

Problematizing the Religious Basis of Maududi's Political Theory

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Introduction

This paper problematizes the divinity of establishing an Islamic state by analysing the religious basis of Maulana Abul Ala Maududi's (hereafter referred to as Maududi) political theory. His political theory revolves around the idea that religion and politics are an inseparable entity and the fulfilment of religious dictates is impossible unless and until we organize a political system as per criteria set by the religion. This idea of Maududi has led many to believe that it is our religious duty to struggle for an Islamic state like many other religious obligations, e.g. offering prayers and keeping fasts. Though neither Maududi himself nor his political party has been involved systematically in political violence for political ends, it is difficult to argue that his ideology has not undermined the establishment of a sound political system by entangling its development with religion.

The selection of Maududi's political theory for analysis in this paper is informed by the fact that his ideology still has a widespread following in the world. According to Nasr, Maududi is "the most influential of contemporary revivalist thinkers"¹. This opinion is echoed by Jackson.² To materialize his idea of establishing an Islamic

¹ Seyyed Vali Reza Nasr, *Maududi and the Making of Islamic Revolution* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), 3.

² Roy Jackson, *Mawlana Mawdudi and Political Islam: Authority and the Islamic State* (New York: Routledge, 2011).

state, he organized a political party named the Jamaat-i-Islami (hereafter referred to as JI) which is one of the most organized religio-political parties of Pakistan.³ It was organized by him in 1941 before partition of the Indian Subcontinent.⁴ Maududi anchored and supervised the JI for more than three decades till his death in 1979. Maududi's contribution to laying down the ideology of the JI is momentous as whatever had been written by him is regarded as its standard discourse. At present, Maududi's brainchild, the JI, is organized and works under the same name "Jamaat-i-Islami" in five geographical locations in the Indian Subcontinent.⁵ The JI's influence has extended far beyond its place of birth, i.e. the Indian Subcontinent. It maintains links and has organized sister organisations in the USA, UK, and other parts of the world, largely related to the diaspora communities.⁶ Maududi's ideological influence may also be observed in Central Asia, North Africa and Southeast Asia.⁷

There is another reason for analyzing Maududi's political theory: debates on constitutionalism in Muslim majority countries often bring up issues highlighted by Maududi in his writings. These issues include sovereignty of human beings versus sovereignty of

³ Seyyed Vali Reza Nasr, *The Vanguard of the Islamic Revolution: The Jamaat-i-Islami of Pakistan* (London: I. B. Tauris Publishers, 1994); Pooja Joshi, *Jamaat-i-Islami: The Catalyst of Islamisation in Pakistan* (Delhi: Kalinga Publications, 2003).

⁴ Nasr, *Mawdudi*, 41; Irfan Ahmad, *Islamism and Democracy in India: The Transformation of Jamaat-e-Islami* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2010).

⁵ Frederic Grare, *Political Islam in Indian Sub-continent: The Jamaat-i-Islami* (New Delhi: Manohar Publishers, 2005), 11.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 102.

⁷ Nasr, *Mawdudi*, 4.

God, the state's responsibilities toward non-Muslim citizens, and differences in the fundamental rights of Muslim and non-Muslim citizens.

The basis of Maududi's political theory is inseparability of politics from religion; hence, there is a need to problematize this link. The present paper seeks to achieve this objective by two different but inter-connected means. It will first highlight the dependency of contemporary revivalism, of which Maududi is a part, on modern techniques and methodologies, and secondly, juxtapose Maududi's opinions with another famous scholar Wahid-ud-Din Khan (hereafter referred to as Khan). Once Khan was a trusted comrade of Maududi, but became disenchanted with the latter's ideology and endeavoured to develop his own perspective on the relationship of politics and religion which is in essence a counter-version of Maududi's theory. This comparative analysis will problematize the link between religion and politics and demonstrate that the relationship between the two is not as indivisible as asserted by Maududi.

The paper is divided into two main sections in addition to an introduction and a conclusion. The first section situates Maududi's political theory within contemporary revivalism and points out the paradoxical nature of the relationship of the latter with the modern. On the one hand, contemporary revivalism relies on modern tools and mechanisms, and while they are meant to be employed by contemporary revivalism for replacing the so-called modern, on the other. Thereafter, the second section delves into a comparative analysis of Maududi's and Khan's perspective on relationship of religion with politics.

Maududi and Contemporary Revivalism⁸

⁸ Contemporary revivalism in this paper means and includes those religio-political movements across the Muslim world which struggle to establish an Islamic state in their respective countries. Its main tool in this struggle is political mobilisation of

Contemporary revivalism is not a homogenous phenomenon; it has different shades of thoughts and resorts to multiple kinds of strategies for materializing its goals. But this is not to suggest that there is no common ground among the contemporary revivalists. They agree on a few fundamental premises and Maududi's role in shaping these premises is far reaching. Inseparability of politics and religion, and establishment of an Islamic state emerge conspicuously in these premises. From the outset, contemporary revivalism seems to be a mixture of paradoxical drives; it aims, on the one hand, to revive the tradition in the modern and on the other, it is deeply connected to modernage.

