A Critique of Theories and Theorizing in Social Sciences: Special Reference to Islamic Political Experience

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Abstract

This paper seeks to present a critique of and an alternative to theories and theorizing employed by social scientists to explain the relationship between religion and politics in general and Islamic Political Experience in particular. Within the context of the paper we argued that politcal theory can be conveniently understood in terms of the co-existence of two distinct and rival styles of though: Positivism and historicism. For the lack of better terms we take positivism and historicism to be conventional and radical paradigms respectively. The paradigms are found wanting in that they do not have the capacity to provide a satisfactory framework of ideas and common vocabularly with which to conduct discourse on Islamic Political Experience. In any case, for a paradigm to do that, it must become fully subsumed in an Islamic worldview. A paradigm presented as a critique and alternative to these paradigms is based on conceptual analysis with pure Qur'anic and Shariah concepts providing both the framework and methdological tools of analysis. It is an axiomatic approach as it involves systematic analysis of a number of axioms, the starting point of which is the idea of the totality of Islam as an ideal which Muslims endeaovur to concretize.

Introduction

Currently, students of social sciences are showing interest in theorizing on the relationship between religion and politics in general, and the Islamic political experience in particular. Islamization of social sciences ranks high in popularity with many intellectuals in the Muslim world. To see how the theoretical discourse on the Islamic political experience tended to remain within the conventional and radical paradigms is rather striking. The question that suggests itself and which should be considered here is this: Do

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the conventional and radical paradigms have the capacity to explain the Islamic political experience?

To provide an answer to this question we intend to review four categories of theoretical literature on religion and politics. The first category concerns the question of religion and political legitimization. The second category concerns the problem of religion and partisan identification. The third category deals with the question of religion as it relates to the problems of reaction and revolution. And finally, the fourth category of theoretical literature deals with the problem of religious movements and Islamic resurgence.

This article is organized into six parts. The first part provides an overview of the conventional and radical paradigms. The second part provides an overview of the theoretical literature that addresses the role of religion as the basis of legitimization and delegitimization of rule. The third part reviews theoretical literature on religion and partisan identification. The fourth part focuses the theoretical literature that addresses the question of the role of religion in reaction and revolution. The fifth part deals with the theoretical literature that focuses on religious movements and Islamic resurgence. The sixth part provides an alternative to the conventional and radical paradigms.

Overview of the Conventional and Radical Paradigms

Recently, Thomas Kuhn's[1] use of "paradigm" has interested political scientists. In Kuhn's analysis, 'paradigms' are defined as universally recognized scientific achievements that for a time provide model problems and solutions to a community of practitioners. In Kuhn's notion, a paradigm relates to research firmly based on one or more past scientific achievements—achievements that some scientific community acknowledges for a time as supplying the foundation for its practices. These achievements become paradigmatic examples of actual scientific practice. Examples come from law, theory, application and instrumentation and provide models from which spring particular coherent traditions of scientific research. This prefigures the notion of "what Eckstein has called 'meta-theory,' theory about theory, or the kind of research that is meant to lead to research rather than to findings."[2]

We can define paradigms as very basic metatheoretical assumptions which underscore the frame of reference, mode of theorizing and *modus operandi* of the political theorists who operate within them. Metatheoretical

assumptions refer to those assumptions that relate to the questions of appropriateness, consistency, and comprehensiveness of the theories used to explain the what, how, and why of the phenomena under study. In its simplest terms, a paradigm is just a pattern or framework that gives organization and direction to a given area of scientific investigation.[3] Hence a paradigm is a scientific community's perspective on the world, its set of beliefs and commitments—conceptual, theoretical, methodological, and instrumental. This is because a paradigm guides a scientific community's selection of problems, evaluation of data, and advocacy of theory.

Within the context of this article we are arguing that political theory can be conveniently understood in terms of the coexistence of the two distinct and rival styles of thought: positivism and historicism. Each style of thought relates to a dominant paradigm in political science and they may be labeled as conventional and radical paradigms, respectively. Each paradigm is defined by very basic metatheoretical assumptions in relation to the nature of science and society.

The philosophical roots of the radical paradigm can be traced back to the late nineteenth century when historicism grew out of German academic debate. The leading proponents of historicism include, among others, Hegel and Marx. Sometimes referred to as perspectivism and relativism, historicism deals with history. Writing in the historicist tradition, Hegel and Marx dealt with this problem by showing that a succession of historical epochs would lead to the creation of a final epoch, which would represent the historical process as a whole. The historicists argue that the main task of the social scientist is to discover the laws of historical development and on the basis of such laws make predictions about the future.[4]

Historicists take exception to positivist thought by arguing that data based on sensations are not acquired in unbiased situations. The mind is active, not passive, and it selects and shapes experience according to prior awareness. One cannot determine if the source of experience corresponds to the objective world. Moreover, there are multiple views, not a single view of the objective world. Distinct perspectives of the world are found from one epoch or culture to another. Truth is relative to the worldview characteristic of the epoch or culture to which one belongs. Hence, worldviews are temporal and relative rather than absolute.

Historicism takes the position that science can only be understood in terms of history, in sharp contrast to positivism, which served as a reaction to historicism. Positivism grew out of classical British empiricism. It is

associated with the name of Auguste Comte, who is said to have been partially influenced by Henri Saint Simon, who places greater emphasis on science, knowledge, and technology. The classical British empiricists—Saint Simon, Comte, and others—provided some of the principles which underpin what is today called behavioralism, which emphasizes the concepts, laws, and theories of empirical science that reflects occurrences in the real world.[5]

The conventional paradigm was formulated from the positivist tradition, especially from logical empiricism, which captivated many positivist thinkers of the late nineteenth century and behavioralists of the midtwentieth century. Logical empiricism holds that thought processes alone cannot know the whole truth and that they need the support of human observation. Hence knowledge is based on objectivity and on observations of real experience. A reconstruction of positivist thought suggests the following tendencies.

