



Values and Institutions of a Free Society in mainly Muslim Countries

Why a Particular Political Idea didn't Emerge in Islamic History?

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What is the Trouble in the Muslim World?

When we try to depict the Muslim World in terms of political way we'll see a situation like that: There isn't any good governance, political stability can't be provided and violence is dominant. The process which had begun with Jasmine Revolution and continued with Arab Spring was a hope to Muslim World. This hope has been destroyed in Syria, Iraq and Egypt; however there's an uncertainty in Libya and Algeria but Turkey, Tunisia and Morocco keep giving hope. Turkic republics in Middle Asia are governed by full or half dictatorship. Iran and Saudi Arabia provoke the violence constantly with communion fanaticism. There are few countries which have peace. In a nutshell, the political future of the Muslim World is totally uncertain.

There may be so many reasons like the World conjuncture, foreign interferences, global economics and local equilibrium for this vagueness. But there is a more specific and distinct historical background of this politically-uncertain-situation in the Muslim World. The mind contexture of Muslims is the main reason for these issues. The basic approach which determines this mind contexture is the idea that making a distinction between belief and law will devastate the religion. This idea holds back the improvement of political secularization and the emergence of a independent political science. In the Muslim World, there's a lack of "political science". Because of that political science haven't occurred yet, the political principles haven't emerged; therefore the proper methods to block social disorders haven't evolved. And muslim people can't decide how to live in what kind of society.

The Muslims' Main Question: What's the Role of Religion in Politics?

Muslims was more interested than how much they should've been interested in what Quran and Sunnah say about topics related to governance and, still, they are. The question of what Quran and Sunnah say is a wrong question; the right one is like that "how can we solve our political problems and, at this point, how do religious values contribute to these solutions?" The right questions go on as: What and how should be the relationship between ruler and ruled one? On what principles should a legit governance be based? What's the limitation of power and puissance? How does the state find a solution to disagreement and conflict of interest in society? Who makes the laws? On what principles will these laws be based? The true answers could have been found depending on a mind directed to social events, which is called "an empirical glance" by Ibn Khaldun and called "anthropological eye" by Hassan Khanafi.

We recognize that these questions above were asked and replied in Islamic thought history. In history of Islam, an empirical political idea, which's detached from religion, had emerged; furthermore it had been functional occasionally but it couldn't ensure continuity. For this reason, a political social memory which knows and evaluates what happened in past couldn't occur in Islamic World. Today, Muslims keep asking the question of what the role of religion in politics is. This question is an obstacle to create a political idea because the situation and contexture of Muslims' mind are blocking to establish a proper relation between beliefs and political principles or laws. It tries to establish this relation just theoretically –not motivated by experience and problems.

The Historical Development of Islamic Political Thought

The roots of Islamic political thought are based on Prophet Mohammed and his political actions. Mohammed took based on Mecca's pre-Islamic political experience as to his political actions. Pre-Islamic Mecca politics was based on a system called consultancy (mashwarat). The issues of the city was shared among tribes/families and legalized. Caliphate, means to keep going the works of the Prophet after he dies, emerged. After Abu Bakir and Umar's caliphate terms this system didn't run well and faced with malfunction.

Umayyad Dynasty combined the caliphate system with sultanate (reign). Afterwards, authority get the legitimacy from the "asabiyah" means group feeling. In his work, al-Muqaddimah, Ibn Khaldun says Islamic political thought is based on two different group feelings. Being combined the sultanate and caliphate systems in Umayyad Dynasty the ethnical nationalism which is the group feeling depends on blood-relation and, the other one, communitarianism which is the religious or ideological group feeling became the legitimacy reference of the governances in the Muslim World. Combining of these two group feelings created powerful governances depending on blood-relation and religion. The big problems which had been through was solved with dominance of powerful rulers not with consensual decision mechanisms guided by political and historical memory.

Except for this action which is related to the state governance, academic works which would plant the basis of political science in the world have been begun to served since 8th century, in Muslim World. This science, which was developing among religious disciplines like Canon Law (Fiqh) and Kalam in first place, tended to be secularized in 9th century. This process had been begun with translating some books belong to Hellenistic culture into Arabic language in Beytu'l-Hikme (House of Philosophy), the first university of Muslims. Al-Kindi (801-873) was the first person who tried to embrace and protect this legacy.

Traditional Islamic political thought separated in two branches in 9th century. The first branch includes some pieces like *Nasihatname* (Advise Epistle) and *Siyasetname* (Political Epistle) which are shaped in the Palace circle. For instance Nizamu'l-Mülk's *Siyasetname*, Abu al-Hasan al-Mawardi's (972-1058) *Ahkamu's-Sultaniyye*, Yusuf Has Hacib's *Kutadgu Bilig* (knowledge bringing happiness) were books including advices to sultans.

