

STRUCTURE OF INTELLECTUAL TREND IN RECENT RESEARCHES ON 'ISLAM': AN APPROACH TO CONSOLIDATE THE EMPIRICAL STUDIES

By:

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Abstract

No other religion has become such a big controversial issue as Islam does. Islam has become a buzzword in the modern world, especially after 9/11. It is no more mere a religion; it has integrated a lot more political and social facets into it. Hundreds of intellectuals of different corners of the world have made themselves engaged in developing perspectives to explain political forms in Islamic world, Islamism, Islamic State, Jihad, Martyrdom or Shahadah and so forth. Though it may seem the researchers are involved in analyzing different aspects of Islam, integration is possible to understand it in a more comprehensive manner. This paper would provide a straightforward guideline to grasp most of the pertinent aspects related to the intellectual trends of the researchers on Islam in the last few decades.

Keywords: *Islamism, jihad, martyrdom, globalization, colonialism.*

Introduction

Tenets of Islam in the age of contemporary world have been flourishing beyond the regional boundaries and ethnic traditions that primarily attributable to modern technological advancement and development of the communication network. This has opened up a debate of whether Muslim individuals with their personal moral consensus should form the Islamic society, or political Islam with the tenets of *sharia* should control the state.¹ The simple issue has submerged with some radical problems as Islamic norms and values that have played a crucial role for the stability of the Muslim societies and has become the matter of disputes among the three *Abrahamic faiths*. Consequently, a new dilemma surfaced, whether Islam should continue to play the significant role that it has played for thousands of years to bind up the societies together, or it must limit itself to certain communities for the welfare of the people all around.² Further, he disputes intensified as consequences of some major historical shifts in the twentieth century and turned into clashes against Islam. The primary axis of conflict has

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¹ Ira M Lapidus (2002), *A History of Islamic Societies*, 2nd ed, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, p. 869.

² Johan H Meuleman (2001), *Islam in the Era of Globalization: Muslim Attitudes Towards Modernity and Identity = Islam Di Era Globalisasi: Sikap Umat Islam Terhadap Identitas Dan Kemodernan*, Seri Inis. Jakarta: INIS.

become in religious lines, particularly prevalent between Muslims and non-Muslims.³

The twentieth century witnessed the end of the Ottoman Period (1923), the establishment of the state of Israel (1948) due to the Zionist movement and the Balfour Declaration (1917) by the British Mandate.⁴ The recent incidents like the hostage crisis in Iran during 1970s, the war with Iraq (2003), the attack on the World Twin Tower (2001), the U.S. response towards the international terrorism from the 1960's onward and Israeli-Palestinian conflict for several decades made 'Islam' a central theme for decoding modern day conflict. Westerner's view of Islamic revivalism has become a converging point to fundamentalism and radical politics that reinforcing the perception of Islamic ideology as violent form of religion. Scholars from different fields, from the different corner of the world have tried to develop intellectual perspectives on political system, Islamism, Islamic State, Jihad, Martyrdom and so forth in an effort to provide a proper understanding of the modern complexities derived for, or against this religion. They involve themselves studying history, culture, politics, and ancient Muslim textual tradition to grasp all aspects of an inextricably complex modern social condition.

The inextricably multifaceted role of Islamic culture and tradition in formation and transformation of societies has been the chief concern for the social thinkers for centuries. This paper makes an effort to address the startlingly complex, intertwined and dynamic aspects of contemporary researches on Islam. In this effort, both past and present drifts of situations are analyzed, and key areas of debate are outlined. Certain questions are frequently aroused during the past few decades and the proper answers of those questions lie not only in the religious countenances of Islam but also in the historical context of the situation. What are the apparent facets of Political Islam in modern societies? Which one is the more evident form of politics than the others and why? Which model of rule is prescribed by the Quran and the Prophet? Is there any noticeable political-economic aspect in any Islamic countries? Why there is a problem with the forms of constitution and Islamic law? Are using coercion and violence always involved in Islamization? What will happen if any women of the west become Muslim and try to follow the Islamic dress code? Can modern form of urbanization be a part of Islamic culture? Why there is ever intensifying conflict among the west and Islamic countries? Who are Jihadis? How are they motivated to do such violent activities? The primary objective of this paper is to generalize the daunting complexities of recent Islamic religious and political developments to some systematically related categories and develop a convenient simplified interpretive scheme to provide answers.

