Coinage of the term 'Political Islam': Perspectives, Implications and prospects

Dr. Sajid Iqbal Sheikh *
Assistant Professor, Department of Islamic thought and Civilization, University of Management and Technology, Lahore.

Dr. Muhammad Samiullah **
Assistant Professor, Department of Islamic thought and Civilization, University of Management and Technology, Lahore.

Abstract

This paper aims to unfold genealogical notions backing the coinage of political Islam and its related discourses and attempts to search out its complementation or contradiction in contemporary political arena. Primarily, the study focuses on holistic and theoretical view of political Islam with its perspectives, implications and prospects. The study also aims to analyze the basic theory and current strategies of Islamic movements which may be considered the vanguard of Islamic revolution. These movements have created a certain discourse of political activism that is one of the matters of hottest debate in the contemporary world. Discourse analysis method with its approach of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) is going to be used and qualitative data collected from specific and relevant strata will be analyzed. The study argues that conspiracy theory is one of the key factors involved in offending political Islam and apparently, a valued segment of scholars concerned to the subject believe that Islamic political Theory must not be perceived as the source of violence and a root for terrorism discourses.

Keywords: Post-Islamism, political hegemony, Islamic political theory, Muslim democrats, political harmony, pluralism, post-Arab spring, Islamic resurgence movements. Conscious Muslim Polity.

1.Introduction:

In general, the term political Islam, mentions political identification in terms of activism in the name of Islam. More explicitly, it refers to the movements of Islamic

resurgence representing themselves as vanguard of Islamic revolution in various Muslim populations and their offshoots all over the world.

One cannot include all Islamic resurgence movements in category of political Islam, because many largely active Islamic movements has no political agenda like, *Tableeghi Jamaat* and other *Dawah* Sufi orders etc. The term political Islam, since its inception in 1942 was coined to determine explicitly, not as generic tag, to specific political program of *Muslim Brotherhood* in Egypt and *Jamaat e Islami* in India of that time. All other political activities are generally excluded from the term political Islam.

Instigation of the term *'Political Islam'*:

In 1942, Arther Jeffery, presented the term political Islam introducing scholarly recognition of organized political movement of Islamic resurgence.[1] It is interesting to state that Maulana Mawdudi founded Jamaat-e-Islami in 1941 and almost 13 years back in 1928, Hasan Al-Banna founded *Ikhwan-Ul-Muslimun* (Muslim Brotherhood).

Moving forward, sentiments of suppression arose in Muslim masses after defeat from Israel of Arab countries in 1967. Then phenomenon of political Islam turned significant in Muslim world and political role of Islamic movements seemed on higher level. Later in 1980, Martin Kramer is considered the key scholar, who vibrantly explain political Islam by mentioning active political role of Islamic regimes in Muslim countries.[2] Some scholars used term "Islamism" and political Islam interchangeably for the same theme.

Later on, a paradigm shift was seen in this debate when Dekmejian frequently used fundamentalism and Islamism, as an influential treatment of Political Islam. Some scholars, using descriptive terms such as conservative, progressive, militant, radical, or *jihadist* Islam, distinguishing among ideological strains of Political Islam.[3] There is a need to have refined approach for building understanding complexity pertaining to political Islam rather than just explaining simple distinction between traditional goals of religious nature and modern political goals. As a terminology "political Islam" has inadequately framed our explorations due to inclusion of distortion in religious practice. In this sense, there is no discussion regarding interruptions of destructive nature or complete destruction that has been tempted in society by putting modernization into state matters. Conversely, certain attempts have been made from group of religious people in order to respond to that destruction or disruption but these attempts are taken as suspect with no emphasis to put distinction in these instances which require critical stance. [4].

Perspectives, Implications and prospects:

