Radical Islamism and Failed Developmentalism

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The rise of radical Islamism in recent years does not limit the applicability of the concept of cultural nationalism. Rather the two are intertwined in ways which this article will attempt to highlight. Islam taken specific national forms as modern nation-states arose and its contemporary resurgence of radical Islamism also follows that modern pattern. I examine the emergence of the three most important movements in the Islamic world, namely, the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt, Jama'at Islami in Pakistan, and Khomeinism in Iran. I argue that imperialism, authoritarianism, and the contemporary rise of radical Islamism are closely related. More particularly, the latter is the complex product of failed modernization programs, failed developmentalism under the auspices of international capital and in collaboration with the local propertied classes, and corrupt, undemocratic governments throughout the Islamic world. The failure of secular left and liberal nationalist movements to attract mass-based support, also contributed to the strengthening of readical Islamists. The article concludes that the mobilizing power and populist appeal of radical Islamists' can be challenged effectively only if the social, economic and political factors that give rise to these movements in the first place are eliminated.

Like any other religion and ideology, Islam has had a contingent nature, influencing and being influenced by the cultures and societies it came to dominate. Contrary to simplistic views in the West – shared, ironically, by the Muslim orthodoxy – Islam is not a monolithic religion. Heresiographers have identified over 72 sects within it, each considering itself the 'saved sect' and the others as misguided.[1] Besides the major division between the majority Sunnis and the minority Shi'is, within each there are major sub-sects and divisions.[2] Those who try to explain Islamic movements on the basis of the 'essence' of Islam do not take into consideration the complex interplay of religion and society, and its articulation with political, cultural, social, and economic structures in particular societies in different stages of historical development. In modern times, this has meant that Islam has not only interacted with the movements and forces which created modern 20th century states and their developmental nationalisms (See Bamyeh in this volume) but are also part of the processes through which these developmental nationalisms have unravelled, opening the door to a range of more or less extreme versions of Islamic politics which form, in different Islamic countries, their national versions of cultural nationalisms.

While the contemporary, and trans-national, rise of Islamic politics might seem to limit the applicability of the concept of cultural nationalism, the two are intertwined in ways which this article will attempt to highlight in the course of its argument. Although Islam is in some sense trans-national, not only has Islam taken specific national forms as

modern nation-states arose,[3] it's contemporary trans-national resurgence also follows that modern pattern, though Pakistan may be an exception of sorts (see Shaikh in this volume). In this article, I examine the emergence of the three most important movements in the Islamic world, namely, the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt, Jama'at Islami in Pakistan, and Khomeinism in Iran. Approaching the matter politically, rather than theologically (the latter approach is, unfortunately all too common, and misleading) I argue that imperialism, authoritarianism, and the contemporary rise of Islamic politics are closely related. More particularly, I will argue that the latter is the complex product of failed modernization programs, failed developmentalism under the auspices of international capital and corrupt, undemocratic governments throughout the Islamic world. Suppression of secular forces by dictatorial regimes, as well as the failures of the secular left and liberal nationalist movements in these societies, has further contributed to the rise of radical Islamic movements.

In the most blatant cases, radical Islamic movements have emerged as a result of the direct encouragement of imperialists and foreign forces: the US supported the *mujahedeen* in Afghanistan unconditionally while they confrontated the Soviet Union and Israel early on supported Hamas in order to weakening the secular PLO in the Palestinian Occupied Territories[4].

Modern Islamic Politics and the Nation-state

Contemporary Islamic movements which have emerged in different parts of the Islamic world for a variety of reasons may appear, given their radical interpretation of Islam, akin to the old phenomenon, going all the way back to the Islamic revivalism of the teachings of jurists such as Ibn Hanbal (780–855), Ibn Taimiyya (1263–1328), and, at a later period, Muhammad Abd al Wahhab (1703–1792). Yet, the modern Islamic movements are not direct continuations of that revivalism: none of the earlier movements, which were suppressed at the time, were mass movements. When Caliph Ma'mun in the 9th century brutalized Ibn Hanbal and his followers, he was not faced with a major reaction. When in the 14th century Ibn Taimiyya was constantly sent to jail by the Mongols and Egyptians, and eventually died in captivity, no movement was formed around him. Likewise when in the 18th century Muhammad Ali, the Viceroy of Egypt sent an expedition to suppress and eliminate the Wahhabis in Arabia, there were no mass reactions in their favour. Even at the earlier stages of the rise of Islamic fundamentalist movements in the contemporary era, we do don't witness any mass movements. When Hasan Al-Banna was killed by King Farouk, and at a later time Sayyed Qutb was killed by Nasser, or when in Iran the leaders of the Fedayeen of Islam were executed by Mohammad Reza Shah, there were no mass uprising.

For centuries in the Islamic world, the vast majority of traditional religious leaders – the high-ranking clerics, or *ulama* – were an integral part of the political establishment. They either supported the *status quo*, or chose 'quietism' *vis-à-vis* corrupt despotic rulers; the small minority that confronted such rulers were tortured or eliminated. The implicit social and political contract between the sovereign and the

ulama meant that the clerics would sanction the 'divine' absolute rule of the king and secure the allegiance of the *umma* (the followers) to the sovereign in return for control of religious endowments, the judicial system and the education system.

