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THE ISLAMIST CHALLENGE:
BETWEEN “MODERNIZATION” AND INTIMIDATION

Abdullah al-Ahsan

Most contemporary Muslim nation-states emerged on the world map during the latter half of the 20th century. During the latter half of the 19th and the first half of the 20th centuries, these countries struggled against European Colonialism and in the process they adopted many European ideas such as nationalism, democracy, socialism etc. All these ideas were viewed as part and parcel of the modernization process in the Muslim world. However, independent Muslim nation-states increasingly came under challenge from traditional Islamic ideas. In this paper we shall examine how these ideas have challenged the contemporary nation-state system. We shall also examine how the nation-states have responded to their challenges.

Initially, many observers of nationalist developments in Muslim countries believed that Muslim nation-states would follow the 19th century European pattern to modernize and westernize themselves. Hans Kohn, for example, believed that Muslim countries were going through a secularization process similar to that in Europe. After observing the development of the nationalist idea in Asia, he noted:

A few years back religion was the determining factor in the East. Nationalism is not ousting religion, but more or less rapidly taking a place beside it, frequently fortifying it, beginning to transform and impair it. National symbols are acquiring religious authority and sacramental inviolability. The truth which men will defend with their lives is no longer exclusively religious, on occasion even, it is no longer religious at all, but in increasing measure, national.¹

¹ Hans Kohn, *Nationalism and Imperialism in the Hither East* (New York: Howard Fertig, 1969), 19.

He further observed:

Only twenty-five years ago the Turks, the Arabian, and the Egyptians described themselves first and foremost [as] Mohammedans. They are not yet conscious of ethical designations, or only accorded secondary consideration. Today the Mohammedan is primary a member of his nation or a citizen of his state and afterwards a Mohammedan.²

On the basis of these observations Kohn formed a theory in the study of social change. He said, "Nationalism takes the place of religion as the principle of governing all social and intellectual life."³ Following the footsteps set by Kohn, another widely-quoted scholar on nationalism, Harvard professor Rupert Emerson, theorized that "the rise of nationalism coincides with the decline in the hold of religion." He supports his view by quoting Hans Kohn, saying:

Hans Kohn formulated a universal sociological view which he saw as signifying the transition from medieval to modern forms of organization: religious groupings lost power when they confronted the consciousness of a common nationality and speech.⁴

Following Kohn's "universal sociological theory," Rupert Emerson theorized the growth of nation-states in Asia and Africa saying that:

The nations have come to be accepted as taking priority over claims coming from other sources. Family, tribe, locality, religion, conscience, economic interest and a host of other appeals may at any given time and

² *Ibid.*, 24

³ Hans Kohn, *A History of Nationalism in the East*, 8.

⁴ See Rupert Emerson, *From Empire to Nation: The Rise of Self-Assertion of Asian and African Peoples* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press 1960), 158, and the corresponding note on page 436.

place prevail over national allegiance for particular individuals or groups. But it is the characteristic feature of the national era that for most men the national allegiance takes precedence over all other claims which may be made upon them when they are confronted with alternative choices of allegiances, as most strikingly in time of war.⁵

Some scholars, however, soon recognized this over zealous generalization as a mistake and identified the challenges posed by Islamic ideas on nationalism. For example, in the 1950s, Bernard Lewis enthusiastically made a sweeping remark on the growth of the nation states in the Muslim world and even referred to the mission of the Prophet of Islam. He said, "Another such struggle is being fought in our own time - not against Al-Lat and Al-'Uzza (pre-Islamic objects of worship) - but a new set of idols called states, races, nations; this time it is the idols that seem to be victorious."⁶ Within years, in another article entitled "The Return of Islam," he revised his view saying that:

A Muslim Iraqi would feel far closer bonds with a non-Iraqi Muslim than with a non-Muslim Iraqi. Muslims of different countries, speaking different languages, share the same memories of a common and sacred past, the same awareness of corporate identity, the same sense of a common predicament and destiny. It is not nation or country which, as in the West, forms the historical basis of identity, but the religio-political community, and the imported Western idea of ethnic and territorial nationhood remains, like secularism, alien and incompletely assimilated.⁷

⁵ *Ibid.*, 97.

⁶ Bernard Lewis, *The Middle East and the West*, (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1967), 70.

⁷ Bernard Lewis, "The Return of Islam," in *Commentary* (January 1976), 40-41.

Perhaps Lewis was alarmed by the 1973 war in West Asia which was followed by a successful oil embargo against several pro-Israeli countries. Since the publication of Lewis's work, and particularly after the Islamic revolution in Iran (1979), many other works have been produced on a variety of topics and themes such as 'fundamentalist Islam', 'militant Islam', 'resurgent Islam', 'political Islam' and 'Islamic revivalism'; all indicate renewed interest among Muslims in traditional Islamic ideas. We shall identify this trend in the Muslim world as the Islamist Trend.

Who are the Islamists? How does one define what is Islamism? Is there any uniformity in such a historical development? One French scholar has defined the term as:

... 'Islamism' is a brand of modern political Islamic fundamentalism that claims to re-create a true Islamic society, not simply by imposing *sharia*, but by establishing first an Islamic state through political action. Islamists see Islam not as a mere religion but as a political ideology.⁸

With this theoretical understanding of Islamism the author identifies the Islamist political entities as: "Pakistani Jamaat-i-Islami, the Turkish Refah Partisi and its successors, the Iranian Islamic revolution, the Lebanese Hezbollah, the Tunisian Nahda, the Islamic Salvation Front (FIS) in Algeria, the National Islamic Front in Sudan, the Islamic Renaissance Party in Tajikistan, Islah in Yemen, the Palestinian Hamas and the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt, Syria, Kuwait, Jordan and the Gulf states."⁹ We shall analyze the Islamist phenomenon based on the experience primarily of *Ikhwan al-Muslimun* in Egypt, *Jamat-i-Islami* in Pakistan, and *Refah Partisi* in Turkey. We shall then try to compare and generalize with similar movements in other countries. Afghanistan's Taliban has been considered an Islamic phenomenon mainly by the Western press, but

⁸ Olivier Roy, *Globalised Islam: The Search for a New Ummah*, (London: Hurst & Company, 2004), 58.

⁹ *Ibid*, 60.

Islamists in other countries did not relate themselves closely with them when they were in power. Also, more recently many terrorist organizations seem to have emerged mainly in occupied territories notably of Afghanistan, Iraq and Palestine who are engaged in kidnapping and killing of civilians. In our opinion, none of them fall into the category of this Islamist phenomenon.