³ Samuel P. Huntington (1993), "The Clash of Civilizations?" *Foreign Affairs*, vol. 72, no. 3, pp. 22-49.

⁴ Mohd Roslan Mohd Nor (2008), "Islamicjerusalem Under Muslim Rule: A Study Of The Implementation Of Inclusive Vision On The Region," *Journal of Al-Tamaddun*, Vol. 3, Issue 1, p. 187.

Discussion

The pertinent aspects of the debate lead to the overview of cradle of Islamic world and the ideological formation of Muslim nations particularly in the post-cold war world. The face of modern civilization is arguably assumed to be attributed to the consequences of 'Colonialism' and 'Globalization'.⁵ Colonialism has established the favor of parliamentary democracy in Islamic countries,⁶ and globalization led to a tolerant view towards the westerners in the Muslim world. This, however, heavily depends on the National and historical context of the countries involved in the process itself.⁷ On the contrary, the acceptance of Muslims by Westerners is an eventuality of the consequences of action linked with Islamization – the process of conversion to Muslim.⁸ This process may a result of 'moral regeneration', an Islamic cure for ruthlessness and ethical degradation.⁹ The 'asymmetry of development' among the Islamic World and Western countries in the present world scenario, is perhaps the consequence of 'Colonialism' and 'Globalization'.¹⁰ The rise of Islamic fundamentalism is conceivably the result of this uneven development between the Muslim and western countries.¹¹ Some scholars argue that suicide bombing is merely the public manifestation of the fundamentalists' activities shaped by the historical context and their personal experiences.¹² Islamic Fundamentalism reflects the desperation to reestablish 'Caliphate', the system of government based on the teachings of the Quran and the traditions of the Prophet.¹³

⁵ Akbar S. Ahmed and Hastings Donnan (1994), *Islam, Globalization, and Postmodernity*, London; New York: Routledge.

⁶ Abdullahi Ahmed An-Na'im (2006), *African Constitutionalism and the Role of Islam*, Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press. See also Masoumeh Banitalebi, Kamaruzaman Yusoff and Mohd Roslan Mohd Nor (2012), "The Impact of Islamic Civilization and Culture in Europe During the Crusades", *World Journal of Islamic History and Civilization*, 2 (3): 182-187.

⁷ Sallie A. Marston, Paul L. Knox, and Diana M. Liverman (2002), *World Regions in Global Context: Peoples, Places, and Environments*, Upper Saddle River, N.J.: Prentice Hall.

⁸ Howard M Federspiel (2007), *Sultans, Shamans, and Saints: Islam and Muslims in Southeast Asia*, Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press.

⁹ Berna Turam (2007), *Between Islam and the State: The Politics of Engagement*, Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, p.99.

¹⁰ Ahmed, Akbar S (2007), *Journey into Islam: The Crisis of Globalization*, Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institution Press. Mohd Abbas Abdul Razak (2011), "Globalization and its Impact on Education and Culture", *World Journal of Islamic History and Civilization*, 1 (1): 59-69.

¹¹ Meghnad Desai (2007), *Rethinking Islamism: The Ideology of the New Terror*, London: I.B. Tauris.

¹² Mohammed M Hafez (2007), *Suicide Bombers in Iraq: The Strategy and Ideology of Martyrdom*. Washington, D.C.: U.S. Institute of Peace Press.

¹³ Marc Sageman (2008), *Leaderless Jihad: Terror Networks in the Twenty-First Century*, Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press.