This division of labour, a sort of church–state concordat, worked well for rulers and clerics in the societies of the time, until the traditional social and economic fabric of Islamic societies began to fall apart as European expansionism – or the conjoint expansion of capitalism and imperialism – reached the regions of Islam in the late-nineteenth century and particularly into the mid-twentieth century. With the ensuing defeat and humiliation of the Muslim world by the West, Muslim religious leaders – apart from the traditional establishment clerics, who continued their opportunistic or quietist politics – followed two other broad strategies. One was to reform and modernize, the other was to rehabilitate Islam and return to the fundamentals. The creation of nation states and national identities in these societies was accompanied by both reform efforts as well as the gradual emergence of militant Islamic movements challenging the political status quo.

Muslim Reformers

Modern calls for reform, like liberal and rationalist interpretations of Islam, trace their lineage in the intellectual history of Islam back to the eighth century C.E. and the Mu'tazelites, who relied on logic and attempted an allegorical, as opposed to a literal, reading of the scripture. Later luminaries, such as Al-Kindi (796–873), Zakariya Razi (865–925), Farabi (872–950), Avicenna (980–1037), Suhrewardi (1155–1191) and many others in Persia and the Arab world tried to reconcile Greek and Islamic philosophies. Later, great Andalusian thinkers such as Averros (1126–1198) and Ibn Arabi (1165–1240) strengthened the rationalist approach, and were among the forerunners of ideas that influenced the European Enlightenment.[5] Indeed, until the Age of Enlightenment, and despite the fact that the Islamic world had begun to decline by the fifteenth century, as Meddeb argues, the developments in both Europe and the Islamic world paralleled each other. However, with the beginning of the Enlightenment, Europe advanced ahead of all other civilizations.[6]

With European expansionism and colonialism, much of the Islamic world came under the dominance of European powers and, in each of the three countries under examination, we find powerful liberalizing, modernizing currents aiming to reform Islam and adapt its adherents to the new society that was emerging. In India, early Muslim reformers such as Mirza Ghalib (1797–1869), the great Indian Shi'i poet, and Syed Ahmad Khan (1817–1898) initiated reforms and called for modernism.[7] The latter sought a 'Muslim Renaissance,' calling for Western education and a move away from traditional religious education led by the backward-looking *ulama*. The graduates of Aligarh Muslim University, founded by Syed Ahmad Khan, formed the bulk of the new Muslim middle classes that later came to play a significant role in the movement for independence and the creation of and subsequent politics within Pakistan and India. His modernizing politics, however, were neither appreciated by the *ulama*, nor could they attract a large

following in a still largely rural society.[8] If in late 19th century British India, the minority status of the Muslim community within the pre-dominantly Hindu sub-continent and Sir Syed's clear recognition that Muslims were falling behind in their adaptation to the challenges of modern life relatively to Hindus, gave his politics a certain pro-British and pro-Western bias. By the early 20th century, such biases were discarded in sub-continental reformist and modernist politics. Mohammad Iqbal (1877–1938), the prominent poet, philosopher, and political figure, more closely resembled the modernism emerging in the Islamic world beginning in the late 19th century.[9] He and other founders of the Muslim League, which later established Pakistan, were mostly secular Muslim modernists.

In Iran, Sayyid Jamal al-Din Assadabadi, known as al-Afghani (1838–1897), vigorously sought to revitalize Islam and Muslims for the new challenges. This prolific Iranian Shi'i scholar and activist, and the founder of Pan-Islamism, became the most influential proponent of Islamic modernism. However, unlike his contemporary Syed Ahmad Khan in India, his modernism was clearly anti-imperialist and his pan-Islamism based on the idea that the unity of Muslims would increase their power against the Europeans. He also approved the use of violence to push colonialists out of the Islamic world. He emphasized the need to reform and reinterpret Islam, and to adjust it to modern conditions. During the 1905–1911 Constitutional Revolution,[10] other Muslim reformers in Iran, such as Mirza Hussein Na'ini and Mulla Abdol-Rasssul Kashani, engaged in theoretical arguments about the relations between religion and the state.

In Egypt, the most prominent reformer was Muhammad Abduh (1849–1905), the Egyptian jurist/scholar who later became the grand mufti of Egypt. He was a staunch modernist and a stronger proponent of reform. Abduh introduced Western sciences and thought into the curriculum of the influential Al-Azhar University, a move that angered the traditional *ulama*. While calling for a return to the fundamentals of Islam, he emphasized the need for reinterpreting the Qur'an, warning his followers not to imitate their forebears in interpreting the holy book, and to use 'reason and reflection' in its interpretation.[11] Abduh's follower, the Syrian Rashid Ridha (1865–1935) espoused modernist ideas, but gradually shifted to conservatism along the lines of the Hanbalite school; he supported the Wahhabi movement in Arabia and later influenced radical fundamentalists such as Hassan al-Banna and the Muslim Brotherhood.