Intellectual foundation of these Islamist political entities may be traced with the 20th century *Ikhwan al-Muslimun* or the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt founded by Hasan al-Banna (1906-1949) and *Jamaat-i-Islami* in Pakistan founded by Abul A'la Mawdudi (1903-1979). It is interesting to note that these two movements played a similar role in shaping the Islamist ideas around the middle of the 20th century in a similar fashion and they originated completely independent of each other. Both movements claimed to have been based on the fundamental teachings of Islam and viewed the historical Prophetic society in Madinah as their desired model. Both claimed to have wanted to establish an Islamic state in their respective countries. Both movements have made deep impacts on the 20th century's entire Muslim society. By the end of the century these movements had produced a significant number of followers in Europe and America as well. Now this Islamist phenomenon has become a dominant factor in the global political agenda. We shall analyze the impact of this phenomenon in this paper.

Throughout its fourteen hundred years of history Islamic civilization has witnessed many revivalist movements wanting to establish an ideal society like the one established by the Prophet in 7th century Madinah. Although all these movements claimed to have been based on the fundamental teachings of Islam, one may identify unique characters of each of these movements in accordance to their respective times and places.¹⁰ Muslim revivalists generally viewed their role in history as being responsible for rescuing the community (*ummah*) from moral decline. They believed that the moral decline of the society is always followed by social, economic and political

¹⁰ For a general survey of Islamic revivalist movements, see Fazlur Rahman, "Revival and Reform in Islam," in *Cambridge History of Islam*. Ed. P.M. Holt, et.al, Vol. 2 (Cambridge: At the University Press, 1970), 632-656.

decline of the society. Although the Islamic revivalists have always wanted to establish an Islamic order, their criterion for success has never been the successful establishment of the Islamic order. Rather, they have always held the belief that their responsibility ended with sincere attempts to achieve that goal and their real success lay in the Hereafter.

It is worth noting that in the 18th century, just before the colonial penetration, two such movements made lasting impacts on the Muslim world. One of these originated in India under the leadership of Shah Waliullah (1703-1762), and the other originated in the Arabian heartland of Najd under the influence of Muhammad ibn Abdul Wahhab (1703-1789). Although both movements identified a general decline in the Muslim society, it was not until the 19th century that Muslim intellectuals recognized this decline in contrast with the Western civilization. While acknowledging Muslim backwardness as opposed to the Europeans, most 19th century Muslim reformers wanted to introduce institutions such as the parliament in the Muslim world. This clearly was an evidence of the impact of European thought on modern Muslims. Yet one can unmistakably suggest that 19th century Islamic reform movements were just continuations of earlier Islamic reform initiatives. Fazlur Rahman has rightly pointed out that:

“[w]e must ... emphasize the continuity between the pre-modernist [18th century] awakening and the Modernist renaissance [19th century], inasmuch as both are concerned with society. Even the terrific zest and dynamism displayed by the modern movements of liberation from foreign rule are essentially a continuation of the activism of the pre-Modernist reform movements.”¹¹

The 20th century Islamist movements also appeared in continuation of the same trend in the Muslim world. However, because of the differences in historical circumstances the 19th and 20th century

¹¹ Ibid, 642.

movements responded to many European ideas differently. Since they were subject to European political domination, these Islamist movements heavily emphasized the political aspect of Islam. That is why some scholars have understood these movements as political Islam.¹² We shall refer to these movements just as Islamist movements. However, the fundamental difference between the 19th century reform movements and the 20th century Islamist movements is that while 19th century reformers confronted European colonial rule, 20th century Islamists faced the challenge of Europeanized nationalist leaders in independent and sovereign nation-states, who were often supported by their former colonial powers. In order to keep our discussion to a manageable size, we shall confine our discussions to Egypt, Pakistan and Turkey. Since the Muslim Brotherhood movement originated in Egypt, we shall begin our discussion on the subject with political developments in Egypt.

Egypt

The *Ikhwan al-Muslimun* or the Society of Muslim Brothers (also referred as the Muslim Brotherhood) was founded as a youth club in 1928 when Egypt was passing through a very critical period of history. There were three different "sovereign" bodies in Egypt: the King, an unstable parliament mainly led by the populist party *Wafd*, and the undeclared colonial power – the British. Interestingly Egypt was never a part of the British Empire, and yet it remained the most powerful political player in the country until the military revolt of 1952. This undeclared British dominance later defined the Muslim Brotherhood's attitude not only towards the British but also, to a great extent, towards Western civilization. Its founder, Hasan al-Banna, saw most of Egypt's problems originating from the British occupation of the country and found their solutions by returning to

¹² See, for example, Olivier Roy, *The Failure of Political Islam*. Tr. Carol Volk. (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1994) and Joel Benin and Joe Stork, ed. *Political Islam: Essays from Middle East Report*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997).

fundamentals of Islam. He described Islam as creed and worship, fatherland and nationality, law and culture, tolerance and strength – an all-encompassing way of life.¹³ He also declared that Egypt's poverty, powerlessness, and lack of dignity had resulted from its failure to follow Islamic moral principles. He observed that the Egyptian constitution freed the masses from the slavery of feudalism only in theory; in reality the British had enslaved the whole Egyptian society. Al-Banna also believed that Muslims all over the world constituted one single brotherhood and the geographical boundaries, ethnic differences, and cultural backgrounds did not constitute any barrier in this brotherhood.¹⁴

The Brothers claimed to have been committed to creating what they called an Islamic order in modern Egypt. For the Brothers the ideal society was the one that was established in Madinah by the Prophet and his immediate companions in the 7th century. It is in this sense that the Brothers have been viewed as Islamic revivalist. Interestingly, Muslim modernists in the 19th century also viewed the Prophetic society as their ideal. However, a fundamental difference between the modernist approach to social reform and that of the Muslim Brothers is that while the latter believed that the practice of *shari'ah* determined the true Islamic order, the former emphasized the role of *ijtihad* or independent reasoning for achieving the same goal. Here one must note that the Brother's understanding of the *shari'ah* was different from that of the tradition. The Brothers did not simply believe that *shari'ah* constituted a bunch of legal codes that existed historically which could be imposed on modern society. Rather, the Brothers believed, as Richard Mitchell points out, that "the rulings of the legists of the Islamic tradition are obviously inadequate." They have failed to respond to the needs of society

¹³ On the Muslim Brotherhood, see Richard P. Mitchell, *The Society of Muslim Brothers*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1969), and Ishak Musa Husaini, *The Muslim Brethren: The Greatest of Modern Islamic Movements*, (Beirut: Khayat College Book Cooperative, 1956). Also see www.ikhwanweb.org the official website of this group in Egypt.

