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Beyond the Muslim Nation-States

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In no field of human endeavour is the present day Muslim more confused than in the field of political science. This confusion is at both the intellectual level and the level of the practitioners of the 'art' or the 'science' of politics: the politicians. (In this paper we are not concerned with the politicians, though we may have to refer to them and to their political systems.)

The confusion at the intellectual level is greatest among those least expected to be confused—the political scientists. The modern political scientist who is a Muslim is in great difficulty. He is a political scientist, with perhaps a doctorate in political science, a teaching post at a university, and even perhaps a few books to his credit. Yet the Muslim political scientist must ask himself a simple question: is he any different

from non-Muslim political scientists who have identical degrees, university posts, and publications? The honest answer is 'no'.

The catch lies in the phrase 'Muslim political scientist'. In actual fact the Muslim in the political scientist is independent of his academic discipline. There are, so to speak, two persons in one—a Muslim and a political scientist. The Muslim is the standard 'believer' in Islam, but his political science is non-Muslim. The Muslim 'faithful' and the non-Muslim political scientist live in the single individual side-by-side and are the cause of much confusion. And when this schizophrenic 'Muslim political scientist' sets out to pronounce on 'the political theory of Islam' and the 'the Islamic State', the confusion is worse confounded.

The roots of Political Science

Little more than fifty years ago, these paragons of wisdom, the professors of political science, were an unknown breed. The first of them were appointed in this century.¹ But when one asks what the subject matter of politics is, the immediate answer is the thoughts of Plato², Aristotle, Augustine, Aquinas, Machiavelli, Dante, Hobbes, Locke, Rousseau, Bentham, Marx and John Stuart Mill. Then there are the descriptions of great modern States—the United States, Britain, France, Germany, the Soviet Union and a few others. Finally, there is an extensive contemporary literature on analytical conceptualizations.

Looking at this list more closely, several questions arise. If, for instance, the 'father of political science' (Plato) wrote his *Republic* almost 2,400 years ago, where has the child been since? The answer, partly, is that the child was in church for several hundred years, and was then put through the Reformation and the Renaissance. It then had to come through the faculties of law, history and philosophy before being recognized as a discipline in its own right. Its twin sister, international relations, is still having some difficulty in being born.³

1. W. J. M. MacKenzie, *Politics and Social Science*, London: Pelican, 1967, p.57.

2. Plato is given the title of 'father of political science' and his book, *Republic*, is the first book of politics.

3. J. W. Burton, *International Relations: A General Theory*, Cambridge: The University Press, 1965, chapters 1 and 2.

This answer, however, is still not entirely satisfactory. The question of why the Church and the faculties of law, history and philosophy held the infant back for so long and then suddenly delivered it so quickly as a healthy child (which has in fifty years, which is no time at all in the context of 2,400 years, grown into a vigorous adult with a virile tendency to procreate) still remains. Why did this happen almost suddenly in the twentieth century? Why did it not happen in the eighteenth or nineteenth centuries, or why could it not wait for the twenty-first century? Why, oh why, in the twentieth century? Why exactly at this time? The answer to this question holds the key to a great number of mysteries. One of the possible answers is that the political science we now have was most *needed* at this time; hence its great success, great expansion, great recognition, great patronage and great following. Who needed it, and why?

A. J. P. Taylor, the celebrated English historian, has recently written:

Europe took a long time to get going. Its lead [over non-European civilizations] began only in the sixteenth century [the Muslims lost Spain]; *its triumph came only in the twentieth.*⁴

Taylor was reviewing *The Hutchinson History of the World*, by J. M. Roberts. Taylor becomes lyrical in Roberts' praise:

This is the unrivalled World History *for our day*. It extends over all ages and all continents. It covers the experiences of ordinary men as well as chronicling the acts of men in power. It is unbelievably accurate in its facts and almost incontestable in its judgements.

