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**RELIGIOUS ORIENTATION IN SOCIO-POLITICAL LANDSCAPES
OF ISLAMIC SOCIETIES-
FROM MEDIEVALISM TO MODERNITY**

Syed Munawar Abbas

ABSTRACT:

This article examines the development of the practices and beliefs of religion in Islamic countries, starting from the Umayyad and Abbasid dynasties up to the present day. It highlights the continued influence of Sharia-based administration and the difficulties faced by secular and liberals using qualitative research methodology. The study commences with an examination of early Islamic clans, such as the Umayyads and the Abbasids. The Umayyads were renowned for their immense power and their efforts to consolidate Islamic administration. Abbasids were a family that made notable contributions to science and culture while also exerting power over religion. The research aims to explore how these historical periods established fundamental principles and behaviours that still have an impact on contemporary Islamic political traditions. Progressing in a sequence of events, the paper examines the contemporary political situations of nations such as Iran, Saudi Arabia, Turkey under Erdogan, and Pakistan. It emphasizes their commitment to religious legislation and their differing levels of adoption of modern progressive ideas. The paper explores the socio-political processes that define modern Islamic communities, including traditionalism, hostility towards opposition, and a tendency towards autocratic administration. The paper suggests promoting a healthy religious perspective, including campaigning for acceptance, encouraging debate within spiritual platforms, and combining contemporary learning with traditional beliefs. These strategies seek to

find a balance between traditional Islamic values and the requirements of modern global issues, promoting a peaceful coexistence of religious beliefs and societal advancement.

KEYWORDS: Religion, Socio-political, Islamic society, Tradition, Modernism.

Past and present are inextricably linked. The present is the manifestation of historical processes. That's the reason the study of history helps us understand the present. The mentality of Islamic civilization that developed during the medieval has remained unchanged over centuries. It has an important bearing on the culture of modern Muslim societies. Religious practices are still far more alive. Islamic civilization has retained its medieval mentality even to our age. That civilization has not experienced humanism and modernization for most of its history and remained under the influence of divine laws. To understand the culture and society of the modern Islamic world we have to go to the long past to search the roots of its development and only then would be understandable to us.

During the Umayyad caliphate (661-750) and Abbasid caliphate (750-1258), religion and politics were inextricably linked. The rulers patronized the religion and developed institutions along religious lines. They could not think political system independent of religion. The rulers enjoyed unrestrained power. They were responsible to God for their actions and handling of the affairs of the state. Hence, they were not answerable to the subjects. There was no institution to put checks on their power. They were just absolute and above the law. Sometimes the state would adopt extreme policies to bring in line subjects with the dictates of religious doctrine and sometimes would adopt a benign attitude and it all depended on the whims

of a ruler. The ruling class during Umayyad's rule was the Arab aristocracy, and they did not share a privileged position with non-Arabs. Rather non-Arabs were regarded as inferiors.¹The society was divided into hierarchical order. At the top most were families of Arabs ruling aristocrats. The second were non-Arab Muslim converts. They were called *mawali* (clients to Arabs). These clients were second-class citizens. The third class comprised Jews and Christians. They were also regarded as the followers of their revealed religion.²The Jews and Christians were called *dhimmi*s (protected people). They were sometimes tolerated but segregated by rulers and sometimes they were subjected to discrimination. It depended on the attitude of the rulers.

During Umayyad's rule, they were forbidden to build new Churches and Synagogues. They were required not to put crosses on the Churches. They were forbidden to assemble near Muslim quarters. They were forbidden to proselytize their religion.³They were required to pay *jizya* or special tax for living in the Islamic state.⁴The *jizya* was enriching the treasury of Arab rulers. In Syria, Iraq and Egypt majority of the population was Christian and their poll tax mattered a lot to the economy of Umayyads.⁵During Abbasid rule, anti-*dhimmi*s feelings ignited during the rule of al-Mutawakkil (847-61). The *dhimmi*s were subjected to discrimination and segregation. They were required to wear yellow on their dresses in order to

¹ Amira K. Benninson, *The Great Caliphs: The Golden age of the Abbasid Empire* (London: I. B. Tauris, 2009), 21

² Phillip K.Hitti, *History of the Arabs: From Earliest Times to the Present* (London: Macmillan Press, 1960), 231-33

³ Gustave E. Von Grunebaum, *Medieval Islam: A Study in Cultural Orientation* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1953), 179

⁴ Maxime Rodinson, *The Arabs* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1981), 18

⁵ J J Saunders, *A History of Medieval Islam* (London: Routledge Press, 1965), 81

mark them visible in the community.⁶“Upper-class *dhimmis* had to wear yellow hoods, simple belts and to ride with wooden stirrups with two pommels on the backs of their saddles.”⁷All riding animals except the donkey and mule were forbidden to them. He decimated the newly built Churches and Synagogues.⁸Besides that, Mutawakkil was not tolerant of the Shia sect of Islam. He was the proponent and patronize of proto-Sunnite ideology. He ordered the demolition of the holy shrine of Imam Husain, the grandson of the Prophet, that is at Karbala in Iraq. His shrine was destroyed because it was a centre of devotion, inspiration and reverence for the Shia’s creed all over the Muslim world.⁹ Imam Hussain was martyred in 680 AD by Umayyad’s ruler Yazid. Even up to the present in the month of Muharram, the first month of the Islamic lunar calendar, Shia community all over the world commemorate with mourning and self-flagellation by reenacting the tragedy of the martyrdom of Imam Hussain and his family and vowed they would never forget his sacrifices. The rule of sharia helped to emerge the ulema (religious scholars) as the dominant group in the society. The ulemas were the interpreter of religion and the ruler would consult them regarding making laws. They were selected as judges, enabling them to keep in touch with the ruling class.¹⁰Throughout Islamic history, the clergy remained a powerful pressure group. They enjoyed the support of the masses.