¹⁴ On the stand of *Ikhwan al-Muslimun* on this issue, see Zafar Ishaq Ansari, 'Contemporary Islam and Nationalism: A Case Study of Egypt', *Die Welt des Islam*, N.S. Vol. VII, No. 2-4, pp.3-38.

through time. However, the failure of the growth of jurisprudence did mean the *shari'ah* was dead. "The most widely circulated 'legal' book among the Brothers deplores the confusion between the 'words of the legal scholars' and the *shari'ah*, and connects this confusion with the decline of Islamic society."¹⁵

The Brothers wanted to apply *shari'ah* only through the use of *ijtihad*.¹⁶ In other words, like the 19th century modernists, the Brothers also emphasized the role of *ijtihad* or independent reasoning for what they called *Nizam al-Islami* or an Islamic Order in contemporary Egypt. They didn't seek to violently overthrow the political regime in Egypt. Rather, they seemed to have compromised with the practical political realities in Egypt by accommodating the role of the king and that of the parliament elected by the people. Mitchell explains the position of the Brothers as saying:

There are five 'powers' in the Islamic state; executive power belongs to the ruler alone; legislative power is shared between the ruler and *ahl al-shura*; judicial power is exercised by judges nominated by the ruler who, because of their role as interpreters of the law are 'absolutely independent'; financial power by officials appointed by the ruler but responsible to the community; and the power of 'control and reform' belongs to the community at large in the persons of the *ahl al-shura*. The Islamic state thus outlined would be unique; ... it would not be a theocracy because the ruler derives from men not God; it would not be a dictatorship because the ruled may remove their ruler if he breaks his contract; and it should not be a monarchy because the ruler has no hereditary authority.¹⁷

The Brothers never opposed the western idea of democracy and were highly critical of literal implementation of the *shari'ah* in some Muslim countries. Citing the example of Islamic legal

¹⁵ Richard P. Mitchell, op. cit., 237.

¹⁶ *Ijtihad* is held as one of the sources of Islamic law.

¹⁷ Mitchell, 248-49.

punishment for theft Mitchell explains their stand as saying:

On the punishment for theft, the real position of Islam is that a thief is sentenced to the ultimate punishment only if he commits his crime *after* society has provided him with all his needs; the state protects itself and its citizens from theft by assuring for every man sufficient food, clothing, and shelter; the citizen does not steal because his wants are supplied. In this light, the question of punishment for theft is academic, for as long as there is no 'truly Muslim society' there is no application of the law. This attitude was best expressed in the strongly worded condemnation of the implementation of the law in cutting off hands in Saudi Arabia 'while the rulers swim in the gold stolen from the state treasury and the wealth of the people.'¹⁸

Generally the Brothers held the view that Islam provided guidance for all times and for all places. It provides solutions to all problems; modern and traditional. However, what the Brothers wanted remained a dream. They were never able to gain political power and their vision of an Islamic welfare state was never fulfilled. In its short history the movement has passed through many years of turmoil: In 1936 it opposed the Anglo-Egyptian Treaty maintaining that it prejudiced Egypt's interests. It blamed Egyptian political entities saying that under British pressure they gave up Egypt's wellbeing. Soon members of the movement got involved in the Palestinian issue because of what they called anti-Palestinian and pro-Zionist policies of the British. Slowly the Brothers came into direct confrontation not only with the British but also with Egyptian political and economic vested interests. Increasingly the Brothers began to encounter difficulties in their all-encompassing socio-political activities.

Meanwhile the Brothers began to gain popularity at the grass roots level. By the end of WWII they claimed to have 5,000

¹⁸ Ibid, 240-41.

branches and over 500,000 members and many more sympathizers. In 1942 al-Banna decided to contest in the general election, but "then Prime Minister Mustafa El-Nahhas, prodded by the British occupation authorities, persuaded al-Banna to withdraw in return for a promise that the Brotherhood would be allowed greater freedom of action."¹⁹ The British were concerned over the increasing militancy among the Brothers for the cause in Palestine. They had already created a paramilitary wing to support the Palestinians. In 1948 the Brothers actively participated in the war in Palestine. The same year the Egyptian government banned the organization and a real confrontation between the Brothers and the establishment began. In December 1948, the prime minister was assassinated, allegedly by a member of the movement. Within months its founder Hasan al-Banna was gunned down, apparently by the state police. In 1950 the ban on the movement was lifted. Egypt witnessed a military coup in 1952 and, according to many observers; the Brothers cooperated with the nationalist military officers. They definitely welcomed the military in the streets of Cairo. Soon, however, the short honeymoon between the Brothers and the military officers, as Mitchell calls it, was over. In 1954 the movement was again banned and one Brother was accused of attempting to assassinate the military leader Abdul-Nasir. Soon ideological differences were also evidenced between the Brothers and the military officers.

In fact, soon the military rulers began to view the Brothers as their political rival. The military leaders declared their commitment to what they called the idea of Arab socialism. On their part the Brothers had both admiration and antagonism to socialism and communism. While communism preaches "equality, the abolition of classes, distinctions, and pride in property," in reality it has consistently denied "freedom of work, speech and thought,"²⁰ the Brothers held. They were also very critical of the Soviet treatment of Muslims in central Asian states. By 1954 the government arrested hundreds of Islamist activists and as a result, thousands of others migrated to different Arab countries. In 1964 the authorities relaxed

¹⁹ See "Politics in God's name," in *al-Ahram Weekly On-line*, Issue 247 (16-22 November 1995).

²⁰ Mitchell, *op. cit.*, 225-6.

the treatment of the Brothers and many were released from prison. Within months, however, they were again accused of at least three assassination attempts on Abdul-Nasir. In 1966 a number of leading Brothers were executed. The Brothers were accused not only of opposing the country's modernization initiatives, but they were also accused of militancy and conspiring against the state and its leadership. But it is very difficult to develop any impartial opinion about the whole process mainly because the Brothers were tried in military courts and because of lack of transparency in the trials. Referring to one major trial Mitchell says:

... the defence was appointed by the court, ... The chief 'judge' ... conducted himself rather as chief prosecutor: he freely interrupted the answers of the witnesses if the answer displeased him; he put words into their mouths and forced – sometimes by threats – the desired answers. ... The court freely set one witness against the other, fabricating the testimony of one to incite another. ...²¹

The situation changed significantly following the death of Abdul-Nasir. His successor, Anwar al-Sadat, officially changed Egypt's loyalty from the former Soviet Union to the United States. After abandoning Arab socialism as the state ideology the new military ruler now turned to Islam for legitimacy. He made constitutional amendments in 1971 to highlight the role of Islamic ideas in the country's political landscape. One of the amended articles (Article 2) stated that the Islamic *shari'ah* would be the main source of legislation in the country. Commenting on this one author has rightly pointed out that Islam has occasionally been used by Egyptian leaders to legitimize their rule. He says, "On the whole, both Nasir and Sadat have exploited Islam effectively ... Nasir's Islamic appeal ... was far more than cosmetics, and Sadat has sought to appropriate the revival of orthodox piety to his own political purposes."²² The government made gestures of reconciliation to

²¹ Ibid. 155.