The second one emerged by works which belong to those who carried the political accumulation of Hellenistic culture to the Islamic thought. This tradition had been begun by Mutezilian theologians but Al-Kindi became its real founder. The main attribute of this tradition was that making ethic the basic element of politics. This thought was based on Plato's *Republic* and Aristotle's *Politics*. In these books prudence, justice, courage and temperance were served as prior principles that limits the ruler. These concepts were accepted as political virtues and in order to obtain these virtues it was necessary to have basic ethical virtues. Plato and Aristotle claimed that if one who hasn't got some common (doxastic, ethic) ethical values or virtues like honesty, helpfulness, modesty and kindness s/he can't obtain political (epistemic, dianoethic) virtues.

Islamic thought tradition was influenced by this Hellenistic point of view which depends on ethics-politics relation. Many thinkers like Al-Cahiz, Al-Kindi, Al-Farabi, Ibn Miskawayh, Zakariya ar-Razi, Nasiraddin Tusi, Ibn Bajjah, Ibn Tufayl, Ibn Hazm, Calaleddin Davvani, Nizamuddin Arudi, Kınalızade Ali Efendi wrote important books in political and ethical field. These books were written by empirical and anthropological point of view and had some nuances which demarcate the power of political authorities. However religious disciplines like Canon Law (Fıqh) and Kalam outshined ethics and politics. While ethical and political sciences were demarcating the power Canon Law (Fıqh) and Kalam were regarded as legitimating parts of it. Because the rulers would want to take advantage of the religion hiding behind these disciplines. However ethics and politics have both demarcating and secular backbones. Many theologians like Hasan al-Basri (642-728), Abu Khanifa (699-767) and Ahmad Ibn Hanbal (780-855) tried to avoid from being a power-and-authority-legitimating and they were punished for these attitudes by political power. But rulers easily found other scholars who took place of them.

Religious Sciences as Power-Supporter: Some Examples

Politics historically stem from the tension occurred between the authority and freedom. While authority tends to boost its power individuals tend to enhance their freedom. Politics serves some principles to demarcate the authority, domination, tolerance which stand between the authority and individuals. For instance; separation of powers, equality before the law, rule of law, freedom of speech, freedom of religion and conscience are political principles defining and determining these limits. The political principles don't defend the authority; on the contrary, they defend individuals and freedom. However, authorities had tried to establish religious authorities throughout the history of Islam whilst they didn't have a Sunni belief and they tried to provide legitimacy by means of the religious authority for their actions. One of the examples is Suffering Incidents (mihnah) which emerged in 2nd century of Islam. Abbasid Caliph Abu Ja'far Abdullāh al-Ma'mun (786-833) dominated his opponents by depending the religious views ("Has Quran been created?" problem).

A typical example belongs to the Ottoman period. Theologians (Sheikh ul-Islam) named Ibn Kemal (1468-1536) and Ebusuud Efendi (1490-1574) attributes the thought of *raison d'état* (*hikmat-i huqumat, maslahat-i vataniya*) to religious base by giving fetwas. Being motivated by this, they gave fetwas which are suitable for ruler's wishes. These fetwas said rulers are allowed to kill their fathers, children and siblings for the sake of continuity of the state. And they gave fetwas says it's okay for the religion to kill dissidents and take their goods in social conflicts –even if there isn't a war.

While they were giving these fetwas Kınalızade Ali Efendi (1511-1571), who was a Chief Judge in Damascus, wrote a book called *Ahlak-ı Alai* (Morals of Elites). The book was written with respect to Islamic politics tradition. It was consisted of three parts. First part was related to personal moral and spoke about how to be a good person. Second part was related to housekeeping and spoke about how a good person manages his or her home. And the last part was related to ruling a state; and this part spoke about how a ruler, who is a good person and a good housekeeper, should rule the state. But his thoughts impressed no one. After him

not so many books were written about political science in the Muslim World. Although his book continued to be read in some Ottoman schools it showed that the Islamic political thought was coming to end, indeed.

These examples reveal that the traditional Islamic disciplines functioned just as power-and-authority-legitimizing elements. Islamic political thought couldn't improve in spite of the important works and this process destroyed the Islamic political thought. Secularization couldn't exist in political field. Political and religious authority has always been together. Therefore a political and ethical science which is detached from Islamic disciplines couldn't emerge. Politics and ethics have been covered by Fiqh and Kalam. And these disciplines have usually been a fatwa station which provides legitimacy to the authority.