Esposito says that contemporary revivalism does not intend to reproduce the past in a stereotypical manner; its purpose is rather "to reconstruct society through a process of Islamic reform in which the principles of Islam applied to contemporary need."⁹ According to the same scholar, it differentiates between westernisation and modernisation; it has no problem with the latter, but it does not find itself at home with the former.¹⁰ The revivalists accept, even welcome modern tools and technologies, but reject any thing that is based on what they perceive to be a Western value system. This approach of taking science and technology as tools of modernisation and separating them from value-addition of westernisation is severely criticized by Tibi.¹¹ Tibi does not regard scientific tools as value free

the masses. The paper does not refer to that section of contemporary revivalists who employ violent means for their political ends.

⁹ John L. Esposito, *The Islamic Threat: Myth or Reality* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 209.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 134.

¹¹ Bassam Tibi, *Islam between Culture and Politics* (New York: Palgrave, 2001).

and asserts that “modern science is based on rationality and is not simply a source for instrumental tool.”¹²

A question is often raised as to the relationship of 20th century revivalism with the general notion of revivalism in Islamic history. There are two opposing views on this issue. There are those who regard it as a “recurring theme in Islamic history” and at the same time it is also characterized as “a historically unique new development”.¹³ Voll opines that revivalist movements periodically come forward in Islamic history owing to the introduction of unwarranted flexibilities and compromises which have a potential to threaten the very existence of the community.¹⁴ Kirmanj while comparing revivalism in the past and the present concludes that the contemporary movement is “a new wave in an old continuum.”¹⁵ With reference to the uniqueness of contemporary revivalism, Jawed points out that it is “at once a consequence of modernity and the antithesis of modernism.”¹⁶ The uniqueness thesis implies that had there not been modernity, there would not be such a revivalism.

Maududi has written quite a lot about the revivalist instinct and the history of Muslim *ummah*, and in principle, he has submitted

¹² Ibid., 12.

¹³ Nasim Ahmad Jawed, *Islam's Political Culture: Religion and Politics in Pre-divided Pakistan* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1999), 161.

¹⁴ John O Voll, *Islam: Continuity and Change in Modern World* (Syracuse, N. Y.: Syracuse University Press, 1994), 387.

¹⁵ Sherko Kirmanj, “The Relationship between Traditional and Contemporary Islamist Political Thought,” *The Middle East Review of International Affairs*, Vol.12, No.1 (March, 2008), accessed May 19, 2009, <http://meria.idc.ac.il/journal/2008/issue1/pdf/6.pdf>

¹⁶ Jawed, *Islam's Political Culture*, 162.

to the continuity thesis that revivalism is a natural phenomenon which has been taking place throughout Muslim history.¹⁷ He does not subscribe to the view that revivalists step into this arena after having any metaphysical inspiration, though there are a few like Mujadid Alaf Sani and Shah Wali Ullah who have claimed a metaphysical origin for their revivalism.¹⁸ Maududi is of the opinion that this task of revivalism is commenced by individuals themselves and later on owing to the significance of their services they are regarded as such by the *ummah*.¹⁹ This perspective on revivalism has influenced him politically.

Maududi and his party had the idea of revivalism in their minds from the first day. In 1942, a year after its organisation, the JI experienced severe discord within its ranks. Taking into account the severity of the discord, Maududi proposed to dissolve the party. But this proposal was not accepted partly because most of those who were present in that meeting were of the opinion that they had commenced the task of revivalism after a long period of passivity following Shah Wali Ullah, so there was not any justification to abandon it.²⁰

There is another aspect of Maududi's political theory which appears to be a response to *Sufi* (ascetic) tendencies of the previous revivalists. His ideas are more inclined towards political/social or

¹⁷ Syed Abul Ala Maududi, *Tajdeed-o-Ahya-e-Deen* (Lahore: Islamic Publications, 1999).

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 133-148.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 133-148.

²⁰ Department of Organisation, *Roodad-e-Jamaat-i-Islami*, Vol.1 (Lahore: Department of Publication and Communication of the Jamaat-i-Islami, 1993), 73-74. For a detailed background of this meeting, those who parted from the JI and their point of views, see Nasr, *The Vanguard of the Islamic Revolution*.

external aspects as compared to the spiritual/internal dimension of religion.²¹ While referring to renowned revivalists of the past Mujadid Alaf Sani and Shah Wali Ullah, Maududi states that it was those revivalists' overindulgence in *Sufism* (asceticism) that became one of the major impediments to their success.²² Taking this into account, he was not willing to embrace the same fate by indulging in asceticism despite the fact that he has *Sufi* ancestors himself.²³

Maududi states of Imam Mehdi, future and final revivalist as regarded by Muslims, that he will be a thoroughly modern figure; he will not emerge from any *hujrah*²⁴ of mosque and will not only be equipped with traditional knowledge rather he will be well conversant with the modern knowledge of his age.²⁵

Maududi's reading of past and future revivalism emphasizes a number of aspects which have a bearing on his political theory. Firstly, there is a strong hope of change and this change will only be materialized by human initiatives. Secondly, reliance on human initiative shows his conviction in human capacity and capability to bring change. Thirdly, there is no possibility of change if we keep on relying upon traditional methodologies; hence, one has to resort to modern technology to bring about change. Finally, his analysis is also a severe rebuke of Muslims who are generally inclined to adopt a fatalist approach regarding change. It is worth observing that similar

²¹ Nasr, *Maududi*.