Taylor goes on to praise Roberts for 'holding the balance fairly between the different civilizations' in his 1,100 pages. He then lets out the secret:

...he [Roberts] cannot resist devoting most attention to the European civilization he know best *and to which he*

4. *The Observer*, London, December 19, 1976. My emphases throughout.

belongs. Over half of his book deals with the recent centuries when Europe took the lead.

Taylor does not regret this imbalance but adds: 'The reader will welcome this emphasis...'

Why is Taylor so confident that the reader will welcome this emphasis on the European civilization? Obviously because he knows that this is not history proper; this is the western view of history and will therefore be popular with the west. This is indeed why he calls it 'history for our day'. He thus tacitly admits that each civilization has to produce its own view of world history and other civilizations. No objectivity can therefore be attributed to his own judgements, let alone to those of his subject.

Let us stay with Taylor's view of history and accept, for the sake of argument, that Europe's lead began in the sixteenth century. He omits to tell us whose the lead was before then. We, the Muslims, happen to know but the historians of the west hide the fact carefully from their readers. The Muslim civilization remained dominant for more than a thousand years and the western civilization, as Taylor admits, did not in fact triumph until the twentieth century.

Once the triumph of the west had been finally accomplished and the Muslims removed from the stage of history, the west needed two types of intellectuals: historians who would confine Islam and Muslims to a few paragraphs and footnotes, and political scientists who would justify and rationalize the dominance that had been achieved. In this enterprise to falsify history and produce a secular view of man and his political development, the newly triumphant civilization of the west proceeded to invest huge human and material resources. A third plank of the same strategy was the Orientalist tradition of scholarship, instituted largely to infiltrate the remaining body of Islam and to scuttle it from within. The Christian missionaries also joined in the same enterprise and received rich rewards.⁵

5. Christians now admit that for more than a century 'many missionaries served the interests of the colonial power.' See the 'Statement of the Islamic Da'wah', Chambesy, June 1976, published in *Impact*, London, November 12-25, 1976.

It is now possible to see clearly the roots of (western) political science. These roots have not been allowed to spread of their own free will. They have not been allowed, for instance, to draw anything from Imam al-Ghazali, Ibn Taimiyya or even Ibn Khaldun. Instead, the roots of modern political science have been shielded carefully from contact with Muslims or Islam and instead been taken directly to the ancient Greeks, the medieval Church, and back to feudal, and later national Europe.

So, right up to our own times, the political philosophers of the west are still arguing such issues as the nature of man and trying to explain political behaviour in terms of the Christian doctrine of 'original sin'. We must bear in mind these contrived roots of political science. Western political science, western history, philosophy and the arts have all been contrived to serve the purposes of the western civilization.

One essential difference

This analysis of the background to modern political science prompts a question: if each civilization needs its own political science, how did the Muslim civilization, lasting for more than a millennium, manage without a political science of its own?

The answer is, in its own way, simple and yet complex. For Muslims generally and for Muslim intellectuals and thinkers in particular, political power and dominance were neither new and surprising nor in need of justification. For them, and for Muslim statesmen and administrators, political power was the very essence of Islam. They could not conceive of Islam or themselves outside the framework of a political system. To them political life was as natural as life itself; they took it for granted as they did sunshine, rain, air and the earth. They were like fish that did not have to stop to ask why water was necessary. Indeed, the *Sunnah* of the Prophet demanded the establishment of a political system, without which Islam itself could not be understood or practised. There was no need to rationalize, theorize or explain.

So long as political power lasted and the political framework for the expansion and protection of the Muslim State existed, Muslims

worried little that the office of the *khalifah* had become hereditary and, in essence, a monarchy. The ruler called himself *khalifah* and, though he was no longer a selfless ruler, he was still recognized and obeyed as *Amir al-Mumineen*.

