

Iran and the World

Iran and the World:
Some Contemporary Developments

Edited by

Bahram Navazeni

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Edited by Bahram Navazeni

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PREFACE

BAHRAM NAVAZENI

Both Iran and the World have witnessed changes with profound effects in their past history as well as current events. Despite the antiquity of Iran's history, rich oil and gas resources, and monitoring of the strategic Persian Gulf, the country has enjoyed stability in its blend of religion and politics of social affairs in the face of profound change.

Contemporary international relations, known for its dominating principles of equal sovereignty and self-determination, is also undergoing change, the most obvious ones being the Soviet collapse, the "new world order," and globalization, all of which have affected Iran.

Everyone acknowledges the fact that as the universe, night and day, and the environment exposed to evolution and change, humans and human behavior and thus political phenomena and events are also changing and the study of these ups and downs, transformations and developments are yield to academics and researchers to study and think about them.

This book is to put emphasis on some contemporary developments in Iran and the world and to study its interactions by drawing the attention of think tanks in International Relations, Political Sciences and other experts in different scientific fields. We encourage outside thinkers to know the Islamic Republic of Iran from inside and make good contacts with Iranian scholars and professors in their research and their post graduate students works.

In a variety of subject developments in mystical vision of the Islamic Revolution in the discourse of Martyr Mortaza Motahhari, legal and ethical issues of human right to democracy, the nation-state system and Islam, Iran's religio-constitutional institutions in 20th century, Iran's admission policy of international students, Arab-Israeli conflict, development strategies in Iran and Algeria, Shanghais Cooperation Organization, authors attempts to explore some domestic developments in Iran as well as regional and global ones.

CHAPTER ONE

MYSTICAL VISION OF THE ISLAMIC REVOLUTION IN THE DISCOURSE OF MARTYR MORTAZA MOTAHHARI

ISMAGIL GIBADULLIN (ISMAIL IBADULLAH)

Abstract

The chapter deals with the mystical aspects of the Islamic revolutionary discourse revealed by Martyr Mortaza Motahhari (1920-1979) in some of his speeches and texts at the dawn of Islamic revolution. Motahhari discussed some most significant problems and ideas critical for understanding of the nature and essence of Iranian revolution as a complicated and multidimensional phenomenon. Re-reading of this concept demonstrates that the very idea of the Islamic Revolution was deeply rooted in Islamic conscience and mentality of Iranian people. Motahhari provided a thorough and full-blooded understanding of the Islamic Revolution as a project in process (not in plan). Motahhari was a prolific author and his interpretation of the Islamic Revolution is only a little part of his theological and philosophical legacy and all that intellectual discourse which he brought to life. The chapter contains a brief account of Motahhari's analysis and synthesis of the revolution.

Key Words: Islamic Revolution, Iran, Islam, Motahhari

Introduction

As we know, Ayatollah Mortaza Motahhari was one of most distinguished Iranian revolutionary activists. He also was one of the main intellectual communicators between Imam Khomeini and various strata of Iranian society and moreover one of the architects of Islamic revolutionary ideology. Motahhari was introducing the concept of the Islamic

Revolution to the large sections of the Iranian society by all available means. He tried to explain purposes and goals of the Islamic Revolution and demonstrate its uniqueness. In a quite short space of time Motahhari successfully managed to examine and analyze the very phenomenon of the Islamic Revolution then drew an integral vision of this phenomenon and brought it home to the people.

Speeches and interviews delivered by Motahhari were the earliest experience of theoretical reasoning of the revolution. Motahhari as the chief thinker (motafakker) of revolutionary-minded Shiite Ulama strikingly and vividly conveyed the main point of the Islamic Revolution which was laying its way through political chaos and instability. In this chapter I am going to give a brief account of Motahhari's analysis and synthesis of the revolution.

Mystical Vision

The central point of Motahhari's attempt to theorize on the Islamic Revolution was well-grounded but understandable explanation of its "essence" (mahiyat) to the vast masses of Iranian people through substantiation of its Islamic nature. Motahhari like social theoreticians of Marxism attempted to analyze such aspects as essence, factors, motives forces, reasons, conditions, social bases, goals and purposes of the Islamic Revolution although reviewed all these elements of revolutionary process in light of its unique and exceptional nature and accentuated points which were more indicative of its essential dissimilarity with all known political and social revolutions launched in other countries.

It should be borne in mind that he was a traditional Shiite thinker and theologian not a western-like scholar so he did not categorize social theory to solve such complicated issues in a way Western scholars do.

Islamic Revolution was not the only one of its kind in human history. Motahhari considered it as a continuation of those tendencies which were manifested in the earliest period of Islam. He repeatedly pointed out to the fact that "ground of the path of the Islamic Revolution was laid by the Sacred Prophet of Islam" (Motahhari, 1993: 27). The atmosphere of general religious enthusiasm and exalted devotion to the spiritual leader Imam Khomeini revived associations with early Islamic historical experiences. Motahhari frequently appealed to the episodes of Islamic history tied with such key figures as Imam Ali b. Abi Talib (ra), Imam Hussain b. Ali (ra). Their life courses were models of superior justice and revolutionary impulse in human souls. Motahhari described "the revolution of original Islam" as a permanent process calling for 'its further

preserving and prolongation', the purpose to be fulfilled by Twelve Imams and their followers.