²² Maududi, *Tajdeed-o-Ahyaa-e-Deen*, 119.

²³ Syed Asad Gilani, *Maududi: Thoughts and Movement* (Lahore: Islamic Publications, 1984), 21; Naeem Siddique, *Al-Maududi* (Lahore: Al-Faisal, 2006).

²⁴ Literally means room.

²⁵ Maududi, *Tajdeed-o-Ahyaa-e-Deen*, 52-54.

emphasis on change/reform coupled with faith in human capabilities can also be observed in the origin of modernity. Leonard Binder, while discussing the JI, has underscored its “desire for reform” which is comparable to the similar desire for modernity.²⁶

Maududi’s movement has made use of all available resources of modernity from communication to propaganda and from organisation to mobilisation. On the other hand, it has advocated a more entrenched relationship with the past. In addition to the organisational structure, the JI has taken the lead to break away from dominant traditional attitude of ulama of not contesting themselves for government’s posts. Thanks to the rich history of Islam and the modern party system in the world, the JI has taken this task onto itself. Maududi has endeavoured to connect his theory to the tradition, but what is more apparent is that its branches are caught up in the modern and these have been shaped by it.

Maududi’s connectivity with the modern can also be observed from another perspective. According to Foucault,²⁷ there are multiple discontinuities and ruptures in a course of history, and it is not a continuous discourse.²⁸ Every discontinuity or rupture is

²⁶ Leonard Binder, *Religion and Politics in Pakistan* (Berkeley: University of California, 1963), 73.

²⁷ Michel Foucault, *The Archaeology of Knowledge*, trans. A. M. Sheridan Smith, (London: Routledge, 1972).

²⁸ One of the very instructive engagements with Foucault’s conception of discontinuity is by C. B. Dilger. He writes “Foucault’s goal is not the violent and permanent removal of all continuities, nor the erasure of all humanism and anthropology, nor the denial of the use of these concepts and their ready-mades in certain contexts. Rather, he seeks a more balanced form of analysis in which continuities are controlled and prevented from dominating and distorting history” (C. B. Dilger, “The Discontinuities of Foucault: Reading the Archaeology of Knowledge” accessed April 29, 2009, <http://www.thefoucauldian.co.uk/discontinuity.pdf>). This is the sense in which I have employed the concept of discontinuity here.

accompanied by a paradigm shift which lays down new parameters of thinking. That means that each individual's thoughts are shaped or influenced by the circumstances they are located in. They respond to the currents and undercurrents constituting their present. Their constructive efforts might afterwards be justified with reference to any divine source or secular ideal, but the complex relationship these efforts have with their 'immanent frame'²⁹ cannot be ignored.

Maududi's effort to construct a self contained political theory on the basis of reliance on the divine is not different from this process. How does he give new meanings to old words and phrases? How does he borrow terminologies from the modern and then endeavour to snatch meanings from them? How does he develop new terminologies while being influenced by his socio-political context? His explanations of *deen*, *Ilah*, *Rabb* and *ibadah* are a demonstration of his first methodology of giving innovative meanings, although as per his view it is just an effort to rediscover original meanings.³⁰ We will analyse this aspect in the next section. The notion of sovereignty, as it is understood in Western political theory with reference to popular sovereignty, has been a perennial issue of discussion within Islamic political theory since Maududi insisted on the exclusivity of God's sovereignty. Maududi's introduction of the concept of theo-democracy has no parallel in the literature of Islamic political theory and seems to be a combination of theocracy and democracy. This "articulation of themes"³¹ is characteristic of Maududi's political theory which also reveals how

²⁹ This phrase has been borrowed from Charles Taylor, *A Secular Age* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 2007).

³⁰ Syed Abul Ala Maududi, *Four Basic Quranic Terms*, trans. Abu Asad, (Lahore: Islamic Publications, 2000); Syed Abul Ala Maududi, *Quran ki Char Bunyadi Istilahain* (Lahore: Islamic Publications, 2000).

³¹ Jawed, *Islam's Political Culture*, 164.

much Maududi depends on his socio-political context even for the purposes of elaboration of those themes which he regards as Islamic.

Again referring back to Foucault's³² notion of discontinuity, the colonization of the Muslim world is a kind of historical discontinuity which snatched from the Muslims whatever insignificant power they had been exercising in their domains. This deprivation of power has also influenced the shaping of contemporary revivalist movements. In the pre-colonial period, the Muslim world witnessed a relatively soft revivalist phenomenon; soft in the sense that most of the revivalists in that period did not attempt to dislodge the Muslim monarchs but endeavoured to bring about change through them. Mujadid Alaf Sani and Shah Wali Ullah confirm this aspect.³³ The historical discontinuity of colonization provided the contemporary revivalists with a window of hope to return to the purest form of Islam as was supposed by them to have been exercised during the period of the *Khulafaey Rashedin* (the Rightly Guided Caliphate). They started to think of it as a better alternative to bring change on their own initiative rather than giving it effect through Muslim governments and monarchs as had been done in previous revivalist movements. That's what led to the more politically enthusiastic revivalist movements in the aftermath of the colonial period.³⁴

³² Foucault, *The Archaeology of Knowledge*.