This is in complete contrast with the idea of the separation of Church and State in the history of western political thought and development. Early Christians were organized, if they were organized at all, as a monastic order and not as political, military or civil units. Christians obeyed the Roman authority in virtually all matters. Ultimately, Church and State came into confrontation, with boundary disputes between the profane and the sacred. Islam, on the other hand, began by defying the existing authority, by organizing civil, military and administrative systems and, in the lifetime of the Prophet, by defeating the opposition and establishing the unchallenged supremacy of the new way of Islam. As Iqbal puts it:

In Islam the spiritual and the temporal are not two distinct domains, and the nature of an act, however secular in its import, is determined by the attitude of mind with which the agent does it. It is the invisible mental background of the act which ultimately determines its character. An act is temporal or profane if it is done in a spirit of detachment from the infinite complexity of life behind it; it is spiritual if it is inspired by that complexity. In Islam it is the same reality which appears as Church looked at from one point of view, and State from another. It is not true to say that Church and State are two sides or facets of the same thing. Islam is a single unanalysable reality which is one or the other as your point of view varies. The point is extremely far-reaching and a full elucidation of it would involve us in a highly philosophical discussion. Suffice it to say that this ancient mistake arose out of the bifurcation of the unity of man into two distinct and separate realities which somehow have a point of contact, but which are in essence opposed to each other. The truth, however, is that matter is spirit in space-time reference. The unity called man is body when you look at it as acting in regard to what we

call the external world; it is mind or soul when you look at it as acting in regard to the ultimate aim and ideal of such acting. The essence of '*tawheed*' as a working idea is equality, solidarity and freedom. The State, from the Islamic standpoint, is an endeavour to transform these ideal principles into space-time forces, an aspiration to realize them in a definite human organization.⁶

The above discussion and Iqbal's argumentation show clearly that the idea of State in Islam is fundamentally different from the idea of the modern nation-States. The two types of State are not the same: they have nothing in common. While Islam brings the State into existence as an instrument of Divine *purpose*, the nation-State comes into existence for precisely the opposite reason: to dismiss God and to replace Him with the 'national interest' as determined by human reason. Let us examine what one western political scientist has to say. W. T. Jones agrees with Bodin that the concept of sovereignty was unknown to Greek or medieval thinkers, and goes on:

The reason is that certain conditions arose at the beginning of the early modern period which necessitated a new theoretical schema. The schema which was finally worked out is based on the notion of sovereignty, and, since the same conditions survive today, the notion of sovereignty is still of the first importance. These conditions are, of course, the emergence out of the feudal political system of the national territorial State. This kind of political organization had to come into being; or, rather, the modern world would not have developed as it has—into a lay, industrial and capitalistic culture—had it not been for the creation of the national territorial State, which is at once an instrument and an effect of this development... They [Machiavelli, Bodin and Hobbes] see simply, but very clearly, that a supreme and absolutely powerful

6. Muhammad Iqbal, *The Reconstruction of Religious Thought in Islam*, Lahore: Ashraf, 1971, p.154.

ruler—a sovereign—is an indispensable condition of the new order of things.⁷

The Present Situation

We have now indicated some of the area covered by the conceptual jungle which is causing so much confusion in the political thinking of contemporary Muslims, including professional political scientists, politicians and also traditional *ulama* attempting to analyse and prescribe for the political ills of the *Ummah*.

The confusion, incidentally, is at the source—in western political science itself. There is, as yet, no agreement among the pundits of political science about the meaning of 'politics'. Though the word 'politics' originated with the Greek 'polis', it has acquired many new shades of meaning.

Definitions of politics vary from 'politics is a struggle for power' (Morgenthau), 'the study of influence and the influential' (Lasswell), to 'the authoritative allocation of values' (Easton).⁸ Bernard Crick settles for the trite comment that 'politics is politics', and quotes Isaac D'Israeli as having said that politics is 'the art of governing mankind by deceiving them'.⁹ The 'dirty game' image of politics and politicians persists throughout the world, including the west. Some politicians, once they have attained high office, have even attempted to put themselves 'above politics'. Others have tried to 'save the country from the politicians'. Statesmen are often advised 'not to play politics with the national interest'. This is hardly surprising in a situation where the highest form of political organization, the nation-State, itself does not recognize any moral values, except those of the profane world. Such

7. W. T. Jones (ed), *Masters of Political Thought*, vol. II, London: George G. Harrap, 1963, p.19. For the origins of the nation-State system in Europe, its universalization through colonialism, and its impact on non-European areas of the world, see Kalim Siddiqui, *Functions of International Conflict*, Karachi: Royal Book Company, 1975, especially Introduction and Chapter II, 'Political Legitimacy in the Third World.' See also R. Emerson, *From Empire to Nation*, Boston: Beacon Press, 1962.