So the Islamic Revolution was an organic continuation of the revolution launched by Prophet Muhammad (saw) at the dawn of Islam and has sacred nature for it ushered society to the highest historical and religious mission.

He listed several basic causes for the Islamic Revolution namely "disillusionment of Western liberalism and despair of Eastern socialism," "return of our Muslim nation to its essence, feeling of a real miracle, finding oneself and one's own philosophy" (Motahhari, 1993: 118). The last mentioned aspect of the Islamic Revolution is worth of special attention for the doctrine of "return to oneself" (*bazgasht be khod*) occupied the central position in Motahhari's understanding of hidden causes and motives of the Islamic Revolution which lied in depth of social psychology of Iranian society.

The "return to oneself" was an excellent allegory of national awakening and revival of Iranian people when they realized them "have their own doctrine and independent thought and are able to stand on their feet and to rely upon their own power" (Motahhari, 1993: 45). Discussing the "return to oneself," Motahhari employs another allegory to define the situation of Iranian society namely "embarrassment" or "self-alienation" (*khodbakhtegi*) and "stupor" (*estesba*) as central psychological attitudes of Iranians in pre-revolutionary time which emerged under impact of Western colonialism. Motahhari notes that the worst of colonialism is cultural one (*este'mar-e farhangi*) in which we see that "in order to take an advantage from someone they take off one's individuality, put it against everything what he supposes his own and then make him charmed of what is offered by colonizers" (Motahhari, 1993: 160-161). Trying to depict the situation as vividly as possible, he appeals to the symbol of "killer-mosque" (Motahhari, 1993: 46-47) repeatedly used by Jamal ad-Din Asadabadi (al-Afghani) in his famous *Urwat al-Wusqa*. Asadabadi likened Great Britain and Western world in total to the legendary "killer-mosque" where strangers spending the night were found dead every night and only one man was to discover the mosque was an awful miracle created by evil spirits. Involving such an interesting symbolic figure Motahhari sought to expose falsehood and delusion of those ideals which captured Iranian society.

The concepts of "embarrassment" and "stupor" are worth of being examined in detail. "Embarrassment" was understood as "uneasiness of personality, absence of self-confidence, self-alienation, and lack of self-respect, distrust for one's own culture, one's own ability and facility"

(Motahhari, 1993: 118). All these qualities were attributed to the whole Iranian society en masse. Another allegory was stupor which signified literally "state of stupor typical for a victim occurred in front of a beast." By this term Motahhari implies disability of Iranian society which was devoid of protective mechanism to resist a pressure of cultural colonialism of superpowers which could finally turn out to be a defeat for Iranians and then cause their total annihilation (Motahhari, 1993: 118-120).

Motahhari's understanding of revolutionary society is to be found in his concept of "return to oneself" which has mystical inflection and is based on putting an individual as a microcosmic reality and a society as its macrocosmic match. Motahhari e.g. states that every society like an individual has a spirit (*ruh*) which is equal to the culture of the society. It's interesting to hear from him that "if someone manages to shake up the spirit and to revive it he will manage to set in motion the very body of a society." This statement very briefly reflects Motahhari's view of Islamic revolution's background which lies far from purely social and economical reasons.

This conception is closely related to religious and mystical elements of Motahhari's worldview which emerged under the great influence of Islamic discipline known as *Irfan* or Gnosticism (Rudgar, 2004). According to him revolution was a pure spiritual phenomenon and was interpreted as "finding oneself" or "finding one's soul" (but in a national scale) which is taken as "a knowledge of God" (*ma'rifatullah*) in Islamic epistemology. The famous tradition of Prophet Muhammad (SAW) reads: "The one who knows one's soul will know the Lord." The Islamic meaning of the revolution lies at this point.

Let me draw your attention to the problem of the essence of Islamic revolution. Motahhari says that "Islamic Revolution had Islamic essence and it was the revolution which had Islamic identity in all its material and spiritual, political and ideological aspects" (Motahhari, 1993: 48). The Islamic Revolution was called "the revolution in the true meaning of the word" (Motahhari, 1993: 30). Though Islamic nature of the revolution is not confined within "spreading of religious prescriptions and fulfillment of religious duties" and implicates total transformation of all aspects of social and humane life on the basis of Islam.

While examining various conceptions of leading factors in the Islamic Revolution, Motahhari suggests three factors corresponding to three different types of social revolution: Firstly, the factor of material or economical relations; secondly, the political factor or factor of desire for freedom (*azadikhahi*); and thirdly, the ideological or religious factor. The Islamic Revolution was the sole revolution where all three factors came

together and the reason was universality and holism of Islamic doctrine. The social justice, freedom and classless society are among values of Islam and only in Islam they rest upon "deep spirituality" (Motahhari, 1993: 41).