³³ Maududi, *Tajdeed-o-Ahyaa-e-Deen*.

³⁴ Mahmood Mamdani observes that "contemporary, modern, political Islam developed as a response to colonialism. Colonialism posed a double challenge, external and internal, the challenge of foreign domination and of the need of internal reform to address weaknesses exposed by external aggression" (Mahmood Mamdani, (2004) "Contemporary Political Terror: Its Origins in the Late Cold War," (2004) accessed April 30, 2009, <http://www.library.cornell.edu/africana/lecture/mamdani.pdf>).

Revivalist movements are supposed to have gained prominence either after the six day Arab-Israel war in 1967³⁵ or on the eve of the Iranian revolution in 1979.³⁶ But the fact of the matter is that revivalist ideologues including Maududi were born and their academic upbringing took place in the colonial period. Whenever they were reading the Quran and particularly verses dealing with the dominance of Islam as understood by the contemporary revivalists in terms of political dominance,³⁷ they were struck by the apparent contradiction in the Quranic references of Islam's dominance and their own reality of subjugation. It would have been a persistent query: whether the Quran was not telling the truth or it was the prevailing attitude of Muslims that had led to the failure of Islam's promised dominance. Acceptance of the former would have been destructive of faith, so the latter option was accepted. This acceptance was not the end of the debate; instead it encouraged them to strive for the promised dominance through revivalism.

It is noteworthy that the above referred dogmatic issue was not there in the pre-colonial period as Muslim monarchs were in governments of their respective domains. This was the reason that the effort to control governments by revivalists was not the defining characteristic of revivalism in that period. It is a marker of the difference between revivalist movements in the pre-and post-colonial periods. In the former period revivalists were more inclined to bring

³⁵ Tibi, *Islam between Culture and Politics*, 14.

³⁶ L. Carl Brown, *Religion and State: The Muslim Approach to Politics* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2000), 1.

³⁷ This theme is recurrent in Maududi's following writings: Syed Abul Ala Maududi, *Deenyaat* (Lahore: Idara Tarjumanul Quran, 2002); Syed Abul Ala Maududi, *Khilafat wa Malookeyat* (Lahore: Idara Tarjumanal Quran, 2000); Syed Abul Ala Maududi, *The Meanings of the Quran* Vol.1-6. (Lahore: Idara Tarjumanul Quran).

change through the available apparatus of Muslim governments, while during the colonization, revivalist movements/they took this responsibility of bringing change and reform onto themselves. Islamic sources and history are rich enough to equip these movements with arguments and justifications for their chosen course of action. This scenario set the stage for the emergence of new strands of revivalism. Had there not been such a period in Muslim history, it would have been difficult for Maududi to emerge as an ideologue in the Subcontinent.

This contention ought not to be read as if colonial dominance was the only reason for such revivalist approaches. Overemphasis on a factor sometimes obscures reality and reduces diversity. Such a view would be reductionist in nature and not tenable per se. Maududi's political theory as such is not a product of his socio-political context exclusively though substantially influenced by it. Another important factor is his construction of the divine in a particular manner to substantiate his theory. We will discuss this aspect in the next section.

There are a number of factors which are supposed to contribute to the contemporary wave of Islamic resurgence. Esposito includes in this list economic crises, social dislocation, reaction to authoritarianism, national shame stemming from Arab military defeats, crises of national identity, quest for historical authenticity, and desire for legitimate authority, and disillusionment with Western-inspired governments to manage social problems.³⁸ Choueiri regards it as middle class resilience phenomenon³⁹ and Tibi portrays it as a response to cultural modernity.⁴⁰

³⁸ John L. Esposito, *Islam the Straight Path* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), 160.

³⁹ Youssef M. Choueiri, *Islamic Fundamentalism* (London: Pinter, 1997).

⁴⁰ Tibi, *Islam between Culture and Politics*, 4.

There is no doubt that all the above factors contribute. But it needs to be queried whether all these factors are bound to contribute in one particular way. Similar factors may produce different reactions including nationalist, secularist, and modernist. This is similar to any particular precept of the divine which could be read in a traditionalist, modernist or revivalist manner. The multiplicity of views does not relegate the influence of any particular factor. Equally true is the importance of the socio-political context which acted as a contributory factor, but not as the sole factor in this regard.