Clergy in Ottoman’s empire and Modern Turkey:

⁶ Hugh Kennedy, *The Court of the Caliphs: When Baghdad Ruled the Muslim World* (London: Phoenix Press, 2005), 240.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 240

⁸ Brokelmann, *History of the Islamic People*, 132

⁹ Kennedy, *The Court of the Caliphs*, 239

¹⁰ W. Montgomery Watt, *What is Islam* (London: Oxford University Press,)126

The clergy remained a powerful group in the Ottoman Empire (1300-1923). As the Ottoman state was a theocratic state so ulemas were the interpreter of divine laws “and operated the system of religious courts that had jurisdiction over family, marriage, inheritance and a host of other matters of personal status.”¹¹The Ottoman sultans were absolute rulers who aimed to reform subjects along religious lines and regarded themselves as trustees of God.¹²“They played an important part in the administration of the empire”.¹³The religious scholars were Puritans and they disliked the exercise of reason, science, music and dancing. Any innovation in the realm of Islam was seen as blasphemous.¹⁴

The rulers proclaimed themselves as the champion of Islam and vowed to spread it far and wide. They adopted expansionist policies like the Arabs. In the sixteenth century, the Ottoman Empire reached its zenith. The empire conquered a swathe of land in Africa, the Middle East and Europe. In Europe, it occupied Rhodes, Belgrade, Wallachia, Hungary, Bosnia, Ukraine, and Crimea. In Northern Africa, the countries that were bordering the Mediterranean Sea like Algiers, Tunis Tripoli and Egypt were all brought under Ottoman’s suzerainty. The whole of South Arabia, Syria and Iraq were also the parts of Ottoman Empire. In 1517 the key of Kabba was handed over to Ottoman Sultan Selim by the Shaikh of Mecca.¹⁵All these conquests became possible due to strong Islamic

¹¹ Francis Fukuyama, *The Origins of Political Order: From Prehuman Times to the French Revolution* (London: Profile Books, 2012), 222

¹² Halil Inalcik, *The Ottoman Empire: The Classical Age 1300-1600* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson Press, 1973), 67

¹³ Hourani, *A History of the Arab Peoples*, 223

¹⁴ Inalcik, *The Ottoman Empire*, 182-3

¹⁵ Fernand Braudel, *The Mediterranean and the Mediterranean World in the Age of Philip 2* (London: Happer Colophon Books, 1966) 668

ideology. The Turkish tribes took it upon themselves the responsibility to spread Islam to the heart of infidels and to claim mastery over the Muslim world. The idea of a Holy war ignited the zeal of worriers to subjugate all the non-Muslims. “The Holy War was the foundation stone of the Ottoman state.”¹⁶A special poll tax was imposed on the non-Muslims. The Ottoman Sultans took little interest in converting infidels because they provided revenue to the Islamic state in the form of poll tax.¹⁷

The Turkish empire remained traditional and orthodox. The European enlightenment where reason was held supreme could not make its way into the Turkish Sultanate. The overwhelming influence of the clergy did not allow modernization to take root. The European enlightenment thinkers were rarely known in Turkey well up to the nineteenth century.¹⁸The book-reading culture was not allowed to flourish by the clergy. Rather it was suppressed. The foreign books were not allowed to be translated into either Arabic or Turkish language.¹⁹“There was a religious taboo: no books were to be printed in the Holy language of the Quran, Arabic, or in Turkish.”²⁰Only minorities like Jews, Armenians and Greeks were allowed to read books of their taste. In the nineteenth century, the restrictions were relaxed and the printing press was allowed to publish books.²¹

Iran’s Religio-political Landscape in Medieval Times:

¹⁶P. M. Holt ed, *The Cambridge History of Islam: The Central Islamic Lands*, vol 1 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1970), 283

¹⁷ Ilhan Niaz, *Old World Empires: Cultures of Power and Governance in Eurasia* (Karachi: Oxford University Press, 2014), 312

¹⁸ Hans Kung, *Islam: Past, Present and Future* trans John Bowden (Oxford: One world, 2007), 411

¹⁹ Ibid., 411

²⁰ Ibid., 411

²¹ Ibid., 411

In Persia, the rule of Ismail 1 (1501-24) laid the basis of the modern Iranian state. He was the founder of the Safavid empire (1501-1732). Before that Persia was a more geographical entity rather than political since the invasions of the Caliph in the seventh century.²² Ismail adopted Shia Islam as the state religion. Shiite ideology believes that Caliph Ali (601-61) and his descendants were the lawful heirs to Prophet Muhammad. Shias attached an element of charisma of divinity and infallibility to their revered imams.²³ Imam means the supreme leader of the Muslim community, used commonly by the Shia for Ali and his descendants. According to Ibn Khaldun Shias regarded the imam as a “human being with divine qualities, or they assume that he is God in human incarnation.”²⁴ Ismail thus became an imam in the theocratic state of Persia. He developed charisma and fostered belief in the public that “he was a manifestation of God himself.”²⁵ He imposed Shia Islam through the power of the sword. In Iran, the majority of the population was adherents of Sunni Islam when Ismail came to power.²⁶ The Sunni population was ruthlessly executed and forced to convert. The Sunni Ulama had no option to live in Iran: either they were executed or forced to be deported to other neighbouring states.²⁷ Ismail did not hesitate to use violence for he assumed he was on the divine mission to implement Shiism.