²² Michael Hudson, *Arab Politics: The Search for Legitimacy* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1977), p. 236.

the Brothers by releasing the imprisoned members and inviting them to join the political process in the country. Like a benevolent dictator, Sadat declared, "Muslim Brothers are now free people in a respectable community. Their behavior should be in line with Egypt's interests."²³ And Egypt's interests were defined by the state authorities. In reality, the Brothers were allowed to neither express their views independently nor participate in the elections. As a result dissent groups began to emerge from among their supporters. In 1976 supporters of the Brothers contested elections independently or under the banner of other parties. But any changes proposed by them in the parliament were fiercely resisted by the government. As a result, the government of Egypt has faced and still faces increasing opposition both from the Islamists and dissidents, many of whom turned out to be terrorists.

On the ideological front—in a post-WWII bi-polar world—they opposed both capitalism and communism. Communism and capitalism have been engaged in excessive materialism and have become victim of moral decay, the Brothers observed. Also, the West had committed the most abhorrent act in Palestine by depriving the local population of their fundamental rights. And both capitalist and socialist blocks were responsible for this. They believed the British didn't implement in Egypt some of the noble ideas belonging to Western civilization that they practiced in Britain. The Capitalist West had exploited the Muslim world during the colonial occupation, and following their independence the West continued the same policy "through the technical and economic aid programmes."²⁴ With the passage of time this antagonism became aggravated, particularly against the United States because of the latter's increased support for Israel. The same issue brought the Brothers in direct confrontation with Anwar al-Sadat's regime.

A major point of disagreement between the Brothers and the government occurred when the latter pursued the policy of reconciliation with Israel. The Brothers believed that Israel had

²³ Raymond William Baker, *Sadat and After: Struggles for Egypt's Political Soul*. (London: I.B. Tauris, 1990), 244.

²⁴ *Ibid*, 228.

violated the fundamental rights of indigenous Palestinian people, and any unilateral decision by the Egyptian government to deal with it will only harm the legitimate cause of the Palestinians. It should be noted that the Muslim Brothers adopted a very active approach toward the Palestinian issue since the British Mandate. This position was an immensely popular issue in the country. Their opposition to Sadat's reconciliation initiatives with Israel coincided with a student uprising in Egyptian campuses. The government sought and received support from the Brothers to control the students. Yet the government continued to expand its diplomatic initiative with Israel. In October 1981, Anwar al-Sadat was assassinated by an officer in the armed forces and the assassin was alleged to have belonged to the Brothers or to one of the Brothers' oriented splinter groups. The wrath of the regime again fell on the Brothers.

The Brothers remained under strict surveillance by government agencies under Hosni Mubarak. They remained banned not only from politics but also from social, economic and even humanitarian activities. Yet any observer of contemporary Egyptian politics and society will recognize their presence in the society. One notices their presence not only in the cosmetic national elections, but also in the professional and labor organizations. According to one author, "no one can deny that it (the outlawed Muslim Brotherhood) is an influential actor on the [current] political scene, despite the government's efforts to marginalize it."²⁵ At the end of 2005 elections were held under strict control of the government, and yet the "banned but tolerated" Brothers captured 20% of parliamentary seats. One may raise the question at this stage as to why the governments of Abdul Nasir, Sadat and Mubarak opposed the Brothers. Are the Brothers opposed to modernization? It does not seem so. In fact, the Brothers have always favored industrialization and modernization of Egypt. But, as has been highlighted earlier, they stood for a moral reform of the country, which they believed was necessary for the general social, political, and economic development of the country. This, they believed, could have come from their faith in Islam. However

²⁵ Mohamed Sid-Ahmed, "Democracy and the national debate," in *Al-Ahram Weekly* Issue 662. (30 October 5 November 2003).

the governments seemed to have felt threatened from their growing popularity, and wanted to suppress them at any cost. We shall return to some of these developments when we analyze this phenomenon at the end of this paper.

Pakistan

The Islamist phenomenon in Pakistan is generally identified with Abul A'la Mawdudi and *Jama'at-i-Islami* in Pakistan. However, in a sense the demand for Pakistan itself was an Islamist demand. It will be recalled that the poet-philosopher Muhammad Iqbal, who is known for presenting the idea of Pakistan, also presented the idea of an Islamic *ummah* as a 'League of Nations'. He also highlighted Islamic political teachings. He also believed that if politics were separated from religion what remained was barbarism. However, when Iqbal presented his ideas, most Muslim nations were still under direct control of European powers. Mawdudi later developed this theory and began to write on the subject before Pakistan was born. He then vehemently opposed the idea of geographical cultural nationalism.²⁶ He did however endorse Muhammad Ali Jinnah's two-nation theory when the latter declared Islam the basis of the proposed Pakistani nation. In 1947 Mawdudi migrated to Pakistan and set a mission to translate the new nation into an Islamic state. Mawdudi believed that "the establishment of the Islamic state is a part and parcel of ... the rehabilitation of Islam"²⁷ in the modern world and Pakistan would be a model for other Muslim states to follow. This idea of Mawdudi later helped formation of the OIC in 1969 which we shall discuss in the next chapter. We shall now discuss Mawdudi's vision of Islam and his efforts to achieve this vision in Pakistan.

Like Hasan al-Banna, Mawdudi also believed that Islam was an all-encompassing religion and ideology having its implications on all aspects of human life. He believed:

²⁶ See Abul A'la Mawdudi, *Mas'alah-i-Qawmiyat* (Lahore: Islamic Publications Ltd., 1967), originally published in 1937.

²⁷ Sayyid Abul A'la Mawdudi, *The Islamic Law and Constitution*, 1-2.

Neither trade nor industry, neither government affairs nor international relations, neither civil nor penal laws, in short, no aspect of human life can claim an autonomous status and thus fall beyond the jurisdiction of Islam.²⁸

Mawdudi had a longer life and produced a wider intellectual influence than al-Banna.²⁹ Mawdudi's idea of an Islamic state was adopted by the mainstream political culture in Pakistan. A US Embassy report of 1948 observed that, "'an Islamic State' [became] a political motto to be used by the Muslim League to continue indefinitely their predominant position in Pakistan politics."³⁰ Mawdudi's writings on Islamic law and constitution suggest that, unlike many Muslim traditionalists, he believed in the British Indian democratic tradition which had prevailed in the country since the beginning of the 20th century. He seemed to have a modern outlook as opposed to the traditionalists who viewed Mawdudi as a revolutionary. But his efforts brought him into direct confrontation with the British trained military-bureaucratic vested interests in the country.

Within two years the Constituent Assembly adopted an 'Objective Resolution' outlining the Islamic character of the future constitution and Mawdudi played a pivotal role in it despite immense adversaries against him and his party. However, within a

²⁸ See Khurshid Ahmad and Zafar Ishaq Ansari, *Mawdudi: an introduction to his life and thought*. (Leicester: The Islamic Foundation, 1979), 13.