***Hukumat-i-Ilahiya*⁴¹ and the Religious Basis of Maududi's Political Theory:**

Jawed outlines the reasons for the necessity of an Islamic state and government in different strands of political Islam.⁴² Firstly, “conception of the moral role and power of government” provides justification to strive for establishing an Islamic state and this idea is particularly associated with revivalists. Secondly, there are certain goals which could not be achieved without a state, e.g., implementation of the complete *Shariah* code. This view is primarily held by traditional ulama and is also another justification extended by revivalists. Thirdly, there are certain social goals, e.g., Islamic social order, which necessitate establishing a state.⁴³ All the abovementioned views have one point of convergence, that they regard the state as a tool for the accomplishment of some other purpose. That purpose has been variously articulated due to differences of perspective among these groups.

⁴¹ Literally means a government which rules according to the laws laid down by God.

⁴² Jawed, *Islam's Political Culture*.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, 60-61.

According to Maududi, this purpose is the establishment of *hukumat-i-illahiya* and he has coined terminologies to distinguish his conception from other forms of government. The most important of these terminologies are “sovereignty of God” in contradistinction to “popular sovereignty” and “theo-democracy” in contradistinction to “theocracy” on the one hand and “secular Western democracy” on the other.⁴⁴ He opines that all problems in different systems of the world are due to the fact that human beings rule human beings and if popular sovereignty is replaced with the sovereignty of God, these problems are bound to be resolved.⁴⁵

That the popular sovereignty would be substituted by the sovereignty of God in a system proposed by Maududi appears to be an attractive idea at first look. But, is there any other way to materialize that sovereignty except through the people? If the people do not observe limits as enshrined in his notion of God’s sovereignty, the situation would not be different from that under the popular sovereignty. We could not imagine any system which can work without the involvement of human agency. It is this human agency which is likely to “promote illiberal, authoritarian politics that leaves little room for civil liberties, cultural pluralism, the rights of women and minorities and democracy.”⁴⁶ It is unfortunate that issues similar to the above are eschewed in utopian discourses.

The distinctive nature of the terminologies employed by Maududi is worth analyzing. He has not coined these terminologies in a vacuum. Their foundation is well established in contemporary

⁴⁴ Syed Abul Ala Maududi, *The Islamic Law and Constitution*, trans. and ed. Khurshid Ahmad, (Lahore: Islamic Publications, 1960), 136-141.

⁴⁵ Syed Abul Ala Maududi, *Tabreek-e-Azadi-e-Hind Musalman* Vol. 2 (Lahore: Islamic Publications, 1996), 193.

⁴⁶ Seyyed Vali Reza Nasr, “The Rise of Muslim Democracy,” *Journal of Democracy*, Vol.16, No.2, April (2005).

political theory. It is submitted that it was this condition of possibility which assisted him to rearticulate them while keeping his perspective in view. Popular sovereignty is replaced by sovereignty of God, and theocracy and Western democracy is substituted as theo-democracy.

Maududi regards his notion of Islamic state as “universal and all-embracing” in a sense that it would extend into and mould the personal affairs of its citizens.⁴⁷ He distinguishes this interventional aspect of the Islamic state from other totalitarian states and emphasizes that “individual liberty is not suppressed under it nor is there any trace of dictatorship in it.”⁴⁸ It presents the middle course and embodies the best that the human society has ever evolved”. It is not surprising that Maududi regards his notion of the Islamic state as less totalitarian as compared to other totalitarian systems of the world in spite of its interventional aspect. This paradox is difficult to resolve without understanding the difference in human sensibilities. Whatever we value we do not recognize its negative aspects, and whatever we do not feel comfortable with despite its relative ease we are bound to experience onerous feelings. Keeping in view this aspect, we should not expect Maududi to elaborate on the totalitarian effects of his Islamic state.

There is one other aspect that ought also to be pointed out here. Maududi’s utopian construction of Islamic state and its impact on human beings shows his belief in the effective instrumentality of the state for developing human sensibilities in a particular manner. This idea has been historically integral to the colonial idea of white men’s burden where the attitude and sensibilities of one particular class were considered to be standard and therefore eventually considered worthy to be transposed on

⁴⁷ Maududi, *The Islamic Law and Constitution*, 146.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*

those who lack such attitudes and sensibilities through the instrumentalities of the colonial state. From this perspective, Maududi's project involves remaking others, i.e. citizens of the Islamic state, which could not be accomplished without an Islamic state.

This perspective has involved Islamists like Maududi in power politics and struggle for government, which is bound to generate reactions from other competitors. Maududi considers this type of confrontational consequences of his movement as not different from the resistance extended to the Prophets during their lives. One of the vocal critics of Maududi's thought, Khan⁴⁹ has severely objected to his confrontational vision and viewing everything through the prism of *bukumat-i-illahiya*.⁵⁰ Khan asserts that this attitude kept the ulama in conflict with the colonizers during the colonial period and in the post-colonial period they were reduced to perpetual opposition.⁵¹ This confrontational attitude is itself a hurdle in paving the way for a society embedded in an Islamic value system. Moreover, demands for establishing Islamic rule are made without the preparation of the Muslim masses for this purpose.⁵² Khan even

⁴⁹ Wahid-ud-Din Khan is a prolific writer based in India who has written about Islam extensively. He joined the JI and remained an active worker for about fifteen years. He served as an editor of the Jamaat-i-Islami India's periodical "Zindaghi" for some time. His books and journals can be accessed at www.alrisala.org.