The Development of Political Science in Europe and Islamic Thought's Influence

Islamic political thought couldn't be consistent historically. After two Arabic works were translated into Latin, this thought tradition became an inspiration to Renaissance and European political thought. These works were *Tadbir al-Mutawahhid* (The Solitary Being or The Governance of Solitary) by Ibn Bajjah and *Hayy Ibn Yaqzan* by Ibn Tufayl. Ibn Bajjah's book was translated into Latin as *De Vita Solitaria*, by Francesco Petrarca (1304-1374); and Ibn Tufayl's book was translated into Latin as *Decameron*, by Giovanni Boccaccio (1313-1375). Petrarca and Boccaccio were the pioneers of Renaissance and their translations weren't mot-a-mot translations. Especially Boccaccio added some erotic parts into the story but the theme was same. Both of the books included individuation as main subject.

In their books, individuality means escaping from the pressure of authorities, self-sufficiency, being a person who lives without help, being a person who helps others –not being helped. In a nutshell individuality means to have necessary qualifications to survive, in their works. The same logic was protected in Petrarca and Boccaccio's works and became an inspiration to Renaissance. Political science in Europe was established on individuality and secularization and became the memory of Europe's political history. But the individuality and the secularization didn't always imply detaching from the religion. For example, in Scottish tradition, this means to get rid of the religious and political pressure of authorities.

After Petrarca's pieces, hundreds of books upon ethics and politics have been written in Europe. Muslims' political legacy gained a peculiar form and specialized in Europe and became an independent science. Today, the Eurocentric political culture is a world-wide reference source.

Colonialization Period in the Muslim World and the Need for Politics

There had been powerful governances till 19th century came. This situation held the politics back from developing as an independent science or discipline. Powerful governances would use power to block the social destructions that might be happen because of the conflicts and the disagreements emerged in society.

When 19th century came the governances in the Muslim world lost their powers. The powerful countries of Europe colonized the Muslim countries. Being ruled by a British fabric company, the India indicated that Muslim's 1.200 sumptuous years had come to an end. The Muslim world couldn't decide what the right move is at that point. Different reactions appeared in different times. In 19th century there were back-essence and recoverism movements. Jamal al-Din al-Afghani (1838-1897), an Indian thinker, was the founder of back-essence theology and he was followed by Islamic modernists like Muhammad Abduh (1849-1905), Namik Kemal (1840-1888), and Musa Carullah Bigiev (1875-1945).

In back-essence theology there are the thoughts of religious recovering and religious innovation. According to this, the reason of the situation, in which Muslims stucked, is that the Islamic thought have been slowing down gradually. Muhammad Iqbal regards this slow down as a result of Islamic thought's tendency to afterlife and irrational thinking, and this tendency has been going on since 5th century.¹ The revival of Islamic thought is connected with leaving the traditional Quran and Sunnah perception and the interpreting of the main sources according to the necessities of the time. When we re-produce the Islamic knowledge, Muslims will get rid of this shameful situation and go back their good old days. They claimed that western values must be checked by Quran and adapted to the Muslim world. Their catchword was "bring the science and tech, not the culture and religion –from the West." Afghani and his followers would suggest setting up a political Islamic alliance.

Sir Syed Ahmad Khan, who was from India; and Ali Abdel Raziq, who was from Egypt, put forward a more modernist and syncretic propositions. They suggested that the religion and politics should be detached from each other and Muslims should take or imitate the western politics and science as what they are.

At the beginning of the 20th century, the colonialization in the Muslim world gave its place to secular dictators. Back-essence and recoverism movements were gone and resistance and revival movements came. The secular dictators were the worst form of nation-state conception that emerged in the West. The resistance discourse was created to compete with this conception. According to this idea, Muslims lagged behind because of they fell apart from Quran and Sunnah. Muslims would be saved if Allah's sovereignty comes into the Muslim world. Abul-A'la Mawdudi (1903-1979) and Sayyid Qutb (1906-1966) were the most important representatives of this idea. According to them secularism and democracy was ideological colonist tools brought by the Western world to the Muslim world. They rejected some political concepts like democracy, pluralism, religious tolerance, the freedom of speech and secularization because of that they are from out of the religion and they are western values. Mawdudi and Qutb regarded them as a Trojan and claimed the political sovereignty only belongs to Allah.² This idea remarked any other idea as "dangerous". The entegrist attitude (autism) was based on the principles of saving the society, introversion and surviving.

¹ Muhammed İqbal, *İslam'da Dini Düşüncenin Yeniden İnşası* (The Restoration of Religious Thought in Islam), çev.: Rahim Acar, Timaş Yayınları, İstanbul 2013, s. 215.

² Seyyid Kutup, *Yoldaki İşaretler* (Signposts on the Road), çev.: Salih Karataş, Dünya Yayınları, İstanbul 1997.