Motahhari affirms the leading hand of ideological factor in Islamic revolution. According to his doctrine of "social evolution" the religious ideology was the tool to free people from pressure of material and social factors of their life. It is the only thing which gives someone an opportunity of overcoming one's own bestiality, realizing true values of one's life so one manages to release oneself from the rule of economical, political and social determination i.e. turns from the passive recipient of foreign influences into the subject of transformation of one's social and natural environment (Motahhari, 1993: 114).

Earlier we touched upon the issue of ideological guidance or "leadership in Islamic movement." He also admits that "reasoning of the essence of the Islamic Revolution is inseparably linked with reasoning of its leadership" (Motahhari, 1993: 118). Here Motahhari focused on personality of Imam Khomeini who was the leader of the Islamic revolutionary movement and became the leader of Iranian nation. Asking himself why it was Khomeini "to be chosen as the leader by people," he points out to different qualities of Imam's character, namely "sincerity," "courage," "keen insight," "strong mind" etc. But finally he concludes that every trait of Imam's character was not unique and exclusively inherent in Khomeini's personality. Giving further explanation to the question, he raises the issue of correlation between personality and history, as it states in his "Philosophy of History": "Personality and history are the result of their inter-relation" (Motahhari, 1993: 50). If a leader wants to bring society to an ideal then he must be the reflection of the spirit of the society. So the main cause for advancement of Khomeini was not only his leadership abilities but the fact that "he was at the ideological and spiritual course of people and was aware of their needs."

So it was Khomeini who managed "to revive the spirit of society" and thereby "set in motion the whole society" that was the central point of his theory of "return to oneself." In one of his public speeches Motahhari said: "Imam gave self-consciousness to our people. He gave us the real essence and Islamic identity. He managed to revive their lost faith and made them believe in themselves" (Motahhari, 1993: 21). Motahhari also admits:

if Imam had not the degree of religious and spiritual guidance, if there were not love and attachment for Islam hidden in the depth of Iranian spirituality, if there wasn't the affection of people to the Prophet's family and if people didn't feel that it was the call of the Prophet, Imam Ali and

Imam Husain coming from the lips of this great man (Khomeini), such a wide [revolutionary] movement and the revolution itself hardly could arise in our country (Motahhari, 1993: 51).

As follows from the above the role of personality of the leader was rather important in formation of Islamic revolution. Motahhari discusses the problem in the context of "return to oneself" imbued with the spirit of the Islamic mystical doctrine known as Irfan, and thus gives the mystical color to role of a leader. The leader namely Imam Khomeini in Motahhari's interpretation was not simply an acknowledged headman of revolutionary movement but could be considered a sort of alter ego of Iranian nation, the reflection of its innermost spiritual essence which was to be found through Islamic Revolution.

The overall and rather detailed attempt to theorize on the very phenomenon of the Islamic Revolution undertaken by Motahhari gave intellectual nourishment for further attempts to find the sense of the Islamic Revolution and actually was the earliest experience of self-meditation on the Islamic Revolution of Iranian people. This experience was closely associated with revolutionary activities and deeply involved in revolutionary process itself, although it lacked a distance (be it in time or space) which is commonly prerequisite for impartial understanding of any social phenomenon of such a large scale. In this respect the works by Motahhari hardly answered requirements of western-like standards of social, political and humane studies. Thus theoretical and cognitive value of Motahhari's reflections on the Islamic Revolution for Western scholars and observers is in that he reflected the most profound strata of Iranian national mentality underlying in Islamic tradition. It was this basic aspect of the Islamic Revolution deeply rooted in tradition which was completely swept out from minds of those researchers who tried to observe this great event from the outside. And due to this grievous fact most Western and Soviet-Russian patterns of theorizing on the Islamic Revolution were extremely perfunctory and actually remain the same even nowadays. Motahhari considered all aspects of social reality as being of great value, and unlike non-Iranian and secular Iranian theoreticians he showed significance of cultural, ideological, spiritual and even psychological factors of the revolution.

Islamic Revolution as it was interpreted by Motahhari has clearly mystical color which it owes to the revival of traditional Islamic discipline of Irfan widely propagated by Khomeini, Ali Shariati, Tabatabai, Broujerdi and Motahhari himself. The Gnostic (Irfani) orientation of the ideology of the Islamic Revolution gave it an exalted metaphysical meaning and special historical mission. Motahhari introduced the Islamic

Revolution as a unique and exceptional phenomenon and explained its purely religious background and essence.

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CHAPTER TWO

HUMAN RIGHT TO DEMOCRACY: LEGAL AND ETHICAL ISSUES

PLAMENA POPOVA

This chapter was provoked by the theoretical and practical attempts to combine two of the major concepts of the contemporary world – democracy and human rights.

The contemporary understanding of human rights includes an indisputable claim for their universality. Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) enshrines a set of rules that apply to all human beings irrespective of their belonging to a particular race, culture, country or geographical position. The significance of that claim to universal applicability of the rights which are acknowledged as human poses another major issue.

