

A CRITICAL REVIEW ON THE POLITICAL THOUGHTS OF JOHN LOUIS ESPOSITO IN THE LIGHT OF ISLAMIC TEACHINGS

*Dr. Muhammad Mansha Tayyab **

*Dr. Tahir Mustafa **

John Louis Esposito is a western scholar of Islamic thoughts; he frequently talks about the political system of Islamic state. Ruler of Islamic state considered himself the vice-regent of Allah on earth and used the authority which Allah almighty awarded him. He can make rules and regulation for the implementation of law but cannot alter the laws with his own will. First three Caliphs were selected by the consultation of Senior Companions of the Holy Prophet Hazrat Muhammad (PBUH). Caliph in Muslim society did not exercise direct political, judicial, military and fiscal control. There were various types of government in Islamic countries at the beginning of the modern era Democracy is a western European system of government. In this system, sovereignty and law making authority is hand over to the subject of a state. Although now large number of Muslim states having this system of government. They used different justification for the authenticity of democracy. Numerous Muslims are effectively occupied with characterizing Islamic majority rules system. Esposito expresses, that in the western world there are two different views about Islam and democracy. Many western scholars give the impact that according to Muslim traditions democracy is not hostile to Islamic political theory, whereas some other opposed these views.

Key Words: Esposito, Umayyad dynasty, successor, military services, sovereignty

1. Introduction:

Esposito was born on 19 May 1940 in Brooklyn, New York City. He belongs to a Roman Catholic family. He teaches International Affairs and Islamic Studies at Georgetown University, additionally he is the director of *Alwaleed Bin Talal Centre for Muslim-Christian Understanding* at Georgetown University. In 1974 he earned a Ph.D. degree from Temple University, Pennsylvania. He is much interested in political affairs of the Muslim world. He wrote many books and articles about the political situation of Muslim world. About the concept of sovereignty of Islam he said that the Head of Islamic State called Caliph. Allah is the sovereign of Islamic State and Caliph is His vice-regent on the earth. He is not an absolute power but is the only Supervisor to maintain Allah's rule on His earth.

وَإِذْ قَالَ رَبُّكَ لِلْمَلَائِكَةِ إِنِّي جَاعِلٌ فِي الْأَرْضِ خَلِيفَةً (Quran 2:30)

* Subject Specialist, Islamic Studies, Govt. Arif Higher Secondary School, LHR.

* Chairman, Dept. of Islamic Thought & Civilization, U.M.T. Lahore.

Head of Islamic state is Caliph, whose duty is to maintain peace in society, secure the state from foreign attacks, ensure the Islamic law in its origin, command the armies of Islam, and lead the Friday prayer:

“The caliph employed absolute power. If not in Islamic belief, in practice his word was law. He retained his position as the commander of the believers.”¹

He blamed that Muslim belief and practice were contrary as “if not in Islamic belief, in practice his (Caliph) word was law”. In fact Caliph did not practice this. He considered himself the vice-regent of Allah on earth and used the authority which Allah almighty awarded him. He can make rules and regulation for the implementation of law but cannot alter the laws with his own will. As Hazrat Abu bakar Sadiq (R.A), The First Caliph said:

لست خليفة الله ولكن خليفة رسول الله صلى الله عليه واله وسلم²

Caliph should must follow the Sharia. It was discussed in the period of Umayyad dynasty. Which was an objection on the piety and character of Caliph. It was strongly emphasized in Abbasids period that political attitude of Caliph should must be equivalent to the religion.

Supervision of religious affairs and obligations, implementation of prophetic traditions and Sharia is the duty of King. It is also the duty of King to honour the religious scholars and awarded them with scholarships from bait-ul-Maal. He should constantly meet with religious scholars.

2. Pattern for the selection of Caliph

In the Muslim views it is the duty of all Muslim citizen to choose and obey a Caliph or Imam among themselves:

اتفق جميع اهل السنة وجميع المرجئة وجميع الشيعة وجميع الخوارج
علي وجوب الامامة وان الامامة واجب عليها الانقيار لامام عادل يقيم
احكام الله ويسوسهم باحكام الشريعة التي اني بها رسول الله صلى الله
عليه واله وسلم³

First three Caliphs were selected by the consultation of Senior Companions of the Holy Prophet Hazrat Muhammad (PBUH). Hazrat Abu bakar (RA) was selected with the consultancy of Senior Companions, Second Hazrat Umar (R.A) was nominated by first Caliph and third by a small group of electors. So now

consultation, nomination and selection through a small group of electors was the pattern for the selection of a Caliph:

“Thus, based on the practice of the first three caliphs, a pattern was established for selecting the caliph from the Quraysh tribe through a process characterized by consultation and an oath of allegiance.”⁴

Caliph was picked through a procedure of counsel, assignment, and choice by a little gathering of balloters who, in the wake of promising their faithfulness, exhibited the caliph to the general population for acknowledgment by general approval.