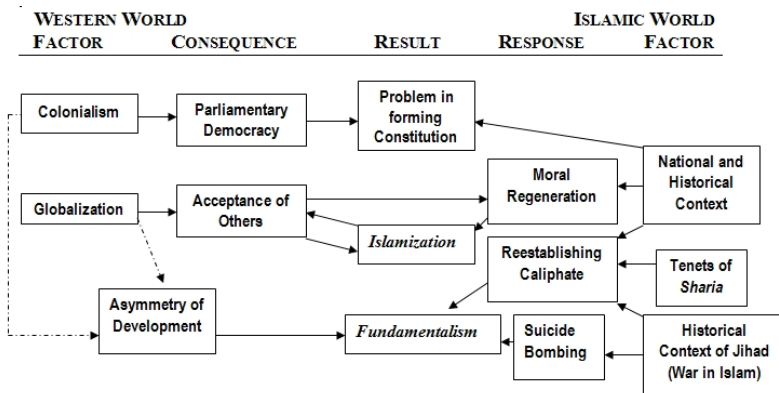


Diagram: Structure of Intellectual Trend in Recent Researches on ‘Islam’

Hence, the structure of recent intellectual trends can be elucidated assuming the following hypotheses: (1) Modern political models of Islam, either aggressive or peaceful in nature, are rather the outcomes of the historical context of colonialism, the perspective towards globalization and uneven development among the West and the Islamic countries than that of pragmatic Islamic culture and religious tradition; (2) Islamization, as a complex of theological concern, cultural phenomenon and alternative paradigm for social change, is a non-violent rather than a violent process of conversion that may lead to disparity of identity and segregation from society in the western countries; (3) Islamism is a diversified political ideology formed by the political context of the related nation states, reflecting the consequences of globalization and colonialism, and it has a conflict with the western ideology in general, and with the ideology of United States in particular; (4) contemporary forms of Jihad that emerged from a social context, is the violent demonstration of activities of a group of people whose goal is not the religious development of public life but the establishment of political state with a strict and aggressive non-tolerant system. These hypotheses would provide a straightforward guideline to grasp most of the pertinent aspects related to the intellectual trends of the researchers on Islam in the last few decades.

(1) Modern political models of Islam, either aggressive or peaceful in nature, are rather the outcomes of the historical context of colonialism, the perspective towards globalization and uneven development among the West and the Islamic countries than that of pragmatic Islamic culture and religious tradition.

The realms of religion and politics are tightly intertwined with each-other in several ways. Though the former is related to the private area of life and the later is to the public sphere, both have a great impact on each other. Politics in Islamic countries is strikingly different from the western countries. It has its own several models to rule the state. There are some noticeable political-economic aspects in some Islamic countries; most evidently, the form of constitution is a common

problem for Muslims. The governmental systems of the Muslim countries are very much related to their response towards globalization.¹⁴ Governing bodies of some Muslim countries are the 'religious entrepreneurs' who commoditize and personalize religious beliefs.¹⁵ Some Muslim countries manifestly believe that the *Sufi* traditions of Islam should be the focal point of their constitutions.¹⁶

Akbar Ahmed's *Journey into Islam* (2007) deals with the present ideological deformations of Islamic world. His multidisciplinary study profoundly relies on the interviews of the Muslims in eight Islamic countries, such as Turkey, Syria, Qatar, Jordan, Pakistan, India, Malaysia and Indonesia. While tracing the forms of governments and the facets of politics in Islam in modern societies, Ahmed finds that there are several different political models that he designates by the names of towns in India: (1) *Ajmer*, (2) *Aligarh*, and (3) *Deoband*. These three cities symbolize different interpretations of Islam that are applicable across the world. The *Ajmer* approach is rooted in pluralism and the acceptance of others, whereas the *Aligarh* approach supports for parliamentary democracy and the *Deoband* model supports for all varieties of fundamentalism. *Ajmer* model, Ahmed believes, can direct Muslims out of the ethnic, religious and political conflicts that globalization has forced on them.¹⁷

While dealing with the questions like why fundamentalism rises in Islamic countries, Akbar addresses the misery, grief and distress due to humiliation of religious symbols and traditions by the west to serve their predetermined ideological and political objectives. These are the underlying causes behind the young Muslims' preference of Osama bin Laden. The *Deoband* model has become the inspiration for millions of young Muslims across the Islamic world because of such figures like Abu Ala Maududi, Hassan al-Banna, Hassan Nasrallah, Ayatollah Khomeini, and Mahmoud Ahmadinejad. The model replaced both *Ajmer* and *Aligarh* approaches and continues to spread the poisons of fundamentalism with such a pace that without immediate remedial action, no antidote may ever be found.¹⁸ *Deoband* model favors the vindictive policies of the formal U.S. President George Bush, Jr. because they believe that these policies motivate the Muslim world to rejuvenate and reunite.¹⁹ Akbar wishes for a pluralistic, tolerant and cosmopolitan Muslim world that can unite the monotheistic commonalities shared by the three Abrahamic faiths.