The concept of human rights in its modern form emerged recently in human history. Specific definitions of human rights are enacted at the different international and local legal acts. The preamble of the UDHR, adopted in 1948, which has no binding legal effect, states that, "recognition of the inherent dignity and of the equal and inalienable rights of all members of human family is the foundation of freedom, justice and peace in the world." Freedom, justice and peace are values which all members of the international community share. Such a statement could hardly be used in respect of each individual human right, especially when such right is not enshrined in a legal document with binding effect.

The question of human right to democracy goes beyond the theoretical disputes, as the concept of human rights in its entirety, are increasingly used as a tool for political interference.

An initial set of features of the modern system of human rights is to regulate and control the behavior of national governments to their citizens. This conclusion is supported by the different nature of legal texts, which include the UDHR. There are formulated as principled positions (Article 7) or as prohibitive texts which are aimed at authorities (Article 9).

Certainly a number of texts are formulated as a content of specific rights granted to individual human beings. A particular set of individual freedoms and opportunities are one of the elements that are included in the initial understanding of the modern legal concept of human rights. A significant part of the texts in the UDHR are devoted to rules that restrict the behavior of governments for the protection of individual freedoms. Legal necessity that subjective rights correspond to certain obligations, whether of individual or collective nature, acquires new dimensions in the contemporary world.

Subjective right is a reasonable requirement to possess or acquire something, to act or be treated in a certain way. Human rights are rights (майнах запетаята) which are inherent to all human beings just because they are human beings. They exist regardless of the position of a person or his/her belonging to a society or nation. Therefore, it is assumed, that the legitimacy of human rights is independent from the consent of the authorities/government bodies/ which are said to accept more than create such rights.

Human rights must be distinguished from the rights arising from the operation of the legal system (positive rights) such as the right of the minimum wage.

Vienna Declaration of 1993 states - All human rights is universal, indivisible and interdependent and related. The international community must treat human rights globally in a fair and equal manner, on the same footing, and with the same emphasis."

Therefore, in its very essence, the concept of human rights stands as an independent universal value, which requires the obligation of all sovereign states and actors in the international community to provide a set of rights for its citizens and to treat these rights equally. However, this obligation corresponds with the essential characteristics of human rights - the moral primacy and urgency of rights.

What does it mean to recognize democracy as a human right? This would have two basic meanings and consequences:

Acknowledging to its high priority and its equivalent in importance to basic human rights like freedom from torture and starvation, and

Acknowledging that democracy (defined as a form of governance) should be applied to all modern states as a minimum standard.

It is necessary in the first place to define democracy in order to determine whether or not the above mentioned consequences in the international legal order should be admissible.

The concept of democracy evolved from the understanding of democracy in ancient Greece, namely direct democracy, to the modern

concept of representative democracy. As Beetham says, different societies and diverse circumstances require different arrangements if democratic principles are to be effectively realized. So the notion of democracy is dynamic and inconsistent. There are two basic theoretical concepts of democracy - "substantive" and "procedural" conceptions. The basic elements of a substantive democracy, according to Beetham:

are that the people have a right to a controlling influence over public decisions and decision makers, and that they should be treated with equal respect and as of equal worth in the context of such decisions.

The idea of democracy expressed in the concept of substantive democracy, in practice, is an expression of certain values enshrined in Western societies. There is also a narrow understanding of democracy, namely, procedural democracy, which is associated primarily with the conduct of free and democratic elections.

For the purposes of this chapter, I accept that the formulated concept of democracy should be considered in a broad and narrow sense. Democracy in the latter is actually enshrined as part of the concept of human rights both in UDHR and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights. In Article 21 of UDHR is stated that:

(3) The will of the people shall be the basis of the authority of government; this shall be expressed in periodic and genuine elections which shall be by universal and equal suffrage and shall be held by secret vote or by equivalent free voting procedures.

Article 25 of International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights states that everyone has the right to

b) To vote and to be elected at genuine periodic elections which shall be by universal and equal suffrage and shall be held by secret ballot, guaranteeing the free expression of the will of the electors ...

Setting of such legal opportunity in basic acts on human rights gives rise to a number of scholars to justify the existence of the human right to democracy in the broader sense.

I think that such a view is deprived of ethical and legal grounds for the following reasons.

1) Democracy is an idea. The basic idea of democracy is formulated as an ideal and it should be emphasized that no existing or historical political order has fulfilled it completely. Democracy is a political ideal in the first place which applies in different ways and takes various forms in different

societies. Even the oldest democracies in the Western world that claim to impose this ideal as the minimum standard for all communities have faced difficulties performing democratic values in practice. There are numerous examples that illustrate the lack of common understanding about the nature of democracy in the modern world. It is noteworthy that highly developed democratic states are observed to perform particularly serious violations of fundamental human freedoms. An adequate example in that matter is given by the prison at Guantanamo - Before 11 July 2006 the United States said that these prisoners are not protected by the Geneva Convention on prisoners of war.