8. Kalim Siddiqui, *Functions of International Conflict*, *op. cit.* See also Kalim Siddiqui, 'Is Politics Relevant?' in *Impact*, London, July 27-August 9, 1973.

9. Bernard Crick, *In Defence of Politics*, London: Pelican, 1964, p.16.

values are neither immutable nor universal. They are different from nation-State to nation-State, and in the same nation-State different values are often used in different situations depending on the 'national interest' involved in each situation. Not surprisingly, therefore, international relations between nation-States represent a struggle for power, by means of power, for the sake of more power.¹⁰

Enough has been said to make the central point about the current situation in the predominantly Muslim areas of the world today. It is simply that the Muslim world is now divided into nations and each nation has its own 'nation-State'. (Exceptions such as Palestine, Eritrea and Kashmir are under either foreign occupation or colonial rule.)

Muslim nation-States are essentially no different from all other nation-States. Few, if any, admit moral values, except as slogans. Some, like Pakistan, even fly a flag of convenience and call themselves 'Islamic Republic'. The fact, however, is that all nation-States are the product of the western civilization and its period of colonial dominance. Their purposes, structures and behaviour patterns are all alike, whether the nation-States happens to be in Europe (its 'mother' continent), or in Africa, Asia or America. The same analogy holds here as was advanced in the case of the Muslim political scientist, where the individual was Muslim but his political science 'non-Muslim'. In precisely the same way the countries are Muslim but their political structures—the nation-States—are non-Muslim. Nationalism is the very antithesis of Islam. We must, therefore, face up to the situation and admit the reality that now stares us in the face: that no political manifestation of Islam exists today. Indeed, this phase of history when the Muslim populations are parcelled into nation-States is, strictly speaking, a continuation of the period of European colonialism. Instead of having direct rule from Europe, Muslim countries are now ruled over by European institutions through local Muslim elites that share the European, secular and profane view of the word.¹¹ In a sense, then, we

10. The leading exponent of this view of international relations is Hans J. Morgenthau. See his *Politics Among Nations*, New York: Knopf, 1948 (Fifth edition 1973).

11. It was this view that led me to propose a model of the 'Islamic movement' in which Muslim States are merely sub-systems. See Kalim Siddiqui, *The Islamic Movement: A Systems Approach*, London: The Open Press, 1976. This paper is also an example of how an

are all Europeans, and we are still under a form of western colonialism. Indeed, the economies of Muslim 'nation-States' are all capitalistic and integrated into the international capitalist economy. International trade, aid, finance and insurance corporations are the modern versions of the old East India Company.¹² It is in this context, the universalization of the nation-State and the capitalistic culture, that we should view A. J. P. Taylor's claim that the triumph of the western civilization came only in the twentieth century. We are now 'independent' prisoners of the western civilization.

Towards a new Political Science

Muslim political scientists must now talk as a group of prisoners. They must define the scale and model of the prison in which they live. They must map the prison in detail. The three dimensions of this prison are social, economic and political. These dimensions are linked by intellectual corridors. The political scientists themselves are the leading exponents of their prison, as well as its victims. To plan and ultimately execute an escape from this all-encompassing 'open' prison, we may, for a while, have to behave like model prisoners and mix among our tormentors in a way that does not arouse their suspicion. To some extent it might even be possible to take the 'guards' into our confidence. They might even co-operate with us so long as we do not become a threat to their positions and leadership roles in the short-term.