Benjamin Soares in *Islam and the Prayer Economy* (2005) shows his concern on the political authority of Islamic countries. He provides a detail description of the increasing commoditization and personalization of religion that reflects the

¹⁴ Akbar Ahmed (2007), op. cit.

¹⁵ Benjamin F Soares (2005), *Islam and the Prayer Economy: History and Authority in a Malian Town*, Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press.

¹⁶ Abdullahi Ahmed An-Na'im (2006), op. cit.

¹⁷ Akbar Ahmed, op. cit., p. 40.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p.47.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, p.72.

political-economic situation of some Muslim countries. People of Nioro, a city in the south-west of Senegal, consider their authority as the holy men or saints who act as a medium for the divine recompense and seek benefits from them by providing certain gifts. Consequently, there evolve a class of religious entrepreneurs who are competing within themselves to get a favor to win a political struggle or large business venture, sometimes even for simple recognition of piety or some assistance with personal problems. Religious affiliation has become more important than developing spiritual individualism. This plays the most crucial role that motivates in formation of the authority. The three main sects of Muslims, the Tijaniyya, the Hamawiyya Sufi orders and the Wahhabis (ahl al-Sunna) or the reformists are struggling with one another to legitimize their authority in this eccentric political economic condition.

Abdullahi Ahmed An-Na'im's *African Constitutionalism and the Role of Islam* (2006) contains an inclusive theory of constitutionalism to integrate the present constitutional problem in Muslim world with colonial and early postcolonial socio-political circumstances. He explores the constitutional experiences of African countries of Ethiopia, Ghana, Guinea, Rwanda, Tanzania and Uganda. He demonstrates that pre-colonial, colonial, and postcolonial stages of Africa are the part of a single process through which the African societies, such as societies in Ghana and Nigeria, construct paths to constitutional governance. An-Na'im indicates the role of *Sufi* traditions to form modern constitutionalism. Sufism is more tolerable towards the diversity. Muslims of Senegal are not willing to support any new religious movement if it does not associate itself with political power.²⁰ He shows that colonialism is responsible for the lack of successful constitutionalism in Africa. It appears that People of Africa are inclined to accept uninformed and authoritarian forms of government, socio-economic adversity and even the violations of human rights merely because they believe it is the way things are supposed to be.²¹

(2) Islamization, as a complex of theological concern, cultural phenomenon and alternative paradigm for social change, is a non-violent rather than a violent process of conversion that may lead to disparity of Identity and segregation from society in the western countries.

Islamization is a process through which Islamic culture and traditions become the general code of conduct of the individuals and *sharia* become embedded in society. The term frequently used to refer the courses of action, violent and nonviolent, by which people, either by willingly or by force, become Muslim or adopt Islam as their religion. Islamization is a complicated phenomenon as it incorporates different facets of social life and various dimensions of religiosity. It brings a change by integrating dissimilar religious ideas and diverse rituals under a single religion. Islamization can transform regional political power relations, the

²⁰ An-Na'im, op.cit., p. 153.

²¹ Ibid., p. 91.

formation of state, legal institutions, norms, rituals and religious ideologies as well.²² The process itself can merge with urbanization by integrating Islamic symbols, institutions and *Sufi* order into it.²³ The consequences of Islamization may not always be positive and women in particular, seem to face disparity due to general societal norms of the western countries.²⁴

Howard M. Federspiel in *Sultans, Shamans, and Saints* (2007) shows that Islamization is a gradual and peaceful process that integrates a cascade of changes in regional political power relations, formation of state, legal institutions, norms, rituals and religious ideas. It is not a one-way movement but a stream of people and ideas in several directions. It is a constantly evolving complex of theological, cultural and social norms continually assimilating ideas from other religious traditions as well. Federspiel depicts Islamization that took place in the encounters among traders, teachers, and holy men with the inhabitants of Southeast Asia over six centuries. He gives a detailed account of the transitions of religion, politics, trade and customs of Southeast Asia during the thirteenth century to the present day. The Muslim merchants and Hindu rulers came in contact for business. The most significant contacts occurred among the traders who were Hadhrami Arabs, Ottomans, Persians, Indian Muslims and Chinese, Malays, Javanese, and Bugis in Asia, where commerce was the vehicle for the changes in religious institutions.