²² P. M. Holt ed. *The Cambridge History of Islam: The Central Islamic Lands* vol. 1 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1970), 398

²³ Sanders, *Medieval Islam*, 126

²⁴ Ibn Khaldun, *The Muqaddimad*, 406

²⁵ Holt ed. *The Cambridge History of Islam: The Central Islamic Lands*, 401

²⁶ A. J. Arberry ed. *Religion in the Middle East: Three Religions in Concord and Conflict* vol. 2 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1969), 100

²⁷ Kung, *Islam: Past, Present and Future*, 401-2

The imposition of Shia Islam made Iran ideologically different from the Ottomans, which was upholding Sunni doctrine. The Turkish empire was suspicious of the Safavid ruler for igniting uprisings in the bordering regions of Anatolia. Ismail wanted to extend the influence of Iran in the Middle East and Anatolia. Ismail wanted to cash the Shia doctrine in order to bring into its orbit the Shia-majority regions of the nearby states. When Ottomans observed the involvement of Safavids in instigating uprisings along the Western borders then they started planning to stem the expansionist designs of Ismail. The Ottoman rulers propagated anti-Ismail ideology to sanction war against Muslims. The religious authorities of Ottoman regarded Safavid religious attitude and policies as un-Islamic. The adherents and supporters of Ismail were labelled as heretics and unbelievers, and jihad against them was justified.²⁸First, the adherents of Ismail *Qizilbash* who were living in the province of Rum northwest of Anatolia were massacred brutally. Almost 40,000 *Qizilbash* were put to death and thousands were taken hostage. Salem, the Ottoman ruler, justified the brutality in religious terms.²⁹Declaring the Safavids as heretics, Salem had ordered the military campaign against Ismail. In the battle of Caldiran on 23 August 1514 the Ottomans mustering the army of 100,000, of whom 12,000 were musketeers, defeated badly the Safavid forces. Ismail managed to flee from battle, and Ottoman forces chased him to his capital city Tabrez but could not capture him. Tabrez was sacked and added further humiliation to Ismail's power.³⁰ Now again Ottoman

²⁸ Caroline Finkel, *Osman's Dream: The Story of the Ottoman Empire 1300-1923* (London: John Murray Press, 2006), 104-5

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 105

³⁰ *Ibid.*, 106

took hold of eastern Anatolia and northern Iraq. The defeat proved tragic for Ismail from which he could not recover all of his life. “Chaldiran destroyed Ismail’s faith in his invincibility.”³¹ It produced doubt in the adherents who regarded him as the manifestation of God. It laid roots for the withdrawal of fanatic tribes and Turkish-blooded military aristocracy *Qizilbash* from loyalty to Ismail and his successors. The *Qizilbash* were ardent supporters of Ismail and regarded him as both “their temporal ruler and their spiritual director.”³²

The base Ismail set for Shia Islam as a state religion survived throughout centuries up to the present times. The legacy of his rule was carried out by his successors. In the theocratic state, mullahs emerged as a strong group. They were given patronage by the state. Shia ulamas were brought from Syria, Iraq and Egypt. During Abbas 1 rule (1588-1629) the ulamas were made a part of state bureaucracy and performed manifold tasks. They were educationist and instructors in state-sponsored madrasahs. They performed their duties in administration, legislation and the judiciary.³³ The religious scholars were very strong because they were interpreters of Sharia and the Monarch would consult with them to make laws.³⁴ The 1979 Iranian revolution that was brought by Ruhullah Khomeini did not bring any new developments in the State. Iranian society was already religious-oriented since the times of Ismail 1. Society was so religiously charged that people could not imagine any system or thoughts besides religion. In Iran, there is

³¹ Holt ed. *The Cambridge History of Islam: The Central Islamic Lands*, 401

³² *Ibid.*, 401

³³ Kung, *Islam: Past, Present and Future*, 402

³⁴ Arberry, *Religion in The Middle East*, 109-10

“in reality no aspect of social life which is completely divorced from religious principles.”³⁵

The religious sects other than Shiism were not tolerated. The Sunnis and Sufis faced persecution and suppression throughout the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. In order to hurt the religious feelings of Sunnis the Shia ulama would curse the first three caliphs. The state was also intolerant to non-Muslims. It encouraged their conversion to Shiism. “In 1656, Shah Abbas granted extensive powers to his wazirs to force Jews to become Muslims.”³⁶ During Shah Hussain's rule (1688-1726) the Zoroastrians were forcibly converted to Shiism.³⁷

Western Enlightenment:

Parallel to Islamic civilization, the European civilization was developing along different trends. In European civilization, human reason and conscience were given importance. The stress on reason gave way to the development of humanism and liberalism. In humanism philosophy man was important and not God. It was a revolt against absolutism and injustice. Humanism was always against “exclusive submission to God; against any doctrine neglecting humanity; against any system that would reduce human responsibility”.³⁸ The liberal thinkers advocated the freedom of consciousness and the realization of intellectual power. For Adam Smith “God’s wisdom ought not to be the great business and occupation of our lives”.³⁹ Immanuel Kant wrote a famous essay “*What is*

³⁵Ibid., 109

³⁶Lapidus, *A History of Islamic Societies*, 297

³⁷ibid

³⁸Braudel. *A History of Civilizations*, 340-1

³⁹ Quoted in Sheldon S. Wolen. *Politics and Vision: Continuity and Innovation in Western Political Thought* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1960, rep 2004), 267

Enlightenment” in 1784 in which he said that enlightenment means the courage to use reason and reproofing the slavish following of others. The man would not claim to be enlightened unless he released himself from the tutelage of others. The history of Christianity developed in Europe along different lines. First Jesus Christ did not make any theocratic state. He was just a preacher. In Europe, Christianity played a vital part in developing the notion of individualism and secularism.⁴⁰ Secularism was not an anti-religion ideology. Secularism fostered a belief that “to be human means being a rational and moral agent, a free chooser with responsibility for one’s action.”⁴¹ It held human reason supreme.