First, scientific principles are based on sensory experience and thus are independent of time, place, and even circumstance. They may, however, be revised according to subsequent developments in the field. The empirical sciences stress laws, concepts, and theories that differ from metaphysical accounts of the world or from nonempirical endeavors in logic and pure mathematics. Second, generalizations about the external world are meaningful only if they are constructed from, or tested by, the raw material of experience. One cannot know what one cannot see, touch, smell, or hear. Experience-based knowledge is the only objective knowledge.

In part, the conventional paradigm evolved as a reaction to the noncomparative, descriptive, parochial, and static character of the traditional approach, which focused on formal and legal aspects of government. The conventional paradigm also incorporates a critique of traditional political thought, including Marxism, that interrelates facts and values in comparative analysis. The historicists, it is argued, postulated overly ambitious theories of history rather than engaging in any meticulous empirical testing of hypotheses and formulations of concepts.[6]

In summary, the two paradigms evolved their own view of the world, the individual, and society, which has led to the appearance of different concepts, principles, theories and laws used by the political analyst to explain political phenomena. The radical paradigm seems to have explanatory superiority over the conventional paradigm, but it is much too faithful to its own theoretical constructs and far too negligent of empirical

data. As the radical paradigm draws its historicist assumptions from Marxist thought, many of the criticisms labeled against Marxism apply equally to it. Marxism, however, has several commendable features. First, it recognizes an inevitable class conflict in an unjust society. Second, it is concerned with socioeconomic equality. Third, it contains a well-founded critique of the greed and exploitation found in feudalism, colonialism, and capitalism. And fourth, it has a relatively broad and comprehensive perspective on human society.[7]

Marxism, Lenczowski[8] argued, is a grossly oversimplified and inaccurate view of history and society, whose fallacies have been amply exposed by democratic and revisionist writers alike. Marx's monocausal view of social change, his historical determinism, his dogmatism about the necessity of class conflict, and his narrow concept of the alienation of the masses as stemming from the control of the means of production by the capitalists have been challenged on many occasions. It is also characterized by "overwhelming determinism, pervasive materialism and capitulation to uncritical scientism."[9] Scientism, as Hayek points out, is "the slavish imitation of the method and language of science."[10]

Marxist analysis overemphasizes material life to the exclusion of other vital aspects of life. In any case, an approach that emphasizes economic stimuli to the exclusion of other factors is not satisfactory in elucidating political phenomena. Marxist analysis is characterized by a tendency to twist facts until they fit into a framework of preconceived ideas, neglecting facts that do not fit. In sharp contrast with the Marxist thesis, history does not appear to be a unilinear, inexorable, and irreversible process. Moreover, as Karl Popper rightly noted, historical phenomena are susceptible to a plurality of interpretations that are fundamentally on the same level of both suggestiveness and arbitrariness.[11] These interpretations could be presented as unobjectionable points of view. Instead, Marxist scholars present them as doctrines or theories, asserting that all history is the history of class struggle. If they actually find that their point of view is fertile, and that many facts can be ordered and interpreted in its lights, then they mistake this for a confirmation, or even for a proof of their doctrine.

In practice, Marxism tends not only to be characterized by evasiveness and opportunism, but as Dilnawaz Siddiqui notes, it has always ended up becoming a state totalitarianism and party dictatorship. It fails to recognize the individual's need for a certain measure of personal freedom to maintain his/her sanity and to actuate his/her creativity. Its morality has no lasting

metaphysical standards; it allows no dissent or human rights; and it has no stable, clear-cut criteria of goodness, beauty, and truth.[12]

The conventional paradigm, on the other hand, eschews theoretical unassailability in order to achieve fidelity to facts. But it is obsessed with the notions of objectivity and value neutrality. So much so that it tends "to throw out the baby value with the bathwater imprecision."[13] Despite the nonideological nature of inquiry that the conventional paradigm advocates, it tends to assimilate some liberal premises; for example, the separation of religion and government. Secularism in politics was accompanied by the liberal notion of John Locke and later of John Stuart Mill, that every person has the right to hold and profess an opinion, as long as the opinion is not seditious. A positive belief in the liberty of conscience was integrated as a law of nature.

Interestingly, system metaphor is basic in the conventional paradigm and systems approach has its roots in structural-functionalism. Moreover, as John Paden points out, "the system paradigm, which is the basic paradigm in social sciences—whether in critical theory, positivism, behavioralism, post-behavioralism, or phenomenology—is inevitably rooted in a normative context."[14] This means the conventional paradigm too is built on metaphysical assumptions and abstractions about the nature of social and political phenomena. Hence there is no such thing as scientific objectivity. The conceptualization, theoretical formulation, empirical verification, and final packaging of knowledge takes place in a sociocultural milieu. Hence to hide it under the carpet amounts to dishonesty and hypocrisy.[15]

Religion: The Basis of Legitimization and Delegitimization of Rule?

Political history suggests an intimate relationship between theology and politics in the thought of ancient man.[16] Perhaps the best indicator of this is the "divine theory" whose underlying assumption is that some people are God's chosen ones. Political power came from God and those who were chosen to exercise it were higher on the social scale than ordinary people. Consequently, people were duty bound to obey the prince, even if he was a tyrant, because he was God's magistrate on earth.[17] Consistent with this line of thought, Maurice Duverger notes:

> For centuries, those in power have sought religious sanctions. Political leaders regarded themselves as God's representatives, or more simply even claimed to be gods themselves. Furthermore, religious beliefs in

> a future world, one in which the inequities of the present world will disappear, have prescribed resignation to the oppressed and kept them in a state of obedience to power. But on the other hand, certain religions have taken a stand against the established order by declaring it illegitimate; they have thus become instruments of opposition.[18]

This may help to explain the potency of religion as the basis of both the legitimization and delegitimization of rule. Religion gives and denies legitimacy to political incumbents. Legitimacy is of vital importance to any regime, for once established, it "serves as the most effective justification for the manner in which political power is exercised. It is the most effective argument against attempts to change the structure of a political system."[19] Conversely, failure to maintain legitimacy is a recipe for anarchy.

