

Comparative Political Islam

Pluralism and Democracy in Egypt: A Perspective from Al-Azhar

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Islam..... A Religion & A Perspective Of Governance

Presented By: Mahmoud Ashour

- Spirituality in Islam does not restrict it to only considering and working for the Afterlife.
 - From the Islamic perspective, the best of Muslims are those who would work for their two lives simultaneously.
- Islam is a highly positive ideology and a perfect system for a perfect life, not just a spiritual creed that urges for worshiping and isolation.
- Islam calls for believing in Allah, His Angels, Books, Messengers and the Day of Resurrection but also gives way to handle daily life issues in wise/effective manner:
- Islam perceives the existence of a state governance system to be necessary, with the state carrying out rulings/penalties instead of individuals.
- Pays great attention to the poor/public welfare, declaring that the wealthy should donate certain calculated amounts of money (through taxes and alms-giving)
- Need government system for law enforcement and tax collection, as well.
- Islamic perspective of governance:
 - Ideologically inspired by the Glorious Qur'ān as the supreme constitution legitimating all rights, determining all duties, and laying down foundations to the nation's general framework
 - Make public consultation (Shūrā) the basement for handling affairs
 - Allah commanded the Prophet to consult the people not for the reason of simply getting their opinion but because it is obligatory on the part of the government that they consult its people on national concerns.
- The Islamic State has been aimed at maintaining the feelings of affection, brotherhood, kindness, and mercy in order to get rid of the "rich over poor," "strong over weak" chaotic ruling system that deprived the poor and women of human rights.

Ideal Humanism

- Islamic perspective of governance is humanitarian in all actions and behaviors
 - It undertakes the duty of achieving social solidarity among all subjects
- To achieve this decent standard of living:

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- Spread equality among Muslims and Non-Muslims
- Establish justice and fight oppression
- Provide rights and freedom for all within the frame of public interest and without violating others' freedom
- Securing the rights of the powerless from the powerful, and the rights of the poor from the rich
- Advocating knowledge and scientific research, eradicating ignorance, and providing equal chances for all citizens without partiality or discrimination.
- The form of equality advocated by Islam encompasses all citizens in regard to civil and political rights and duties before the law and courts. There is nothing superior to Law, and no social class is granted a separate set of courts and laws.
- The Islamic perspective opposes fanaticism, tribalism and regional sectarianism
 - Goes against whatever is likely to affect the nation's unity and undermine its power.
 - Considers those who advocate and promote fanaticism as non-believers.
- In the Islamic perspective of governance, officers of public authorities are elected from those of good manners, piety, and wisdom, as such qualities would help them undertake their duties in a proper way and avoid falling in the abyss of treason.
 - Sunnah traditions has shown that nominating the unqualified to public authorities is a facet of corruption that will occur towards the end of time.

Non-Muslims

- The Islamic perspective of governance is the holder of sovereignty on all subjects (Muslims and non-Muslims) whether under Muslim protection or asylum or involved in a treaty with Muslims.
- Dhimmis (non Muslims living permanently with Muslims) should respect Islamic rulings organizing financial transactions and accept the penal system in order to remain on equal footing with Muslims. In return, family issues shall be dealt with based on their religion.
 - Free to enjoy whatever permissible in their religion though potentially prohibited in Islam.
- Under the Islamic perspective of governance, the regime is requested to provide all protection to the dhimmis.
 - Prophet Muhammad stressed the necessity of looking after them and avoiding any harm to them. He said, "He who kills a non-Muslim protected by the power of a treaty shall never smell the fragrance of Paradise."
- Islam calls for absolute justice among all people, evident in many quotes from Allah reiterating the need to act justly.
- Historically, it is acknowledged that the Islamic perspective of governance used to maintain justice in all legislations and rulings and that non-Muslim subjects used to enjoy all justice in litigations with their Muslim counterparts.

Foreign Policy under the Islamic Perspective of Governance

- Islamic perspective of governance is basically humanitarian both in peace and wartimes.
- Relations with non-Muslim countries are based on peacefulness and security, rather than on warfare and fighting, unless Non-Muslim parties...
 - Plot against Muslims
 - Try to make Muslims give up their religion
 - Hinder them from spreading Islam

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- Attack their homelands and sacred places
- In such cases, Jihad becomes obligatory even on every individual who can undertake it in order to wash away in justice and repulse any aggression.
- Islam wants nothing from non-Muslims except withholding their evil from Muslims and it is forbidden to sever peaceful relations with non-Muslim nations as long as they do not assault Muslims.
- Islam has legitimized fighting to drive away any form of injustice and assaults, bring seditious acts to a halt, and stand up for the Islamic call.
- As long as a Muslim State's relations with others are based on peace and security, so the ruling Muslim regime shall have the right to:
 - Establish economic, commercial, health, and social relations with other nations for mutual interests
 - Exchange diplomatic delegates on the same level of counterparts
 - Work with other countries to reach good for all and comprehensive peace in practice of Allah's command
- The form of peace for which Islam calls is the one for the sake of which all countries work on equal footing to be in service of all humanity with dignity and strength, without vileness or disgrace.
- Islamic perspective of governance calls for keeping its promises, treaties and agreements made with other countries in times of peace and war, as long as the other party shows commitment.
- Treason is definitely forbidden by Allah, whether privately or publicly and on all levels.
- Through Muslim expansion, Islam was not spread by force, but rather was adopted due to its peacefulness and justice practiced by the Arabs.
- Despite violence being demonstrated against Muslims, they reacted peacefully and without bloodshed, preserving their duty of justice.