We have got into this nightmarish situation through the cumulative effects of hundreds of years of neglect and the sins of commission and omission of our forefathers. We are not, therefore, required to get out of this bog of history in one jump; the most we can do is to build, or begin to build, a solid platform from which a future generation can launch its escape. We have got into the present morass by default, but we can escape only by design.

The first set of problems that confronts any team of design-engineers is conceptual. It is only after these have been cleared

analytical tool of modern political science might be used by a Muslim political scientist.

12. I have treated this thesis at length in a study of Pakistan. See Kalim Siddiqui, *Conflict, Crisis and War in Pakistan*, London: Macmillan and New York: Praeger, 1972.

that model-builders can proceed with experimentation. Perhaps a period of experimentation and, hopefully, success will yield increased confidence and greater human and material resources for the final assault on the overriding forces of history. The first stage, however, is largely, if not exclusively, one of removing the conceptual obstacles and shaping a bagful of new conceptual tools. Whether the whole enterprise gets off the ground at all and proceeds to the subsequent stages depends largely on how well the initial tasks are accomplished.¹³

It is clear that this first stage might be called one of 'education'. All educators must participate, whatever their field. Yet the political scientist has a central role to play. The Muslim historian does not need to write history as propaganda, nor does the Muslim political scientist need to theorize for the sake of appearing respectable and profound. In Islam there is a framework which bestows legitimacy on scholarship, especially theological scholarship, directed towards goal attainment.

The goals the Muslim political scientist sets himself have nothing to do with writing on the popular recent themes of 'the political theory of Islam' and 'the Islamic State'. Such literature as was needed on these themes has already been written.¹⁴ The goals that have to be set must be rooted in and derived from the present situation. As political scientists we know that the present generation of Muslim nation-States has not solved and is unlikely to solve any of the problems that now confront the *Ummah*. We must prepare our students and future generations for the time when the nation-State will be no more. We must look beyond the nation-State era. We must with our analysis prepare an intellectual climate which will look forward to the time when the nation-State will

13. In the second edition of this paper (1980), Dr Kalim Siddiqui added the following sentence at this point: 'Some of the initial difficulties have already been removed by the Islamic Revolution in Iran.'—Ed.

14. I am not convinced of the efficacy of this literature; I find it apologetic in tone. Authors who have written in this framework include such eminent figures as Maulana Abul Ala Maudoodi. It appears to me that these authors have tried to mould Islam into the framework of western political science. They ask who is the sovereign and come up with the answer 'Allah'. They then spend pages on this concept of sovereignty in Islam, although the fact perhaps is that the concept never occurred to earlier Muslim thinkers or rulers. But I am not qualified enough to challenge these authors or their literature. I am therefore confining my unease to this small footnote. Perhaps others will produce the evidence to show that I am right, or, better still, correct me.

be no more. Some will go of their own volition; others might have to be brought down. The danger, however, is that the present institutions, bad though they are, might collapse before we and our peoples are ready with an alternative form of political organization to replace them. Politicians cannot be expected to plan to replace themselves and their systems; the Muslim political scientist has no choice.

The recent political 'revivalist' movements among Muslims have failed to accomplish their desired goals. We need a number of dispassionate studies to try to discover why such movements as those of the Ikhwan and Jama'ate-e Islami failed. A number of possible reasons, or a combination of these, need to be examined. These must, of course, include their structures, leadership roles, 'styles', and other 'human' factors. But the greatest emphasis should be placed on the basic conceptual roots of these movements, their 'reading' of the situation they tried to tackle and the policies they pursued. For instance one would like to know whether the political party approach to change is acceptable? Was the Jama'at justified, conceptually or on the basis of convenience and expediency, in jumping to the conclusion that 'elections' could produce the desired result? What is the place of expediency when the available options are in conflict with the values and traditions of Islam? Can an 'Islamic movement' climb an un-Islamic ladder and hope to arrive at Islam? What, if any, 'compromises' are possible or desirable in a 'democratic' situation? Is the acceptance of the 'democratic' process in a nationalist-capitalist framework justifiable?