When there is a serious loss of legitimacy, the people are more likely to take overt action against the existing government. The consequences of such action could be disorder, secession, revolution, or some form of disintegration.[20]

Smith argues that religion plays an important role in the crises of participation and legitimacy that confront Third World States.[21] The frequently violent, forcible secularization of politics in these states brings in its wake crises of legitimacy and participation which the secular Western ideologies cannot solve immediately. To be sure, the elite exposed to Western education develop a real comprehension of, and commitment to, secular political values. The mass of the people, however, remain steeped in traditional religious modes of thought, and in any event are far removed from the political process. Given the fact that secular Western ideologies are shared only by the elite and generally have little emotional appeal, religion remains the only viable legitimatizing principle the political elite have to achieve legitimacy and make politics meaningful to the apolitical masses.

Concerning the question of ideological interaction, interactions between Third World religions and socialism tend to be characterized by relevancy and legitimacy: socialism makes religion relevant while religion makes socialism legitimate. Religious group identities tend to have a greater effect on political behavior than secular ideologies, econonic interests, or membership in voluntary associations. Religion plays a significant role in internal revolts to overthrow national governments through extraparliamentary agitations and violence. In essence, events in Egypt, South Vietnam, and Columbia have demonstrated the capacity of religion to

provide a viable legitimatizing principle to those who are bent on changing the political system through extraconstitutional means.

Recent events have demonstrated that Islam provides the most effective symbols for political mobilization, whether to arouse the people in the defense of a regime that is perceived as possessing the necessary legitimacy, or perhaps in opposition to a regime that is perceived as having forfeited that legitimacy by no longer being Islamic.[22] According to Esposito, Pakistan and Iran provide two dramatic examples of the political use of Islam in legitimation and delegitimation.[23] In both countries, Islam served as an umbrella for opposition movements consisting of diverse religious and secular parties. Islamic symbols and slogans and the mullah-mosque network demonstrated Islam's effectiveness in mass mobilization. K. Afrachth's "Iran" and W. Richter's "Pakistan," Esposito continues, illustrated the uses of Islam in delegitimating the incumbent governments of Muhammad Riza Shah and Zulfikhar Ali Bhutto. Subsequently, Islam was used to legitimate their successors, the Ayatollah Khomeini and General Zia-ul-Haq.

Perwez Shafi treats the concept of legitimacy as a congruence between the values, norms, beliefs, and actions of the political system and those of the people it governs. He uses this conception as the key to reaching some understanding of the historical roots of the failure of Muslim countries to develop.[24]

Starting from the perfect legitimacy of the Islamic State in the seventh century, Muslim civilization declined and decayed due to the abandonment of the rule of law and rule by popular consent. One of the adverse effects of this unhealthy development was the ease with which the colonial powers colonized Muslim dynastic States and transformed them into the present Muslim nation-state system. Western values, norms, and ideologies have been institutionalized at every level of the nation-state system, whereas the political culture of the masses is still derived from Islam. This incongruence of the value structure made the Muslim nation-state system and its political system illegitimate. Shafi proposes a general theory of Islamic revolution as a way out of this predicament. It consists of a developmental stage with social, cultural, and intellectual revolutions preceding the final stage, Islamic revolution, in which the illegitimate nation-state is overthrown and replaced with a legitimate Islamic state.

Shafi selects Iran as the paradigm case of his model. The Iranian experience, he said, proves the validity of the general theory of Islamic

revolution. He comes to the interesting conclusion that only after establishing legitimacy will development become a possibility in the contemporary Muslim world.

Religion and Partisan Identification

A number of studies indicate a strong relationship between religion and partisan identification in so-called "complex secularized" societies. For instance, such studies indicate that in Britain and the United States, Catholics tend to prefer the Labor Party and the Democratic Party, respectively; while the Protestants tend to prefer the Conservative Party and Republican Party, respectively.[25] This suggests that minority groups tend to support liberal political movements, while majority groups tend to support conservative political movements.

From the standpoint of Mannheim's theory of ideology and utopia, one might reason that the low status group is subject to greater social and economic deprivation, oppression, and exploitation and thus is interested in social change via political means to alleviate its lot. Conversely, the high status group tends to prefer the status quo, which supports its privileges and position; therefore, it leans in the conservative direction.[26]

Argyle and Beit-Hallahm put forward four explanations for this phenomenon. First, the relationship is not based on any specific content of religious beliefs or behavior, but rather on the minority position of certain groups. This explanation, they argue, applies particularly to Catholics in both Great Britain and the United States. Second, the liberal politics of the Catholics was created by a combination of minority status and more recent immigration. Hence the connection with the left may be expected to disappear as they climb up the social ladder. Third, the relationship, they continue, is a result not of any ideological differences, but of a continuing tradition in a religious subgroup, for it was found that persons who were more involved in the religious community were more likely to follow the particular group's voting pattern, save the Catholics who tended to prefer Democrats regardless of community involvement. And finally, they argue that the relationship is partly due to class differences, since Catholics have a higher working composition in both Britain and the United States.[27]

In his analysis of ten countries, Arend Lijphart[28] found that religious voting is higher than class voting in six of the ten countries. Moreover, the indices of religious voting generally reach higher values than the indices of class voting. De Jong,[29] who analyzed the survey results from eleven

European countries, found that religion is of primary significance and that class, although important, occupies only a secondary place in the hierarchy of voting determinants.