2.1 Selection process of Caliph and his social status

By far most of Muslims (Sunni) trusted that Hazrat Muhammad (PBUH) left the world without assigning his successor or building up a framework for determination of his successor. After a starting time of vulnerability, the Companion of the Holy Prophet (PBUH), and the senior citizens or pioneers of Medina, chose or recognized Abu Bakr, an early Muslim, as Caliph. Designation of Hazrat Abu bakr (R.A) as pioneer was symbolized by the offering of Baya (vow), a handclasp utilized by the Arabs to seal an agreement, for this situation a vow of submission and devotion:

“As caliph, Abu Bakr was the political and military leader of the community.”⁵

He says that for the appointment of ruler in Islamic state Hazrat Umar (R.A) formed an election committee:

“He (Umar) also introduced a new method for the selection of his successor. On his deathbed, Umar appointed an “election committee” to select the next Caliph.”⁶

Although this was a new procedure for the selection of Caliph after him, but it was also based on the basic principle of consultation. As he himself argued that he constitute a committee for the selection of Caliph.

2.2 Authority and responsibilities of Caliph

“The Caliph’s authority and leadership were rooted in his claim to be the successor of the Prophet as head of the community. Muhammad’s practice provided the model for governance.”⁷

Caliph in Muslim society did not exercise direct political, judicial, military and fiscal control. He is the vice-regent of Allah and is authorized to control the state and society and overview the God’s rule on earth. He is bond to consult with his fellow men in every

matter. It was the practice of Holy Prophet (PBUH) and his companions. Allah also ordered the Muslim community and its leader to consult in every matter.

(Quran 42:38) وَأَمْرُهُمْ شُورَى بَيْنَهُمْ

2.3 Revenue of the Islamic state, Types of taxes and beneficiaries

The Islamic arrangement of assessments took a few structures: the tithe or riches expense to advantage poor people and an area duty paid by Muslim; the survey assessment and tribute, later an area assessment, paid by non-Muslim. All income was claimed, gathered, and controlled by the state:

“The distribution of revenue was managed by the registry at Medina through a system of payments and pensions based on priority in accepting Islam.”⁸

“An agent of the caliph oversaw the collection of taxes and other administrative. Revenue for state came from the captured lands and taxes.”⁹

People of other religions in Islamic state were exempted from military services as they were paying poll tax (Jiziyah). In return government was responsible for the security of their lives and property. Jiziyah was very ordinary amount according to their profession and income sources. Revenue for the state came not only from the capture lands but it was Ushar and Zakat collected by Muslim subjects.

3. Kinds of political system in Muslim world

There were various types of government in Islamic countries at the beginning of the modern era. These largest realms were governed by Sultan and armed commanders:

“As the Ottoman Empire in Europe and the Middle East and Moghul Empire in India. In Shii Iran, the rulers were shah; throughout the Muslim world there were smaller principalities ruled by local notables such as the Imam of Yemen and the chieftains of Persian Gulf states.”¹⁰

In spite of different governing style in different states, Sharia was the state law and ruler of the state considered vice-regent of Allah. There were many socio-political changes which were the result of western influence.

The inquiry is not whether religion ought to educate life, but rather when and how. They trusted that religious universality (or all the more precisely, orthopraxy) and social genuineness require if.

For these Muslims, the blending of religion and governmental issues is not the issue-whether it is done to control or control individuals or a fanciful, contorted way is.

In Islamic point of view there is no concept of separation of religion and state:

الاسلام وَالسُّلْطَانُ أَخْوَانٌ تَوْأَمَانٌ لَّا يَصْلِحُ أَحَدُهُمَا إِلَّا بِصَاحِبِهِ فَالاسلام
أَسُّ وَالسُّلْطَانُ حَارِسٌ فَمَا لَّا أَسُّ لَهُ مِنْهُمْ وَمَا لَّا حَارِسٌ لَهُ ضَائِعٌ¹¹

Thus Islam, like Christianity, is a world religion with a universal mission. However, it is distinguished from Christianity by the unity and totality of the Islamic view of reality.

