POLITICAL ISLAM: TRENDS AND EVENTS

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Abstract
In the 21st century, there is evidence of an attempt to assert the continuing and validity of Islam in the context of the modern Muslim world. This study therefore, argues that the failure of the Western - style secularist regimes in the Muslim world has strengthened the position of the traditionalist who view worldly ideologies as mere fallacy because they are ill-concerned, full of distortion, unreliable and lacks what it takes for practical implementation. This study reveals that, the "political Islam" is not anti-modernization and development though its concepts of modernizations and development are diametrically opposite to the western concepts. It observes that, secularization which form an indispensable part of Western model of development and modernization has shattered the moral spiritual dimensions of the societies wherever it has penetrated. It observes that, as interpretation, innovation and imagination cannot be ruled out in the unfolding drama of events, a balance will have to be struck somewhere and somehow between the dictates of today and the demands of yesterday. The study concludes that, the conservative scholars, who helped the establishment in the past, are fast losing their influence. That, political Islam is a reality today and it will be a growing trend in the near future. The agitation of the Muslin activists who are trying to establish Islam is nothing but simply to integrate and operate "Shari'ah" to govern the society.

Keywords: Fundamentalism, Political Islam, Politics, Secularism, Islamic State.

Introduction
History is a succession of events in the life of nations, of peoples or of communities. Historical events are social cumulations. Fundamentally, one set of identifiable events in time and space is as much rooted in a preceding set as it is the root of succeeding events. Similarly, historical events in one place could become the genesis of events in other places

depending, of course, on the critical nature of the former. In this manner of conceptualizing events, history could be said to be unrestricted by space and time. But, history and historical events are not amorphous or shapeless occurrences. On the contrary, historical events and processes possess a uniqueness which marks them as much the product of the past and at particular places, as they are sufficiently differentiated from their antecedents. Such uniqueness of history provides both the basis for a break from either the past or from events of other places, as well as the basis of a completely new future history. The decisiveness of the unique nature and character of historical events and processes provides the basis for the differentiation in history. A set of events and processes could be quite profound and long drawn-out with the attendant consequence that existing structures and values of a nation become completely broken or overturned giving rise to new structures, institutions, values and patterns of social conduct. In this way, one could speak of a revolutionary historical situation (Oyovbaire & Olagunju, 1996:1).

As Berger (1999:2) has observed, "the world today, with some exceptions … is as furiously religious as it ever was and, in some places, more so than ever". Other scholars, including Norris and Inglehert (2004:229), have noted that there has been "no worldwide decline of religiosity or of the role of religion in politics". This has been especially true of the Muslim world where, since the end of the 1960s, Islam has re-emerged as a potent socio-political force contesting the validity of the dominant paradigm of Western inspired development and concomitant secularization, as well as the power of its custodians (Hunter, 2009:17). Islam, which had played a crucial role in the growth of nationalism and in the anti-colonial struggle, continues to play an equally important role even after independence. This new role must be seen in the context of the historical background of Islam. Thus, often unstated, assumptions have inspired much of the discussion in the West regarding political Islam over the last decade and a half – especially since 9/11. These are: one, that political Islam, like Islam itself, is monolithic; two, that political Islam is inherently violent; and three, that the intermingling of religion and politics is unique to Islam. These assumptions are false. Moreover, although an argument can be made that there are a number of varieties of transnational political Islam, such transnational manifestations form a very small part of the activity referred to as political Islam (Ayoob, 2004:1).

One of the most interesting - some could say disturbing features of the post - Cold War era is the resurgence of religious

politics. It appears as a dark cloud over what many regard as the near - global victory of liberal democracy following the collapse of the Soviet Empire (Fukuyama, 1999:xi).

It fuels regional disputes in North Africa, he middle East and South Asia and may be leading toward what Samuel has apocalyptically called "the clash of civilization".