Traditionalism and Wahabi Movement:

When we move to Islamic civilization one can observe the orthodox religious attitude and medieval thinking. The European enlightenment and modernization were foreign to them. In the eighteenth century, there was a religious movement Wahhabism in Arabia for the revival of Islam in its pristine condition. The founder of Wahhabism was Muhammad bin Abd-al Wahab (1703-92). Abd-al Wahab was not happy with the innovations in Islam that had evolved in Arabian society since the departure of Prophet Muhammad. He regarded anything that was not mentioned in the Quran and Hadith as *bida* (illegitimate innovation) in religion. He was sternly against *shirk* (the association of persons and things with God). For him, *shirk* was a grave sin. According to his philosophy, it was forbidden to visit shrines, and tombs of saints and make any association with God. The Shiites and Sufi's practice of Islam was regarded as un-Islamic. Over time

⁴⁰ see Larry Sidentop, *Inventing the Individual: The Origins of Western Liberalism* (London: Penguin Books, 2014)

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 361

Abd-al Wahab won over the support of different tribes to spread his reforms. His alliance with Muhammad b. Saud in 1744, the tribe head in the small town of al Dirriya in Najad, was more enduring and successful. Al-Wahhab promised him a ruler-ship once they conquered Arabia.⁴²The Wahhabis unleashed efforts to persuade and persecute people to give up *Bida* and *shirk*. They thought those who go to shrines and tombs commit idolatry. That attitude still survived in the Wahhabi school of thought, and Wahhabism is the state religion of Saudi Arabia. Arabian society was very conservative. When Ottoman rulers in about 1850s proposed reforms for the abolition of slavery and *jizya* in their empire then Hijaz was reluctant to accept those reforms. The religious scholars of Mecca showed concern about why on earth the Ottomans were abolishing slavery when Sharia itself justified it. The ban on slavery meant the stoppage of the flow of black slaves from Africa and white ones from the Caucasus.⁴³The chief Ulema of Mecca denounced the ban saying “The ban on slaves is contrary to the Holy Sharia”.⁴⁴The *Ulemas* mobilized people for the Holy War against the Ottomans. The revolt was suppressed, but the Ottomans yielded to their demand and exempted the province of Hijaz from following the law on the ban of slave trade promulgated in 1857.⁴⁵

Modernization in Twentieth Century and Orthodox Clergy:

In the modern world, the only Islamic state that broke away from the past and established a secular State was Turkey. The reformers of modernization in Turkey were inspired by Western liberal political

⁴²Arberry, *Religion in The Middle East*, 272

⁴³ Bernard Lewis, *What Went Wrong: Western Impact and Middle East Response* (London: Phoenix Press, 2002), 95-102

⁴⁴ Quoted in *ibid.* 103

⁴⁵*Ibid.*, 103

thought. Ziya Gokal (1875-1924) was the father of Turkish nationalism. He advocated the abolition of the Caliphate. He advocated the separation of religion from state affairs. He was of the view that if Turkey would develop into a nation-state along modern Western states then it could compete and attain development. Other Nationalist leaders like Mustafa Kemal, Rauf Hussain and Refet Bele all favoured a liberal constitution and supremacy of Parliament.⁴⁶ The humiliating defeats in World War 2 had shattered the Ottoman Caliphate. It became a victim of successive breakdowns. The man who saved somehow the honour of Turkey in that War was Mustafa Kemal. He was an intelligent military general who emerged hero after the War of Gallipoli. His military prowess made him distinguished. When the war was over, he emerged as the leader of Turkey. He was first elected as President of the Grand National Assembly in April 1920. He was a radical reformer. He believed in liberal democracy and secularism. He was made President of Turkey in October 1923 when it was declared a Republic. He made Turkey a secular state. He abolished the age-old Islamic institutions of the Ottoman Sultanate in 1923 and the Caliphate in 1924. He brought religion under state control and barred *Ulema* from interfering in state policies.⁴⁷ He went to extreme lengths to purge Islamic influence. The Sufi dervish Orders were disbanded and women were banned from drawing the veil in public. In schools and colleges, religious education was dropped, and the whole education curriculum was set along secular lines.⁴⁸ Family laws were

⁴⁶ Niaz, *Old World Empires*, 344.

⁴⁷ Lapidus, *A History of Islamic Societies*, 608

⁴⁸ Fazlur Rehman, *Islam and Modernity: Transformation of an intellectual Tradition* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1982), 62

developed based on Swiss legal codes. Polygamy was declared illegal and women were given equal rights in the matter of divorce.⁴⁹ The secularization of the state was an assault on the entrenched power of Ulemas, and it broke their back. During the Caliphate period, the Ulemas were the power holders. As the sovereignty would belong to God and Divine laws were here held absolute then Ulemas were interpreters and defenders of these laws.⁵⁰ Attaturk abolished the Ministry of Shariat, and Sheriat Courts where *Ulema* were its judges and justice was delivered in the lights of Holy laws. Religious seminaries were banned.⁵¹

It was a cultural revolution that was imposed from above. The state became authoritarian to impose its modernization drive. It did not tolerate opposition and dissent. Kamal Attaturk believed people could only be modernized through a secular orientation of power. He thought that a “nation of superstitious and largely illiterate,” could not produce a culture suitable for liberal democracy.⁵² The state has to take responsibility for modernizing the mentality of the masses. He could execute his agenda of reforms into practice as long as he had power. The Kemalist influence lasted until the 1950’s. The masses did not reconcile with liberalism because it was something that was imposed from above. Liberal thought was not part of their culture. For centuries they remained under the influence of religion and superstition. Then, how could it be possible to change their mentality overnight to another extreme at one stroke? “The cultural revolution imposed from the top had relatively slight

⁴⁹ Lapidus, *A History of Islamic Societies*, 607-608

⁵⁰ Bernard Lewis, *The Emergence of Modern Turkey* (London: Oxford University Press, 1961), 259

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 260

⁵² Niaz, *Old World Empires*, 344

penetration.”⁵³ The orthodoxy related secularism with anti-Islam. The religious-minded people cursed modernization. In 1930 in the region of Menemen, near Izmir, a striking incident happened. A young Kemalist officer complained over the dervish cursing of Kemalism in public, he was harassed by the mob and beheaded on the spot.⁵⁴

What was a landmark achievement on the part of Kemalism was to break the hold of Ulemas on organized Islam, and implementation of impressive economic policies. The Ottoman Sultanate was famous for its poor tax collection. People would not pay taxes, and money generated from taxes would not usually reach the state treasury. The government was lax and could not execute its power properly. The corruption in the state and society was rampant. Mainly it was an agrarian economy. During Mustafa Kemal's rule tax collection “doubled from 111.30 million Turkish Liars in 1924 to 206.10 million Turkish Liars in 1929”⁵⁵, which was impressive. The regime built industries from its revenue and did not borrow for industrial development, although the government had not recovered fully from the jolts of the First World War.