⁵⁰ Wahid-ud-Din Khan, *Deen ki Siyasi Tabeer* (New Delhi: Al-Risala Books, 1990); Wahid-ud-Din Khan, *Tabeer ki Ghaalti* (New Delhi: Al-Risala Books, 1995).

⁵¹ Wahid-ud-Din Khan, *Ulama aur Daur-e-Jadid* (New Delhi: Al-Risala Books, 1992), 25-26.

⁵² *Ibid.*, 25-26.

goes on to term such movements as “counter-productive” in the Muslim world.⁵³

Khan attributes this interpretation of responsibility for establishing *bukumat-i-illahiya* as a product of the defective understanding of Western dominance in the world considering it as if it is political in nature.⁵⁴ The political dimension is only one aspect of dominance of Western civilisation; the other aspect comprises invention and circulation of knowledge. The latter dimension is more instrumental in creating and perpetuating the dominance of the West.⁵⁵

For the purposes of substantiating his contention, Khan notes that there were only a few Prophets (including Yousaf, Dawood and Muhammad) who actually succeeded in establishing a political entity.⁵⁶ If we insist that establishing an Islamic state was a responsibility of the Prophets then we have to admit that the overwhelming majority of them were unsuccessful in their prophetic missions. Maududi does not subscribe to this view. He argues that it was rather the failure of people who did not believe and support the Prophets to carry out the prescribed task of *bukumat-i-illahiya*.⁵⁷

⁵³ Ibid., 28.

⁵⁴ Ibid., 31.

⁵⁵ See Khan (Wahid-ud-Din Khan, *The Call of the Quran* (New Delhi: Goodword Books, 2000), 84) to appreciate his opinion of the responsibility of ulama in the contemporary world and more particularly his description of Jamal-ud-Din Afghani and Sultan Abdul Hamid Sani of the Ottoman Empire.

⁵⁶ Khan, *Tabeer ki Ghaalti*.

⁵⁷ Syed Abul Ala Maududi, *Muslaman aur Majooda Siyasi Kashmikasb Hisa Soum Par Tanqiedi Jiyaṣa*, Months 9-10-11 (1941): 130.

There are a number of scholars who view the idea of the Islamic state as a product of the modern age which has little to do with religious dictates.⁵⁸ Tibi is of the opinion that “Islamic state” and “God’s rule” have recently been annexed to Islamic thought.⁵⁹ An-Naim has argued that it is the secular system of state which is more likely to provide real opportunity to realize full meanings of belief, because belief depends on consent and not compulsion.⁶⁰ Black attributes “the intellectual stagnation and decline of the Islamic world” to the “intertwining of religion and politics” which is at the foundation of the idea of establishing an Islamic state.⁶¹

Al-Ashmawy does not view Islam as giving sanction to any political system; he criticizes those who have taken on the responsibility of speaking on behalf of God while interpreting Islam politically.⁶² “Distinguishing politics and religion,” he...“stress[es] that political action is the work of simple mortals who are neither sacred nor infallibles; governments are elected by people not by God.”⁶³

⁵⁸ Irfan Ahmad, (2009) “Genealogy of the Islamic State: Reflections on Maududi’s Political Thought and Islamism,” *Journal of Royal Anthropological Institute* (2009):145-162.

⁵⁹ Bassam Tibi, *The Challenge of Fundamentalism: Political Islam and the New World Order* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002).

⁶⁰ Abdullahi Ahmed An-Naim, *Islam and the Secular State: Negotiating the Future of Sharia* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2008).

⁶¹ Antony Black, *The West and Islam: Religion and Political thought in the World History* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008), 155.

⁶² Muhammad Said al-Ashmawy, *Islam and the Political Order* (Washington: The Council for Research in Values and Philosophy, 1993) accessed May 19, 2009, <http://www.crvp.org/book/Series02/IIA-1/front.htm>

⁶³ Ibid.

Al-Ashmawy and Maududi rely on the same sources to reach different conclusions. There may be many reasons for this difference of opinion, but to my understanding the main reason is their variation in understanding the relationship between politics and religion. If one, like Maududi, is of the opinion that there is no difference between politics and religion, then he would reach a conclusion which is premised on responsibility to establish a government of God. But if someone views politics and religion as pertaining to different domains, then it would be less likely that he would conclude that establishing an Islamic state is a responsibility of Muslims. The fact of the matter is this that the divine and historical sources relied and referred to by Muslims are so loaded and diverse that they always need human agency to make them speak or give them a particular construction.

There appears little need to emphasize the point that Maududi has taken the idea of the fusion between politics and religion to its zenith. What is more important in this respect is to analyze the question of how he evolves a/the religious foundation for his thesis? We will observe how similar words are construed to portray entirely different pictures by different Muslim scholars.