²⁹ For a short presentation of Mawdudi's basic ideas in English, see Sayyid Abul A'ala Mawdudi, *The Islamic Movement: Dynamics of Values Power and Change*. Ed. Khurram Murad. (Leicester; The Islamic Foundation, 1984). On the impact of his ideas outside the sub-continent, see the special issue of the *Muslim World* on *Allama Mawdudi and Contemporary Pakistan* Vol. 93 No. 3 & 4 (July-October 2003). Particularly see M. Kamal Hassan's article "The Influence of Mawdudi's Thought on Muslims in Southeast Asia: A Brief Survey," 429-464; Fathi Osman's article "Mawdudi's Contribution to the Development of Modern Islamic Thinking in the Arabic-Speaking World," 465-486. and Malik Badri's article "A Tribute to Mawlana Mawdudi from an Autobiographical Point of View," 487-502.

³⁰ Quoted in Seyyed Vali Reza Nasr, *The Vanguard of the Islamic Revolution: Jama'at-i Islami of Pakistan*. (London: I.B.Tauris, 1994), 117.

few years the military-bureaucratic vested interests implicated him in a sectarian riot in Pakistan and he was given the death penalty in 1953. According to one author Mawdudi's

Jama'at-e-Islami did neither initiate nor join the anti-Ahmadi agitation until its representative were invited to the Muslim Parties Convention ... The Jama'at, as a matter of fact, was not so much interested in the agitation as it was in framing an Islamic constitution for Pakistan. But the Jama'at's denunciation of the Ahmadis and its presence in the Muslim Parties Convention was taken as a pretext by the civil-military-bureaucratic complex to accuse the Jama'at of fomenting the trouble. The Court of Inquiry, established to look into the causes of the agitation, concluded that the anti-Ahmadi agitation was the natural consequences of the Islamic constitution controversy created by Mawdudi and the Jama'at.³¹

In the end, however, the government abandoned the idea of executing Mawdudi due to heavy national and international pressure. But the undemocratic approach of the military-bureaucratic cartel later manifested itself in a staged military coup, the dissolution of the constitution of 1956, and the promulgation of martial law in 1958.

Under military rule all political parties, including *Jama'at-i-Islami*, were banned for a few years. One Ministry of Information account during this period is reported to have suggested that the government treat *Jama'at-i-Islami* exactly the way Abdul-Nasir had treated the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt.³² This, however, was not carried out. A new constitution was formulated in 1962 with a declaration that Islam would be the state religion and the democratic process would be restored. A two-tier voting system called basic democracy was introduced in which members of the parliament would be elected, not by the people directly, but by the representatives

³¹ Abdul Rashid Moten, *Revolution to Revolution: Jamaat-e-Islami Pakistan*. (Kuala Lumpur: Islamic Book Trust, 2002), 34.

³² Nasr, 153.

of the people. Mawdudi, along with other opposition political parties continued to oppose the government till the regime collapsed as a result of a mass uprising in 1969. The next democratically elected government, led by Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, declared in yet another new constitution (1973), Pakistan's commitment to Islamic moral standards. However, Bhutto himself violated such standards: his government adopted Islamic socialism as its main motto, and yet served the interests of Pakistan's landed aristocracy. It "served" Islam by replacing Sunday with Friday as the weekly holiday, declared the Ahmadi community a non-Muslim minority, but did little to ensure social, political, and economic justice for the common people. This government also fell when it rigged election results in 1977.

After the military take-over following an Islamic oriented mass agitation in 1977, the new military government adopted a policy of what the military leader called a process of Islamization in Pakistan. Mawdudi's ideas seemed to have attracted attention not only of the new military ruler, but also a significant number of modern educated intellectuals. General Ziaul Haq is quoted to have said:

The basis of Pakistan was Islam. The basis of Pakistan was that the Muslims of the sub-continent are a separate culture. It was on the two-nation theory that this part was carved out of the sub-continent as Pakistan. And in the last 30 years in general... there has been a complete erosion of moral values of this society. ... These are the Islamic values and we are trying to bring these values back.³³

He also explicitly declared his loyalty to the Islamic concept of *ummah* and said:

Islam does not recognise any geographical limits dividing its followers. Muslims are Muslims, regardless of whether they are also Ajami (foreigner) Arab,

³³ Quoted in Tahir Amin, *Ethno-National Movements of Pakistan* (Islamabad: Institute of Policy Studies, 1988), 171-2.

Pakistani or Russian. Nationality is irrelevant within the *Ummah*, within the universal brotherhood of Islam or the commonwealth of Muslim nations. But Islam does recognise separate communities and nations, separate countries within their own geographical frontiers.³⁴

These statements clearly indicate Mawdudi's influence on Zia ul Haq. *Jama'at-i-Islami* initially enthusiastically cooperated in what President Zia-ul Haq called a process of Islamization. This seemed like an imposition of certain ideas from the top. However, soon they disagreed on the methodology of implementation of their ideas. Mawdudi had already passed away and the *Jama'at-i-Islami* and Zia regime opposed each other in their vision of Islamization. While *Jama'at-i-Islami* demanded democratic elections (although most of the times they didn't perform well in the elections), General Ziaul Haq, like his counterpart in Egypt, wanted to ensure his personal rule through some form of democratic process. Increasingly, *Jama'at-i-Islami* intensified its campaign against the government which resulted in increased repression and banning of all student unions which were largely dominated by the student supporters of the party. This confrontation ended with the death of the military ruler in 1988.

In spite of the differences between General Zia's and *Jama'at-i-Islami*'s vision of Islam, during the military ruler's eleven years tenure, Pakistan saw some form of political stability and the role of Islam was further strengthened in Pakistani politics. During the next eleven years of civilian rule, Pakistan held four national elections, dissolved four national assemblies, and dismissed three prime ministers. Two leaders – Mian Nawaz Sharif and Benazir Bhutto – emerged as politically influential and alternatively occupied the position of prime minister: both demonstrated their commitment to Islam by frequently performing *'umrah* (lesser pilgrimage), visiting shrines, and particularly Benazir Bhutto by covering her head and rolling beads in her hands. Thus, Islamic commitments of Pakistani leaders were confined to outward manifestations. The Islamic

³⁴ *Ibid.*,

commitments to such ideas as brotherhood, equality and justice were shelved. Corruption increased to a point that Transparency International (TI) listed the country among the top corrupted countries in the world. Corrupt practices and rhetoric on Islamic commitments did not seem contradictory to these politicians. The country fell into deep economic crisis: The government could not pay even its own officials without IMF or World Bank loans. More than half of the gross national income went to servicing the debt. In 1999, the so-called civilian democratic rule in Pakistan ended with another military coup.

The new military led government initially performed well in handling economic and financial problems; terms of debt services improved, but at a very high cost. During the Bush administration's war on terror it sided with what US President Bush called "us." Like early military administrators, General Ayub Khan and General Ziaul Haq, President General Musharraf consolidated his position as the head of the country but refused to give up his position as the chief of the armed forces of the country. This brought the government in direct confrontation with the Islamists. Interestingly, the *Jama'at-i-Islami* that used to consider itself a revolutionary movement, now joined the tradition-oriented political parties against the military-civilian government of General Musharraf which had aligned itself with the US led "war on terrorism." We shall analyze this role of the Pakistani Islamists in the concluding segment of this paper.