Whatever their differences, the most important and consistent component of the teachings of the Muslim reformers was that Islam was in harmony with modern sciences, and that Muslims could adapt to modernity and still keep their faith. Whether they were pro-Western or anti-imperialist, they all subscribed to its modern ideals and argued either that they were, or could be made, compatible with the Muslim intellectual and political heritage. Ironically, however, it was the expansion of West's influence in the social, economic and political aspects of life in Islamic societies that, directly and indirectly, increased the power of obscurantist forces and diminished that of these reformers. Given continued Western domination, suppression, and other setbacks, the Islamic reformers could not easily attract more followers, and in the process lost many of their supporters to more radical perspectives.

One may briefly review the strong impact of colonial and imperial politics on the Middle East and the Indian subcontinent. The British occupation of Egypt in 1882 culminated in the suppression of a nationalist movement that could have been a prelude to the formation of an independent country and a fledgling democracy.[12] Later, in 1919, the British arrested the members of the Egyptian nationalist delegation who had supported the British war efforts, exiling or detaining them. This led to major strikes and riots throughout Egypt. One of the students participating in the riots was Hasan-al-Banna, who in 1928 founded the Muslim Brotherhood, one of the most widespread and influential radical Islamic movements.[13]

In the more complex environment of pre-dominantly Hindu India, despite the pro-British policies of some Islamic reformers, particular British actions and, more importantly, the general results of colonial rule, undermined reformers' influence among the Muslim masses. Examples of actions particularly offensive to Muslims included the brutal suppression of the 1857 rebellion and the exile of the last Mughal emperor, the creation of the Durand Line in 1893, after being defeated twice in Afghanistan, to divide Afghanistan and India and intentionally cutting through the lands of the Pushtun tribes and forcing Indian Muslim troops to fight against their co-religionists in Turkey during World War I.[14] More importantly, however, British rule rested on the empowerment of traditional obscurantist Islamic clerics in large parts of social life, including education and family law, and retarded the spread of education in the sub-continent more generally. The vast majority of the sub-continent's Muslims remained rural and uneducated. Although the movement for Pakistan was, as already pointed out, led by secular forces, they originated form territories that remained, after partition in 1947, in India, while the Muslim League's hold over the territories which became Pakistan was very weak.[15] It was not surprising, therefore, that British India's Muslims became a breeding ground for radical fundamentalist movements such as the Jama'at-e Islami. Established by Abul Ala Mawdudi in 1941, it subsequently played a very important role in the subcontinent, particularly in Pakistan, and in Afghanistan.[16]

Though Iran was formally independent, Britain's involvement in the country's affairs began with its desire to stem Tsarist and later Bolshevik influence there and the contemporaneous discovery of oil in the early years of the twentieth century and the concessions on it gained by British companies. Decades later, in 1951, a democratically elected parliament voted to nationalize the AIOC (Anglo-Iranian Oil Company), and called on Dr. Mohammad Mossadegh to form a new government. In 1953 the Americans, promised a good share of Iranian oil by the British, orchestrated a *coup d'etat* that toppled Mossadegh's nationalist government.[17] Mohammad Reza Shah Pahlavi, who had fled the country, returned to Iran, and with the help of American 'advisors,' the CIA, the Mossad (Israeli secret service), and SAVAK (the shah's own secret police), began a brutal dictatorial rule that lasted 26 years. During this period of the shah's rule, which was associated with authoritarian modernizing and westernizing reforms, liberal tendencies came to be associated with authoritarianism as well as imperialism. The Americans even went so far as to humiliate him, demanding capitulation-type immunity from prosecution for over 50,000 American advisors in Iran. Not surprisingly, the people

were against this sort of authoritarian yet craven regime and with the suppression of progressive political forces, they soon became hostage to clerical ones: Seyyed Ruhollah Musavi Khomeini, by then a middle-ranking cleric, had scolded the shah for granting the humiliating privilege to the Americans. He was also against land reform and women's suffrage. Sent into exile, he was to return during the 1979 Iranian revolution that brought a radical Islamic regime into power.

The Cold War had turned most of the countries of the Middle East into pawns in the hands of the superpowers. The area became an integral part of American and Soviet global politics. The establishment of the state of Israel, the plight of Palestinians, and the successive Arab–Israeli wars were additional sources of tensions. The unconditional support of Israel and the protection of conservative, oil-rich Arab states by the United States angered succeeding generations of Muslims. The disastrous defeat of the Arab countries in the Six Day War in 1967 disillusioned and humiliated large numbers of the youth of these societies who had put so much hope in the flawed developmental nationalisms of the Nasserist and Baathist regimes. Liberal Islamists and reformers now had less and less of a chance to compete with the rising tide of radicalism. The failure of modernization programs and the suppression of secular forces, particularly the left, as discussed below, further contributed to the emergence of Islamic radical movements.