Eric Ross in *Sufi City* (2006) develops an alternative paradigm to understand urbanization. His paradigm explains urbanization, not in the context of colonialism, but in relation with the mystical dimension of Islam. He illustrates that although urban networks in Senegal are considered as a result of French colonialism, it is Sufism that played the guiding role to build up the city. His geographical study of the modern Muslim holy city of Touba in Senegal, capital of the *Mouride* Sufi order shows the relation between urbanization and the practice of Sufi Islam. The city reflects Sufi concepts and the shared set of ideas of the mystic dimension of Islam that acts upon it and gives it shape. The city of Touba actualizes the spiritual construct and people's acts of habitation and acts of will, the social forces, and institutions of the city lead to its present form.²⁵ He explores the development of the city since the autonomous Muslim towns emerged during the seventeenth century and indicates that the city survives in this form despite colonialism only because of Sufism.²⁶

Anna Mansson McGinty in her book *Becoming Muslim* (2006) discusses the cause and consequences of the conversion to become Muslim in Sweden and United States. She studies the narratives of nine women, six from Sweden and three from

²² Howard M Federspiel (2007), *op. cit.*

²³ Eric Ross (2006), *Sufi City: Urban Design and Archetypes in Touba*, Rochester Studies in African History and the Diaspora., Rochester: University of Rochester Press.

²⁴ Anna Mansson McGinty (2006), *Becoming Muslim: Western Women's Conversions to Islam*. 1st ed, Culture, Mind, and Society, New York: Palgrave Macmillan.

²⁵ Ross, *op. cit.*, p. 44.

²⁶ *Ibid.* , 174

United States, and analyzes the personal ideas, emotions and memories that are attached to the subjects' own 'biographical idiosyncrasies'.²⁷ There is a 'cognitive reconciliation' and a sense of disparity between their self-images as Swedish and Muslim. The alternative identities sometimes go against the societal norms, especially about the dress-code. The sense of spiritual needs, the desires for stronger family values, commitment to social justice, and aspiration for women's rights led them to become Muslim. However, the non-Muslim Swedes and U.S. citizens often negatively stereotype the Muslim. These converted women relate their own self-images as Swedish with that of the surroundings, but which in return only reckon them as Muslim. Thus, Muslims are segregated in the West, even when those Muslims are themselves Westerners.

(3) Islamism is a diversified political ideology formed by the political context of the related nation states, reflecting the consequences of globalization and colonialism, and it has a conflict with the western ideology in general, and with the ideology of United States, in particular.

Islamism, in general refers to a radical interpretation of Islam to control political power with the means of violence. This term, sometimes, is compared with other – 'ism', like fascism, Marxism, Communism or nationalism to indicate this as another modern scheme to control the political power and run the state with a totalitarian ideology.²⁸ A common aspect of Islamism is the less toleration towards the non-Muslims with a great antagonism towards the West. Islamism integrates Islam and political context of Muslims shaped by the colonial dialectic. Its primary aim is to use the state as the instrument of the Islamic law or *Sharia*.²⁹ It may seem to be a democratic alternative to authoritarian regimes, or it can be the practice of theological-intellectual dissent of Islam to oppose the forces of globalization.³⁰ Islamism may seek the moral regeneration among Muslims, make the state as the tenets of *Sharia* and create a worldwide Muslim polity with violent actions.³¹

Mohammed Ayoob's *The Many Faces of Political Islam* (2008) considers Islamism as a political phenomenon that can be properly understood within the framework of the nation-state. Islamism is a modern phenomenon or an 'invention of tradition', and it is unlikely a religious one. There was neither any Islamic state in previous historical context nor any mention of such a concept in the Quran. Religion and politics were separated after the death of the Prophet. The religious institutions have become subordinated to secular authority. Further, colonialism undermined the role of religious scholars in formation of state and stirred the

²⁷ McGinty, op. cit., p. 10.