Understanding of "Political Islam" should be in broader sense because of political authoritative status that is given by different contemporary movements, ideological trends and state policies. The main source of Political Islam in an organized way lies in the Muslim Brotherhood movement founded by Hasan al-Banna in 1928 in Ismailia city of Egypt. Now the movement possesses massive support in Arab world and has affiliated branches in several parts of world where Muslims are living in minority. However concern regarding the authoritative role of Islam from political perspective has been started before this movements with figures like Jamal-ul-Din al-Afghani and after that intellectual response over ending of Ottoman Caliphate in 1918.[5] It would not be right to consider political Islam as a single ideology or movement rather is belongs to large political scale. One can assess that modern trends in the movements of Islamic resurgence ranging from populist protest in the name of social problems as compare to conservative claims of Sharia law of politics and economy[6].On the ideological range of modern Europe, it is considered very hard to map political Islam. The trends of Islamic active groups especially in the European countries are diverse in terms of their economic agenda or moral puritanism, and also show diversity on other axes.[7] Islamic groups show fluctuations in their traditional religious narratives and approaches. There is a rejection from some Islamic groups regarding sources and methods of traditional religion before modern age and think that interpretation of Islam from political perspective is open to Muslim community. It is not necessary for this type of interpretive modernism to provide signal reading political or moral broadmindedness. Representation of all Islamism by rejecting authority of traditional scholars is considered as a mistake. [8]. Shia revolution in Iran is led by different Shia scholars such as Imam *Khomeini, Murtaza Motahhari, Husain Ali Montazeri,* and *Mahmud Teleghani*. From the Sunnis side, there is also a notion that partial goal of Islamic state should be to provide empowerment to religious scholars so that they can speak convincingly regarding Islamic law.[9]. Salafism, as a religious movement, is particularly adamant in providing rigor in methods of interpretations and existing authority of scholars.[10]

On the other hand, different groups may differ in usage of violence towards politics. The Salafi movement is committed towards a specific form of Muslim creed, an inflexible focus on bringing purification from any conceivable form of shirk and an obsession with mastering the words and deeds of the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) for the purposes of both knowledge and emulation in practice.[11]

On political line, there are extreme quietists in Salafis who orate near-Hobbesian compliance to even the most autocratic rulers[12] and others who contribute in politics of competition,[13] as well as members of the worldwide jihadi association.[14]. Islamists are fluctuated not only on bringing purity and transparency but also on

means to attain it. They have included political gradual is willing to work within corrupt, "un-Islamic" political systems as well as radical revolutionaries unwilling to legitimize any institutions that represent un-Islamic (*jahili*) political ideas.[15]

Political Islam should not be limited to societal movements looking for power or to those radical regimes brought to authority by Islamist engagement as in countries like Iran, Sudan and Afghanistan. Political Islam has been designated by multiple states like Pakistan, Egypt, Morocco, Malaysia, Indonesia, Tunisia and Nigeria for bringing Islamic principles into local legislation.[16]

So, political Islam research is incomplete if the focus is just on relating it with social movements of non-state and other militant organizations.[17]

In terms of relationships with nation state, Islamic movements are different in nature and behavior. Although Islamic movements started with the title of Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt, it is considered as a worldwide movement. Yet, some organizations are more explicitly dedicated to attaining power within specific national framework or to the deliverance of particular Muslim lands from overseas occupation, even as they stay with worldwide movement. Islam respects the believers (*the Ummah*) as the most vital political force, so transnationalism and cosmopolitanism are unescapable in Islamic activism. This aspect of current political Islam has gathered significant academic consideration.[18]. The existing literature on the subject of political Islam in history, religious studies, political science, anthropology, and sociology is spacious enough.[19] Political theory in capacity of academic field has lagged in developing unique approach and contribution in political Islam subject, if we comprehend political theory in terms of institutional type of work executed by academic political philosophers.[20]

Conclusion:

In above discussion we have explained background and historical perspective of the Political Islam, some vital links of the debate, a comprehensive view of salient features of political Islam and historical occurrences through which theory of political Islam was coined and operationalized. It was mentioned clearly that a holistic study on this debate was missing in remaining literature on political Islam and this study claims that discourses on political Islam are taking paradigm shifts and suggests a new scientific approach towards the topic because current situation in Tunisia and Sudan has proved that Islamic Movements are not allowed to work independently by the local and world powers even they have power through legitimate political process. This whole scenario is emerging as vital challenge to the Islamic movements because militant groups exploits this situation for attracting Muslim youth for their violent agenda.

References

[1] Jeffery, Arthur. "The political importance of Islam." Journal of Near Eastern Studies 1, no. 4 (1942): 383-395.

[2] Kramer, Martin S. Political Islam. Sage Publications (CA), 1980.

[3] Dekmejian, R. Hrair. Islam in revolution: fundamentalism in the Arab world. Syracuse University Press, 1995.

[4] Hirschkind, Charles. "What Is Political Islam?" Middle East Report, no. 205 (1997): 12-14.

[5] March, Andrew F. "Political Islam: Theory." Annual Review of Political Science 18 (2015): 103-123.

[6] Ramadan, Tariq. Radical reform: Islamic ethics and liberation. New York: Oxford University Press, 2009

[7] Shepard, William E. "Islam and ideology: Towards a typology." International Journal of Middle East Studies 19, no. 3 (1987): 307-336.

[8] Zaman, Muhammad Qasim. The ulama in contemporary Islam: custodians of change. Vol. 38. Princeton, NJ. Princeton University Press, 2010.