Radical Islamism

If Muslim reformers attempted to re-found Muslim societies for the modern age in secular and rational thinking, a politically more powerful and potent – because vastly more popular – set of alternatives was proposed by radical Islamists who sought the way forward in the faith itself. In Egypt, Hassan Al-Banna (1906–1949) had come to the conclusion that the weaknesses and humiliations of Islamic societies stemmed from their deviation from 'true' Islam, and he called for the return to the practices of early Muslim rulers. He considered Western civilizations immoral, materialistic, and individualistic, and believed that their influences had had a negative impact on Islamic societies. The Muslim Brotherhood, which he founded, waged violent campaigns against the British, and also against the secular Egyptian modernists. In the 1930s, Al-Banna even flirted with the corrupt royal court of Farouk in an effort to ban secular political parties. In the early 1940s, the Brotherhood established the 'secret apparatus,' and in 1948 they assassinated the prime minister. In retaliation, the police in 1949 assassinated Al-Banna.

When a more popular phase of politics began in Egypt as the monarchy collapsed and the Free Officers came to power under Gamal Abdel Nasser, the popular space was for a time fiercely contested between the secular nationalist forces of Nasser and the Brotherhood. Initially supportive, the Brotherhood soon came up against the realities of this competition as Nasser's authoritarian rule violently eliminated many of his potential rivals, including the secular left and liberals, as well as the Muslim Brotherhood in 1954. Sayyid Qutb (1906–1966), the most significant thinker of the Brotherhood, was sent to 'camp,' where he secretly wrote *Signposts*, one of the most important reference books for many radical Islamists. He maintained that the Muslim world, as in the time of Jahiliyya

(Arabia before the revelation to the Prophet), had become un-Islamic, and he called for establishing the sovereignty of God through the overthrow of government and its replacement with an Islamic regime based on Shari'a. Qutb considered Western civilization a complete failure, and was delighted when in his research he came across the works of Alexis Carrel (1873–1944), the French Nobel Prize–winning biologist—and later a Fascist collaborator—who had painted a gloomy picture of Western civilization and the Enlightenment. As Choueiri notes, Carrel's notion of 'la barbarie' exactly fit Qutb's notion of Jahiliyya.[18] Qutb shared much of Carrel's biological and essentialist views, including those regarding the 'inferiority' of women. He was also impressed and influenced by another fundamentalist from the Indian sub-continent, Abul Ala Mawdudi, thus creating a sort of bridge between the two radical Islamist movements: the Muslim Brotherhood and the Jama't Islami.

Nasser released Qutb from jail in 1964, but when his underground network of terrorist cells was found to be preparing for a series of assassinations and acts of sabotage, he was tried and sentenced to death along with other Brotherhood leaders. Despite brutal suppression, the Muslim Brotherhood survived, but divisions within it took it in different directions. Some resorted to mild reformism and parliamentary politics, some chose seclusion, and others moved towards more radicalism, creating a variety of terrorist organizations.[19]

The most important current of radical Islamism to emerge from the Indian sub-continent was established by Abul-Ala Mawdudi (1903–1979) in the form of the Jama'at-e Islami in 1941. Mawdudi advocated an interpretative reading of Islam aimed at the mobilization of Muslims towards the creation of an Islamic state. He emphasized, however, the Islamization of society *before* the creation of the Islamic state: 'If the state were Islamized before society, then the state would be compelled to resort to autocracy and impose its will on an unwilling and unprepared population…'[20] However, as Moghissi rightly suggests, this seemingly Gramscian concern for legitimacy in the relations between civil society and political society cannot be taken seriously when we observe Mawdudi in practice.[21] While he was against the traditional *ulama*, he joined ranks with them to demand an Islamic constitution for Pakistan, something that the secular-minded Muslim League founders were trying to avoid. To pressure the new government of Pakistan, he singled out a Muslim religious minority, the Ahmadiyas, and mobilized the masses against them, causing major riots. Through this Fascistic strategy, repeated again and again, Jama'at succeeded in incorporating many of its conservative Islamic demands into the constitution, and stood firmly in the way of any progressive reforms. Mawdudi eventually became a senior statesman in the brutal military regime of General Zia-al Haq in the late 1970s.

In Iran, the authoritarian modernization programs of Reza Shah (1925–1941), including the forcible unveiling of women, had angered the clerics. Their reaction led to brutal suppression, including a bloody assault by the police in 1935 on a holy mosque, in which many clerics were killed and wounded. In 1941, after the removal of Reza Shah by the allied forces and the political vacuum thereby created, Navab-Safavi (1924–1956) founded Feda'iyan-e Islam organization, with the aim of re-Islamizing Iranian society.

Among other things, he called for the application of Islamic laws and punishments, the re-veiling of women, segregation of the sexes in schools and workplaces, and the execution of those who were against Islamization.[22] The adherents of Feda'iyan-e Islam began assassinating not only top officials, including two prime ministers, but also secular intellectuals—most notably the prominent historian, Ahmad Kasravi. Although they were later brutally suppressed by Muhammad Reza Shah's regime and Navab-Safavi and three of his associates were executed in 1956, their followers regrouped and came to play a significant role in pressuring the traditionalist *ulama* to support Khomeini and in mobilizing the powerful bazaar merchants during the Iranian revolution of 1979.