²⁸ Meghnad Desai (2007).

²⁹ Mohammed Ayoob (2008), *The Many Faces of Political Islam: Religion and Politics in the Muslim World*, Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press.

³⁰ Anouar Majid (2007), *A Call for Heresy: Why Dissent Is Vital to Islam and America*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.

³¹ Meghnad Desai (2007).

emergence of Islamist thinkers whose primary concern was to gain political control. These thinkers neither had received any classical training on religion, nor they had any religious concern. When the development and application of law in Islam occurred within the civil society, the Islamists contend that the state should be the instrument of sharia. This is actually a departure from traditional Muslim practice. This has continued with Arab successor states, including Saudi Arabia, where the 'House of Saud' seized the institutionalized manifestations of Wahhabism.

The collaboration of Islamic religion and politics is unique. Islam does not prescribe any particular model of rule, whether authoritarian, democratic or structural. Ayooob undertakes paired case studies of the Muslim world. He regards Saudi Arabia and Iran as 'self proclaimed Islamic states'. Saudi Arabia is an anti-constitutional monarchy and Iran is a constitutional republic. Both of these states are modern constructs. Egypt and Pakistan are the states that confront ideological and pragmatic Islamism. Pakistani Islamists are more committed to democracy than that of the Egypt. Turkey and Indonesia are the states with Muslim democracies. The export-oriented economies of Turkey and Indonesia facilitated the synthesis of globalization and Islam. Consequently, the rise of Islamist bourgeoisies in these two states made them defenders of globalization. Thus, in reality, no two Islamism are alike, they are all conditioned by the national and historical contexts within which they originate and operate.

Anouar Majid's (2007) *A Call for Heresy* shows the ever intensifying conflict between the Islamic world and the United States. The Islamic fundamentalism and Puritanical-capitalistic rational thoughts of USA are playing a vital role to intensify the conflict. He compares so-called repression of self-disparagement in Islam and the weakness of Puritanism and Capitalism of United States. Hence, people are losing their ground to the reactionary forces and becoming subjected to religious, political and economic orthodoxies that are restraining their intellectual legacies.³² He develops a stance of religious anti-secularism and moralist strains. It is impossible to understand the culture and politics of United States without its religious formation.³³ The Puritanism is at the bedrock of U.S. history, culture and political expression. He argues that there are some disagreements among the post-war liberalism, the institutionalization of corporatism and religious conservatism. These disagreements led the people disheartened because of the U.S. abandonment of its promise and myths. The United States should change its economic model by reinforcing its social and cultural fabric.³⁴

Majid considers that Islam is not the root cause of terrorism. Contrarily, it is an effective strategy to oppose globalization and can restore the practice of intellectual and theological dissent of Islamic tradition. Islamism is the only

³² Majid, op. cit., p. 5.

³³ Ibid. p.122.

³⁴ Ibid. p.177.

democratic alternative to authoritarian regimes. The retrieval of the progressive tradition of Islam is an alternative to encounter the forces like widespread commercialism and political messianic. The anti-orthodox and institutional thinking is a vital act, and Islam should break free from the tyranny of Sunni orthodoxy. There are progressive initiatives of Muslims and there are progressive strains in the Islamic fundamentalist movement as well. Muslims are particularly unaware about the advancement of the history-shocking event of modernity.³⁵ Majid shows the point toward reconciliation that Christians and Muslims share a tradition of conservatism and rationalism that can bind them. They should embrace the right critical method to ensure a society which doesn't punish the differences and proscribe intellectual pluralism.

Meghnad Desai in this popular book *Rethinking Islamism* (2007) distinguishes Islamism from Islam by relating the former as a political ideology while later as a religion. Islamism as an ideology consists with a set of ideas related with political goals based on history, whereas Islam as a religion is a guiding model or a system of belief. He argues that Islamism is closely related to the philosophical position like Nationalism, Socialism, Communism or Anarchism than it is to Islam itself. For that, Bin Laden's actions should be responded within an ideological framework rather than on religious point of view. Islam should be distinguished from Islamism, the former is a religion, and the later reflects merely the political use of that religion.³⁶ Religion sometimes has some effects on civic, social and political institutions, but its focus always remains on living a present good life and having a better after life, whereas the ideology is the totalistic explanations of history drawn from Islamic theology and has the political aims to win the power over people.

