

## Two Basic Factors

At the very outset it is emphasized that any attempt to understand the true nature of political thought in the contemporary Muslim world ought to take into account two basic factors: the inherent link between Islam as a comprehensive scheme for ordering human life, and politics as an indispensable instrument to secure universal compliance with the scheme. It is also indicated that in no case Muslims have had a unified and monolithic perception of their faith. The main differences centre around the issue of the caliphate, which divided Muslims into two major schools, i.e. Sunni and Shi'ah.

It is rightly pointed out that Muslims, for the greater part of their history, lived under regimes which had only the most tenuous link with Islamic norms, and observed Shari'ah only to the extent that it legitimized their power in the eyes of the faithful. The author has given sufficient evidence of inseparability of religious faith and politics in Islam.

Firstly, *jihad* is one of the basic tenets of the Muslim faith—which is wrongly translated as 'holy war', for the term covers a wider range of meanings; secondly, the principle of 'enjoining the good and forbidding the evil' (*al-amr bi l-ma'ruf wa al-nahy 'an al-munkar*) requires every Muslim to see that socio-political justice is enforced in the society.

These principles not only politicized the Muslim mind, but also determined their attitude towards the rulers. The author explains the absence of independent political thought in Islamic history in the light of Muslim view which rarely treated politics in isolation from related disciplines. It is why the concept of secular state and society remained alien to the majority of Muslims, both literate and illiterate.

While giving a brief account of the basic strands of tradition, Hamid Enayet points out that, though always subsumed under some other discipline, classical Islamic thought represents a fascinating mosaic of divergent schools. The first and the most lasting controversy arose regarding the choice of the Prophet's successor.

Two opposing views were presented, but it would be an oversimplification if one credits one view to be democratic and the other to be undemocratic. There is a very big question mark yet now before all Muslims as to what is the proper method of selecting a ruler, and as to what is the place of what we call

democratic method today.

Another related question: Can we apply modern Western criteria to medieval Muslim society? The book does not pass any judgement on any of the abovementioned two views. The author, though a Shi'i, has remained neutral. But it may be pointed out that his attempt to confine Shi'i view to *Imamah, wilayah* and *'ismah*, and Sunni view to *khilafah, ijma`* and *bayah* leads a student of Islamic thought nowhere, it rather creates a confusion.

This issue has been rightly discussed by the reviewer of the book in *Jumhuri Islarni*. Another point of contention is the author's description of the Khawarij as a revolutionary force in the body of Muslim polity.

Accepting the fact that the Khawarij were pious people, devoted to the ideals of Islam, one should not forget that their naivety combined with the lack of political insight paved the way for the defeat of Islamic political ideals, and proved to be instrumental in inflicting the heaviest blow to Islamic democratic values by martyring `Ali (A) and indirectly strengthening the hands of unscrupulous monarchical aspirations.

Thus their role was negative and retrogressive. Hamid Enayet, being a professor of political science, was expected to know the difference between a rebel and a revolutionary; while the former has no well thought out programme, the latter follows a well knit ideology.

The Khawarij, at the most, can be described as rebels without political insight. Moreover, their piety was also misconceived, for they refused to listen to `Abd Allah ibn `Abbas' argument in favour of arbitration (*tahkim*), and betrayed the man whom they had accepted as their Imam. Hamid Enayet describes the Khawarij as a third force or trend in the `first four decades of Islamic history'.

Apart from the ambiguity of `the first four decades of Islamic history', he seems to attach too much importance to a trend which soon died its natural death. The Mu'tazilite doctrine of tawhid, freedom and `aql is discussed by the author, but strangely the political implications of the doctrine of free will are not discussed, which are more relevant to political thought than other purely metaphysical notions. Anyhow, the author has rightly described Mu'tazilism and the movement of Ikhwan al Safa as intellectual catalytic agents in the politics of early Islam.

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