2) The modern concept of democracy could be regarded as a cultural phenomenon. In a sense, understanding of democracy could be regarded as a cultural phenomenon, directly linked with the Western societies. This problem has been thoroughly analyzed in the "Twilight of democracy" by Patrick E. Kennon, where the transfer of emphasis from the democratically elected representative bodies to bureaucracy is remarkably clarified. Let me give an example with democratic processes in my country. Bulgaria is part of the countries in Eastern Europe, where the lengthy process of trying to impose a democratic type of political governance has begun. This process of democratization of societies continues today in countries like Iraq and Afghanistan. While naming a democratic, Bulgaria is a country in which the last national referendum was held in 1946. Problems of applying democratic values in Bulgarian society could be explained by the presence of certain cultural characteristics. This problem is even more observable in countries such as Iraq and Afghanistan. There has been misappropriation of the concept of democracy; many countries have proclaimed 'democratic' does not meet the criteria of the basic idea. These statements may stem from a misunderstanding of the idea or deliberate misuse of it. In my opinion democracy could not be defined as a minimum standard, i.e. adopted at the international level, i.e. as a human right.

3) In legal theory it is stressed that the idea of democracy could be used as the standard by which professionals can assess a country as more or less democratic. Even though the debates on human rights began in Western societies, as Forsythe points, there is no reason *ipso facto*, for these rights not to apply in non-western societies. The concept of human rights and fundamental freedoms, in theory is applicable to any type of society, because it guarantees fundamental freedoms of the individual identified only by his human nature. In practice, in contemporary international relations, the concept of human rights is used quite often as a basis for overriding national sovereignty. Certain actions of certain members of the international community have been the reason to identify

and produce the concept of human rights with Western imperialism. As John Rawls says in *The Law of Peoples* that human rights define where legitimate toleration of other countries ends. Rawls points out that human rights "specify limits to a regime's internal autonomy" and that "their fulfillment is sufficient to exclude justified and forceful intervention by other peoples, for example, by diplomatic and economic sanctions, or in grave cases by military force" (Rawls 1999, 79-80). Examples of such military intervention in Kosovo, and later in Iraq are one of the ways to distort of the idea of human rights.

4) The imposition of a democratic structure as a global standard in the global society is a paradoxical denial of one of the values of democracy, namely equality between the participants in the legal order and freedom of self-determination. Assuming that equality and freedom of self-determination are valid principles in relations between individuals, it should also be considered to participants in international relations. In this sense, Article 1 of International Covenant on Human Rights states:

All peoples have the right of self-determination. By virtue of that right they freely determine their political status and freely pursue their economic, social and cultural development.

2. All peoples may, for their own ends, freely dispose of their natural wealth and resources without prejudice to any obligations arising out of international economic co-operation, based upon the principle of mutual benefit, and international law. In no case may a people be deprived of its own means of subsistence.

3. The States Parties to the present Covenant, including those having responsibility for the administration of Non-Self-Governing and Trust Territories, shall promote the realization of the right of self-determination, and shall respect that right, in conformity with the provisions of the Charter of the United Nations.

To acknowledge a human right to democracy means in a sense, to bind government to grant it to individuals. Such a requirement is inconsistent with the desire the concept of human rights to be set as a global and universal standard in modern society. One of the conditions to delimit the concept of human rights from the political interests of Western imperialism, I believe is not to associate that concept with democracy as an idea and a form of governance. Assuming that there is a fundamental right of democracy, then the individual should be recognized and the right to live in an authoritarian, totalitarian regime etc. as far as the basic value, which should still be protected, is freedom. Freedom of the individual or

human being should not be limited to one particular type of social order, even if it is preferred by certain parts of the world.

Acknowledging the existence of a human right to democracy, means in that point of view, to question the universal and global nature of the application of the concept of human rights.

The concept of human rights presents a set of important standards that are universal and applicable in all political societies. To acknowledge right to democracy as a human right means in that point of view to admit democracy as an urgent standard for the human beings. But democracies are above all a dynamic political ideology whose meaning in different societies differs.

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CHAPTER THREE

DIFFERENT PARADIGMS: THE NATION-STATE SYSTEM AND ISLAM

MUHITTIN ATAMAN

Abstract

This chapter argues that with the intensified globalization process, the Westphalian temple which has been proposing the nation-state system as a universal political unit began to weaken. Actually the nation-state system has never been a universal political reference for non-Western states. In the wake of the Cold War and the introduction of Huntington's infamous thesis of the clash of civilizations, the Muslim world emerged as the other of the West. That is, the West declared the Islamic civilization as the main challenging discourse with the abolishment of the communist bloc.

Islam and the West each have different political, economic and cultural paradigms. This study elaborates similarities and differences between the two paradigms. It emphasizes that "nation" and "nationalism" concepts are alien to Islam and Muslims. Therefore, expansion of these concepts in the Muslim world caused identity crises. Nationalism caused cultural insecurity and has been one of the main bases of Islamic revivalist movements against the Western world. Therefore, a conceptual evaluation of the nation-state system, ethnicity, and the Islamic approach of politics is required to understand relations between the West and the Muslim world.