It has led to some impressive gains, for example, radical religious parties are now firmly established not only in Iran but in Algeria, Sudan, Egypt, India, Afghanistan, Pakistan, the incipient Palestine, and elsewhere in what was once called the Third World. Although it is tempting to dismiss the religious activists involved in these uprisings as "fundamentalists", their goals and their motivations are as political as they are religious. For this reason, Juergensmeyer (1993) prefer to call them "religious nationalists" implying that they are political actors striving for new forms of national order based on religious values.

Clearly, the revival of Islam has potentially enormous significance for the global position of the Muslims. Over one billion Muslims worldwide constitute majorities in over forty states while the Muslim diaspora in the West numbers in the Millions (Murden, 2002). Political Islam is the main ideological competitor of globally triumphant Western liberalism. In Murden's (2002:204) view:

> In a world rapidly being swallowed by an all-pervasive global system, Islam (is) a diffuse grassroots counter-hegemony.

But, this does not necessarily mean that a growing clash of civilizations between Islam and the West is becoming the major axis of post-Cold War international relations or even that Islam is becoming a power in world politics.

Literature Review

For the clarity of purpose, it is highly imperative to discuss the following terms within the context of the discourse:

Fundamentalism

There are those who have attempted to define "fundamentalism" more precisely than the popular usages of the term. These scholars tend to take two approaches. They either attempt to identify a more penetrative understanding of the phenomenon by seeking to define it or, alternatively, they provide lists of its common features. Thus, Hadden and Schupe (1989) two sociologists of religion, in 1989 provided a definition of fundamentalism as follows: *A pattern of many contemporary socio-political movements that share certain characteristics in their responses to a common globalization process which can*

be described as secularization. Hadden and Schupe (1989) go on to list the common characteristics as:

1. Resistance to secularization
2. Denial of religious forms which have developed by compromising with modernity.
3. A coherent ideology which seeks to bring religion back to the centre stage of public life as well as private life.
4. Fundamentalists claim authority over a scriptural tradition which is reinstated as the antidote for a society that has strayed.
5. They accept the benefits of modernity, particularly technology, whilst rejecting modernism (defined as subordinating traditions to harmonize with modern thought and an ideology that emphasizes materialism as a way of life) as an ideological framework.
6. Fundamentalism is a modern phenomenon which attacks the ideology of modernism and very often traditional religious forms.

Thus, Hadden and Schupe (1989:47) choose to provide both a definition and a list of common characteristics in order to assist in identifying religious fundamentalism. A more recent "list" approach to fundamentalism is found in Harriet Harris's (2001) article, written over ten years later in 2001. Her list contains some of the characteristics found in common with Hadden and Schupe's but with additions:

1. Reactive to the marginalization of religion – especially secularization.
2. Selectivity – selecting particular aspects of their religion to emphasize in opposition to particular aspects of modernity.
3. Moral dualism – the world divided into good and evil, light and dark.
4. Absolutism and inerrancy – absolute validity of the fundamentals of the faith – sacred texts are inerrant
5. Millennialism and messianism – victory to the believer at the end of history
6. Elect membership – the faithful remnant
7. Sharp boundaries – the saved from the unsaved
8. Authoritarian organization – charismatic leadership with no possibility of dissent.
9. Behavioural requirements – members expected to participate fully.

There is methodological question that marks both approaches and certainly both lists of characteristics are open to critique. Some of the characteristics cited by Harris seem to be more attributable to the kind of sectarian organization equally mislabeled by the media as "cult" rather than the phenomenon of a "fundamentalism". Not

all of the latter types of religious organization see the world through the lens of moral dualism, millennialism and messianism, or organize themselves along the lines of charismatic leadership. Even where charismatic leadership is found in Islam, for example, the idea of "no dissent" has to be examined very carefully. The problem is that both lists of characteristics continue to take their "ideal-type" of fundamentalism from varieties of Protestant Christian. Muslim critics of the label "fundamentalism" might argue that this is the correct approach as that is where the term originated and belongs. On the other hand, Hadden and Schupe (1989) provide us with the useful analytical boundary of "political" to describe fundamentalism. Therefore, any religious movement cannot be called "fundamentalist" unless there is a "coherent" ideology which seeks to bring religion back to the centre stage of public life as well as private life.