Kamal Attaturk died on 10 November 1938. His policies were carried out by his loyal colleague Ismet Inonu until 1950. Ismet Inonue, the leader of the Republican Party compromised with Islam to gain public support. He knew that if he did not show leniency, then they would have public support. He established in 1948 imam-hatib schools where students were taught religion. In 1949 he established the Faculty of Theology at Ankara

⁵³ Lapidus (1988), *A History of Islamic Societies*, 610

⁵⁴ Lewis, *The Emergence of Modern Turkey*, 411

⁵⁵ Ilhan (2014), *Old World Empires*, 349

University.⁵⁶ In general elections Republican Party, which was championing Kemalist ideology, lost the election with a heavy mandate. That election was won by the Democrat Party under the leadership of Celal Bayer. Democrats won the election because they promised the relaxation of rules on centralized tendencies of power and religion. The new leadership tolerated Islam. Religious books were made part of education curricula in schools. The mosques were patronized and received state support, and rulers benefited “from the use of pulpits to preach against the Republicans.” The regime lifted the ban on the airing of religious programs and recitation of the Quran on the radio.⁵⁷

In Turkey, Kemalism is synonymous with secularism and modernization. The military wanted Kemalism intact, and it has been the guardian of secularism. Religion has popular support in Turkey. The reason Attaturk's reforms could not last for a long time is that religious-minded had no support behind them. Modernization did not develop in people rather it was imposed from the top. One famous Turkish journalist Can Dunder aptly said in his article in *The Guardian*, “Turkey politics has always acted like a pendulum: it swings from mosques to barracks and back again. When it sways too near the mosque, soldiers step in to take it to the barracks.”⁵⁸ Turkey has a history of military intervention in politics. General Cemel Gursel carried out a military coup in May 1960 and ousted the Democratic Party from power. He launched a coup when his demands for political reforms were rejected. The recent failed putsch of 15th July

⁵⁶ Rahman, *Islam and Modernity*, 92.

⁵⁷ Ilhan (2014), *Old World Empires*, 351.

⁵⁸<https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2016/jul/22/biggest-witch-hunt-turkish-history-coup-erdogan-europe-help>

2016 was unique in the history of Turkey. President Recep Tayyip Erdogan, leader of the Justice and Development Party (AKP), the government foiled the coup and asserted civilian power vis-à-vis the military. The mosque imams played a vital role in mobilizing people against the coup. Appeal from 8,5000 mosques had played a significant role. Responding to their calls people come out to the streets. The religious-minded people did not like the military government due to its Kemalist ideology. Mr Erdogan has always been sympathetic to the Islamization agenda. His party's (AKP) main agenda was to reverse the influence of secularization since it assumed power in 2002. It encouraged the Islamization of education and marginalized secular-minded people.⁵⁹ He encouraged Islamic education and converted about 1500 non-religious schools into *imam hatib*. *Imam Hatib* is a vocational school in which emphasis is given to religious education and training. In 1950 it was established to produce preachers for the mosques. When AK came to power the ratio of students in *Imam Hatib* was 2%, and now the number increased to almost one million.⁶⁰

Iran: Islamic Revolution and its Vestige:

The Iranian Revolution of 1979 put an end to the monarchical rule of Muhammad Shah Pahlavi. The leader of the revolution was Ruhullah Khomeini. He was the spiritual mentor of the people of Iran. People had trust in him. He transformed the state into a theocracy. The ruling class of that Islamic state was Vilayat-i-Faqih or the Mandate of Jurists. For Khomeini, those would be the rulers who would be the experts of divine

⁵⁹<http://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/europe/turkey-coup-president-erdogan-islam-akp-government-a7142836.html>

⁶⁰*The Economist*. 6th to 12th Feb. 2016. P.7

law.⁶¹ He believed the rule of divine law would be the solution to all problems. In the theocratic state of Islam, “the legislative power and competence to establish laws belongs exclusively to God Almighty.”⁶² All the laws would be derived from the teachings of Qoran and Sunnah.⁶³ Divine laws are absolute and infallible and citizens must obey and adhere to them.⁶⁴ Human reason has no value and has to be submitted before the absolute laws of God. The Divine book and teachings of the Prophet (PBUH) cover all the aspects of human guidance.⁶⁵ It means that there is no need for people to use their reason for a good life because Divine Laws provide them with a perfect system of life. “In August 1982, all un-Islamic laws passed since 1917 were nullified by Supreme Judicial Council, effectively making the *Ulema* the judicial administrator of the country with the power to dispense justice they saw fit.”⁶⁶The *Ulema* served as qadi in the courts. The revolution brought theocracy in which real sovereignty belonged to God. People have become mere agents to serve the interests of God. They could serve God's interest only by submitting to his laws. There is no social contract. “Entry into the community of religion often demands an internalization of its sacred and absolute

⁶¹ Antony Black, *The History of Islamic Political Thought: From the Prophet (PBUH) to the Present* (Karachi: Oxford University Press, 2004), 334.

⁶² Saiyyid Ruhollah Musavi Khomeini, *Islam and Revolution: Writings and Declarations of Imam Khomeini*, trans Hamid Algar (Barkley: Mizan Press, 1981), 55.

⁶³ *Ibid.*, 56.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 57.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 44

⁶⁶ Ilhan Niaz, *Old World Empires: Culture of Power and Governance in Eurasia* (Karachi: Oxford University Press, 2014), 205.

truths.”⁶⁷ God is absolute and man has to surrender before it. Iran claimed an Islamic democracy.