Duverger contends that, by and large, the influence of religions is directed primarily toward conservatism.[30] But there are numerous exceptions to this general tendency, such as the case of an ethnic minority with a different religion from that of the majority. The Jews provide the best example. They were found to be consistently liberal on all social and political issues regardless of socioeconomic status.[31] A number of explanations have been put forward to explain this phenomenon. Fuchs argues that Jewish Liberalism is a product of the tradition of intellectualism, charity, and nonasceticism in the Jewish subculture.[32] Hennessey explains it in terms of Jewish minority consciousness and their history of oppression.[33]

Lenski sees the phenomenon in terms of status inconsistency. Jews as a group, he asserts, score high on all measures of socioeconomic achievement, yet they are socially excluded by other groups. This gives rise to a persistant "underdog" feeling, with sensitivity to social injustice, despite the objective reality of high economic status.[34] Cohn denies the existence of anything specifically religious responsible for the Jewish political behavior. He notes that Jews score lowest in all measures of religious activity and beliefs compared with all other groups. Hence it is difficult to correlate many of their characteristics with religious factors. This leads him to conclude that the sources of the phenomenon are a combination of historical, political, and socioeconomic factors.[35]

Apparently, these scholars are loath to bring the religious factor into play in their analysis of Jewish political activities and behavior, as this is not in line with the theoretical spectacles through which they observed and interpreted the phenomena. Instead, they prefer to theorize on the basis of abstractions. Surely, what is missing from the above explanations is the simple realization that religion is the pivot of being a Jew. Hence any analysis of Jewish political behavior must come to terms with its impact, and any general theory of Jewish political behavior that does not fully incorporate this fact must forfeit all credibility.

Religion, Reaction and Revolution

As Parenti notes, there are consistent relationships between religious culture based on beliefs and traditions regarding attitudes towards this

world and man's responsibility in it, and thepolitical positions of religious groups.[36] No consensus, however, exists on how those relationships can best be explained. While many social scientists hold that religion plays a conservative, reactionary and regressive role in politics, others maintain that religion plays a revolutionary and positive role.

For instance, Hamilton,[37] who analyzed the content of sermons in the United States, found an increase in the amount of what he termed, "pessimism" or "discouragement" towards social reform. In a sense, social optimism, if any, was far outweighed by social pessimism. This brought the conservative significance of religion into clear relief. Similarly, Hennessey[38] argues that the affect of religion on American public life is conservative and that religion is an important factor maintaining the status quo. This tendency, he continues, stems from two main sources: the Protestant influence, which can be identified with visions of rugged individualism and minimal government welfare programs, and that of Catholicism, as expressed through the disregard for civil rights of minorities and dissenters.

Apparently, from the foregoing overview, scholars of liberal persuasion hold that religion tends to prevent any basic social change and contributes to the maintenance of the existing power relationships in a society. This, however, is far from being a novel idea. Indeed, it is one of the major themes of Marxian philosophy "which tend to run like Ariadne's thread through ages."[39] Marx himself asserted the reactionary role of religion and almost all those who take his thesis as their frame of reference reach the some conclusion. Perhaps nowhere has Marx more succinctly expressed this thesis than in his famous dictum: "Religion is the opium of the people,"[40] which, as Lenin noted, "is the cornerstone of the whole Marxist outlook on religion."[41] Marxism has always regarded all modern religions and churches and every religious organization as instruments of bourgeois reaction that serve to defend exploitation and befuddle the working class.

Marxists suspect religion because they believe it numbs the masses and invites them to obscurantism. Hence the inability of the masses who are under the influence of religion to become aware of their exploitation, let alone rise in rebellion to improve their lot. Manipulation of religious symbolism and language that has become the base of effective political power and influence is often cited by Marxist scholars as a classic example that religion is a reactionary and regressive force in politics. The

bourgeoisie, it is argued, deflect intraclass contradictions into the stream of religious consciousness to serve narrow ends.[42]

Religious strifes that often flare up in Nigeria are said to be politically motivated, neatly planned by the bourgeoisie who systematically use antisocial elements to achieve specific results. For instance, Usman[43] admirably chronicled in great detail the various ways in which the country's bourgeoisie skillfully manipulated religious feelings and symbols to realize their political and economic aspirations. The importance of Usman's[44] work is that he brings this crucially important idea of the manipulation of religion into discussion. Manipulation, however, is not the whole story. Had he taken a multicausal approach, he would have realized that manipulation of religion alone does not explain the entire matter. But he was unwilling to probe beyond the level of class relations. The lack of such a perspective distorts his conclusions, affects the kind of questions he asked, and limits fruitful lines of inquiry. There is no denying the parsimony of squeezing everything into class categories, but fidelity to facts is bound to lose out to simplistic reductionism in the process.

As Watt rightly notes, manipulation of religious symbols and ideas by the bourgeoisie for political purposes does not necessarily strengthen their power base.[45] Moreover, the thesis of manipulation of religion tends to overspecify the guile of the bourgeoisie and gullibility of the masses. Whatever insight into the nature of religious strife this thesis may show, one thing is clear: it cannot adequately elucidate the problem.

We have already noted that Marxist scholars emphasize the reactionary significance of religion, but some of them see the Maitatsine uprising as a critique of Nigerian society. The Maitatsine uprising brought the fundamental contradictions in the society into clear relief. According to Yaqub A. Adam,[46] Maitatsine's teachings provided a reverse focus of Nigerian social values, as evidenced by Maitatsine's followers' total rejection of prevailing capitalist values. The fact that the bulk of them were of lumpen elements, Adam argues, proves the alienation and marginalization of certain groups in the society—those left behind in the consumer boom of the 1970s ushered in by petro-dollars. Bjorn Beckman,[47] however, describes Maitatsine's followers as lumpen proletariat inspired by a confused revolutionary opposition to the new order.

Heinecke agrees with those who view the Maitatsine uprising as a critique of Nigerian society.[48] He holds, however, that the problem was not specifically a religious one, even though its expression was superficially

religious. Though crude, primitive and uncoordinated, these upheavals are a marked expression of mounting and widespread discontent in Nigerian society—blind struggles of people opposing repression and yearning for freedom. He argues that religion divides the oppressed and dissuades them from changing the system. He acknowledges, however, that it is not religion generally that oppresses but its interpretation. Though Heinecke acknowledges the fact that both oppressor and oppressed tend to use religion to further their respective interests, he insists on finding answers in terms of class relations; thus he obtains simplistic answers from important questions. Sometimes occupational concern with class analysis produces circular arguments that lead nowhere. For instance, Heinecke[49] argues that the masses are poor because they are religious and they are religious because they are poor. Putting this another way, he argues that poverty leads to intensity of religiosity which in turn leads to poverty. He mistakes cause for effect and effect for cause simultaneously.