Political violence

Over two and a half centuries ago, Montesquieu (as cited in Cohler, Miller & Stone, 1995:461) asserted that Islam had a violent streak that predisposed Muslim societies to authoritarianism:

> The Christian religion is remote from pure deposition, the gentleness so recommended in the gospel stands opposed to the despotic fury with which a prince would mete out his own justice and exercise his cruelties … The Mohammedan religion, which speaks only with a sword, continues to act on men with the destructive spirit that founded it.

Huntington (1996) for example, holds that Muslim societies are especially prone to political violence. This is, perhaps, as a result of Islamic resurgence and re-awakening in the Muslim world. Marshall (1999) has assembled a comprehensive list of incidents of political violence in the world during the post-war period. By his account, there have been 207 episodes of major intrastate political violence. Of these events, 72 or 35 percent of the total – took place in Muslim countries. The data show that the Muslim world has had its fair share of political violence – indeed, a bit more than its fair share. But only a bit more. Since 30 percent of the world's polities are predominantly Muslim, the evidence does not show that the Islamic world has been the site of a grossly disproportionate amount of political violence.

This clearly shows that the conclusions of Huntington sharply contradict the findings of Marshall. Huntington has different standards for the evaluation of data. He arrives at "overwhelming" evidence for the greater violence of Muslim societies by totaling

up "ethnopolitical conflicts" in 1993 – 94 and "ethnic conflicts" in 1993, then within each group dividing the site of strife into Muslim and non-Muslim countries. His evidence on intercivilizational strife seems unequivocal: two-thirds of conflicts (thirty-six of fifty-one cases) were between Muslim and non-Muslim countries. But Huntington takes the further step of saying that "intracivilization" conflict is also much more common in Muslim world. He not only argues that "Islam's borders are bloody" but also adds, "and so are its innards". Its innards are most important for our purpose. But here the data are ambiguous. In the category of "intracivilization" strife, only eighteen of fifty-eight conflicts – or 31 percent – were in Muslim societies. Given that 30 percent of the world's polities are predominantly Muslim, Huntington's evidence is less than overwhelming. Indeed, his evidence on intracivilization conflict provides no support for his argument, though he does not allow this detail to interfere with his generalization. Finally, Huntington fails to control any other variables. Simple correlation, presented in the form of unanalyzed descriptive statistics, serves as his empirical evidence (Huntington, 1996:256-58).

Islamic State

Modern Islamist political thinkers devised the term "Islamic state" in order to reconcile their romanticized vision of the Islamic polity with the existence of sovereign states on the European model that were products of the twin processes of colonization and decolonization (Nasr, 1996). In practical terms, the Islamists' preoccupation with the Islamic state has meant the attempt to Islamize existing Muslim states. Only a very small minority of Islamists thinks that merging the Muslim world into a single Islamic caliphate is a feasible proposition. Mostly, the search for the pristine Islamic state has led to the emergence of what the French scholar Roy (1996:26) has called "Islamo-nationalism". Many such Islamo-nationalist movements, from North Africa to Southeast Asia, were fashioned in the crucible of resistance to colonial domination. During the colonial period, the Islamist movements had to share the stage with secular nationalist forces that were in most cases the leading vehicles through which the anti-colonial struggle was waged. However, Islamist resistance movements, like their Marxist counterparts, often departed from the exclusively political pre-occupations of the more secular groups by devising strategies for social as well as political transformations. Unlike the Marxists, however, the Islamists were less interested

in socio-economic change than with moral and cultural transformation (Ayoob, 2004:2).

There is further consensus among the thinkers of Islam that an Islamic state must be ruled by the law of *Shari'ah* and will by no means be a secular one. Qutb does not offer any specifics about the form of government in an Islamic state (Haddad, 1983:91), whereas Turabi and Mawdudi argue that a system of caliphate should govern an Islamic state (Adams, 1983:117; Turabi, 1982:243). Though, these are just general, idealizing statements, these assertions of the requirement of a caliphate system by these thinkers have naturally a close connection with Muslim history. In Muslim history, after Prophet Muhammad's death, the Muslim territory expanded under the first four caliphs, considered as 'rightly guided' because they all knew Muhammad personally and used to be companions (*Sahabah*) of the Prophet, thus they knew *Sunnah* as directly as possible (Mubashar, 2011:14).