[9] Scott, Rachel M. "What might the Muslim Brotherhood do with al-Azhar? Religious authority in Egypt." Die Welt des Islams 52, no. 2 (2012): 131-165.

[10] Salafism, Global. "Islam's New Religious Movement." London: C. Hurst & Co (2009).

[11] Haykel, Bernard. "On the nature of Salafi thought and action." Global Salafism: Islam's new religious movement (2009): 33-57.

[12] Salomon, Noah. "The Salafi critique of Islamism: doctrine, difference and the problem of Islamic political action in contemporary Sudan." Global Salafism: Islam's New Religious Movement (2009): 143-68.

[13] McCants, William Faizi. The lesser of two evils: the Salafi turn to party politics in Egypt. Saban Center at Brookings, 2012.

[14] Paz, Reuven. "Debates within the family: Jihadi-Salafi debates on strategy, takfir, extremism, suicide bombings and the sense of the apocalypse." I Meijer, Roel (red.) Global Salafism: Islam's New Religious Movement (2009): 267-280.

[15] Mecham, Quinn, and Julie Chernov Hwang, eds. Islamist parties and political normalization in the Muslim world. University of Pennsylvania Press, 2014.

[16] Jan Michiel, Otto. Sharia Incorporated. A Comparative Overview of the Legal Systems of Twelve Muslim Countries in Past and Present. Leiden University Press, 2010.

[17] Nasr, Seyyed Vali Reza. Islamic leviathan: Islam and the making of state power. Oxford University Press, 2001.

[18] Devji, Landscapes of the jihad Faisal. : militancy, morality, modernity. Cornell University Press, 2005.

[19] Esposito JL, Shahin EE, eds. 2013. The Oxford Handbook of Islam and Politics.

[20] Pitts, Jennifer. "Political theory of empire and imperialism." Annual Review of Political Science 13 (2010). P. 212

Bibliography

Dekmejian, R. Hrair. Islam in revolution: fundamentalism in the Arab world. Syracuse University Press, 1995.

Devji, Landscapes of the jihad Faisal. : militancy, morality, modernity. Cornell University Press, 2005.

Esposito JL, Shahin EE, eds. 2013. The Oxford Handbook of Islam and Politics.

Haykel, Bernard. "On the nature of Salafi thought and action." Global Salafism: Islam's new religious movement (2009): 33-57.

Hirschkind, Charles. "What Is Political Islam?" Middle East Report, no. 205 (1997): 12-14.

Jan Michiel, Otto. Sharia Incorporated. A Comparative Overview of the Legal Systems of Twelve Muslim Countries in Past and Present. Leiden University Press, 2010.

Jeffery, Arthur. "The political importance of Islam." Journal of Near Eastern Studies 1, no. 4 (1942): 383-395.

Kramer, Martin S. Political Islam. Sage Publications (CA), 1980.

March, Andrew F. "Political Islam: Theory." Annual Review of Political Science 18 (2015): 103-123.

McCants, William Faizi. The lesser of two evils: the Salafi turn to party politics in Egypt. Saban Center at Brookings, 2012.

Mecham, Quinn, and Julie Chernov Hwang, eds. Islamist parties and political normalization in the Muslim world. University of Pennsylvania Press, 2014.

Nasr, Seyyed Vali Reza. Islamic leviathan: Islam and the making of state power. Oxford University Press, 2001.

Paz, Reuven. "Debates within the family: Jihadi-Salafi debates on strategy, takfir, extremism, suicide bombings and the sense of the apocalypse." I Meijer, Roel (red.) Global Salafism: Islam's New Religious Movement (2009): 267-280.

Pitts, Jennifer. "Political theory of empire and imperialism." Annual Review of Political Science 13 (2010).

Ramadan, Tariq. Radical reform: Islamic ethics and liberation. New York: Oxford University Press, 2009

Salafism, Global. "Islam's New Religious Movement." London: C. Hurst & Co (2009).

Salomon, Noah. "The Salafi critique of Islamism: doctrine, difference and the problem of Islamic political action in contemporary Sudan." Global Salafism: Islam's New Religious Movement (2009): 143-68.

Scott, Rachel M. "What might the Muslim Brotherhood do with al-Azhar? Religious authority in Egypt." Die Welt des Islams52, no. 2 (2012): 131-165.

Shepard, William E. "Islam and ideology: Towards a typology." International Journal of Middle East Studies 19, no. 3 (1987): 307-336.

Zaman, Muhammad Qasim. The ulama in contemporary Islam: custodians of change. Vol. 38. Princeton, NJ. Princeton University Press, 2010.