws can be made without reference to Islam. Many Muslims believe that they must eat meat slaughtered according to halal requirements. In some western countries, a majority of people regard these as cruel to animals and have proposed laws to outlaw such slaughter. The main difference is that some Muslims believe that laws are made by God and cannot be changed by humans, whereas secular democracies make laws according to the will of the people.

On the other hand secularism gives Muslims many advantages. There are minority sects and groups within Islam. Some Muslims have been persecuted for their beliefs and claimed asylum in the UK where they feel they can live freely according to their conscience. In a secular state a person can make their own individual decision about what to believe, whereas there might be pressure in a religious state to conform to something that an individual does not believe in.

In the UK there are many Muslim politicians who encourage Muslims to participate in elections and get involved in their local communities to integrate with others. At the same time there are some Muslims who do not agree with democratic elections and prefer to live separate lives in single faith communities, where they might find it easier to practise a conservative interpretation of their faith. Moves to encourage integration may be a problem for some, whereas other Muslims may welcome and benefit from the opportunities to share what is good about their faith by mixing more with others.
Candidate A (cont)

A traditional interpretation of Islam, in which Muslims pray five times a day at set times, and women wear a headscarf form of hijab, may encounter problems in a secular state such as France. In France, the hijab is banned in government buildings and schools, and it can be difficult to take time off from work to pray. On the other hand, there are advantages for Muslims, who may find it easier to fit in and progress if they are seen as equal with others. It may depend on an individual’s interpretation of faith. If a Muslim sees their inner belief as a personal matter, then they may be comfortable living in a secular state. If they feel it is important to bring Islam into all aspects of life and express an Islamic identity, then living in a secular state may be more problematic.

As Turkey progressed and became more developed, it became more secular. Some Muslims saw secularism as bringing modernisation. The country brought in democratic elections, secular laws and banned religious symbols like the hijab in schools and universities until recently. Other Muslims saw this as weakening religion. Turkey legalised homosexuality along with many secular states, which is a problem for some Muslims who believe that such relationships are against Shariah law.

Secular laws can protect women and others from abuse which may take place in religious communities. Some Muslim women argue in favour of secular law for that reason. Others say they prefer Shariah law courts to sort out family matters, because marriage and divorce are seen as according to God’s law and defined by nikah contract in Islam. There is debate about the role of Shariah courts for family law in countries like the UK.

In some parts of the world, reaction against colonialism and against local rulers who came afterwards, who were seen as corrupt, led to a desire for a religious state. In Egypt, the Muslim brotherhood promoted Islam in all aspects of life, including government, because they thought that the leaders of Egypt were unfair and corrupt. However, other Muslims saw political Islam and Islamism as creating a new model, rather like other political movements such as Communism, which were not justified by the sources of Islam.

Iran is an Islamic Republic. Iran’s Shia Muslim government is the opposite of secular, because religion is involved at every level. The Iranian state is based on religion, headed by an Ayatollah, who is a senior religious leader. Votes are held to elect representatives to a parliament, but to stand a person must be approved by a Council of Imams. Laws too must pass vetting by religious councils. The Iranian system was put in place after the 1979 revolution against the Shah, the former king. It is a government led by Shia Muslims which some Sunni Muslims do not agree with. The powerful position of the Ayatollah as head of state fits with the Twelver Shia belief in the importance of Imams who should provide just rule for the people until the return of the Twelfth Shia Imam on the approach to the end of time.

Within the Sunni world there are different models of government, some loosely based on Islam and some more secular in nature. Many Muslims believe that no one system of government was decreed for them so they can live in either secular or religious states, and obey the authority they live under in return for protection under the law.

Today, some Muslims reject the idea of secularism as lacking in something they yearn for. The influence of Islam on governments in many parts of the Islamic world has increased. Some Muslims see secularism as a problem which makes it more difficult for them to maintain their traditions of prayer and dress. At the same time, others see secularism as the way forward. Dictators who were seen as corrupt and unfair could be challenged through democracy, in keeping with the original principles of fairness and equality, if not the literal example, of Prophet Muhammad.
Examiner commentary

AO1: This answer is broad and wide ranging and covers most of the aspects set to be studied in the specification. The focus is on the question throughout. There is a good selection of material which is used appropriately, although could be more detailed and precise in places. The term shura is used correctly. There is some reference to modern or reformist and Islamist views, although scholars are not named. The concepts are clearly well understood. There are some aspects of this answer in Level 5, but the overall best fit of this answer suggests a Level 6 subject to confirmation at a standardisation meeting.