Islam and Secularism

While secularism refers to the segregation of the role of religion from the affairs of society and the state, within secularism itself, there are various models and schools of thought. Hence, there are varied opinions on the exact nature of the relationship between secularism and religion. These range from moderate to extreme, depending on the extent they allow religion to play a role in the life of man. Briefly, the two distinct schools of thought are the following:

a. The first limits the role of religion to within the individual and personal spheres of life, and to the place of worship, without being against it. It even recognizes the role of religion in building character of man.
b. The second altogether denies any role of religion, and is against all basic religions concepts such as the existence of God, the Hereafter and Hell. It strives to separate or eliminate religion from man's life (Hussein, 1965:170).

Understanding that there are various schools of thought within secularism and analyzing each one independently is important in deriving the appropriate judgement and treatment for any one of them (Hussein, 1965:195). Such an understanding will allow Muslims to determine the *maslahat* (benefit) and *mudarat* (detriment) of a particular school of thought more accurately. There are, according to Gellner (1992) various versions of the secularization theory:

> The scientific basis of new technology undermines faith, or the erosion of social units deprives religion of its organizational base, or doctrinally

centralized, Unitarian, rationalized religion eventually cuts its own throat.

Secularization, therefore, appears to mean different things to different people, a fact underscored by Taylor (1997:ix) who points out that:

> When people talk about 'secularization', they can mean a host of different things. In one sense, the word designates the decline of religious belief and practice in the modern world, the declining numbers who enter the church, or who declare themselves believers. In another, it can mean the retreat of religions from the public space, the steady transformation of our institutions towards religions and ideological neutrality, their shedding of a religious identity.

Secularization does not, however, denote that people are necessarily becoming less interested in spiritual matters – witness the growth in cults such as the Raelians and their recent cloning claims. Rather, secularization refers to:

- dwindling social and moral influence of spiritual leaders and of general attitudes towards the importance of religion;
- governmental policies pursued without clear heed to specifically religious injunctions or interdictions (Haynes, 2003:7).

This reminds us one of the important remarks of Gellner (1991:2):

> … no secularization has taken place in the world of Islam … Islam is secularization – resistant, and the striking thing is that this remains true under a wide range of political regime.

Commenting on the above remark of Gellner, Voll (1994:290) observes:

> This whole range includes relatively modernized as well as more traditional societies. Modernization clearly has not meant an end of religion as a major force. On the contrary, by the beginning of the 1990s, the renewed vitality of Islam was one of the most important forces even in the most modernized areas.

In this sense, Weber described the condition of the modern secular society as the 'disenchantment of the world'. Man feels tired of himself, his environment, his routine and everything in the world. Life and death become meaningless for him. He writes:

> What he (man in the modern secular society) seizes is always something provisional and not definitive, and therefore death for him is meaningless, civilized life is meaningless, but by its very 'progressiveness' it gives death the imprint of meaninglessness (Both & Wittich, 1968:625).

Obviously, when 'religion' which offers 'meaning' to life is relegated, life becomes meaningless. The meaningless life becomes much more meaningless when a number of worldviews are presented by a number of human minds through rationalization and they all clash with each other. Thus, this man of the modern secular society lives in so many different worlds but with no 'meaning'. As Weber puts it: "modern man exists instead of an infinite plain without horizons; a secular eternity devoid of ultimate meaning" (Both & Wittich, 1968:624).