Another range of questions that must be asked concerns the social origins and relevance of the recent Islamic movements. Were these movements too 'middle class'? Did they represent, or appear to represent, the established sectional interests in their society? Did they or did they not identify themselves with the poorest and the weakest in their society? Did the need for funds drive the Islamic movements into the arms of influence of those who wished to maintain the economic/social *status quo* under the banner of Islam? Did the Islamic movements appear to support the capitalists in the dialogue for change? What lessons are there for a future Islamic movement to learn from past, recent and current failures? Another set of questions concerns the

'level of competence' of the Islamic workers and the nature and extent of their commitment and life-style.

Beyond the Muslim nation-States

The Muslim teachers of political science face a most challenging task. Initially, they must reveal to their students and a wider public the true nature of the nation-State and all its structures and functions. They have to develop a body of literature to prove that the nation-State cannot possibly solve any of the problems that now confront the *Ummah*. Contemporary history is full of data to drive this point home. The Muslim students of political science, indeed all students, must be made aware that they must look forward to and prepare for a time when the nation-State form of political organization will have disappeared.

But the passing of the nation-State, however desirable, must not be allowed to leave a vacuum or lead to disorder and anarchy, though some temporary imbalance during transition and fundamental change will be inevitable. The teacher of political science has to mould the mind of his Muslim students in a direction towards change. The political scientist, working among and with his students, has also to shape an overall strategy for change. He has also to produce operational models for change. The climate of opinion is to be so infused with the expectation of change that the coming of change will be welcomed and helped by Muslims everywhere.

Before that stage is reached, however, the Muslim political, economic and social philosopher has to produce an image of the future which makes the present unbearable. A new set of socio-economic political systems of Islam has to be shaped. These models should be so rationally convincing and attractive that a whole new generation of Muslims will struggle to bring them into being.

This means that the Muslim political scientist must also develop in himself and his students the qualities of body, mind and spirit that will be required in the next phase of history. If the nation-State goes, with it must also go the present style, social origin and function of leadership. Perhaps we will have to offer an entirely new or Islamic concept of leadership. Maybe the word 'leadership' would not apply to the active

workers in an Islamic social order; perhaps all members of the new order would so participate normally and naturally in the promotion of the collective good that the 'role' and 'function' of leadership would become diffuse and institutionalized at all levels throughout the society.¹⁵

It is, of course, impossible to foretell the future, but it would be negligent not to plan it. It is also important to be conscious and realistic about the time scale involved. It would be useful, for instance, to divide the 'future' into three parts: the short-term (next five years), the medium-term (next 20 years), and the long-term (20-30 years and beyond).

The processes of history are such that what is going to happen in the short-term is probably already beyond control or planning. The most that can be done over this distance is limited to marginal manoeuvres by top decision-makers. Few academics can possibly hope to influence events and their course in the short-term.

Over the medium-term the situation is not much better, though it improves as one gets into the latter part of the period. Though 'events' might still exercise a strong momentum of their own, it is possible to influence our 'response' to them. For instance, it may be possible to make our social, economic and political systems aware of a wider range of alternatives in determining their behaviour pattern. This would greatly improve the efficiency of these systems and the output per unit of resources might also improve dramatically. But in the 20-30 year range it should be possible to project a period of intense activity for the attainment of major intermediate goals; these goals will be of the type which might be called 'pre-requisites' for the ultimate triumph of the 'Islamic movement' over all other forces, internal and external. Just what form this triumph would or should take is itself a challenge to social scientists of the present time.

15. In the second edition of this paper (1980), Dr Kalim Siddiqui added the following sentence at this point: 'The style and content of Imam Khomeini's leadership point in the same direction.'—Ed.

What is incontrovertible is that only a major act of will and long-term planning can deliver the *Ummah* into the next phase of history that lies beyond the Muslim nation-States.