Paul Sullivan:

*** The following notes are the opinion of Dr. Sullivan and not the National Defense University.**

- political Islam with regional perspective
- contrarian comment: "Islam is good for many politicians, but many politicians are not good for Islam"
- Islam is a subtle, moderate religion with a complex book as its basis
- In order to read the Quran, one needs to be peaceful inside to understand it; if read when angry, one could get the wrong idea from it (read too much/little into it and take the wrong way)
- Worry that it will be abused by those with drives of power and money
- The "real Islam" is good and has a lot to offer but "street Islam" is a problem
 - "street Islam" are those trying to further personal motives
- People in the west confuse the street/distorted Islam for real Islam
- The "them and us" western viewpoint that exists will only lead to more violence/hatred
- To remedy the situation, on the Muslim side, proper leaders (not the people who put them in charge) must make proper decisions
- Tensions of chronic problems in Palestinian territories are part of the problem: Iran, Darfur, nuclear crisis in Iran, tensions of cartoon, bombings of mosques, etc.
- Extremists of ALL TYPES continue to bring on tensions and feed upon each other
- Politicians in east and west playing these situations for their benefits
- Leaders need to ensure people turn to the good Islam in time of need

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- False messages by street preachers distort the Quran/Islam and spread ignorance against Muslims and non-Muslims
- What do we see today?
 - Wrong ideas born from jihad increase
 - Unbalances continue to grow and influence youth
 - Political Islam as a growing force
 - Governments fail to fulfill hopes of people and with the people becoming more educated, frustrations grow at an even faster rate
- Examples:
 - Palestine: The corruption of leaders and the failure of peace processes lead to the Hamas victory
 - Need to move the resistance force into a leadership movement/force if want to succeed
 - Egypt: Growing Brotherhood
 - Egypt as a country should be wealthy and peaceful because of the resources, geographic position, people, etc. However...
 - Inequality is still a big issue, as well as economic problems, youth problems, and electoral problems
 - Morocco: The New King is trying to open society
 - People are left with large frustrations and feelings of hopelessness
 - That problem is fueled by the unemployment issue – the labor force keeps rising, yet no more jobs are becoming available

Abdul Karim Bangura:

- Essence of what people call political Islam (Gandhi)
 - First – ignore you
 - Second – laugh at you
 - Third – fight you
 - Fourth – you win
- The US has a policy against political Islam, but how is it defined?
- People are so excited about writing about political Islam but they have the wrong idea, that political Islam has an agenda of hatred and oppression
- We (the US) tend to support repressive government that makes democracy difficult
 - Economic strategies on these regimes make democracy difficult
- Two schools of thought on political Islam:
 - 1: culture talk
 - See Islam and the West in a collision course because they are such different cultures
 - Basic definition of culture though: no culture is monolithic
 - 2: world systems theory
 - Political Islam is dangerous to global capitalism
 - Obsolete argument = if these groups challenging status quo are so much in collision with capitalist powers, why would they challenge them?
- Why do these problems exist and what are solutions?
 - US doesn't completely understand what Islam is

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- Can not linguistically translate *din* (roughly translated as religion in English; English is insufficient to translate what al-Islam is)
- It's a way of life
 - Separation of church/state in US is not going to work in Islamic cultures
 - Until political Islam can separate church/state, a problem will exist
- Islam's connection to politics
 - *Tawhidd* – the belief that Allah alone is Creator, Sustainer and Master of everything that exists on earth
 - *Risala* – medium through which the law of Allah is brought down and received
 - *Kilifa* – means representation (humans are supposed to be the representatives of Allah here on earth)
- Why are people afraid if Muslims ascend to power, chaos will break loose?
 - People don't know enough about Muslims and juxtapose politics into teachings
- If Hamas is a “terrorist organization,” why not make it change its activity?
 - If not given money or food, their own people will jump on them
 - But if we try to squeeze them and make them focus on governing people, they'll see a different enemy
 - Work better with talking rather than confrontation
- Problems with the cartoons:
 - People having problems with cartoon are some of nicest people he's met
 - It's the way the news is reported
 - 36 more ways in Islam to protect human rights beyond internationally set standards, thus Islam is better for everyone than people think
- Islam is total way of life
 - Can't take “vacation's” to drink and limits speech only minimally, but nothing extreme and every society/ culture has their own rules what to do and not do-like in the United States not being able to yell “fire” in a crowded movie theater.