From this perspective, both religion and secularism are about order. They are therefore potential rivals. Either could claim to be the guarantor of orderliness within a society, either could claim to be the ultimate authority for social order. Such claims carry with them an extra-ordinary degree of power, for contained within them is the right to give moral sanction for lifes and death decisions, including the right to kill. When either secularism or religion assumes this role by itself, it reduces the other to a peripheral social role. The rivalry has historical roots. Earlier in history it was often religion that denied moral authority to secular politicians, but in recent centuries, especially in the West, it has been the other way around. Political authorities now attempt to monopolize the authority to sanction violence. They asserted this authority long before the advent of the nation state, but usually in collusion with religious authority, not in defiance of it. What is unusual about the modern period is how victorious the secular state has been in denying the right of religious authorities to be ultimate moral arbiters. In the modern state, the state alone is given the moral power to kill (albeit for limited purposes, military defense, police protection, and capital punishment). Yet all the rest of the state's power to persuade and to shape the social order is derived from these fundamental powers (Juergensmeyer, 2006:40).

In Weber's view, the monopoly over legitimate violence in a society is the very definition of a state. But the secular state did not always enjoy a monopoly over this right, and in challenging its authority, today's religious activists, wherever they assert themselves around the world, reclaim the traditional right of religious authorities to say when violence is moral and when it is not. Religious conflict is one indication of the power of religion to sanction killing. The parties in such an encounter may command a greater degree of loyalty than contestants in a purely political war. Their interests can subsume national interests. In some cases, a religious battle may preface the attempt to establish a new religious state. It is interesting to attempt to establish a new religious state. It is interesting to note, in

this regard, that the best-known incident of religious violence throughout the contemporary world have occurred in places where it is difficult to define or accept the idea of a nation-state (Jeuergensmeyer, 2006:40).

Contextualizing Political Islam

The underlying concept of political Islam is the view that Islam is a way of life. It is a comprehensive religion governing all aspects of human life, with no separation between any of the aspects. To appreciate the close relationship between Islam and politics, it is important to understand two important concepts held by Islamists. The first is Islam is a way of life. It is a comprehensive religion governing all aspects of human life, with no separation between any of the aspects (Qutb, 2006; Mawdudi, 1977). The second concept is that man as God's *khalifah* (vicegerent) of this world, is to submit fully to God and is obligated to establish His order by implementing what He has decreed in the Qur'an and which had been explained by His Prophet in the *hadith* (Prophet's tradition) in all aspects of life in this world. Establishing God's order in this world is regarded as an important manifestation of submission and worship of God (Qur'an, 3:85; Qur'an, 51:56).

Based on the above two concepts, Islamists conclude that it is the responsibility of every Muslim to implement Islam in politics or to participate in politics according with the principles of Islam because it will help him to carry out his duty as *Khalifah*. In fact, the word *Khalifah* itself means power and leadership in the Qur'an (Mawdudi, 1977). Hence, a Muslim cannot separate Islam from politics or politics from Islam. Political Islam is a modern phenomenon, with roots in the socio-political conditions of Muslim countries in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. It is a product of the Muslim peoples' interaction – military, political, economic, cultural, and intellectual – with the West during the past two hundred years, a period when Western power has been in the ascendant and Muslims have become the objects, rather than the subjects, of history. The acceptance of Islam as integral to identify formation in most Muslim countries may have been inevitable, but it opened the gates to Islamist intrusion into the post-colonial political process.

However, the attraction of political Islam increased as the governing elites failed to deliver on their promises of economic progress, political participation, and personal dignity to expectant populations emerging from colonial bondage. It is in this era, from the 1950s to the 1970s that political Islam, as we know it today, came of age. Abul Ala Mawdudi in Pakistan and Sayyid Qutb in Egypt, both advocates of the Islamic state

and opponent of secular nationalism, became its foremost intellectual standard bearers (Ayoob, 2004:2-3). Of course, Zubaida (2000:62) talks of conservative Islam, radical Islam and political Islam. Bernard (2003:29) prefers the terms fundamentalist, traditionalists and modernists while Nasr (1994) has distinguished fundamentalists, modernists, mahdists and traditionalist.