Inseparability of religion and politics has been theoretically a concern of more or less all schools of thoughts within the Islamic tradition, it was not maintained practically.⁶⁴ Maududi does not find this difference in theory and practice as a precedent worthy to be relied upon. One of the most influential books by him which discusses the basis for his view on the inseparability of religion and politics is “*Four Basic Quranic Terms*.”⁶⁵ I will deal with this book to explain how he makes the divine speak. Thereafter, Maududi’s

⁶⁴ Nasr, *Maududi*, 60; Brown, *Religion and State*, 80.

⁶⁵ Maududi, *Four Basic Quranic Terms*.

version will be juxtaposed by Khan's contentions. The point meant to be substantiated in this debate is not that anyone's version is more authentic than the other rather it is that Maududi's primary thesis of inseparability of religion and politics cannot be unquestionably and indisputably derived from divine sources.

Maududi's contention of the inseparability of religion and politics is founded on his primary thesis presented in his book *Four Basic Quranic Terms*, according to which the sovereignty of God over the entire universe is an indivisible entity and not amenable to sharing out in any manner whatsoever. Maududi has selected four terms in the above book to substantiate his thesis. They are *Ilah*, *Rabb*, *ibadah* and *deen*.⁶⁶ According to him, *Ilah* is comparable to the contemporary understanding of sovereignty in political science, which emphasizes willing submission to God's sovereignty in those spheres where He has left choice/option for human beings. "Godhood and authority are inextricably interconnected and are, in essence and substance, one and the same thing."⁶⁷ Moreover, this sovereignty is indivisible.⁶⁸ This indivisibility implies that it is polytheism to consider somebody as worthy of obedience without the clear sanction of God.⁶⁹

With reference to *Rabb*, Maududi states that there are five literal meanings of this word and all of them are employed for God in the Quran, sometimes independently and sometimes conjointly to highlight the inseparability of metaphysical sovereignty from political sovereignty.⁷⁰ Most of the debates between the Prophets and their

⁶⁶ Ibid.

⁶⁷ Ibid., 24.

⁶⁸ Ibid., 26.

⁶⁹ Ibid., 28.

⁷⁰ Ibid., 31.

respective nations as referred to in the Quran employ the word *Rabb*. Maududi while construing these instances concludes that the real issue between the Prophets and their nations was not over the metaphysical sovereignty of God because it was recognized by the political leaders of that time and their respective nations.⁷¹ The contentious issue was with respect to political sovereignty as these leaders were not comfortable with the idea of giving up the political aspect of their sovereignty to God and it is this aspect of sovereignty which was asked by the Prophets to be submitted to God.

While discussing Quranic conversations between Prophet Musa and the Pharaoh, Maududi observes that Pharaoh did not reject the existence of *Ilah* as such, but he was not willing to surrender the political, cultural and social aspects of his sovereignty.⁷² Maududi opines that as far as sovereignty in metaphysical terms was concerned, the people regarded God as Supreme and when they attributed some of His qualities to anyone else, they only viewed the latter as having a secondary position next to Him. Maududi further elaborates that God's status in terms of "Supreme Sovereign, the Fountainhead of authority, the Supreme Law giver, and the Supreme Lord of the all creation" was either assigned wholly to particular human beings, or while assigning these attributes to God in theory, in practice they treated the entire *rububiyyah* or sovereignty in moral, cultural and political spheres as vested in human beings.⁷³ Maududi argues that it is a misconception to compartmentalize *rububiyyah* or sovereignty into metaphysical and political cum cultural aspects, all

⁷¹ Ibid., 35-71.

⁷² Ibid., 57.

⁷³ Ibid., 72.

these are exclusive attributes of God, hence they form part of the same whole which is essentially indivisible.⁷⁴

According to Maududi, *ibadah* essentially means acknowledging the superiority and dominance of someone, and it also includes a withdrawal from personal autonomy and independence.⁷⁵ This word implies slavery, obedience and worship.⁷⁶ In the absence of any contrary indication in a verse the word *ibadah* ought to be understood in all-inclusive meanings and should not be reduced to actual worship as is generally done.⁷⁷ Maududi's understanding of *ibadah* is not restricted to worship and rituals; it includes a complete way of life. Maududi's explanation of *taghoot* is conversely related to his understanding of *ibadah*; *taghoot* includes all those persons, groups and institutions which have opted to revolt against God. Maududi asserts that every state and government which governs without the guidance of God falls in the category of *taghoot*.⁷⁸ One of the reasons for Maududi's confusion in explaining *ibadah* is that the same word *ibadah* is used in the Quran for *taghoot*⁷⁹ as well.

Maududi's explanation of *deen* includes the following factors; "(a) sovereignty and supreme authority; (b) obedience and submission to such authority; (c) the system of thought and action established through the exercise of that authority; and (d) retribution meted out by the authority in consideration of loyalty and obedience

⁷⁴ Ibid., 73.

⁷⁵ Ibid.; Maududi, *Quran ki Char Bunyadi Istilahain*.

⁷⁶ Maududi, *Quran ki Char Bunyadi Istilahain*, 101.

⁷⁷ Ibid., 117.

⁷⁸ Ibid., 104.