There are three forms of 'Islamism', (1) 'Moral Islamism' that seeks ethical regeneration among Muslims, (2) 'National Islamism', which is a practical policy to assume power in a Muslim country, conforms the nation assuming the tenets of Sharia and (3) 'Global Islamism' that aims at creating, through violent actions, a worldwide Muslim polity under a re-established caliphate and building a unified moral society under Islamic domination. Desai outlines the desire of Global Islamism. The global political goal of Islamism is the re-establishment of the caliphate and brings forth a new terror to the modern world. This is closer to Communism. "Islamism" wants a reformation in Saudi Arabia, the destruction of American superpower and the formation of a world-wide *ummah* under a restored caliph. He sets Bin Laden's argument in the context of the last one hundred years relating the collapse of the Ottoman Empire, the abolition of the caliphate, effects of the two World Wars on the Middle East – especially that on Arabia, the Palestine-Israel conflicts and the broader trends of modernization and globalization.

³⁵ Ibid. p.193.

³⁶ Desai , op. cit., p. 6.

(4) Contemporary forms of Jihad that emerged from a social context, is the violent demonstration of activities of a group of people whose goal is not the religious development of public life but the establishment of political state with a strict and aggressive non-tolerant system.

'Jihad' is commonly regarded in the West to be referring to 'holy war' on behalf of Islam.³⁷ Literary, 'jihad' means 'effort' (Oxford English Dictionary). It is "the spiritual, psychological and physical effort exerted by Muslims to be closer to God and thus achieve a just and harmonious society".³⁸ Jihad is now evolved as a phenomenon of social mobilization. It has become a loose-knit and informal network after the destruction of al-Qaeda's sanctuary in Afghanistan.³⁹ There are several generations of *Jihadis*; they can be labeled in accordance with the historical context of the social situation.⁴⁰ Those who sacrifice themselves in jihad, do so due to believe in great heavenly rewards and to protest the conspiracy against Islam.⁴¹

Suicide bombing has become a common occurrence by the name of Jihad. While discussing the question of why Jihadis involved in suicide bombing, Mohammed M. Hafez in *Suicide Bombers in Iraq* (2007) shows that their primary aim is to demoralize the people of the targeted country. It is a mean for weak groups to force strong opponents into making concessions and changing their policies.⁴² There are three generations of *Jihadis*, the first generation fought the Soviets in Afghanistan in the 1980s, the second generation trained with al-Qaeda in Afghanistan in the Nineteen-nineties and the third generation is the *jihadis* in Iraq. Hafez considers suicide bombings as a strategy for the insurgency in Iraq and the primary goal is to establish it as an Islamic state. They are mostly non-Iraqi Arabs from Saudi Arabia and other Arab countries. These suicide bombers, as Hafez put it are al-salaf al-Salih, the righteous predecessors or founding fathers of insurgencies.⁴³ They are a fraction of the insurgency who wants to interrupt the U.S. foreign policy of fighting terrorism.

Three different groups are involved in the whole process of the suicide bombing; first, the Islamic Nationalists who are the majority of insurgents, second, the Sunnis extremists or jihadi Salafis who are carrying out the suicide bombing and third, the Ideological Ba'athists or Salafis who are the suppliers of funds and resources for insurgencies. Salafis are the chief architect behind the insurgencies in Iraq, and their intention is to spark a civil war. Their prime target is the Shiites who they believe as the rejecters of Islam, the 'al-rafidah'. While dealing with the

³⁷ Reuven Firestone (1999), *Jihad: The Origin of Holy War in Islam*, New York; Oxford: Oxford University Press, p.17.

³⁸ Ira G Zepp (2000), *A Muslim Primer: Beginner's Guide to Islam*. 2nd ed. Fayetteville: University of Arkansas Press, p.95.

³⁹ Marc Sageman (2008).

⁴⁰ Mohammed M Hafez (2007).

⁴¹ David Cook (2007), *Martyrdom in Islam*, Cambridge, UK; New York: Cambridge University Press.

⁴² Mohammed M Hafez, op. cit., p. 9.