By the late 1980s, a new breed of Islamic intellectuals emerged, advocating a different type of reformist Islam. This new notion of reform differed both from earlier understandings of the term and from that characteristic of the Islam – based ideologies of the 1960s and 1970s. This new type of reformist, which has its roots in the reformist movements of the nineteenth century, is characterized by a rationalist, historical, and contextual approach to the interpretation of Islamic sources, in order to make them more relevant to Muslims' needs in today's world and more compatible with new ethical standards of human rights. It aims to reconcile reason and spirituality, religion and freedom, and ultimately to develop a kind ofnativized modernity anchored in Muslims' spiritual heritage while embracing all the emancipatory and liberating aspirations of western modernity. It also embraces openness to other cultures and civilizations and aspires to a world where the logic of dialogue and tolerance rather than violence and dominance prevails (Hunter, 2009:20).

Some states are authoritarian are also strong supporters of the West, though the West claims that it supports democratization not authoritarianism. More often than not, they obviously put all their efforts to settle the matter through peaceful talks and negotiation. But, if the concerned authority does not comply with the Islamists and it uses force against them and becomes tyrannical, the Islamists would have to seek consent of the people on the issue for a revolution. If a majority of the people believes that the conditions are intolerable and that there is a need for a revolution, they will go for revolution. It does not however mean that revolution should be adopted as the political strategy by all the countries. As the political conditions differ from country to country, the political strategies differ accordingly (Kausar, 2002:54).

The US seems to prefer cooperation with dictators who can easily carry out American "advice" without constitutional or institutional hindrance. While the US tries hard to understand and accommodate communism and accept the existence of communism states in the Muslim world, it adamantly refuses to deal with political Islam:

> While Islam proved to be a dominant factor in the politics of Muslim countries, the West in general and the US in particular,

> insists on ignoring Islam as a political power … they cannot tolerate Islamic political activities either from the rulers or from the ruled … The US may claim that it is not against political Islam as such bit against extremism and violence, but is there room in its policies for moderation and dialogue? Several Islamic movements – of whom the Sudanese movement and its leader, Dr. Turabi, represent a model – have tried to exclude all violent measures, rely only on political activities and open dialogue with the West to assure that the time for crusades from any side is over. But they are labelled, with all others who may use force, as fundamentalists (Arabia, 1985).

There are five other countries in the Arab world which have introduced democratic reforms in recent years. In one of them, Tunisia, the process has not been as successful as was originally hoped, and in another, Egypt, the pace of change has been so slow that it has become almost imperceptible. In Jordan and Kuwait, parliaments have been reintroduced after periods in which the countries rulers had governed without them, and in both places the reform has been a success, in the eyes of both governments and people. In Yemen, there have been elections – the first ever in that country – though in practical terms there has been little change in the way the government has been run (Field, 1995:276).

Regimes have been forced to adopt the language of democracy, whatever their real intentions or conniving to prevent it. The definition publicly embraced in the Middle East is the same as it is everywhere else, reflected in the Alexandria statement produced at a meeting of 165 civil society leaders and government officials from eighteen Muslim countries at Egypt's rebuilt Alexandria Library in 2004:

> When we talk of democratic systems, we mean, without ambiguity, genuine democracy. This may differ in form and shape from one country to another due to cultural or historical variations; but the essence of democracy remains the same. Democracy refers to a system where freedom is the paramount value that ensures actual sovereignty of the people, and government by the people through political pluralism, leading to transfer of power. Democracy is based in respect of … freedom of thought and expression and the right to organize under the umbrella of effective political institutions, with an elected legislature, an independent judiciary, a government that is subject to both constitutional and public accountability, and political parties of different intellectual and ideological orientations.

Expanding this argument, Mozayyan (2009:241 - 242) maintains that the main incentive that make political Islam flourish likes in the corrupt and unproductive local political leadership promoting Western ideologies that failed to advance people's well - being. The inspiration, he maintains, derives from the triumph of the Mujahedden over the Soviet in Afghanistan which denotes the accomplishment of Islam over secularity.