The Muslim Brotherhood, Jama'at Islami, and Khomeinism, along with other major radical Islamic movements, were founded in the 1930s and 1940s. However, the period of their most rapid growth came only decades later, when the developmental nationalisms (in Iran's case, for the most part an especially authoritarian and repressive one) began to fail, as much economically as politically. Despite many differences in the patterns of social and economic development in the three countries under study, the outcomes of the period of developmentalism were more or less similar. These included rapid urbanization (less for Pakistan); rapid population growth; development of a new, salaried middle class; a growing gap between rich and poor; the growth of shantytowns and a lumpen proletariat; and, at the political level, growing authoritarianism along with expanding repressive apparatuses. The failure of modernization programs and developmentalist policies carried out by inefficient and corrupt state bureaucracies led to growing economic and social problems and political unrest, particularly among the youth, who constituted roughly 55 per cent of the population in these societies.

Add to this the failure of other political forces, the left, and the nationalists to provide popular alternatives to radical Islamic fundamentalism. The left, equipped with a powerful ideology and radicalism, attracted a growing number amongst the newly educated middle classes, particularly in Iran and Egypt. Universities were the main domains of political activity under the leadership of socialist and communist students. Considering the left's anti-imperialism, anti-capitalism, and anti-authoritariaism, it not only came under attack by the repressive regimes, but also by other opposition forces, including nationalists and liberal Islamists. In fact, governments seemed much more fearful of the challenge from the left than of that coming from the radical Islamists. The brutal suppression of the left only meant that radical Islamic students and their organizations could flourish and expand unopposed.

Equally tragically, in some cases the left was responsible for its own demise. With strong links to the Soviet Union, parts of the left acted as arms of Soviet foreign policy. Obvious examples are the Tudeh Party in Iran and the self-dissolution of the Egypt Communist Party in the wake of Nasser's nationalism. On the other side of the leftist spectrum were the ultra-radical organizations that followed extremist projects without considering the actual realities of their societies. The best case in point was the Afghan Communists' coup d'etat against Daud Khan in 1978, and the subsequent forceful implementation of unworkable radical reforms by the Taraki government. Although this was a response to secret operations by the U.S. in Afghanistan, with the help of Pakistan

and the fundamentalist mujahedeen – a fact now admitted by the American authorities – nonetheless it was a mistaken move by the left that led to other coups and to the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, with disastrous consequences for the Soviet Union, for Afghanistan, for the region and the world.

It is also important to note that developmental nationalist regimes in Pakistan (where it was weakest)[23], Egypt, and Iran, despite their varying characteristics, were all less fearful of radical Islamists and, formed as they were by national capitalists and the new upper-middle classes, more fearful of leftist radicalism. Liberal Muslim reformers were also more concerned about the left and less about the radical Islamists, whom they thought were closer to them ideologically. Hence, when the left was suppressed by dictatorial and undemocratic regimes, these opposing forces either remained silent or openly supported the suppression.

Moreover, whenever the nationalist governments were faced with a crisis or entangled in ethnic and other national conflicts, they would resort to the tenets of Islam and seek the support of the Islamists.[24] In Iran, Mossadeq and his National Front maintained a strong link with and sought the support of the clerics led by Ayatollah Kashani, who at the critical hour of the CIA coup, left Mossadeq and sided with the military and the shah. In Pakistan, the developmental nationalist military regime of General Ayub Khan, had initially taken power to push back Islamic fundamentalist encroachments, and had put many of the agitators in jail, but when faced with the conflicts in Kashmir, Khan begged Mawdudi, the leader of the fundamentalist Jama'at Islami, to declare a jihad against India. Later, when the Islamist mujahedeens' plot against Dawud Khan failed in Afghanistan and they fled to Pakistan, Prime Minister Zulfikar Ali Bhutto gave the conspirators sanctuary and supported their war in Afghanistan. In Egypt, the decline of developmental nationalism which had already begun before the presidency of Awar Sadat was clearly signalled in his appeasement of the Muslim Brotherhood and re-legitimization of its political activities. Indeed, there are numerous cases of dictators in Iran, Egypt, and many other countries of the region appeasing Islamists in order to maintain their own power. Short on the resources of legitimacy, they resorted to those of Islamism, more congenial to their increasingly conservative purposes, and suppressed the left and women's movements. However, in doing so, it soon turned out, they were riding a dangerous tiger. The Shah of Iran fell in a revolution that Ayatollah Khomeini came to lead; Zulfikar Ali Bhutto was hanged in Pakistan by a brutal Islamist general; and Anwar Sadat was assassinated in Egypt by a group of fanatical Muslim radicals.