In the constitution, the Supreme Leader is endowed with enormous power. He set a guideline for the state. He served as a mediator between the judiciary, executive and legislature. He oversees the working of the state legislation and administration. He could dismiss the president from office. He could appoint judges at lower and higher tiers of the Judiciary. He could declare war with other countries as a Commander-in-Chief of the Army. A twelve-man Guardian Council was formed of which six clerics were nominated by Supreme Leader. Guardian Council could veto a bill that is passed in the Assembly. The Assembly sent the bill to the Guardian Council for consent and overview. The Guardian Council could reject any proposal that does not meet the requirements of the spirit of the constitution and *Sharia*.⁶⁸

The Cultural Revolution was unleashed to purge un-Islamic traits from the culture. It was directed against secularism and Western cultural values in society. Secular-minded people were ousted from their jobs. The men were forbidden to wear ties and women were required to cover their bodies in hijab in public places.⁶⁹ The minorities felt threatened because the regime did not like any sect other than the official religion of Shiism. The Bahais community was subjected to discrimination and execution. Their temples were closed and their leaders were punished. They were removed from

⁶⁷ Nader Hashemi, *Islam, Secularism, and Liberal Democracy: Towards a Democratic Theory for Muslim Societies* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009), 114

⁶⁸ Ervand Abrahamian, *A History of Modern Iran* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 164

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, 177

government jobs.⁷⁰ In history Bahai community had been subjected to violence and again history repeated during Khomeini's rule. In twentieth century, liberals voiced for humanistic reforms but the Guardian Council did not cooperate and thwarted any proposal that violated Sharia norms. The state did not allow freedom of opinion. The judiciary trialed the intellectuals for expressing deviant thoughts.⁷¹ Human Rights groups time and again complained about the draconian laws of the state. In 2015 966 convicts were executed and that was the highest number in the world. The state employed corporal punishment. In 2015 47 people were executed through corporal punishment. They were flogged, amputated and blinded in public and even children were present. In 2015 almost 47 journalists and media personnel were behind bars.⁷²

Saudi Arabia: Wahhabism and Saud Dynasty:

After the death of King Abd-al-Aziz or Ibn-Saud (1880-1953) who ruled South Arabia from 1902 to 1952, Saudi Arabia did develop into a state from tribal society. Wahabism was made the official religion of the Kingdom. The rulers of the state belonged to the Ibn-Saud family. The constitution of the kingdom was sharia. All the important administrative posts and ministries were given to close family members and relatives and to those who were linked with matrimonial or other kinds of kin ties.⁷³ The *ulema* wielded much importance in the state. They were the interpreter of *Sharia* in the theocratic state. The rulers were absolute and they had to

⁷⁰ Ibid., 177

⁷¹ Ibid., 191

⁷² The Economist Mar 24th 2016. "Human Rights in Iran are still atrocious" http://www.economist.com/news/middle-east-and-africa/21695716-while-iran-reopens-west-repression-still-prevails-home-human-rights?fsrc=scn/tw_ec/human_rights_in_iran_are_still_atrocious

⁷³ Kung, Islam: *Past, Present and Future*, 440.

operate within the boundaries of Sharia. According to Wahhabi doctrine, the ruler is legitimate as long as he abides by the norms of Sharia.⁷⁴The *Ullamas* served as *qazi* and the ruler had to respect the judgments they made in light of Sharia.⁷⁵To promote Wahhabism the rulers lavishly invested money in building mosques throughout the country in villages and towns.

The religious police commonly known as *mutaween* created to impose strict puritanical morality in the state. The power of the religious police was overwhelming. It monitored all aspects of public behaviour.⁷⁶They did not allow women to use nail polish or high-heeled shoes to show beneath their black robes. They would punish people for not offering prayers in time. The women were strictly banned from appearing in public without their complete covering in black robes. They roamed in shopping malls and streets to supervise public behaviour. “In 2002 15 school girls died in Mecca after members of the *mutaween* allegedly prevented them from fleeing a burning building because they were not covered up.”⁷⁷

As the state is running based on Sharia protests and demonstrations against the government are strictly banned. The demonstration against the state amounted to the crime of apostasy. The Council of Senior Scholars 2011 issued a fatwa that anyone who would demonstrate to disturb the government or bring disunity would be regarded as an evil act. The clerics

⁷⁴ David Commins, *The Wahhabi Mission and Saudi Arabia* (London: I. B. Tauris Press, 2006), 115

⁷⁵ Ibid., 115

⁷⁶ Ali A. Allawi, *The Crisis of Islamic Civilization* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009), 87

⁷⁷ The Economist Oct 22nd 2016 <http://www.economist.com/news/middle-east-and-africa/21709016-government-wants-piety-police-be-less-thuggish-advice-vice?zid=308&ah=e21d923f9b263c5548d5615da3d30f4d>

did not want any kind of Arab Spring in their state. The fatwa stated that since the Kingdom was running on the *Sharia*-based constitution so there was no need left for the people to voice for change through demonstrations.⁷⁸The regime does not tolerate freedom of opinion.

Pakistan: Islamization of the Republic:

After the creation of Pakistan in 1947, religious parties wanted to make Pakistan an Islamic state. Maulana Maududi, who was the leader of Jamat-i-Islami and an eminent religious scholar, said that if Pakistan was created in the name of Islam then the rule of *Sharia* had to be implemented in the state. Ulemas in Pakistan wanted a theocratic state. They pressured the government to implement the rule of *Sharia*. Eventually, the government yielded to their demands. They demanded all the existing laws should be brought into conformity with the norms of *Sharia*, and in future, all the laws would be made according to the teachings of *Qoran* and *Sunnah*.⁷⁹After independence, Pakistan's political culture reverted to the medieval political system that prevailed during the Delhi Sultanate and Mughal rule. It was the British Raj that modernized India and developed institutions along modern trends. During the era of Delhi Sultanate and Mughal rule the state was regarded as the personal property of the ruler.⁸⁰But when the British left, medievalism resuscitated in Islamic state of Pakistan. Islamic scholars of Pakistan viewed Secularism as incompatible with Islamic values and norms. Pakistan could not develop