Turkey

Turkish Islamists are different from both their Egyptian and Pakistani counterparts mainly because they never claimed to aim at establishing an Islamic state. Such an objective has been constitutionally banned in Turkey because the nationalist elites in Turkey believed that progress and modernization of the country lay in following the European pattern of politics where politics and religion are two totally separate domains. Most observers viewed these developments as Europeanization rather than modernization. In response, Islamist political parties such as the National Order Party (NOP) and the

National Salvation Party (NSP) emerged highlighting the moral and ethical values of the traditional Turkish society as the basis of their political program.

One historian of modern Turkish history introduced the emergence of the Islamist political trend in Turkey as saying:

In 1969, Professor Necmettin Erbakan was elected president of the Union of Chambers of Commerce and Industry after a campaign in which he had made himself the voice of the smaller businessmen who criticized Demirel and the JP for being subservient to big business and, specially, foreign capital. A religious flavour entered into Erbakan's argument when he denounced the JP for being an instrument of freemasons and Zionists ... he left JP and was elected to the national assembly as an independent member for Konya, the stronghold of religious conservatism in Turkey.³⁵

One should note here another fundamental difference between Egyptian and Pakistani Islamists and those in Turkey; while in Egypt and Pakistan they started as reformist movements; in Turkey they began their journey as a political party.

After decades of struggle, in 1994 the Islamists made a political come back. In the municipal elections Erbakan's new Welfare Party (WP) not only won the position of mayor in major cities such as Istanbul and Ankara but also secured 19.1 percent of the popular vote. In the national election held in December 1995, WP became the largest party in the parliament with 21.4 percent of the vote. Within a year WP strengthened its position to 30 percent popular support through by-elections. Yet in 1997, the WP led government was forced to resign by vested interests represented by the military and the constitutional court. Meanwhile, Erbakan's WP split with Erbakan establishing the Sa'adat Party and younger members forming the new Justice and Development Party known in Turkish as AKP. In the general elections of 2002, AKP returned to power with an absolute

³⁵ Erik J. Zürcher, *Turkey: A Modern History*. (London: I.B. Tauris, 2001), 270.

majority in the parliament securing over 37 percent of the popular vote. This was the most significant manifestation of popularity by any single political party in decades. The AKP government has so far demonstrated moderation and growth both in domestic and international politics. The country's remarkable economic growth has enabled the government to begin repayment of external debts and the country seems to be on its way to economic independence. In foreign relations, Turkey has more friends in the Arab world and has been able to occupy the position of the Secretary General of the OIC. It has taken advantage of its diplomatic relations with Israel to protest Israeli atrocities against Palestinian civilians and has offered its services to mediate between Israel and Palestine. It has strengthened relations with the US and held advancing integration talks with the EU. Most importantly, Turkey has improved its diplomatic ties with its traditional enemy, Greece.

Another Turkish group that most clearly stands for Islamic ideas is a Sufi group founded by Bediuzzaman Said Nursi (1873-1960).³⁶ The Nursi group does not claim to be a political party, but it has occasionally aligned itself with different political parties at election times. It aligned itself with the Democratic Party just before the 1960 elections and became the victim of military persecution. The group is currently engaged in Turkish society with a huge number of educational and social welfare institutions and organizations, not only in Turkey but in various parts of the world, particularly in Central Asia.

One unique manifestation of the Turkish Islamist phenomenon is the growth of educational foundations such as the Foundation for Arts and Science known as BISAV. The Foundation was established towards the end of the 1980s by a number of Islamic oriented graduate students at various universities in Istanbul.³⁷ Influenced by the ideas

³⁶ For information on this group, see Serif Mardin, *Religion and Social Change in Modern Turkey: The Case of Bediuzzaman Said Nursi*. (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1989). Also see, *Islam at the Crossroads: On the Life and Thought of Bediuzzaman Said Nursi*. Ed. Ibrahim M. Abu Rabi'. (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2003).

³⁷ On BISAV see, www.bisab.org.tr

of Hasan al-Banna and Mawdudi, these students developed academic courses to fill the intellectual gap from an Islamic perspective of various aspects of existing courses in their university curriculum. Courses are offered in four areas: studies on civilizations, fine arts, Turkey and International Relations. In each area two introductory and six or seven specialized courses are offered every semester, and there are three semesters in a year. Courses vary from art to music, from politics to philosophy, from mathematical logic to jurisprudence. The Foundation runs on a totally volunteer basis. Most faculty members were graduate students in the 1980s and 1990s at various Turkish universities and the students study absolutely free. In this unique institution, faculty members are reported to consider it an honor to be able to teach at the Foundation. Almost a thousand students register at the Foundation every semester. On top of this, the foundation regularly organizes seminars and symposiums for the public on various topics. The foundation has made significant contributions to Islamist growth in Turkey. Many other organizations and institutions have contributed to similar developments in Turkey. Was this diversity of Islamist activity in Turkey in any way responsible for the Turkish Islamists gaining political power? Let us analyze the phenomenon. In our analysis we will compare Islamist developments not only in Egypt, Pakistan and Turkey, but will also draw some generalized characteristics from the wider Muslim world.

An Analysis of the Islamist Phenomenon

The Islamist phenomenon came into view as a result of the failure of the nationalist leadership in solving problems of newly independent states. In response to pro-European "modernization" attempts by the nationalist leadership, Islamists adopted a very idealistic position by emphasizing the return to the Prophetic model of an Islamic state. Interestingly, Islamist leadership adopted a very pragmatic approach in countries where European ideas such as republicanism, socialism and secularism were declared the state ideology. On their part, nationalist leaders responded by accommodating certain "Islamic" practices: Egypt's Anwar al-Sadat lifted the ban on *Ikhwan al-*

Muslimun; Pakistan's Zulfikar Ali Bhutto declared Friday the weekly holiday and banned alcohol. Some leaders undertook highly publicized acts of devotion such as performing hajj and umrah and similar activities in Indonesia, Jordan, Tunisia, Algeria and other countries. At the same time, they mercilessly suppressed any growth of Islamist political parties and democratic institutions in their countries. As a result, most countries suffered either dictatorship or political instability, thus bringing acute socio-economic problems to their societies that occasioned extremism among the youth. Let us now raise more questions in our analysis.