The appeasement of fundamentalists for short-term gains has not been limited to the authoritarian regimes and nationalist movements of the regions under consideration. It has also been true of foreign powers, particularly the United States. The most obvious cases include F. D. Roosevelt's deal with Ibn Saud to protect his kingdom in return for a monopoly over Arabian oil; Reagan's arms deals with the Khomeini regime with the aim of releasing hostages in Lebanon (the Iran–Contra Affair); and before that, the U.S.'s quiet endorsement of Islamists at the time of the 1979 revolution because of their fears of a leftist revolution. In Afghanistan, one notes the Reagan administration's support of the

mujahedeen and Bin Laden in Afghanistan, along with the CIA's direct support of the Islamic international brigade against the Soviets; Clinton's affair with the Taliban with the hope of building oil pipelines for Unocal;[25] and George W. Bush's collaboration with the Islamist Northern Alliance (comprising ex-mujahedeen).

Ideologies and Social Bases of Radical Islamisms

Radical Islamisms, not only gained strength in the context of failed developmentalisms, their aspirations and demands were strikingly similar to those of cultural nationalisms elsewhere. Though articulated in terms of an ostensibly universal and trans-national discourse, Islam, in reality, there were distinct national versions. They all believed that Islamic societies had been corrupted by Western cultures and values, as well as by foreign domination; to solve this problem, they advocated a return to the imagined practices of the Golden Age of Islam, eliminating the existing political regimes, and establishing an Islamic state based on Shari'a laws.

The most fundamental demand of all radical Islamists was the establishment of Islamic states. Since the linkage of religion and politics is considered to be stronger in Islam than in other religions, it bears a little examination. The Prophet himself was both religious leader and head of the Islamic state, as was the case with the four Rashidun caliphs. In the early stages of the religion, the relations between the perceived pious ruler and the *umma* were clear, but such a clear alignment of religion and politics was never experienced again. Muslim thinkers seem to agree that the ruler, or caliph, should apply the Qur'anic rules in order to be considered legitimate; the question, however, has been how to achieve this. At least four different interpretations of the relationship between religion and state have evolved in the Islamic world and that radical Islamism represents only one of these four.

The first interpretation contends that the ruler should be guided by the juris-consults, the learned *ulama*. For centuries, the vast majority of traditionalist establishment clerics in both the Sunni and Shi'i worlds have followed this perspective. In practice, this has meant the collaboration of spiritual leaders with political leaders.

The second interpretation, in sharp contrast to the first, believes that the *ulama*, rather than advising a sovereign, should issue a fatwa (a juridical ruling based on *Shari'a*) for a jihad (holy war) against him. The reference here is Ibn Taimiyya, the fourteenth-century Syrian who issued a fatwa against the sovereign appointed by the Mongols. The more extreme versions of radical Islamism, such as the Fedai'yan-e Islam and the mainstream of Islamic regime in Iran inspired by Khomeini, the jihad faction of the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt, the Taliban in Afghanistan, and most other new Islamic fundamentalist movements share this perspective. Ayatollah Khomeini invented a new twist on this perspective, claiming that until the appearance of Mahdi (Messiah), the politics in a Muslim society should be led by the learned juris-consults (*wilayat-e faqih*). Abu Ala Mawdudi and his Jama'at movement, without directly calling for a jihad, believed that sovereignty and legitimacy resides only in God.

The third perspective, while taking a stand against the sovereign, also believes that the *ulama* are itself is the source of corruption and should be eliminated. The Shukri faction of the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt and the Forgan group in Iran are representatives of this perspective.

Finally, the fourth interpretation posits that until the coming of the Mahdi, there cannot be any hope for the establishment of a just Islamic regime. Some adherents of this theory produced their own messiah, including the Druze in Fatemid Egypt, followers of Mahdism in Sudan, Bahais in Iran, and Ahmadis in India and Pakistan. Others, such as the Hojattieh in Iran, are waiting also for Mahdi's appearance. There are also those who have embraced isolationism and passive seclusion until the appearance of Mahdi.

Of all these interpretations, it is the second group, the radical Islamists, who have been most successful in creating a mass political base. They have extreme and violent wings and constitute strong and reactionary political force in each country. Their pre-modern even atavistic ideology stands in rather ironic contrast with their class basis.

The three main social currents within modern Islamic politics discussed here – the traditional establishment ulama, the liberal Muslim reformers, and the radical Islamist fundamentalists – have historically had different social bases. The traditional establishment *ulama*, although it does not form a single social class, are mostly well-to-do landowners or merchants, and usually have sizable incomes through the donations of followers or earnings from governments. These clerics have always had close relations with, and have represented, the merchants of the bazaar and the well-to-do, urban, traditional middle classes. In the absence of a church-like hierarchical institution, each member of the *ulama*, particularly in the Shi'i world, has his own circles and students (*talibs*). The tutees are paid a salary, by the ulama, and in addition to learning, they act as spiritual labourers in finding more followers in the city neighbourhoods and rural areas for the cleric concerned.[26] The faithful followers have to pay a part of their earnings to the ayatollah or imam of choice. The more followers a tutee can find among the Muslim masses, the higher would be his salary. The vast majority of the Muslim population in the societies under study follow the traditional establishment clerics, and considering the latter's conservative or quietist politics, there has historically been relative calm in different parts of the Islamic world. (It should be noted that the post-revolutionary *ulama* in Iran and the Taliban of Afghanistan, who came into power and became part of the new establishment, should not be confused with traditional establishment *ulama*. Radical Islamists and not quietist clerics, they became sovereigns themselves.)