Key Words: Nation-State System, Nationalism, Cultural Insecurity, Identity Crisis, Islamic Revivalism

Introduction

Islam has its own paradigmatic structure regarding political, economic, social and cultural spheres and proposes different and alternative solutions

for problems in those fields (Davutoğlu, 1994). Even though Islam considers all Muslims as one unified nation, it allows Muslim and non-Muslim ethnic groups to enjoy their cultural and social differences. It even tolerates them to continue their political and legal systems if they are not contradicted with main Islamic principles (Ataman, 2003). However, modern Muslim states created by the West allow neither Muslim nor non-Muslim ethnic minorities to enjoy their cultural, economic, religious or political rights as a result of transformation and implantation of Western institutions and values in the Muslim world by indigenous leaders during their modernization processes.

These developments compelled many Muslim communities and many Islamic movements to be anti-Western, which caused them to be regarded as “the other” and as a challenge to globalizing Western values. Therefore, most Western states consider “Islamic alternative” as a threat to the globalization process dominated by Western political and economic forces. This caused modern prejudices towards Islam and Islamic movements, most of which prevented a real understanding of the Islamic approach regarding economic, political and social issues. Eventually the true nature of the Islamic state system, its ethnicity theory and its understanding regarding nationalism was ignored or misunderstood.

In this study, I intend to clarify the Islamic notion of nationalism in theory and to demonstrate contradictions between policies of Muslim states and the Islamic understanding. Besides mentioning differences between Islamic and Western views on nationalism, I analyze interactions between different Muslim groups because, while there are many studies on the situation of non-Muslim ethnic minorities in Muslim states, the relationship between different Muslim ethnic groups is overlooked in academia. In the first part of the chapter, I demonstrate that the modern nationalist movements and the creation of modern nation-states caused identity crises and alienation in the Muslim world. In this context, I propose some arguments on conflicts between the Islamic system and the nation-state system originated in the West. The first argument claims that nation-state system and political nationalism are alien to Islam.

According to the second argument, political nationalism causes identity crises in Islamic societies. The last argument claims that political Islamic revivalist movements are mainly the result of the cultural insecurity perception caused by the Western domination. I suggest that the current political regimes in the Muslim World, often based on the nation-state system, are incompatible with historical and cultural realities of their societies. These regimes are challenged by a wave of strong popular Islamic opposition movements, which claim to turn to the “roots of their

culture” in order to achieve economic development and political stability. In the second part of the chapter, I shortly explain the nature of the Islamic ethnicity theory based upon two arguments. I argue that the Islamic system has its own brand of cultural diversity and offers a “customs union-like” system of states for Muslim societies. The chapter ends with a general evaluation of the comparison between Islamic and Western alternative paradigms.

Contradictions between the Nation-State System and Islam

Islam and the West each developed different, mostly competing but sometimes conflicting political, economic and administrative models based on different philosophical underpinnings. By concentrating mainly on the conceptual framework some contradictions between the modern nation-state system and the Islamic understanding of government will be analyzed. In this framework, political nationalism and its main institution (nation-states), but not their political thoughts, will be elaborated.

Nation-State System and Nationalism is Alien to Islam

Islam and the West have different paradigms. Islam has its own independent spiritual, practical, political, economic and social systems different from those of the nation-state system. Theoretically Islamic community (*ummah*) is universal, and it cannot be divided based on ethnic differences. According to the traditional Islamic understanding, there are no such political systems as “nation-states” (Barry, 1999: 13). Therefore, it is not expected from the transformation of Western concepts and institutions to the Muslim world to solve problems of Muslim peoples. Muslims have to develop indigenous political and economic concepts and introduce institutions emerging from their own paradigm. Mawdudi (1980) claims that Islam is not only different from the West but also the antithesis of secular Western democracy from the viewpoint of political philosophy, since moral values and belief play major roles in an Islamic system.

Davutoğlu (1994: 48) suggests that “the conflicts and contrasts between Islamic and Western political thought originate mainly from their philosophical, methodological and theoretical background rather than from mere institutional and historical differences.” He underlines that there are four important political differences between Islamic and Western paradigms:

The way of justification of the socio-political system, the legitimization

process for political authority, the alternative approaches to political power and pluralism, and the imagination of the universal political system” (Ibid: 196).

While sovereignty belongs to the nation and the criterion of the state action is national interests in nation-state system; national sovereignty is constrained, supreme/absolute sovereignty belongs to God and God’s principles are the most significant criteria in Islam (Zeydan, no date). The focus of loyalty is God in Islam, but it is country and nation in the nation-state system. Hudson (1980: 7) puts this difference of focus in these terms: “the politically developed Islamic society is God centered where as the politically developed Western society is man centered.” Muslim’s nationality is not based on geographical and linguistic unity or on material factors, but on religion. According to Sayyid Qutb, an Egyptian thinker and one of the leading Islamic revivalists of the 20th century, contemporary societies are in *jahiliyya*, the realm of barbarism and ignorance, which signifies the domination of man over man (Zubaida, 1994). For Qutb, “*jahiliyya* denotes a polity legitimized by man-made criteria, such as the sovereignty of the people, as well as man-created system of values” (Sivan, 1985: 23). Islam gives the sovereignty to God; peoples only use it in the name of God. Briefly, nationalism, nation-states and nationalist movements are considered as foreign intrigue in the Islamic world.