Is the Islamist phenomenon a challenge to the nation-state system? This question arises because Islamists have always expressed their commitment to the Islamic concept of *ummah*. Does this mean that Islamists wished to abolish the nation states in the 20th century and restore the caliphate like the one established in Madinah in the 7th century? Neither al-Banna nor Mawdudi recommended any such notion. To the contrary, they have adjusted to their respective national realities. While discussing the power structure in Egypt, for example, Hasan al-Banna found a role for royalty along with the parliament. Similarly, Mawdudi devoted his life to having what he called an Islamic Constitution in Pakistan and he considered the constitution of 1956 a step forward in achieving that goal. Also, the establishment of the OIC (composed of sovereign nation states) in 1969 and its acceptance by all Islamists is evidence of the fact that Islamists posed no threat to the nation state system. However, the nation state system has come under increased scrutiny by common people because the national elite have failed to solve their problems. Since Islamists have challenged nationalist leadership on many of those issues, and also since Islamists have emphasized Islamic universal ideas, they have been perceived as challenging the nation state system.

Are Islamists opposed to democracy? This question arises because Islamists in most countries have demanded the establishment of an Islamic state and the rule of *shari'ah*. They also supported the military coup in Egypt in 1952 and in the Sudan in 1989, with the apparent assumption that the prophetic model state could be imposed from the top. This definitely was in violation of the democratic

principles they had declared to follow. This also was opposed to the prophetic model of establishing an Islamic state in Madina. In reality, nowhere have Islamists been able to set an example of an Islamic welfare state based on *shari'ah* in modern times. In recent history, Islamists have been able to occupy state power in Iran, Sudan and Taliban's Afghanistan. As for Iran, apart from the historical differences between Sunni and Sh'ia Islam, the Iranian example can generally be accepted as a genuine attempt to reach the desired goal of democracy. The country has institutionalized a democratic process that is already over a quarter century old, and if the process continues, with fair elections and more freedom of expression it will have the potential to become an Islamic welfare state with the passage of time. Taliban rule in Afghanistan was not considered an Islamist experiment by either the neighboring Iranian government or by *Jamaat-i-Islami* in Pakistan. The Sudanese experiment is the main blow to any Islamist claim to democracy and an Islamic welfare state. Not only did the government in the Sudan come to power through a military coup, it also split itself through an internal power struggle. But more dangerous to the prospect of democracy in the Muslim world is—as one author puts it—that “many Muslim states, even when officially secular, endeavored to promote a brand of conservative Islam and an ‘official Islam.’”³⁸

As a result, like medieval Europe, only the poor and weak have suffered under what has been described as *shari'ah*. The media highlighted the plight of these victims without taking into consideration the circumstances. This created an enormous amount of fear among many Muslims and non-Muslims alike on the question of *shari'ah* and democracy. That is why, when in the early 1990s the Islamists were poised to gain political power through democratic process in Algeria, the mainly French international press supported military intervention in the country. It is a tyranny of history that in spite of their struggle for democratic rule, in most Muslim countries the Islamists have been viewed as anti-democratic and recommendations have been made to keep them out of the political

³⁸ Olivier Roy, *Globalised Islam*, 92. One can see the result of such official Islam in Egypt, Nigeria and Pakistan.

process.³⁹

There seems to be an unrelenting fear about the Islamists? Why? This brings us to the third question: Are the Islamists anti-western? This is a complex question mainly because of what one understands by the term West. We have mentioned earlier that most Islamists came in touch with the West through European colonialism. As a result, many of them, like the nationalist leaders, resorted to anti-western rhetoric. Also because of the blind support for Israel extended by many western governments, this rhetoric created an anti-western phobia among many Islamists. Also, the indisputable support for many dictators, such as the support for the former Shah of Iran by the US, contributed to this Muslim rhetoric. A rational examination of the Islamist stand on Western civilization would reveal that Islamists are not fundamentally anti-western. Like the beliefs in the idea of democracy and the rule of law in Western countries, Islamists also generally subscribe to the rule of law, ideas of human rights, freedom of expression and scientific technological progress. But Islamists are absolutely opposed to the rejection of the metaphysical world by post-Enlightenment mainstream western philosophy. Rather, Islamists believe that the creator God also guides mankind for a happy and successful life both in this world and in the hereafter. Islamists are also very critical of western capitalism. Under colonial rule Western colonizers exploited economic resources, and the exploitation continued into the post-independent Muslim world in the form of international aid provided to corrupt undemocratic governments. These civilizational and historical differences though are understandable and do not cause much concern for peaceful co-existence.

The Islamist call for an Islamic state does seem to cause concern and, in fact has created some form of Islamophobia among many Westerners because an Islamic state, to many observers, means a state ruled by the *shari'ah*. And, for many, *shari'ah* means laws of punishment or *hudud* and *hudud* means chopping off hands for theft and stoning to death for adultery. Many Westerners also

³⁹ ICG Middle East and North Africa Briefing, *Islamism in North Africa II: Egypt's Opportunity*, (Brussels: International Crisis Group, 20 April 2004), 18.

seem to believe that such punishments would either be imposed on them or they will forcefully be converted to Islam. However, one hardly realizes that such heavy punishments were scarcely carried out under the *shari'ah* during the 14 century long Muslim history. One should also note here that Muslims ruled over India more than thousand years and over Serbia over four hundred years, and yet they remained non-Muslim majority countries. After eight hundred years of Muslim rule when Muslims were expelled from Spain, Jews could not survive under Catholic Spain; most of them migrated to Ottoman or other Muslim territories. On the other hand, the powerful Mongols subdued the Muslims in the 13th century but eventually accepted Islam peacefully.

Now the question is this: Who is responsible for this negative image of Islamists in the West? The Orientalists? Of course some Orientalists have contributed to this image but Muslims themselves have also contributed in creating such image of Islam while at the same time Islamists have not been able to create a just and fair image of their perceived Islamic states. What the Islamist phenomenon lacks, in our opinion, is proper education. They need to reevaluate their own legacy and also develop a good understanding of Western civilization. Should they reject all humanist and secular ideas that came into prominence in Europe only because they originated outside of Islamic civilization? Shouldn't they examine whether those ideas are in harmony with the fundamentals of Islam? Or should they reject them because many of those ideas challenged many religious ideas of medieval Europe? Muslims must come up with convincing answers to these questions.