The general thrust of class analysis is that the mode of production is the material foundation of social life and it largely determines other aspects of life, particularly the legal system, the political system, the belief system, and morality. Once the mode of production is understood we have a fairly good idea of what the general character of other aspects of the social system will be like.[50] Marxist class analysis defines classes as based entirely on the means of production, and portrays politics as an instrument for furthering the interests of the dominant class. Such a one-dimensional paradigm has little room in its explanatory model for phenomena that cannot be reduced into class categories.

Halim Barakat,[51] who uses class analysis as his theoretical framework, describes religion as an absolutist and medieval framework of reference without a clear program for solving complicated problems. He argues that religious visions on which Islamic movements are based on a reaction rather than a solution, an impasse rather than a way out, and a threat rather a promise. Even when people enthusiastically support activist religious movements, Barakat says,[52] the ultimate product of their engagement is impoverishment rather then enrichment, and repression rather than transformation of reality. "When religion is conceptualized in such narrow materialist terms," Najib Ghadbian maintains, "it is easy to overlook the religious vision as a viable one."[53]

Basic in the radical paradigm is denial of the transformative quality of religion. This attitude stems from the belief that religious movements are

vehicles for nothing more politically imaginative than petty-bourgeois ambition. Religious conflicts are believed to lack the capacity for transforming the social system, and communal actions cannot go beyond violence and protest to the creative act of political renewal. First and foremost, Lokwood[54] argues, communal conflict is not directed at an alteration in the structure of power and deference by one section of the community to the disadvantage of the other. Revolutionary goals can only emerge from the antagonism of groups in plural societies when ethnic divisions happen to coincide with lines of economic and other power relationships.

Clearly, from the foregoing overview, a theoretical framework organized around the ideas of mode of production and class does not have the capacity to capture the complex totality out of which religious movements emerge and in which they operate. Little wonder, the radical paradigm is not useful in analyzing and understanding religious conflicts. In fact, there has been very little advance beyond the line of approach that presents religious conflict either as a joint product of bourgeois cunning and proletarian gullibility, or as a displacement of social antagonisms whose origins are to be found in multiple contradictions of the capitalist mode of production.[55]

Also clear from the foregoing overview is the unanimity among some scholars of both liberal and radical persuation on the question of the reactionary role of religion. Neither reaction nor regression, however, is the whole story. The revolutionary significance of religion, especially Islam, is an objective reality.[56] Hence, to confine the role of religion to reaction and regression is to remove some vitally important questions from view.

The phenomenal rise of Islam as a viable social and political alternative, which has become an important subject of research and analysis in contemporary social sciences, provides the best example of a religious ideology of social change integrally related to political activism.[57] As the history of Iran demonstrates, it is not a theory without foundation. The Islamic revolution in Iran has shown that revolution can be based on nonmaterialistic ideologies and ushered in by a collective action of all classes.[58] Revolutions express themselves differently, and each has its own way of formulating its critique of the past and its aspirations for the future. The preferred future is always presented as a qualitative improvement over the present. The Iranian revolution presents itself in terms of Islam, that is to say: a religious movement with a religious leadership, a religiously

formulated critique of the old order, and religiously expressed plans for the new.[59]

Moreover, Muslim revolutionaries look to the birth of Islam as their paradigm, and see themselves engaged in a struggle against paganism, oppression and empire, to establish, or rather restore, a true Islamic order.[60] Hence the fallacy of Smith's assertion that the revolutionary significance of religion is only discovered or rediscovered under the stimulus of Marxism.[61] In political life, Islam still offers the most widely intelligible formulation of ideas of social norms and laws and of new ideals and aspirations.[62] Islam, therefore, does not need the stimulus of any "ism" to make it relevant or legitimate as an instrument of socioeconomic and political change.

According to Chaudhary and Berdine,[63] through the application of ijtihad, Muslim society has the capacity to resolve any changes, new situations, or problems facing the Ummah. In ever-changing sociocultural and socioeconomic conditions, it is ijtihad that prevents fossilization and precludes the development of stereotypes within Islam. With ijtihad, Islam has the inherent capacity to address and respond to change while still following the teaching of the Qur'an and the Prophet. Thus, theorizing on Islamic political experience with one's back turned on ijtihad is bound to be a useless exercise, as ijtihad represents a means of replenishing the depleted reservoir of stale ideas from the fount of authentic sources. It is the principle of ijtihad which enables Islam to cope with the ever-changing pattern of life's requirements, to offer the Muslim masses the framework within which they can attempt a change, and to give them an ideological bond that can hold their units together and warm them with the fire of revolt. In essence, the principle of ijtihad makes it possible for a Muslim society to raise its voice against injustice, fight tyranny, and strive to establish a society that upholds the value-pattern embodied in the Qur'an and Sunnah. Any general theory of Islamic political experience that does not fully incorporate this fact must forfeit all credibility.

Religious Movements and Islamic Resurgence

The phenomenon of religious movements in general, and of Islamic resurgence in particular, has engaged the attention of scholars of different intellectual persuasions. For instance, Fernandez[64] offers four models for examining religious movements defined against a background of Christian evangelism—nativitist, messianic, separatist, and reformative. Brown[65]

offers six features of what he terms a paradigm of messianic movements in the semitic tradition—cataclysmic, charismatic, sectarian, revivalist, puritanical, and revelationist—which he uses to analyze the Sudanese Mahdiya.

Humphreys[66] identifies fundamentalism, secularism, and modernism as the three poles around which the thought and behavior of Muslims in the contemporary world revolve. Gellner,[67] on the other hand, characterizes the phenomenon as puritanism and neopuritanism. The concepts of messianism, puritanism, and fundamentalism on which the main arguments of the above models hinge have their origin in Christian history. The terms puritanism and fundamentalism, with their non-Muslim origin in the late sixteenth century and early twentieth century, respectively, have no place in, and are therefore irrelevant to, the Islamic schema. There is no structural or semantic link between the Christian puritanical and fundamentalist movements and the contemporary Islamic resurgence. Hence the question of what the contemporary resurgence of Islam is about is beyond the capacity of these models.