⁷⁸*The Guardian*. 1/4/2011. Saudi Arabia's anti protest fatwa is transparent by Irfan-al – Alawi (<https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/belief/2011/apr/01/saudi-arabia-anti-protest-fatwa>)

⁷⁹Ilhan Niaz, *The Rise and the Rise of the Ulema in Pakistan and the Reassertion of the Medieval Culture of Power: 1947-52*. Asian Profile, Vol. 35, No. 2 (April, 2007), p. 126

⁸⁰ See Ilhan Niaz, *The Culture of Power and Governance of Pakistan, 1947-2008* (Karachi: Oxford University Press, 2010).

into a secular state like India. Ulemas preferred divine laws for they consider it perfect and infallible. Being perfect no one could challenge their authenticity and they are valid for all ages. That kind of divine-inspired political system was favouring the interest of the clergy.⁸¹ Whenever you would build a religious state then its ruling class would be clergy. That religion was acceptable which was approved by Ulemas. Those minorities who were disliked by orthodox ulemas were feeling threatened. Ulemas declared Ahmadis as non-Muslims due to their doctrinal differences with dominant religious sects. Ahmedis were the followers of Mirza Ghulam Ahmed (1835-1908) and regarded him as a prophet. Ahmedis believed in Islam but did not consider Prophet Muhammad as the last prophet. Therefore Sunni and Shia sects declared them blasphemous and excommunicated.⁸² During Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto's rule (1971-77) the Ahmadis were declared as non-Muslims by the state. Later in the military junta of Zia ul Haq (1977-1988), Section 245-C was added to the constitution in which Ahmadis were not allowed to call their place of worship a mosque and were forbidden to adopt symbols of Islam.⁸³ Zia did this to please Ulemas who were adherent supporters of his dictatorial rule. When the state retains a discriminatory attitude with minorities then it has given a chance to extremists to victimize and do violence on them. Ahmadis are not allowed to read Quran and they have been arrested for transgressing restrictions. Mob attacks on their worship places have become a norm. The most recent such case happened on 12th

⁸¹ Niaz, *The Rise and the Rise of the Ulema*, 118.

⁸² Hamid Khan, *Constitutional and Political History of Pakistan* (Karachi: Oxford University Press, 2005), 74.

⁸³ Tariq Rahman, *Names: A Study of Personal Names, Identity, and Power in Pakistan* (Karachi: Oxford University Press, 2015) 51.

December 2016. The mob of around 1,000 attacked Ahmadi's place of worship in Chakwal's Dhalmaal district in the province of Punjab. The late police force dispersed the mob.⁸⁴

The Pakistan political leadership whether it was military or civilian believed in authoritarian and arbitrary use of power. The mentality of the state is medieval. The state promoted Islamization at various stages in history since 1947. That paved the way for growing orthodoxy and militancy in Pakistan. The military of a junta of Zia properly patronized the Islamization culture. He criticized the secular regimes because they did not derive laws in light of divine teachings. He gave much importance to *Ulema* and made them judges in the Federal Shariat Court. He also made a special *Qazi* court in 1984 in which *Ulemas* served as judges.⁸⁵ His government encouraged the growth of madrassah culture and 12,000 such *madrassahs* were established throughout the country.⁸⁶ In these religious schools, orthodox puritanical theology was taught. Mainly the inspired Sunni version of Islam was taught in these *madrassahs*. At the international level Zia regime enjoyed moral support from powers like Saudi Arabia and the United States of America. As in the Afghan war, Zia was an ally of the USA so that's why his regime enjoyed its moral and economic support. The US President Ronald Regan's administration gave two separate aid packages of \$3.2 billion and \$4.2 billion to support Zia in fighting a proxy war in Afghanistan against the USSR.⁸⁷ The USA also

⁸⁴ *The Dawn*. 13/12/2016 <http://www.dawn.com/news/1302057/mob-besieging-ahmadi-place-of-worship-in-chakwal-dispersed-by-police>

⁸⁵ Ian Talbot, *Pakistan a Modern History*, 274

⁸⁶ Christophe Jaffrelot ed. *A History of Pakistan and its Origins* (London: Anthem Press, 2008), 80

⁸⁷ Brian Cloughly, *A History of Pakistan Army*, 286

encouraged the culture of militancy in that part of the world. To promote jihadi literate it spent almost \$50 million over the period from 1986 to 1992. That was meant to indoctrinate Afghan children and adults to hate and do violence against non-Muslims.⁸⁸

The legacy of the rule of Zia has an important bearing on the state and society of Pakistan even up to the present. His legacy gave impetus to sectarianism and a culture of intolerance. The blasphemy law was passed during the military junta of Zia. Anyone who commits blasphemy would have a sentence of life imprisonment. The liberals, minorities and Shias were persecuted in the name of blasphemy. People can label you blasphemous if they feel you cross the limits of absolute boundaries they have in their minds. Defending the blasphemous is amounted to committing blasphemy in Pakistan. The orthodox will not reason with you when it comes to the matter of faith. “You can’t reason with Allah, so you must not reason with mullah, because that too might be blasphemous.”⁸⁹

President General Pervez Musharraf (1999-2007), under pressure from the USA, started military operations in the Federal Administrative Tribal Areas (FATA) of Pakistan to root out Al-Qaeda hideouts. While the army was fighting in the mountains against the Taliban, the Taliban-minded religious groups were doing moral policing in settled areas and even the capital city of Islamabad. The madrassah students of Lal Masjid and Hafsa “started to impose new rules of morality by forcibly shutting down video

⁸⁸http://www.nytimes.com/2016/08/26/world/middleeast/saudi-arabia-islam.html?smid=fb-share&_r=0