According to Christian scripture Christianity is not a preaching religion but it was only for the people of Bani Israel. There are many evidence in their religious literature that there would be a prophet after Him. Later Christian missionaries make him universal and world religion. So it is not just to say that Christianity is alike Islam.

Islam gave the essential ideological structure to political and social life, a wellspring of personality, authenticity, and direction.

As Islam is a complete code of life. It guide the followers in every field of life. Islam is a modern civilization and last divine religion. Being a civilization Islam has its own political and social values, which differ the Islam from other religions.

Issues of power, authenticity, security, and mainstream support would keep on getting to be huge issues in the contemporary Islamic recovery development.

*The structure evolution of states in the Muslim world involves both Islam and politic.*¹²

It is a universal truth that Islam is the only religion of the world which combine the state and religion. In Islamic civilization religion provide the guidance for ruling a state. In Islamic political concept religion and politics are not different, as a Muslim theologian stated:

From the beginning of Islamic history Islam was the only foundation for politics and social matters. Now western are in trying to prevail the idea that the role of Islam began to involve in

Politics from twentieth century. This statement is quite contrary to the facts:

3.1 Islam and democracy

Most well-known definition of democracy is “the government of the people, for the people, by the people”. But in Islam it is different as in Islam “government of Allah, by his vice-regent (appointed by consultation), for his creation (humanity).

Democracy is a western European system of government. In this system, sovereignty and law making authority is hand over to the subject of a state. Although now a large number of Muslim state having this system of government. They used different justification for the authenticity of democracy. According to Esposito:

“Democracy protects the rights and liberties of the people and recognizes the freedom of people to express their views.”¹³

All these qualities are exist in Islamic political system. As in the period of Hazrat Muhammad (PBUH) and later in the period of Pious Caliph all the citizens of State were free to express their views.

Numerous Muslims are effectively occupied with characterizing Islamic majority rules system. They trust that the worldwide procedures of religious resurgence and democratization can be, and on account of the Muslim world, are, corresponding.

In democracy, peoples are sovereign power, but in Islam Allah is the Sovereign power, in democracy, a man can make laws, but in Islam cannot, as there are permanent laws in Islam, which are capable to apply in all the ages, anyhow, theologian can constitute a law for the welfare of subject, keeping in views that they must not be contrary to the basic belief of Islam.

Professor Rasheed Ahmad wrote in his book “Muslmanun key siyasi Ifkahr” (Political thoughts of Muslims):

“In Quranic government Allah is the only sovereign power in Islamic state, man being His vicergent on earth authorise to enterfare in administrative affairs with limited authority that he may not alter the rules of Allah and cannot deny the obedience. Religious and state both are corporated in such stats.”¹⁴

Esposito expresses, that in the western world there are two different views about Islam and democracy. Many western scholars give the impact that according to Muslim traditions democracy is not hostile to Islamic political theory, whereas some other opposed these views:

Two comprehensively contradicted positions exist as to Islam's similarity with pluralism, secularism, and common society. From an essentialist perspective, Islam is naturally unfriendly and "it is improbable that Muslim social orders will grasp majority rules system and pluralism at any point in the near future.

At the beginning of the 21st century, democratization and common society are normal topics all through a significant part of the world. From the previous Soviet Union and Eastern Europe to the Middle East, Asia, and Africa, voices have been raised that call for force sharing and with it more accentuation on government responsibility, the standard of law, and social equity:

*"Non-state actors and organizations (NGOs), from political parties and trade unions to professional associations, educational, financial, and medical services, women's and human rights organization, have become more visible."*¹⁵

Religious resurgence and democratization are two of the most essential advancement of the last many years of the twentieth century. In numerous territories, developments of religious restoration agree with and now and again strengthen the arrangement of more majority rule political system. In different ranges, the two elements are in strife.

Western style of democracy is quite contrary from the democratic thoughts of Islam. In Islam Allah is the only sovereign of the state but in western democracy people of the state are sovereign power. This is basic difference in Islam and western democracy. Moreover separation of state and religion is also fundamental principle of democracy. But in Islamic thoughts religion and state are two different authorities. Head of the Islamic state at the same time serve as religious and political leader of the society.