The models fail to clearly specify whether the impetus for the resurgence, the direction of the resurgence, and the agents of the resurgence are essentially Islamic or not. Moreover, the models are based on the world-view that is in sharp contrast to the worldview of Islam, and accepts the dichotomization of religion and politics. The point of our argument is that to buy into non-Islamic language and frames is to buy into theory, discourse, and objects that in so many ways tear at the fabric of Islam. Such models neither adequately reflect the complex totality out of which the phenomenon of contemporary Islamic resurgence arose nor lead to a true understanding of Islamic political experience. In any case, for an approach to do this it must become fully subsumed in an Islamic worldview.

Haddad[68] offers three models for examining Muslim responses to the confrontation with the West—normativist, acculturationist, and neo-normativist. Watt[69] argues that the contemporary Islamic resurgence is a product of the ulama's desire to enhance their power and social prestige. Esposito[70] maintains that a confluence of events has contributed to the current emergence of Islam in politics. These may be expressed by three themes: disenchantment with the West, disillusionment over the pervasive social and political decline, and, as a consequence, a quest for identity and authenticity—new indigenously-rooted answers for pressing problems.

In general, these scholars argue that the contemporary resurgence of Islam is spawned by pressures from the West, both internally and externally. Surely what is missing from their analysis is the simple realization that Islamic society is capable of reasserting its Islamicity even where pressures from the West are totally absent. The impetus for Islamic resurgence in the contemporary Muslim world is the Muslims' need to preserve their identity by maintaining continuity with the culture that has nurtured them and the urgent requirement to adapt to contemporary reality as a condition of survival. Even in the most isolated corners of the world, therefore, Muslims are bound to strive to make their society the living embodiment of Islam by interpreting the eternity of its symbols in terms of the contingency of its history.

El-Guindi[71] identifies what he calls the emerging Islamic order with the Muslim ethic which has been woven in sociomoral terms by the culture bearers, building on a strong intellectual base supplied by leading scholars of the movements such as Qutb and Maududi. Shaped by various dynamic forces, it becomes the fabric that cements Muslims in their movement to overcome imposed barriers and provides content to empty elitist ideology, whether political or religious. In a sense, Islamic resurgence presents itself as a viable social and political alternative to the status quo.

To sum up, the proponents of the models reviewed in the foregoing overview mistake the "how" of description for the "why" of explanation and indulge in theoretical transactions for which there is no collateral in real history. Little wonder, the proponents of Islamic science, who articulate science in the absolute macro-paradigm of *tawhid,* have exposed through systematic contrast the weaknesses of elements and key concepts molded in the crucible of western civilization and culture.[72] More to the point, these models are colored by Judaeo-Christian experience. Analyzing Islamic movements from a Judaeo-Christian standpoint smacks of the orientalist thesis "Jewish origin of Islam." This type of argument and interpretation characterizes Islam as a fanatical Judaeo-Christian heresy. One only needs to look at the orientalist works to see the derogatory language used, prejudiced descriptions given, and false judgements passed upon Islam.[73]

A number of studies tend to explain the question of contemporary Islamic resurgence in terms of oil wealth. For instance, Ibrahim[74] treats what he calls Islamic militancy or revolutionary Islam as part of the Arab social order that is a product of previous orders intersecting with regional and global events of the last two decades. Whatever the hypothetical conception

point of its order, he maintains that oil has been its underlying factor. He notes that most Islamic militants are from the lower-middle and middle classes who are well-educated higher achievers, intensely nationalistic, seeking a greater share of power, wealth, independence, and cultural authenticity.

Apparently, Ibrahim[75] advances the primacy of the oil factor in the analysis of what he terms "Islamic militancy," tying the political behavior of Islamic militants to their social class. The empirical basis for this thesis is dubious. In fact, neither oil wealth nor class can explain everything that lies at the root of contemporary Islamic resurgence. In an oil-rich country, the oil boom thesis seems to have practical utility in analyzing and understanding the phenomenon of Islamic militancy. This is because it is plausible to argue that Islamic militancy came about to address gross injustice and moral decadence wrought by oil wealth. But in a non-oil country the oil boom thesis does not offer a viable framework for understanding the phenomenon.

Pipes[76] contends that Islamic resurgence is a product of the oil boom and that its ultimate goal is the destruction of the West. He holds that Islamic resurgence singled out the West for destruction at the instigation of the Soviet Union. He views the phenomenon, however, as a transient one that must fizzle out along with the underlying factor responsible for it: the oil boom. Thence the Islamic alternative will lose its appeal and many Muslims will again regard their religion as an obstacle to progress. Unfortunately for Pipes, history does not bear out his prediction. Despite the facts of a glut of oil in the international market and the demise of the Soviet Union, Islamic resurgence has not lost its appeal. Hence the doubtful validity of Pipes's thesis.

Pipes is oblivious of the fundamental descrepancies between Islam and Soviet communism. Basic in the interaction between the two systems is antipathy. The two systems represent a worldview entirely dissimilar to each other. The two are incompatible and never meet. An Islam-Soviet conspiracy against the West is a mere figment of the imagination. It has not been borne out by experience and research. The overall impression to be gained from Pipes's work is the apparent shallowness of the research carried out and the propensity to mistake diatribe against Islam for political analysis.