⁸⁹*The Guardian*.5/9/12. How to commit blasphemy in Pakistan by Mohammad Hanif (<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2012/sep/05/pakistans-blasphemy-laws-colossal-absurdity>)

and music shops in Islamabad”, and abducted women whom they thought were engaged in immoral activities like prostitution.⁹⁰ As the USA declared the Taliban a terrorist organization Pakistan was forced to take action against them. Pakistan has so far failed to tackle the menace of terrorism. The reason is military believes in the use of force to decimate them physically. That would yield short-term results. The state should produce and propagate at all levels humanist and enlightened counter-narratives to placate extremism and bigotry to have a long-term solution against terrorism. “Madrassas are where ideological indoctrination rejecting all opposing ideas are born. Sectarian violence, therefore, is one by-product of this manufacture of ideology and indoctrination.”⁹¹ According to 2015 surveys the registered *Madressas* in Pakistan were 25000 and unregistered were 15000.⁹²

Pakistani society is religiously oriented. The non-secular policies of the state also helped change society with Islamism. In 2010 a survey was conducted by eminent Pakistani scholar Ayesha Siddiqa in the name of *Red Hot Chili Peppers Islam: Socio-Political Attitudes Amongst Youth in Elite Universities in Islamabad, Lahore and Karachi*. Students of elite universities of Islamabad, Lahore and Karachi mostly gave their opinion in favour of Islamic ideals. They showed signs of radicalism. 70% responded in favour of the Islamic form of government. 77% responded that the Islamic social justice system is better than any other system.⁹³ 60%

⁹⁰*The Dawn* . 31/3/2007 “The Creeping Coup” (<http://www.dawn.com/news/240191>)

⁹¹*The Dawn*. 3/3/2015. “The Madressa Mix: Genesis and Growth” by Ayesha Siddiqa (<http://www.dawn.com/news/1166039>)

⁹² *ibid*

⁹³ Ayesha Siddiqa, *Red Hot Chili Peppers Islam: Is The Youth in Elite Universities in Pakistan Radical* (Islamabad: Heirich-Boll-Stiftung, 2011), 35-6

appreciated the government's decision to declare Ahmadis as non-Muslims.⁹⁴ 18% regarded Shias as non-Muslim.⁹⁵

In schools and college science textbooks, the Islamic ideology is injected. The science is endeavored to bring injunction with religious ideas. In Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa (KPK) science textbooks the Darwin theory of evolution has been regarded as irrational. It is ridiculed how on earth “two rickshaws collide and a motor car was evolved.”⁹⁶ The science books stress more on divine power in creating the universe rather than scientific one. “A physics textbook of the Sindh Text Board categorically states that the universe sprang instantly into existence when certain divine phrases were uttered.”⁹⁷

Conclusion:

Islamic civilization remained religious-oriented throughout history. Secularism and liberalism could not take root because the rulers were authoritarian, and preferred sharia rule. Sharia-based state the sovereignty belongs to God and rulers are the representatives of God on earth. The rulers were not responsible to people for their actions and deeds. The reason was that Muslims believed in theocracy and regarded the rule of Sharia as the best form of government. The study of the political culture of Islamic states in modern times made clear to us how the present resembles with past. Muslim civilization has not yet emerged from medievalism. It did not compromise on its conservatism and orthodoxy. The Kamal Attaturk period was exceptional in the annals of the history of Islamic

⁹⁴ Ibid., 32

⁹⁵ ibid

⁹⁶ The Dawn. 3/12/2016. Promoting anti-science via textbooks by Pervez Hoodbhoy (<http://www.dawn.com/news/1300118/promoting-anti-science-via-textbooks>)

⁹⁷ ibid

civilization. He imposed modernization from above. Modernization was not a product of cultural phenomenon. In the twentieth century, the culture of Islamic societies was “a seamless web in which it was hard to distinguish threads that could be labelled specifically ‘religious’ and still hard to pluck such threads out without tearing the whole fabric to pieces.”⁹⁸ After the end of Kamal Ataturk's rule Turkish state politics reverted to the Sultanate era and current President Tayyip Erdogan's rule has accelerated that process. Erdogan believes in absolutism and authoritarianism. He did not tolerate any opposition and extended the hegemony of his AK party by purging the opposition. “The courts, the police, the intelligence services, the mosques, the public education and the media are all, in one way or another, subject to the Party’s overweening influence.”⁹⁹ The modern political culture of Iran, Saudi Arabia and Pakistan indicates that still, these societies are still under the influence of divine laws. The idea of enlightenment, modernism and secularism is still foreign to Islamic civilization. The reason is that it has not passed through the age of the Renaissance and the way Western civilization passed through it and experienced and internalized these ideas. The Islamic societies are radical and conservative in attitude. They lacked tolerance and did not allow criticism. “The Arab world is a political desert with no real political parties, no free press, and few pathways for dissent.”¹⁰⁰ In Iran, no one could criticize state ideology or the ideals of the Khomeini

⁹⁸ Arnold J. Toynbee, *A Study of History*, vol 8 (London: Oxford University Press, 1954, reprint 1961), 266

⁹⁹ *The Economist*. 6th to 12th Feb. 2016. P.6

¹⁰⁰ Fared Zakaria (2004:12), “Islam, Democracy and Constitutional Liberalism”, *Political Science Quarterly*, vol. 119. No. 1.

revolution.¹⁰¹The state indoctrinated its subjects with religious doctrine. In Pakistan secular-minded people feel threatened due to rampant radicalization. In order to cultivate a well-rounded religious perspective in Islamic countries, it is imperative to encourage acceptance, conversation, and thoughtfulness in spiritual discussions. By prioritizing the ideals of fairness, empathy, and inclusiveness as fundamental values, we can reduce the impact of extremists and promote deeper comprehension of faith-based texts. Furthermore, endorsing changes in education that combine modern understanding with spiritual lessons may inspire communities to bring together their religion with current issues, promoting a cohabitation of traditions and progression.



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¹⁰¹<http://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/1993/02/islam-and-liberal-democracy/308509/>