AO2: The candidate has addressed the first point on the markscheme quite well, and referred to Muslim opinions in favour of secularism. The second point is implicit: there is a definition of secularism and reference to different forms of government, but a more direct questioning of the term would make the argument sharper. The effects of colonialism and Islamism are referred to, though could be expanded with more detail. This level of breadth and understanding is clearly a good answer but possibly a Level 5 rather than a Level 6: in order to achieve the highest level a little more detail in some areas could help and, more importantly, a more focused argument questioning the definition.
To what extent is the secular state a problem for Muslims?

Candidate B

A secular state is a government that has nothing to do with religion. For Muslims, that means there is no Islam in the laws. They can be Muslim living their own private lives but the law of the land will be sure for everyone of every faith.

The Qur’an is the holy book of Islam. It is the word of God. Muslims follow it without question. So, if the Qur’an says do one thing and the secular state another, there is a problem.

Muslims also follow the example of Muhammad. He was the last and perfect Prophet. Muslims follow his words. So if Muhammad did one thing but the secular state says you can’t, Muslims cannot live there.

Muslims pray five times a day: dawn, mid-day, afternoon, sunset and night. They need a prayer space and a washing area for ritual. This would be easy in a religious state as there would be lots of facilities and people praying everywhere. But in a secular state it could be a problem to get a break from work and find a prayer space.

In France, Muslims cannot wear headscarves or have halal food. They can’t have time off for Jummah. Shariah law says they must eat halal and wear...
Candidate B (cont)

A paragraph which balances the previous one and likewise needs more detail. It is somewhat personal in style: 'people don't bother you' needs to be re-written according to formal academic style: 'Muslims are not disturbed…'

A good paragraph with a relevant quotation from the Qur’an. Could do with explanation of Shariah, which is based on the Qur’an and other sources, but is an interpretation of them.

Good paragraph about elections which could be developed with reference to the shura of the Caliphs and the debate about how far the laws of God (Shariah) can be reinterpreted according to the needs of the age (Ijtihad) through a democratic process.

Partly expands on the point made above.

Headscofs. So Muslims are upset that they cannot practice their religion.

However, some Muslims like the secular state. After all, it’s not that hard to be Muslim if you are flexible. Many places, like airports, have prayer spaces. People don’t bother you about religion much and don’t tell you what to believe.

The Qur’an says: “There is no compulsion in religion.” It’s the same in a secular state – you are free to decide your beliefs. So maybe it’s actually better than a religious state? In Saudi Arabia you might get forced to pray, wear a headscarf, or be judged by Shariah even if you don’t want to. This is unfair for women and people who are gay.

There are elections in secular states. Many Muslim countries like Indonesia and Bangladesh also hold elections. They have a mix of Islamic tradition and secular law. Sometimes there are problems because Muslims want Shariah laws like in Pakistan where people want apostasy laws against people who say things against Islam.

In the UK the Queen is head of state and church, so the UK is Christian but in many ways quite secular. People of many faiths like living in the UK freely. Muslims can pray, fast, and follow their religion and nobody bother them. But some Muslims don’t like living in a secular state because they say good only can make laws. So they want Shariah law to apply to them.
Examiner commentary

AO1: Reference to the Qur'an and basic practice of Islam are made with some explanation of the importance of authority. The answer is fairly wide ranging but not detailed. Material selected is relevant and appropriate. The answer has breadth but not so much depth, making it borderline between Level 3 and 4, but on balance this might be awarded a good Level 3.

AO1: Some successful argument is deployed, if basic in detail. The idea about God's laws as against the will of the people is understood, if not developed. Views are asserted but not always justified, and the lack of accuracy in places detracts. Nevertheless, the response is focused on the question set and a straightforward introduction, conclusion and step by step argument make it a satisfactory answer at the high end of Level 3. Examiners might argue for Level 4 on the basis of breadth of coverage and relevance.
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