Sayyid Mawdudi attempted to concentrate on educational developments in Pakistan. In analyzing the role of Mawdudi in education in Pakistan, Fazlur Rahman says:

Mawdudi, though not an alim (Islamic scholar), was nevertheless a self-taught man of considerable intelligence and had sufficient knowledge of Arabic to have access to the classical Arabic literature on Islam. He was by no means an accurate or a profound scholar, but he was undoubtedly like a fresh wind in the stifling

Islamic atmosphere created by the traditional madrasas, and he represented a definite advance over the ulama in that he had a working knowledge of English and he read some works of Western writers. The lay-educated youth, fired by Iqbal's message, became an almost automatic clientele of Mawdudi. But Mawdudi displays nowhere the larger and more profound vision of Islam's role in the world. Being a journalist rather than a serious scholar, he wrote at great speed with resultant superficiality in order to feed his eager young readers – and he wrote incessantly. He founded no educational institution and never suggested any syllabus for a reformed Islamic education. If this kind of development had taken place, his followers, through an enlightened and serious education, would have naturally become more independent-minded and could have led the way to the establishment of new educational institutions. But not one of Mawdudi's followers ever became a serious student of Islam, the result being that, for the faithful, Mawdudi's statements represented the last word on Islam ...⁴⁰

This observation is too unkind. For it will be a mistake to depict the current Islamist phenomenon as one of the “lay-youth fired by Iqbal's message” fighting for a global change. It is also not true that Mawdudi did not make any suggestion on educational reform in the Muslim world. Mawdudi has not only written a book entitled *Ta'limat* or Teachings explaining his views on education, he has expressed his views on education in many other of his writings.⁴¹ However, it is only through the implementation of ideas and through trial and error that one can achieve success in education. Also to evaluate the success of certain ideas one needs to examine the results. In reality,

⁴⁰ Fazlur Rahman, *Islam and Modernity: Transformation of an Intellectual Tradition*. (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1982), 116.

⁴¹ On this subject, see Abdul Rashid Moten, “Islamization of Knowledge in Theory and Practice: The Contribution of Sayyid Abul A'la Mawdudi,” in *Islamic Studies*. 43: 2 (2004), 247-272.

neither the government nor *Jamaat-i-Islami* in Pakistan seems to have produced many capable and morally upright individuals who could have assumed the leadership of both country and *ummah*. *Jamaat-i-Islami* did establish a number of private schools in Pakistan to achieve Mawdudi's goal in education, but before they made a lasting impact, they were nationalized by the Bhutto regime in the 1970s. The establishment of many private universities in the Muslim world since the 1990s is a very positive development: some of these claim to be based on Islamist ideas. Will these universities play any significant role in achieving the educational goals? Only time will tell. One point, however, is clear: without these universities, more Muslim youth would have been frustrated. In many countries these universities have reduced the national control over the curriculum and have created a relatively open intellectual environment for freedom. In fact, we believe through trial and error this new environment may assist in achieving ideal national goals in many Muslim countries.

Another question that may be raised in this connection is: Why have Islamists succeeded in gaining political power in Turkey and failed elsewhere? We have already noted that while the Islamist phenomenon in Turkey began with the founding of a political party, in Egypt and Pakistan it began as reformist movements. Although a movement for an overall social reform seems to be a proper approach, this has not worked in Egypt and Pakistan. In Egypt, of course, the Brothers were not allowed to legally function, but in Pakistan the *Jamaat-i-Islami* functioned openly but failed to draw adequate public support for a political change in the country. An examination of this failure of the Islamist phenomenon in Pakistan is not within the scope of this paper, but a comparison of the Islamist phenomenon in Pakistan and Turkey will make a good topic for an academic discussion.

One difference between the Islamists in Turkey and in Egypt and Pakistan is that the Islamist movements in Egypt originated under the towering personality of Hasan al-Banna, and in Pakistan with that of Mawdudi. In Egypt, following the assassination of al-Banna, the movement suffered from continuous government persecution and no other personality of al-Banna's caliber emerged who could lead the followers through the difficult times that followed. In Pakistan,

a number of learned scholars of Mawdudi's caliber resigned from the party because of disagreements with the leader. After the death of Mawdudi, no one could fill the gap left by the leader. In a sense, Fazlur Rahman correctly observed that for many followers, Mawdudi's opinion represented the last word on Islam. As opposed to Egypt and Pakistan, Islamism in Turkey had witnessed a great deal of diversity. On top of the political party there is the Sufi oriented Nurcu movement and educational institutions such as the BISAV. There was, perhaps, no talent equal to al-Banna or Mawdudi, but there were hundreds of qualified individuals advancing Islamist ideas resulting in gaining the support of the masses.

The question of militancy among Islamists has been raised by many observers. This question has become more relevant particularly with the recent declaration of the so-called war on terrorism. Some Islamist entities such as the Palestinian Hamas and Lebanese Hizbullah have been identified as terrorist organizations. Historically the Egyptian *Ikhwan al-Muslimun* developed militancy in response to Israeli terrorism in Palestine mainly because of two reasons. One, they felt affinity with the Palestinian people because of the idea of Islamic brotherhood; and two, Israelis had been terrorizing the Palestinian population to make space and settle imported Jews from various parts of the world. In 1948 many Brothers went to Palestine to fight the Zionists. Involvement of Islamists in militarism increased in the 1980s. Following the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, Islamists from various parts of the world assembled in Pakistan and Afghanistan to fight the Soviets. Many Islamists also fought in Bosnia, Chechnya and Kashmir. These conflicts were expressions of genuine nationalist aspiration, and were legitimate. But participation of non-national Muslims in these conflicts was viewed as a phenomenon outside the jurisdiction of current international law. However, from the Islamists' perspective, such participation was legitimate because of their understanding of the Qur'anic concept of *ummah* on the basis of which many non-national Muslims fought against the Soviets in Afghanistan. Suicidal activities in the name of Islam, however, are new phenomena. Mainstream Islamists do not approve such behavior and this has posed a serious challenge to the Islamist phenomenon.

Conclusions

The Islamist phenomenon has become a challenge not only to contemporary Muslim nation-states but is a very important factor in international politics today. The Islamist phenomenon has decisively challenged the social science literature on modernity and nationalism. Keeping this Islamist phenomenon in view, social scientists who predicted the rise of nationalism’s congruence with the decline of religion and hence, formulated a “universal sociological theory” must now revise their position.

The emergence of Islamists in the latter half of the 20th century is not a new phenomenon in history: in recent history it is a continuation of the 19th century revivalist and nationalist movements during the first half of the 20th century. Though Islamists failed to achieve their stated goal of establishing Islamic states they did create awareness among Muslims for an alternative political scenario. Nationalist leadership however, took advantage of this awareness and exploited Islamic ideas for political benefit.

Commenting on the future of the Islamists, one former CIA official says, “the irony for political Islam in the twenty-first century is that *only the integration of broad aspects of Western political thought and political experience will enable Islamism to survive as a meaningful political force* – particularly in the area of democratic institutions.”⁴² But as we have demonstrated above, in Muslim countries the political culture has not matured enough for Islamists to participate in the political process. Vested interests have blocked the Islamist participation in the political process. The current political upheaval in Egypt is a blatant example of this pattern.

Unfortunately, not only the mainstream media but prestigious think tanks such as The International Crisis Group in Europe are also opposed to free and fair participation by Islamists in the democratic process. For example, the democratically elected Palestinian Hamas has been kept away from the mainstream political process by some leading Western countries. As a result, many Muslim youth are turning to unlawful means against their governments and their patrons in the West. The Islamists seems to have been caught in between.

⁴² Graham Fuller, *The Future of Political Islam*. 201 (the emphasis is original).