The oil boom thesis is also alluded to by Mazrui,[77] who argues that the phenomenon of Islamic militancy in Libya has its genesis in the

combination of oil wealth and distrust of western modernization. The empirical basis of this thesis is rather ambiguous. For instance, Gellner[78] points out that it would be quite wrong to explain the success of Islam in terms of whatever oil-financed subsidy it may receive. Not much would be achieved, he argues, if B.P. (British Petroleum) chose to divert a comparable part of its North Sea oil revenues to finance a Methodist revival, including a film spectacular of the life of John Wesley, with Omar Sharif in the title role. The fact that Islamic resurgence does have such a widespread impact shows that it does have deep resonance in psychic and social needs. Esposito[79] concurs and points out that political analysis of the resurgence should be wary of such reductionism. While oil money may be used to support Islamic movements or governments, their growth, acceptance, and effectiveness is dependent upon indigenous religious and sociopolitical factors.

Apparent from the foregoing overview, what is missing from the analysis of Islamic resurgence from the standpoint of economic stimuli, such as oil boom and class, is the simple realization that Islam in and of itself is the *raison d'etre* for the support enjoyed by the Islamic alternative. As al-Faruqi puts it, "The inner vitality of Islam alone is the sufficient reason for every movement in Islam, the complete explanation of every Islamic idea."[80]

The salient rise of Islamic consciousness is not determined by economic stimuli, as both the proponents of conventional and radical paradigms want us to believe. Islamic consciousness occurs under conditions of both economic tranquility and severity. The concept of class tells us nothing about Islam or Muslim activists. The totality of life extends beyond the matter and work situation, and one should not be blinded to this through narrow terminologies. Moreover, class terms are rich with associations and with inherent dynamics that can conjure up a wealth of images and projections that may often not be relevant. Religion, rather than class, provides the badge of moral identification and the yearning for collective dignity that fuels the engines of political action among the dispossessed in the Muslim world. Hence Islamic movements in the contemporary Muslim world, far from being politically retrograde, actually represent a detour on the way to revolution.

Toward an Alternative to the Conventional and Radical Paradigms

Each approach treated in the foregoing overview contributes to an explanation of the role of religion in politics, but none has provided an adequate framework for the ideas and common vocabulary with which to conduct the discourse on the Islamic political experience. On careful scrutiny, each approach turns out to be a value-loaded model. Each is based on a worldview that is diametrically opposed to the worldview of Islam. An approach that leads to a true understanding of Muslim society and reveals tangible solutions to its problems cannot be based on a worldview that is antithetical to an Islamic worldview; rather, it must be fully subsumed in the worldview of Islam.

As an alternative to the conventional and radical paradigms, I propose a theoretical approach that is premised upon the assumptions that the totality of Islam is an ideal and that the Qur'anic principle *'amr bi al-ma'ruf wa al-nahy 'an al-munkar* is the key to reaching an understanding of the Islamic political experience. Qur'anic and Shari'ah concepts provide both the framework and the methodological tools of analysis. The process involves elaborating on the wordview of Islam and using a few principles and a conceptual matrix that are found in the Qur'an and Sunnah. The principles outline the general rules of behavior and development as well as chalk out the general boundaries within which the Muslim civilization has to grow and flourish.[81]

Specifically, my approach is informed by three general points. The first is that Islam gives man an ideal to strive for, to commit his life to and cling to, even at the point of death. This ideal comprises Islamic values, an overarching worldview, and a set of aspirations by which a Muslim can locate and evaluate his efforts. Because Muslims maintain a notion of an enduring, if not consistently defined, ideal, movement and initiatives take place.[82] The significance of this ideal lies in the simple fact that it animates and sustains the real—so much so that any analysis of the behavior, actions, and affairs of Muslims that does not take it into account, and indeed concentrate its attention on it, runs the risk of being unrealistic and irrelevant.

The ideal is, *a priori*, relevant for all time. By definition, it is not, and can never be, in crisis or in need of revision. It is immutable in all places until the end of time. It is itself a critique and balance-principle against which all human ventures must be measured and themselves revised and changed. It

embodies a series of interdependent prescriptions for the running of a society in toto. Each element of social life is designed to enhance the operation of the whole system. Conversely, lopsided implementation will lead to its malfunction. Thus, all elements are intricately related so that the meaning and significance of any one element is derived from its place in the total configuration.

The second point that informs my approach is that a Muslim society exists to concretize this ideal; it must be judged by its success in concretizing the ideal. Islam makes the values of jihad and ijtihad the path to the realization of the ideal that is internally consistent yet workable in the real world. Jihad, as Ibn Taymiyya puts it, means striving in establishing what Allah likes, such as faith and good deeds, and eradicating what Allah dislikes, such as unbelief and evil deeds. The significance of jihad lies in the need for Islam to reactivate itself as a militant and vital force and for the Muslim masses to find a place for themselves at the center of the struggle for an Islamic order. Ijtihad, *a word derived from Jihad,* is commonly translated as "creative self-exertion to derive laws from legitimate sources"[82]. It denotes the totality of the efforts of generations of Muslim scholars to find the best means of realizing the Islamic ideal in a way that not only pays attention to the teachings of the Qur'an and the Prophet but also to the lessons of the past, the realities of the present, and goals and aspirations of the future.

Jihad and its derivative, ijtihad, are therefore factors of high potency in shaping people's lives. They enable Muslims to harness and channel the collective experience and wisdom of mankind into creative and meaningful use in complete harmony with the value-pattern embodied in the Qur'an and Sunnah. Thus, a process of adaptation to new circumstances and conditions develops as jihad and ijtihad increase in saliency. Perhaps this explains why the failure of Muslims throughout history is always attributed to their neglect of jihad and ijtihad.

Jihad and ijtihad are the prime movers of any genuine and meaningful process of social change in Islam. The history of Islam reveals that a careful application of these two values results in *tajdid* (Islamization), which, on the insistence of the Prophet, has become part and parcel of the Sunnah of the Muslim community.[84] *Tajdid* implies restoration of what had been lost and recreation of what had once existed in a configuration worthy of contemporary reality. This entails a continuous struggle to create and maintain a condition in which the dynamic and vibrant value-pattern

embodied in the Qur'an and the Sunnah can be operationalized. The result of this is enthroning Islamic values as the dominant ideology of social order and establishing the socioeconomic and political variables that meet the test of Islam and the needs of the people. What is envisaged, therefore, is the creation of a community of people in which at least a few basic principles of Islam are clearly paramount. These principles are best expressed in terms of such Islamic values as *tawhid* (unity) *'ibadah* (worship), *'adl* (justice), *khilafah* (trusteeship), *shura* (mutual consultation), *istislah* (public interest), and *falah* (comprehensive prosperity).

