

Islamic State and the Demands of the Time

Question No. 21

In case of a contradiction between religious thought (texts and traditions) and Islamic State, which one has priority? Do necessities allow religious rulers to act against religious thought in case a necessity arises?

To answer this question, first it should be clarified what we mean by “religious thought”. Here, there are some possibilities:

First. By “religious thought” we mean religious worldview and beliefs. In this case, religious rulers and government are never permitted to oppose religious thought, and no obligation can be a reason for such priority over religious thought.

Second. By “religious thought” we mean the collection of primary religious decrees in the realm of politics and society. In this case, if a more important social demand arises, the Islamic State can temporarily recess the primary practical decree and enforce the secondary governmental or emergency decree. It should be noted, however, that this reading of “religious thought” is incorrect, leading to a delusion about a contradiction between religious thought and governmental decree, while the secondary and governmental decrees are also subject to religious thought and should not be interpreted as priority of something over religion.

Third. By “religious thought” we mean the primary, secondary and authoritative decrees. In this case, there would be no contradiction between “governmental decrees” and “religious thought” unless the government issues a decree contrary to primary ones without observing the degree of importance and social necessities or expedencies. Here, the government has done a wrong thing and deviated from being religious. It is clear that in such a case, religious thought would have priority; because as it has been stated in traditions, it is not permissible to obey anyone if it involves disobeying God. [1](#)

Fourth. By “religious thought” we mean – as stated in the above question itself – “religious texts”. Here, we should say such a definition of “religious thought” is quite wrong, for it includes both rational and

transmitted reasons. Some of the transmitted reasons contain the authoritative and controlling decrees (such as the principles of la zarar (no harm), la haraj (no impediment), and ahamm wa muhimm (the degree of importance)) and some others contain the controlled decrees. Islamic State, in case of necessity, can adduce authoritative decrees to issue a decree contrary to the controlled ones. So, these cases can not be regarded as instances of contradiction between “Islamic State” and “religious thought”.

Question No. 22

What are the fixed and changeable elements in Islamic State? Which parts of duties and functions of Islamic State are subject to change if the situation demands?

No doubt, it is impossible to identify all fixed and changeable elements of Islamic State in various times elaborately and comprehensively here. Nevertheless, some points can be clarified synoptically:

First. Some elements in Islamic State are fundamental and essential, and neglecting them would mean negation of Islamic State. These elements will always be fixed and viable, not changing with the pass of time. One example is the principle that a qualified person with necessary qualifications (such as knowledge and justice) must be at the head of the Islamic State. The other examples are the principle of commitment to justice, protecting the independence [of the country], and negating the foreigners’ dominance.

Second. Along with abovementioned elements, there are some changeable elements both in the structure of the government and in the State’s methods, functions, duties, etc. For example, in Iran, Islamic State has been established in the form of Islamic Republic, while it can take other forms as well. Anyway, this model has been chosen among other alternatives as the most ideal one in the present age.

Islamic State can also be formed as “centralized” or “decentralized”. Ayatullah Mesbah Yazdi writes:

“The problem of separating the elements of power in Islamic jurisprudence is, just like transaction, subject to changes of the time and place... [Decisions on] whether the government should be conciliar or presidential, the elements of power should be united or separated, are related to the expediencies of the society in any time.”²

On the other hand, today, the states have been assigned a lot of duties – more than before – and the Islamic State is no exception. So, we may conclude that the situations of the time and place can change both the structure of the government and its functions and duties. Nevertheless, Islamic State can not accept any change; rather, it always follows some fixed rules and principles, accepting just those changes which are not in contradiction to fixed religious rules and the authoritative rules controlling religious decrees.³

¹. La ta’ata li-makhlūqin fi ma’siat al-khaliq”, Nahj al-Balagha, wisdom no. 165.

². Falsafiy-e siyasat, p.140.

3. For further information, see: Abdullah Nasri, *Intizar-e basher az din*, p. 140–66; Muhammad Soroush, *Din va dowlat dar andishi-y-e Islami*, p. 70–85.

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