Liberal Muslims who emerged among the professional middle classes and small capitalists from the beginnings of modernity in the Islamic world, advocated mild and tolerant interpretations of Islam compatible with modern structures of society, law and government. Their power bases were, and remain, mostly in government institutions and small to medium-sized industry and service sectors. They look for moderate and gradual reforms of government, are less keen to agitate for change, and have less chance of becoming mass-based movements.

Developmentalist strategies, the modernization of education, the growing role of the state and an expanding bureaucracy, as well as a degree of industrialization and urbanization, vastly expanses the size of the salaried middle classes in these societies and, with the failures of developmentalism in these societies, new currents began to emerge within this expanded class. University students and graduates were now attracted to the secular left, liberal Muslim activists, and radical Islamist movements. However, in political contexts already described, attractions to radical Islamism increased.

In radical Islamic movements the new salaried middle classes join forces with recent rural migrants, the lower echelons of the traditional urban middle classes, such as shopkeepers and small retailers, and the lumpen proletariat occupying the growing shantytowns surrounding large cities. With further deterioration of social, political and economic conditions, a growing number of these strata have become attracted to radical religious organizations, mostly through university students or graduates, or seminary students.

In contrast to the traditional establishment *ulama*, who have direct access to the masses of the faithful but do not normally want to mobilize them, and unlike the liberal Muslim activists, who neither have access to nor the intention of mobilizing the masses, the third group of radical Islamists aims directly at the mobilization of the masses in order to change the *status quo*. To attract supporters and sympathizers, its members establish and operate schools and clinics, and turn mosques into multi-purpose social service organizations.[27] The fundamentalists' populism and simplistic explanations for the causes of problems in Muslim societies, along with their bold and violent tactics against the dictatorial regimes of their countries and the interests of foreign powers, have made them increasingly popular.

As long as their activities are limited to the middle classes, radical Islamists cannot pose a very serious threat to the status quo, except when resorting to terrorist activities. But when and if they succeed in mobilizing the masses, then they can violently move towards establishing their perception of Islamic states. In more recent times, in addition to their radical and violent politics, the fundamentalists have resorted wherever possible to democratic processes, and have participated in elections. By doing so, they have created new paradoxes: of inherently anti-democratic forces, participating in, and claiming to respect, democratic politics. If they win the elections but are barred from forming a government, they become more violent. The most vivid example of this phenomenon was in Algeria, where since the 1991 elections, tens of thousands of innocent citizens have been slaughtered by radical Islamists and by the Algerian government, which openly turned into a police state.[28] On the other hand, if the fundamentalists are allowed to form a government, either through an electoral process or through revolution or civil war, they can easily use their powers to inflict their religious zealotry, intolerance, and disrespect for human rights and democracy on the societies they come to dominate.

The intimate connection between imperialism as Islamist politics is evident not only in the failures of developmentalism but also in the rise of surge of radical Islamism in their wake. The growing internationalization of conflicts in Islamic societies, particularly after September 11, the invasion of Afghanistan and Iraq and their continued disastrous and failed occupations, the continued Israeli occupation of the West Bank, Gaza and East Jerusalem and the unresolved Palestinian situation, have provided new breeding grounds for radical Islamists. The continued political repression imposed on Muslim-majority societies by authoritarian regimes has also pushed many of these radicals out of their home bases. One impact of the heightened confrontations between Islamic radicals and their opponents has been the increased sufferings of the majority of people in Muslim-majority countries, and the further deterioration of the social, political and economic conditions of their lives. This situation in itself provides an ideal opportunity for the radical Islamists to recruit new followers and propagate their cause. The continued suppression of all other oppositional forces, particularly of secular progressive elements by authoritarian regimes, further enhances the fortunes of Islamic fundamentalist organizations, making them the only effective oppositional force in many Middle Eastern societies. It seems obvious that the mobilizing power and populist appeal of radical Islamists' can be challenged effectively only if the social, economic and political factors that give rise to these movements in the first place are eliminated.

Notes

[1] W. Montgomery Watt, *The Formative Period of Islamic Thought*, Oxford, 1998, p. 2.

[2] For example, an authoritative source on Shi'a Islam identifies over 200 sub-sects. See M. J. Mashkoor, *Tarikh-e Shi-eh va Fergheh-hay Eslam ta Gharn Chaharom (History of Shi'a and Sects of Islam until Fourth Century)*, Eshraghi Publishers, Tehran, 2000.

[3] See A Al-Azmeh, *Islams and Modernities*, London: Verso, 1996.