The Roles of Islamic Movements

Today, in the Muslim world, a few people believe they can re-establish the perfect Islamic society that Prophet Muhammad created in Madinah in the seventh century. All of the supporters of the Islamists are reacting to a feeling that their countries have failed in the last half century. They see political Islam as a philosophy that comes from their own culture, rather than being an imported Western ideology, such as socialism, and because it has its roots in their own society, they believe it will bring out their hidden strengths and make them great again (Field, 1995:5). In a sense, there is an almost continuous chain of Islamic movements operating amongst Muslim people in all parts of the world. The Islamic movements, as Ahmad (1983:222) rightly points out:

> …despite some local features and indigenous accents, have stood for similar objectives and displayed common characteristics. They have shown unwavering commitment to Islam and great capabilities to face the challenge of modern life creatively … The most important aspect of these Islamic movements has been their emphasis on Islam, not just as a set of beliefs and rituals but as a moral and social movements to establish the Islamic order.

The goal of Muslim reformist movements, such as the *Jama'at al-Ikhwan al-Muslimin* (Muslim Brotherhood) of Egypt and *Jama'at-e-Islami* of Pakistan, was much more than simple a reassertion of cultural identity, formal religious observances and expression of Islamic values – though these were seen to be vital. Their ultimate aim was the creation of an "Islamic state" where the rule of the *Shari'ah*, or Islamic law, would be paramount (Sardar, 2009:XVIII). Though the literature on Islamic activism recognized the importance in those movements of implementing Islamic law, there has been little effort to decipher or understand the rudiments of that law and what it could entail for a Muslim community in terms of social justice. The stat of the art literature on Islamic activism (Binder, 1988: 131) indicates the importance of the *Shari'ah* as follow:

> A key doctrinal precondition for the contemporary reassertion of

> Islamic fundamentalism is whether under contemporary historical conditions, it is feasible to establish and maintain an ideal, Islamic government. An ideal Islamic government is one in which the law may be determined with absolute certainty so that Muslims are left in no doubt about what they must do and what they must not do.

Hasam al-Banna was the founder, at the age of 21 of *Jama'at al-Ikhwan al-Muslimin* (The Society of Muslim Brothers or the Muslim Brotherhood) in Isma'iliyyah in 1928 (It relocated to Cairo in 1932). Al-Banna subscribed to the *salafiyyah* doctrine and concepts of social and political unity, *tawhid,* adopted by his intellectual forebears, Jamal al-Din al-Afghani, Muhammad Abdul and Rashid Rida. Yet more than these earlier three, who for the most part remained writers, he set about organizing a permanent organization to realize these principles through concrete action. The Brotherhood established charitable activities, newspapers and journals, and paramilitary battalions (Toth, 2013:261).

In the early twenty-first century, the Brotherhood evolved in its discourse and strategy, if not its goals. The *Ikhwan's* original creed projected radical transformation. "God is our purpose, the Prophet our leader, the Qur'an our constitution, Jihad our way and dying for God's cause our supreme objective (Howeidy, 1995). The motto is still in its official literature. But a simplified and vaguer version – "Islam is the solution" – has been used for public consumption in recent years. The movement talks less about Jihad and theocratic rule, too. Indeed, when the new class of Brotherhood members showed up for parliament in 2006, its early focus was not on stereotypical issues associated with Islamic rule, such as banning alcohol or imposing Islamic dress on women. They instead went after a government decision to let a retired French aircraft carrier loaded with tons of asbestos sail through the Suez canalen route to India, where it was to be disassembled for scrap metal. A Brotherhood politician angrily warned of the environmental hazards to Egypt (Williams, 2006).