The third point that informs my approach is that the first and classic defense and explanation of politics in Islam is the Qur'anic principle *'amr bi al-ma'ruf wa al-nahi 'an al-munkar,* meaning: promote virtue and prevent corruption. Politics is, as Ibn Aqil puts it: whatever is said or done to "bring people closer to virtue and remove them from corruption", even though it is neither "prescribed by the Prophet nor by any revealed message"[85]. This is because, as Imam al-Shatibby notes: "'The ordinances of the Shari'ah were decreed only for the welfare of people, wherever this welfare is to be found."[86] The justification for this statement is that the principal function of government is to enable the individual Muslim to lead a good Islamic life. In the last analysis, this is the purpose for which Allah has established the State and for which statesmen are given authority over others. The worth of the State, and the good and evil deeds of statesmen, are measured by the extent to which this purpose is accomplished. The basic rule of Muslim social and political life commonly formulated as "to promote virtue and prevent corruption" is thus the shared responsibility of the ruler and ruled, or, in the modern parlance, of the State and the citizen.

The two key concepts in the principle, *ma'ruf* and *munkar* (for lack of better terms "Islamic values" and "disvalues," respectively), assume the status of theoretical primitives from which further definitions are constructed. They provide a series of valid concepts against which the conception and activation of the Islamic ideal in contemporary conditions are judged. From the standpoint of these two concepts, a society's development is measured by the extent to which it succeeds in diverting the flow of nature and history away from value-violation toward value-realization. This means an Islamic society has to orientate its priorities and preferences in conformity with Islamic values and guard against any manifestation of disvalues in its conception and implementation of policies and programs.

The principle can be encapsulated into a single word, *da'wa,* meaning the advocacy of Islamic order. It is, however, the *da'wa* of making constructive demands for change in the methods and means of science, of the practice and legislation of the economy, of analyzing political formations for their inclusiveness and efforts for consensus, of securing respect for the environment that promotes human dignity and nurtures the practical needs of the family.[87] Such a *da'wa* is not all smooth and agreeable. To start with, as Khuram Murad[88] points out, it entails a number of responsibilities. The first of these responsibilities is that because *da'wa* is rooted in the knowledge of truth, the truth by its nature, by its own inherent logic, must be made known, must become manifest.

The second responsibility is to uphold the absolute unity and transcendence of Allah. The root of advocacy in the Islamic order is knowing that Allah is the One and Only God, the Creator and Sovereign. His greatness must demolish all false claims to greatness. Every claim by a creature is false, in whatever sphere of life—intellectual, economic, cultural and political. "The absolute unity and transcendence of God affirmed by *tawhid,"* Al-Faruqi[89] says, "necessarily implies that all creatures are one in their relation to the One and Only God. Certainly, there can and ought to be differentiation according to their deeds and merit."

The third responsibility of *da'wa* is to leaven, shape, and direct human life with the truth of *tawhid.*[90] This demands exposing Islam's relevance to contemporary conditions, developing codes of conduct and governance from Islamic values, and devising Islamic solutions for the practical problems before us.[91] The fourth is to make the language of words go hand-in-hand with the language of deeds. This means we have to be the living embodiment of Islam. We must acknowledge and confirm our genuine commitment to Islam through true adherence to the teachings of the Qur'an and the Prophet. Ideas must be matched with the needs of the people.

The fifth responsibility is to make a thorough critique of how man and society are living and then to lay bare the consequences. This implies being critical and forthright in identifying the flaws in the current conception and activation of the ideal, and then showing the ways and manners of avoiding or correcting them. A corollary of this is to determine what is to be done, why is it to be done, when is it to be done, and how is it to be done.

The final responsibility is to establish systems that implement *'adl* (justice) and provide for the open sharing of society's resources. Basic to

the concept of *'adl,* which is semantically related to *ma'ruf,* is the concern for alleviating the people's deprivation and suffering, allaying their fears and anxieties, and guaranteeing their future and that of their children. This entails demanding what is right and eradicating what is wrong, which in turn requires being the alert guardian of virtue and the bitter enemy of vice.[92] Thus we must exercise power to see that the right prevails. We must eschew wrong, obtain and exercise power to see that wrong and injustice are defeated. This prefigures a society in which good, virtue, justice, and purity are well known and protected by its leaders. Evil, vice, injustice, and impurity will be rejected and defeated by the dominant forces in the society.

Establishing justice enables a Muslim society to rekindle its faith and bring its determining power to an equal measure of efficacy. Thus, it plays a central role in creating the ambience in which society may operate within the parameters of Islamic values—it plays the role of making truth manifest. The process of making truth manifest works through the dialectics of opposites; for example, the right cannot be comprehended except by reference to the wrong. The same goes for justice and injustice, virtue and vice, good and bad, kindness and wickedness, success and failure, development and under development. Put in its simplest form, this means critical examination in two senses: a positive evaluation of Islamic values and urging the individual and society to translate them into action; and a negative evaluation of disvalues and urging the individual and society to shun them.

Viewed against the background of this principle, politics is a continuing effort to distill the Islamic vision of *falah (*a good society) into an idiom that is of this world. Hence, in Islam, the ultimate measure of political success is not how many Muslims hold positions of leadership. Rather, success is measured by the degree to which political activities are in harmony with the value pattern embodied in the Qur'an and the Sunnah, provide means and ways to rekindle the faith and bring their determining power to an equal measure of efficacy and, at the same time, consistently generate the desired impetus for the promotion and sustenance of the Islamic vision of a good society. The three criteria are closely intertwined, and should really be viewed as such, inspite what may have hitherto been the practice or the current situation in a given Muslim community.

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