⁴³ Ibid. , p.65.

question of who are the suicide bombers, Hafez pointed out that many of them are the people who have faced unemployment and often are criminalized. They have weak family ties or friendship and feel hunted or no longer welcomed by their home or neighboring countries. They capitalize on the injustice that they have faced to legitimize their activities and rationalize suicide bombing as a way to inflict great damage on the enemy. The myths of heroic martyrdom and the heavenly rewards of martyrs mentioned in Islam motivate them to sacrifice themselves.⁴⁴ They feel that by doing this, they are securing their place in heaven and easing their shame of humiliation on earth.

Marc Sageman in *Leaderless Jihad* (2008), conversely, does not accept that economic deprivation, brainwashing, naïveté, ignorance, lack of family responsibility and sexual frustration are the principal causes of suicide terrorism. He points out that young middle-class and well-educated Muslims are the major part of Islamic extremists who seek self-glorification through aggressive acts against the Westerners. The radicalization process of Jihadi movement in the global context has the four key aspects: (1) moral outrage, (2) a perception of Islam under siege, (3) the resonance of moral outrage with personal experience and, (4) mobilization by networks that often include usage of the Internet. While explaining the matter of who get radicalized and why, Sageman points out the radical ideology in Islam and a diffuse, loose-knit and informal network of the al-Qaeda plays a critical role here. This informal network that is formed after the destruction of al-Qaeda's sanctuary in Afghanistan is expanding its radical creeds in the family members and childhood associates of the Jihadis.

David Cook's *Martyrdom in Islam* (2007) proposes a framework that helps to understand the motivation of self-sacrifices, which is commonly seen as Martyrdom. A precise, clear-cut and agreed-upon definition of martyrdom is not apparently mentioned anywhere in any sacred Islamic text. Martyrdom is a broad category that includes from the basic sense of dying in the battle field to a nonviolent death. The present violent form of Martyrdom appears in the Muslim world only after the Six-Day War between Israel and the coalition of Egypt, Jordan, and Syria in 1967.⁴⁵ Cook elaborates the incidents of martyrdom in the formative and contemporary period of Islam and indicates that the local culture, the historical figures or movements and theoretical ideas or practiced policy of the state are the chief factors of shaping the ideology of a martyr. A martyr views his act of self-sacrifice as an obligation to such a level that relinquishing his life is more affirmable than abandoning his principles. Hence, the martyr is of feeble status where earthly oppression plays the major role in representing him or her as an idol who sacrifices his or her life to fight the evil.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, p.20.

⁴⁵ Cook, *op. cit.*, pp.143-144.

Conclusion

The first decade after 9/11 produced many literatures on Islam that intended to explain social, political, cultural and religious aspects of Islam to seek a proper understanding of the drifts of current situation. Scholars in different fields like political science, history, sociology, anthropology or even literature involved themselves to provide an explanation. Although their study is more diverse than integrated, a conceptual scheme can offer a greater grasp to the penitent ideas and relevant concepts to explain the contemporary world. Politics in Islam has submerged with the upshot of globalization and colonialism, and different aspects of modern-day politics, such as pluralism, parliamentary democracy and fundamentalism have been integrated with the religion. Some countries, like Senegal has made Islam a commodity to gain privileges in business, contrarily some nations in Africa have prepared their constitutions by following the Sufi tradition of Islam. Making any state Islamic or converting people Muslim is a definite process that includes changes in certain factors like power relations, legal institutions, norms, rituals and belief system. Islamization often integrated with urbanization; however, it may not bring a good result especially for the women who are living in the West. Islamism, is particularly a concept that concern with establishing Islamic law in the state with an intention of opposing globalization. Sometimes, the violence is evident in the political Islam. Jihad, the war in Islam has become a common occurrence in modern history. This is a more violent form of war because it affects the life of ordinary people when suicide bombers strike. Suicide bombers also have a different point of view than that of the ordinary people; they are chiefly driven by the afterlife rewards. Islam is passing fourteen hundred years on this earth among the people of different countries. It has been exposed to lot many diverse cultures and blended with too many different traditions. For this, a wide range of aspects have been developed, and it has become immensely difficult to integrate all in a single frame to explain every event that occurs around the world.

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