Islamic concept of democracy have superiority upon western democratic theories. Islamic democracy started in the period when humanity was in dark ages and was not familiar with democratic thoughts. Hazrat Muahmmad (PBUH) introduced liberty, equality and social justice and introduced new civilization to the warrior tribes of the Arab. Hazrat Muhammad (PBUH) implemented Islamic democratic values in first Islamic state of Medina.

In spite of many differences, there are many similarities in western and Islamic democratic principles. With certain modification of western democracy it could be called Islamic democracy.

Individual have basic importance in Islam. All the members of society are equal in social, economic and political rights. Both in Islam and democracy, there is no place for dictatorship, aristocracy and kingship. So in both system rulers are answerable before subject.

3.2 Separation of state and religion

Unlike Christianity, in Islam there is no clergy in Islam. State and religion remained in the control of single person called Caliph, the head of Islamic state. Now in 20th century it is felt that state and Islam is going to separate in Islamic countries:

“In many areas of the Muslim world, clear trends toward a separation of religion from the state could be identified.”¹⁶

وروى ابن عباس أيضا أنه صلى الله عليه وسلم قال الإسلام والسُّلْطَان

أَخْوَانٌ تَوَاطَا لَمْ يَصْلِحْ أَحَدُهُمَا إِلَّا بِصَاحِبِهِ فَالْإِسْلَامُ أَسُّ وَالسُّلْطَانُ

حَارِسٌ فَمَا لَأَسُّ لَهُ مِنْهُمْ وَمَا لِحَارِسٍ لَهُ ضَائِعٌ¹⁷

In Islam there is no concept of separation of state and religion. A state cannot become a welfare state without religious values. Religion provide the basic legal and moral values. In Islamic belief Allah is the law giver for Islamic state. It is the duty of ruler to implement the order of Allah. So in Islam state and religion cannot be separated.

Syed Abu-al-Aala Maududi writes in his book *Islami Riyasat*:

“In Islamic political system there is no concept of difference in religion and politics. As a result the Muslims always struggle to constitute their state on the base of Islamic principles. And this struggle is required by their belief.”¹⁸

In spite of different encounters between Islam and Christianity Islam is continuously spreading in Western world. Flourishing of Islamic civilization in the West is considering a direct threat for Christianity:

“The rapid rise and expansion of the Islamic empire and the flourishing of Islamic civilization posed a direct danger to Christendom’s place in the world both theologically and politically.”¹⁹

It is very important to explain, that the European countries, considered Islam as a threat for their interests in Muslim world:

“American perceptions of Islam and concern about its potential threat to U.S interests are often grounded in a very limited awareness of the religio-political realities in Muslim countries.”²⁰

4. Muslim population and background of Terrorism

Islam is the second largest religion of the world. It has 56 countries. Muslims are not only inhabitants of Middle East and Asia, but their population is increasing constantly in West and Europe:

“The Islamic world stretches from North America to Southern Asia and includes some forty independent states in which Muslim constitutes a majority of the population. Islam has approximately 750 million adherents and, therefore, is the second largest of the world’s religions.”²¹

20th century is a century of great changes in the whole world. European triumph over Muslim states, Muslims under European colonialism and after it the re-emergence of religion in Muslim world are the most prominent features of this century.

Islam has reasserted itself all the more commandingly in both the individual and general society lives of Muslim social orders in a striking and once in a while emotional way frequently called the Islamic resurgence, Islamic revivalism, or Islamic fundamentalism. September, 2001, terrorist attacked New York’s World Trade Centre and the Pentagon in Washington, D.C. the hijackers who committed these acts reflected a religious radicalism that has debilitated numerous administrations in the Muslim world and also Western governments:

In the 1990s, Muslim extremists were responsible for attacks and acts of terrorism in Egypt, Algeria, Lebanon, Israel, Palestine, Kenya, and Tanzania that killed and maimed Muslims and non-Muslims alike. Spokesmen for the groups denounced the victim as “enemies of God” and railed at “atheist” governments. Post 9/11 Osama bin Laden’s al-Qaida and other extremist movements were responsible for attacks from Spain and Morocco to Indonesia and the Philippines.