As mentioned by Davutoğlu (1994: 51), “it is almost impossible to internalize institutions within a society in the long run, unless those institutions are supported by a socio-political culture.” Zubaida (1994: 134) makes a similar explanation by saying that “the imported political models and ideas of the nation-state and secular political ideologies are superficial grafts, alien to peoples and governments, and are bound to fail in the hostile environment.” Implantation of factors of one culture upon another cannot work because it does not conform to the essence of the host culture. Therefore, political system of the state and political culture of its people have to be congruent. That is, political system has to find its roots in historical processes of the society.

Ethnicity system has to reflect social, cultural and historical realities of the society; otherwise, it will cause social and political problems in the country. Wherever political system is imported from “outside,” it will cause ethnic and social problems. “Imported” political systems mostly maintain their authority only by rudimentary power and suppression. No foreign social and political system does fit to all societies because “different societies and cultures have different ideals” (Hudson, 1980: 7). In the words of Yazır (1997: 6), one of the leading Turkish Islamic scholars:

Whenever the elite and common people of a country are different in their way of life, there will be no spiritual similarity and no harmony in the country. This contradiction between the elite (social circles) and the common people (social environment) will break up unity and social functions, that is, the nation and the state.

The nation-state system is alien and forcibly introduced to the Muslim world. Arkoun (1994: 3) correctly points out that “Arab, Turkish and Iranian nationalisms are all imported and badly transplanted.” Nationalism, on which the nation-state system is based, is itself an alien concept planted all around the world by the Western colonial powers. Western scholars such as Bernard Lewis and Elie Kedourie confirm that there is no equivalent concept of the nation-state in traditional Islamic political theory (Piscatori, 1986). Likewise, Zubaida (1994: 130) points out that “the ‘failure’ of the nation-state in ‘Islamic’ countries is due to the fact that the notion of a territorial state with individualized citizenship, secular law and principles of sovereignty, is alien to the ‘Muslim mind.’”

Today, if we look at the map of the Muslim world, we can see many problems that are brought with the introduction of the nation-state system. On the one hand, some “nations,” like the Arabs in the Persian Gulf, are divided into many nation-states. Even some families or tribes such as *Al-Sabah* family of Kuwait, *Al-Khalifa* of Bahrain and *Al-Zahid* of the United Arab Emirates became or were made “nation-states” by European colonial powers. On the other hand, several different ethnic groups like Turks, Kurds, Arabs and many other ethnic groups in Turkey are forced to form a “nation” under the rule of one nation-state. This is one of the main causes of the inter-ethnic and inter-state conflicts in the Muslim world.

Nationalism Causes Identity Crises in Muslim Countries

After the elimination of the caliphate, the citizenship of nation-states was imposed upon Muslim peoples by their largely Westernized political elite. Political leaders tried to change the identity of their peoples without their consent. Their religious, communal and cultural identities were denounced by political leaders. Muslim ethnic groups fell into “identity crises” when their Western oriented political leaders tried to replicate a Western type of national identity. This caused social and cultural alienation in the Muslim world since the nation-state wants supreme loyalty from people. Modern states do not accept any challenging identities inside their borders. The result is identity crises in the Muslim world, because Muslims are required to give allegiance to their community and to their religion besides their states. When we take into consideration

that “there is not room for one to be a loyal and genuine nationalist and a Muslim believer, it is a question of identity, and one negates the other” (Naqavi, 1984: 72), we see that Muslim nation-states have difficulties in defining themselves in relation to worldwide *ummah* of Muslims.

Therefore, nationalist political leaders in the Islamic world tried to get rid of Islamic symbols, identities and loyalties. For instance, in order to force the Turkish people to forget their historical legacy and Islamic identity, republican governments prohibited religious institutions in schools, changed the alphabet, and accepted Western symbols, customs and culture (Al-Ahsan, 1992). The nationalist Turkish identity was strongly emphasized at the expense of the Islamic *ummah* identity. Naturally, other Muslim ethnic groups such as Kurds, Arabs, Circassians and Georgians in the state were forced to suppress their ethnic and cultural identities and to be assimilated into political Turkish identity. Until very recently, there was still no official recognition that Kurds or other Muslim ethnic groups were culturally or even ethnically distinct from Turks. Similar reforms were made in Iran by Reza Pahlavi. Like in the Turkish case, ethnic, linguistic and cultural diversity of the state was denied (Mojab and Hassanpour, 1995) and the state forced people to be homogenized through modernization process. The homogenization process still continues in most Muslim nation-states.