Political Tendencies in the Muslim World and the Problem of Particularity

Today these three manners are manifested as Islamism, Fundamentalism and Reformism. These three tendencies have some branches in all over the Muslim world –at least as an attitude. The tendencies' common feature is that they try to establish a relation between the approaches which are parts of the Islamic belief system and the politics and religion. Fundamentalists claim that Islam has some principles which are determined and attached in secular and religious subjects and Muslims can't refer to any idea except for the religion's main sources. To them, Muslims can't get something from misbelievers and the best political system is the first historical experiences in the beginning of Islam. We have to carry these experiences to now with respect to the interpretations which are allowed by Islam. Reformists claim that Islam let believers interpret secular and religious subjects depending on their own initiative. Because, they think, the regulations in society depend on the society and the society changes time to time.³ Islamists show a consensual tendency. According to them there are some political principles in Islam and these should be interpreted by referring the Quran and Sunnah, detached from the western values and applied.

These manners are traumatic movements which are developed to compete with colonialization and secularized dictatorships. For that reason, they haven't got any soundness or coherence which can solve the political problems of Muslims. The supporters of these movements believe in that a reform in religion or going back to the main sources will solve the problems. But these approaches can solve the religious problems but they can't find any solution to the political problems. And at the end of a 150-year-process there left an irregular political accumulation in Muslim's hands, and they don't know how and in where use this accumulation. This political accumulation includes the resistance, opposition and exclusion. It hasn't got a political management logic because it hasn't got a consensual method which determines how to solve the political problems. So some Islamic government experiences like Iran, Sudan, and Pakistan are based on this irregular accumulation. In these countries, the resistance and opposition discourse has become an authority and power discourse but it's not a functional example for the Muslim world. However this has got some useful ingredients in it.

Political science is the memory of political history of a society. Without this memory it's impossible to save the experience of the past. Without this memory it's impossible to be ready for solving the today's and tomorrow's problems. We can call it "political ignorance". Political ignorance means to don't know what's going on and what kind of reaction should be done. And this causes a political dilemma for the Muslims: they either keep the traumatic discourses or they seek some opportunities to change and use the western political culture for solving their own problems. This choice is the first phase of the construction of a original political thought.

The Muslim world's irregular political culture is capable of creating this original political thought. Muhammad Iqbal,⁴ Rashid Ghannushi,⁵ Alija İzetbegovic,⁶ Muhammad Abed al-

³ Ali Abdurrazık, *İslam'da İktidarın Temelleri: Bir İdeolojik Devlet Eleştirisi* (The Foundations of Power in Islam: A Critique for the Ideological State), Birleşik yayınları, Ankara 1995, s. 42.

⁴ İqbal, *ibid*, s. 200.

Jaberi⁷ and Abdelillah Benkirane's mentions on the democratic and liberal values can be a motivator to found an original political thought. However the struggles aimed to this way create doubtful minds and they are regarded as a new form of colonialism.

Nowadays, Islamic political thought are stuck in two attitudes. There is a secularist attitude which is very skeptical about each part of the religion and Muslim culture. On the other hand, there is a fundamentalist attitude which regards the politics as a means of realization of the religious aims and making the public religious. Muslims are squeezed and twisted by the pressure of these thoughts. The pressure is felt very strongly in Turkey, Pakistan, Malaysia, Indonesia, Egypt, Tunisia, Algeria and Morocco which are the closest countries to the democracy, though.

Now, Muslims have to decide how to live in what kind of society. This decision requires a right question: In what kind of society do we want to live? Do we want to live in an open society in which all the people are equal to each other before the law or a Islamic society/state which is based on someone's interpretations? With these questions, the Muslim world have to begin to transform the political science produced in West in order to solve its own questions, as quick as it can be.

Conclusion: Why haven't a Political Science been Shaped in Islamic Thought?

1. In Muslim world, a political thought which's independent and detached from the religion couldn't be popular. For this reason secularization and individualism couldn't improve.
2. The political materials in Islamic history couldn't be integrated in a systematical base.
3. Political science was covered by religious disciplines. Islamic disciplines have developed on *raison d'état* in political area.
4. The Muslim world couldn't compete with the trauma which had begun with the colonialization.
5. And the politics has remained as a resistance and opposition discourse.
6. The question of "What's the role of the religion in the politics?" weakened Muslim intellectual's reasoning ability.
7. The political science which emerged in the western historical experience and aimed to their problems couldn't be transformed in a form that has the capability of solving the problems occurred in Muslim societies.

⁵ Raşid Gannuşı, "İslami Olmayan Yönetime Katılım" (Attendance to the non-Islamic Regime), *İslami Yorum* 5, ss. 111-117.

⁶ Ali İzzet Begoviç, *Doğu ve Batı arasında İslam* (Alternative Islam between East and West), Nehir Yayınları, İstanbul 2008.

⁷ Abid el-Cabiri, *Demokrasi Sorunu* (Democracy Problem), *İslami Yorum* 5, ss. 71-82.