[4] See among othersm Beverley Milton-Edwards, *Islamic Politics in Palestine*, I. B. Tauris, 1999, pp.151-152.

[5] For an excellent exposé of the evolution of rationalist interpretations in Islamic thoughts as opposed to literalist interpretations, see Abdelwahab Meddeb, *The Malady of Islam*, English translation, Basic Books, 2003, pp.22–40.

[6] Abdelwahab Meddeb, *Malady of Islam*, pp. 26, 63.

[7] See, A. Schimmel, *Islam in the Indian Sub-continent*, E. J. Brill, Leiden-Koln, 1980, p. 186.

[8] H. Alavi, "Pakistan and Islam:Ethnicity and Ideology," in F. Halliday and Hamza Alavi, *State and Ideology in the Middle East and Pakistan*, Monthly Review Press, 1988, pp. 89, 97-105. Alavi explains how the Muslim League, in order to gain the vote of Muslims in villages, gave serious concessions to the Muslim feudals who were controlling the populous rural areas.

[9] For Iqbal, see A. Schimmel, *Islam in the Indian Sub-continent*, E. J. Brill, Leiden-Koln, 1980, p. 223–232.

[10] F. Adamiat, *Ideology Jonbesh-e Mashrouteh dar Iran (The Ideology of the Constitutional Movement in Iran)*, Payam, Publishers, Tehran, 1976, pp. 229–249.

[11] Y. Haddad, "Muhammad Abduh: Pioneer of Islamic Reform," in A. Rahnema (ed.), *Pioneers of Islamic Revival*, Zed Books, 1994, p. 47.

[12] See, among others, A. Hourani, *A History of the Arab Peoples*, Faber and Faber, London, 1991, pp.282–283, and D. Hopwood, *Egypt: Politics and Society, 1945–1984,* Unwin Hyman, London, 1990, pp. 9–12.

[13] H. Munson, *Islam and Revolution in the Middle East*, Yale University Press, New Haven, 1088, p. 76.

[14] A. Schimmel, *Islam in the Indian Sub-continent*, E. J. Brill, Leiden-Koln, 1980, p. 216, 218.

[15] See Ayesha Jalal, *Democracy and Authoritarianism in South Asia*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995.

[16] For a detailed account of Jama'at-i Islami, see S.V.R Nasr, *The Vanguards of the Islamic Revolution: The Jama'at-I Islami of Pakistan*, University of California Press, 1994.

[17] The shares of the AIOC were distributed thus: BP, 40 per cent; five American "sisters," 40 per cent; Royal Dutch-Shell, 14 per cent; and CFP of France, six per cent.

[18] Y. M. Choueiri, *Islamic Fundamentalism,* Twayne Publishers, Boston, 1990, pp. 140–149.

[19] For Muslim Brotherhood, see, G. Kepel, *Muslim Extremism in Egypt: The Prophet and Pharaoh*, University of California Press, Berkeley, 1993; David Commins, "Hasan al-Banna," in A. Rahnema, *Pioneers of Islamic Revival*, Zed Books, 1994; and C. Tripp, "Sayyid Qutb: The Political Vision," in A. Rahnema, *Pioneers of Islamic Revival*, Zed Books, 1994.

[20] S. V. R. Nasr, "Mawdudi and Jama'at Islami: The Origins, Theory and Practice of Islamic Revivalism," in A. Rahnema, *Pioneers of Islamic Revival*, Zed Books, 1994, p. 106.

[21] H. Moghissi, *Feminism and Islamic Fundamentalism: A Critique of Post-Modern Analysis*, Zed Press, Oxford University Press, London, 1999, pp. 69.

[22] See, A. Rahnema, F. Nomani, "Competing Shi'i Subsystems in Contemporary Iran," in S. Rahnema, S. Behdad, *Iran After the Revolution: The Crisis of an Islamic State*, I. B. Tauris, London, 1995, pp. 79–83.

[23] See Shaikh in this volume.

[24] H. Alavi, "Pakistan and Islam: Ethnicity and Ideology," in F. Halliday and Hamza Alavi, *State and Ideology in the Middle East and Pakistan*, Monthly Review Press, 1988, p. 106.

[25] For Unocal interests and competition with the Argentinean oil company Bridas, see A. Rashid, *Taliban: Islam, Oil, and New Great Game in Central Asia,* I. B. Tauris, London, 2002, Chapter 12; and P. Marsden, *Taliban, War, Religion and the New Order in Afghanistan*, Zed Books, London, 1999, pp. 129, 140.

[26] H. Moghissi, S. Rahnema, "Working Class and Islamic State in Iran," *Socialist Register*, 2001, p. 217.

[27] For example, see Q. Wiktorowicz, *The Management of Islamic Activism: Salafis, and Muslim Brotherhood, and State Power in Jordan*, State University of New York Press, New York, 2001.

[28] For the Algerian case, see F. Bourgat and W. Dowell, *The Islamic Movement in North Africa*, University of Texas, Austin, 1993.