To a large extent, the worldwide Islamic revival is the sum of individual unhappiness (Piscatori, 1986) caused by nationalism and nation-state system. The more nationalist leaders have failed to solve problems, the more the nation-state has lost its legitimacy in Muslims eyes. Arkoun (1994: 70) sees legitimacy issue as a significant problem for Muslim nation-states by claiming that “all regimes established in Muslim countries since the 1950s... suffer from a deficit of legitimacy. Incumbent regimes are now striving to utilize Islamic symbolism to enhance their fragile legitimacy. In Arabia the Saud family entered into alliance with the Wahhabi religious movement to insure Islamic legitimacy.” However, nation-states could not create an absolute identity in the Islamic world. Empirical evidence, a survey of university students from eight Arab countries carried out at Kuwait University (1979-81) found that most respondents ranked religion first in their hierarchy of group affiliation, followed by family, nation-state, national origin (Arab), and political ideology (Piscatori, 1986; Sivan, 1985). A series of attitudinal studies on group affiliations conducted by Farah and his colleagues (1983) in 1977 and 1981 also demonstrate that religion is still ranked first by university students and common people in the society from various Arab states such as Lebanon, Egypt, Kuwait and Saudi Arabia.

After some unsuccessful attempts to eliminate religion from political, economic and social sphere, most nationalist leaders in Muslim countries try to forge a synthesis of Islam and nationalism in order to persuade their peoples. Theoreticians and leaders of nationalist movements in Muslim countries have been considered Islamic principles as one of the basic components of nation building and formulated their ideas according to both Islamic and secular sources. Even the most secular nationalist movement in the Muslim world, the Turkish nationalism of Kemal Atatürk, accepted the “*millet* system” of the Ottoman State as the basic principle of its ethnicity system (Mortimer, 1982). On the one hand, with this Islamic principle, the Republican Turkey has been denying the existence of other Muslim ethnic groups. The state has been trying to eradicate all religious symbols of Turkish people and imposes political Turkism as the only political identity, on the other. In spite of the fierce stance of the nationalist and secular elite, the people continued to maintain their Islamic identity. This contradictory development caused an unbridgeable gap between the secularism of the state and the religion of the people. This gap naturally resulted in the real impoverishment of Turkish culture and caused problems for Turkish society and politics.

Likewise, theoreticians of Arab nationalism use Islam as a source of their nationalist movements. Even the leading Christian Arab nationalist figures such as Michel Eflaq, Sati al-Husri and George Antinius accept Islam as a significant component of “secular” Arab nationalism. In the words of an expert on the subject:

The Arab liberation movement has by now learned that there is no revolution unless one passes through Islam, the only factor capable of unifying and driving the masses to action (Sivan, 1985: 167).

Therefore, it is not a surprise that the Iranian Revolution, the only revolution in the Muslim world, was an Islamic one. Shiite version of Islam was used as a basic concept defining the identity in Iran, and thus a religious nationalism was created, which is criticized by other Muslim countries.

As a result of the maintaining religious identity of Muslim masses, leaders of Muslim countries are unable to exclude Islamic elements from national identities of their peoples. Eventually, contradiction between official and popular identities causes identity crises in Muslim societies. Crises in Muslim nation-states and in their institutions exist because the indigenous Islamic culture is still alive among Muslims. Confusion increases in Muslim societies because Muslim nation-states have accepted the modern European nation-state system without abandoning traditional

Islamic principles. As mentioned by Al-Ahsan (1992: 2), “the Muslim individual in modern society does not appear to have decided which identity, whether it be religious, cultural, linguistic, tribal, territorial, ethnic or historical, commands his supreme loyalty.” Therefore, secular identity of the state and religious identity of people must coincide, which often leads conflict on many issues.

As a reaction to identity crisis and alienation, a number of revivalist Islamic movements emerged in the last century. The Muslim world witnessed a new upsurge that aims rediscovery of the Islamic identity of Muslim peoples. Islamic movements such as the Muslim Brotherhood (*Ikhwan al-Muslimin*), the Islamic Society (*Cemaat-i Islami*) in Pakistan and the Islamic Tendency Movement (*al-Nahda*) in Tunisia try to bring back the Islamic identity of the state. The Islamic revival is a response to the confusion and anxiety of modernity and a challenge to repressive, corrupted and alienated regimes (Hudson, 1980). This reaction mainly comes from below. In addition, Islamic movements are led by intellectuals and educated professionals who opposed Western type of political and cultural institutions (Lawrence, 1987). In other words,

the discourse of these movements express of frustration, oppression, and anguish, and the need for hope among the young generations who have experienced the enormous disappointment of the destruction of liberties, the negation of human rights, imperialist appetites, disorderly development, the ineffectiveness and often the destructiveness of traditional values, unemployment, urban congestion, unequal distribution of resources, waste, and corruption (Arkoun, 1994: 91).

That is, revivalist Islamic movements do not act offensively, but defensively. While these movements reject Westernization, they do not oppose modernization. On the contrary, most of them utilize modern instruments and advance local and national “democratization.” Today, the opposition movements in the Muslim world support the globalization process, in which they expect to maintain and improve their individual and group identities, and represent democratic forces against authoritarian regimes.

Cultural Insecurity and Islamic Revivalism

Peoples sense that only the stubborn identification of religion with tradition through centuries has preserved their identity and culture. Mortimer (1982) points out that religious traditionalism is not something peculiar to the Islamic world. Religious traditionalism is a natural defense