After the breaking and collapse of Soviet Union in Afghanistan. America ignored the Afghanistan, and did not take any interest in constituting a strong central government of Jahadi Leaders. Afghanistan left in isolation. At last Taliban in Afghanistan took part in political matters to fulfil the requirements. It is notable that more than one lack Russian armies, appointed in Afghanistan left

their weapons in Afghanistan or Jihadi leader snatched it from Russian armed. As America was the foremost supporter of Afghan Jihad, so there were latest American weapons in large quantity. After Afghan Jihad America did not play his role to solve the political disputes in Afghanistan. So within the passage of time after the combination of Al-Qaida and Taliban, it was demonstrated that Terrorism is flourishing in Afghanistan.²²

Since the September, 11, 2001 attacks in the United States, as the Muslims have been signed out for physical and verbal harassment and abuse. Almost daily reports of connections of Muslims in Europe to the al-Qaida network have led to a resurgence of concerns about “the Islamic threat” from within:

“The result has been that Muslims, although previously trusted and accepted in their various communities, have once again become outsiders who are “increasingly isolated and stigmatized as opposed to integrated and respected.” One of the major challenges ahead for European Muslims will be the recovery of the recognition and respect they had previously achieved.”²³

Islam is an international religion with international purposes, it is the duty of all Muslims to spread the rule of Allah on the whole world. But Islam did not allow violence in society. It is the religious duty of all Muslims to spread God’s rule on whole earth with peaceful manners. For this purpose the Muslims should abide by international law, a Muslim is not permitted to abolish international law as these laws provide the path for international relations. International laws were made by Muslim initially. As Dr. Hameed ullah writes in his book “Islami Riyasat”:

“International laws were introduced by Muslims. The only available ancient book on international laws was written by Imam Zaid Bin Ali. He considered Iman Abu Hanifa’s teacher. In Ummayyad period he was arrested and murdered in 120 H. after Imam Abu Hanifa write a book on this topic with the name of “Kitab alseer.”²⁴

4.1 American hostility toward Islam

It is the impact of Crusades and the efforts of western thinkers, who considered Islam as a threat for their powers. Which resulted in American ignorance and hostility toward Islam:

At last, American lack of awareness of and threatening vibe toward Islam and the Middle East, frequently studied as a "Christian

Crusader" mind-set impacted by Orientalism and Zionism, were rebuked for confused U.S political-Military approaches:

*"Support for the "un-Islamic" shah of Iran, enormous military and financial establishing of Israel, and the sponsorship of an unrepresentative Christian-controlled government in Lebanon."*²⁵

Summary of political thoughts of American political experts can be present in these words. Religious hierachry could be used for American interests and this can be used for American interest by its gradual mental preparation. They suggest to promote traditional religion, and Islamic element should be present and used for their interests with their own strategy.²⁶

5. Political Islam is a danger for western interests and security of Israel

He warn the western world that Islamic candidates in governments whether through electoral process or any means can harm the interests of western world in Muslim states specially in Gulf states and it will be a permanent threat for the security of Israel.

This prospect generated a fear that Islamic governments would undermine stability in the Middle East and broader Muslim world, make Western access to oil less secure, and threaten the security of Israel.

5.1 Use of petrodollar

Oil of Arab country is the most imported wealth for Muslim world. Major oil producing countries like Saudi Arabia and Libya used their petrodollar for Islamic revivalism. These countries are supporting Islamic movements throughout the world. The petrodollar is also used to assist those government, which are introducing Islamic reforms:

Significant oil forces like Saudi Arabia and Libya utilized their petrodollars to encourage Islamic revivalism in other Muslim nations, supporting Islamic developments, helping governments that presented Islamic changes, and guaranteeing the productions and circulation of Islamic literature:

"Significant oil forces like Saudi Arabia, Libya, and the United Arab Emirates utilized their petrodollars to cultivate revivalism both out of conviction and to expand their political impact. They helped other Muslim governments (on condition that they cultivate Islamic measures), upheld Islamic associations and developments,

and endorsed the productions and dispersion of Islamic writing and the building of mosques, healing centers and schools."²⁷

Western world is much feared by the unity and cooperation of Muslim countries with each other. Western strategy is to divide and rule. For this purpose through their agents in Muslim countries they create artificial disputes among the Muslim countries. The use of petrodollar for the expansion of Islamic values is an alarming situation for the western interest in Muslim countries.

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