To call for a chance to speak in the People's Assembly, legislators have to wave a copy of Egypt's constitution at the parliamentary speaker. With eighty-eight members, the Brotherhood delegation literally began a wave of challenges about reform issues that secular parties had been unable and unwilling to tackle. Persistently and sometimes noisily, they demanded answers on the use of torture. They called for a status report on more than 15,000 political prisoners. They pressed for an end to emergency law. They urged judicial independence and freedom

of speech for journalists reporting on government corruption. They called for term limits on the presidency. They appealed for the rights to assemble and associate (Williams, 2006). Eight decades later, the Brotherhood had spawned eighty-six branches and affiliates in Asia, Europe, and Africa. Most Islamic political groups are a by-product, directly or indirectly, of Banna's unlikely little band (Wright, 2008:99). In the words of Ayubi (1991:231):

> Whereas the earlier 'Islamic reformers' such as al-Afghani and Abdu were striving to modernize Islam, the following generation of Islamists such as Al-Banna and the Muslim Brothers were striving to Islamize modernity.

Mawdudi (1977:1) contended that:

> Islam is not a mere collection of dogmas and rituals but a complete way of life. It is the embodiment of divine guidance for all fields of human life.

However, Haddad, et al (1991:53) notes that Islamic activists "differ in what they wish to implement. Conservatives tend to regard much of the corpus of the traditional Islamic law as binding. Reformers note that the law is subject to reinterpretation, ijtihad and reform". It is within this context that Esposito (1992:118) draws attention to the importance of Islamic law:

> Is the implementation of Islamic law in state and society to be a restoration or reformation, the resurrection of past doctrines and laws or the reconstruction of new models rooted in faith but appropriate to the changed circumstances of life today? The issue is clear when we look at the question of Islamic law. For many, the Islamic character of the state is determined by the implementation of Islamic law.

Nevertheless, the fundamentalist movement of today is in a fractionalized state in most Arab countries. Differences in ideology and tactics, no less than conflicts between leaders have often promoted disunity among the Islamist groups. Ideological conflicts have resulted from diverse interpretations of Islam's original message as well as from differences in the social bases of various Islamist groups and leaders (Fisher, 1982:110).

Summary and Conclusion

The region of the Middle East is characterized by the politicization of religion. As a result of that, no region of the world had experienced as much turmoil as the Middle East since the end of World War II. Particularly, religious conflict is more prevalent, involving the traditional values of the Islamic community and the extent of

modernization permitted by the faith. Of course, the religious clashes reflected the tension between modernism and traditionalism that marked Middle East life. The Islamic Revolution of Iran has transformed the political landscape. Hence, the confrontation between hardened versions of the state and religion in the Middle East was not merely the figment of an observer's imagination, it is real.

There is no doubt that the final decades of the twentieth century have witnessed two important developments – Islamic resurgence and democratization. It is also true that Islamic resurgence and democratization complement each other in some countries. The reason is quite obvious. The authoritarian political regimes of the Muslim world are mostly secular in their approach to politics and modernization. Hence, Islamic movements which form the backbone of Islamic resurgence emerge as the leading movements of opposition which assure not only popular participation of people in politics but also affirm their identification with Islam.

Two dynamics will define political change in the Muslim World for years to come. The first is the oldest force in political identity; the accumulative package of family, faith, race, traditions, and ties to a specific piece of land. Few regions have a more complex or competing set of identities, long before factoring in Israel. The clash of cultures begins within the Middle East. The second dynamic is the newest force in the Middle East youth and an emerging generation of younger leaders. The young have more influence than any previous generation because, for the first time, the majority of them are literate. They are also connected enough to the outside world to be deeply dissatisfied with the status quo at home. They are the dreamers. Indeed, it was the youth that championed the cause of the 'Arab Spring". The internal revolution is purely a dispute between anti-western and zealous religious youth and their government.

A key to developing a robust techno-politics is articulation, the mediation of techno-politics with real problems and struggles, rather than self-contained reflections on the internal politics of the internet. The examples in this study suggest how techno-politics makes possible a refiguring of politics, a refocusing of politics on everyday life and using the tools and techniques of new computer and communications technologies to expand the field and domain of politics. With the maximum and effective usage of the modern technology, those who spearheaded the struggle were able to communicate effectively and create unparallel information to all and sundry, who

sympathize with their struggle. At the end of it all, the unwanted governments collapsed while few are still struggling to consolidate their dictatorship, though with unimaginable opposition.

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