⁷⁹ 5:60; 16:36; 39:17.

to it, or rebellion and transgression against it.”⁸⁰ If a person follows any system of rules and regulations, where ultimate authority is vested in or sanctioned by God, it means that person is following God’s *deen*. Conversely, if one follows any other system where authority is vested in a monarch or anyone other than God, then that person follows the monarch’s *deen* or that other’s *deen*.⁸¹ Therefore, *deen* is equivalent to a comprehensive system of life including worldly and metaphysical dimensions. In this sense, this notion is far broader than religion, which is employed to represent the private relationship between God and human beings, and more specifically worship and rituals.

Maududi, while dealing with these terms *Ilah*, *Rabb*, *ibadah* and *deen* has collected and analyzed all verses employing the same word in different contexts to develop his arguments. He has also presented an innovative way of constructing historical instances in the Quran. Whatever strength Maududi’s arguments regarding the political nature of Islam gather, this is substantially due to his particularistic interpretation of those historical instances which took place between different Prophets and their respective nations. His way of argumentation is to divide the sovereignty referred to in those instances into metaphysical and political-cum-cultural categories. Maududi argues that the former was generally not challenged by the political sovereigns, and it was the latter which was debated by them and which they did not volunteer to submit. Therefore, it implies that the Quranic demand for submission is applicable for political-cum-cultural category of God’s sovereignty. If one reads those conversations/historical instances in this manner, then there remains

⁸⁰ Maududi, *Four Basic Quranic Terms*, 94.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, 98.

no possibility to arrive at any other conclusion than that reached by Maududi.

Let us now consider Maududi's main critic Khan's arguments to appreciate his view on the inseparability of the metaphysical and political sovereignty of God, and hence the inseparability of religion and politics. Khan by his critical analysis of Maududi's thoughts has destabilized the divine foundation of the latter's main thesis of the inseparability of religion and politics. According to Khan, Maududi's thoughts are not defective in a traditional way; traditionally thoughts have been defective on the basis of deficiencies or excesses in interpretation of *deen*.⁸² Whereas Maududi has included all ingredients of *deen* while developing his notion, but he has not put them in appropriate sequence. This is why Maududi's *deen* has included all those ingredients which have been derived from Islam, but its manifestation has taken a new outlook.⁸³

The comprehensive logic which underlies Maududi's construction of *deen* is to present it as a complete system of life. In this respect, Khan regards Maududi's construction of *deen* as a mere result of his imaginative faculty.⁸⁴ It is not inappropriate per se to present *deen* as a system, but overemphasis on [the] system theory as an all-inclusive rationale to group all ingredients into one entity makes it wrong. *Deen* is a specific relationship between God and human beings, and its aspect of being a system is only one manifestation and one that is relative in nature.⁸⁵ A renowned academic Nasr while taking into account the same presentation of

⁸² Khan, *Tabeer ki Ghaalti*, 20.

⁸³ *Ibid.*, 21.

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, 139.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, 140.

Maududi's *deen* has opined that he has adopted a reductionist view in order to substantiate his version of the religion which involves substantial reduction of its intellectual foundation and spiritual expression.⁸⁶

Khan asserts that historically no such comprehensive revolutionary movement was launched to highlight *deen* as a system.⁸⁷ Islam is characterized by its spiritual aspect, but this aspect has been overshadowed by the political dimension of Maududi's *deen*. Khan asserts that it is wrong to assume that this imbalance is a result of involvement in the political process by the JI, rather it is the natural consequence of overemphasis on politics in Maududi's ideology.⁸⁸ According to Khan, the problem of the politicization of Islam by Maududi has to do with his theory and is not an outcome of his political struggle.

Khan criticizes Maududi's *Four Basic Quranic Terms* on three different grounds: (a). that it does not differentiate between what is originally required and what is consequentially desired; (b). therefore, the consequence has been emphasized and the original has been reduced to a level of consequence; and (c). ultimately, the consequence has been presented as a real *dawabor* call of the Quran.⁸⁹

So far as literal meanings of *Ilab*⁹⁰ and *Rabb*⁹¹ as described by Maududi are concerned, there appears to be no problem; it is their

⁸⁶ Nasr, *Maududi*, 56.

⁸⁷ Khan, *Tabeer ki Ghaalti*, 143.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, 144.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, 149.

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, 159.

⁹¹ *Ibid.*, 170.

interpretations which tilt the balance in favour of a more political dimension. The literal meanings of all four terms *Ilah*, *Rabb*, *ibadah* and *deen* are to some extent accurate, but the construction of a comprehensive picture by Maududi either departs from the original meanings or blurs their significance.⁹² This appears to be the reason that Maududi has lapsed in his assertion of the inseparability of God's sovereignty. The indivisibility of God's sovereignty is restricted to the metaphysical aspect only and cannot be extended to political sovereignty.⁹³ Khan asserts that Quranic verses using the words *Malak* and *Khaqum* for God do not mean political and cultural sovereignty.⁹⁴ Khan also criticizes Maududi's selection of three literal meanings from the vast variety of meanings of *ibadah*.⁹⁵ This defective or subjective selection leaves many cracks to be patched.

Despite the fact that Maududi and Khan agree on some aspects including literal meanings of the four terms and system theory to some extent, there are two substantially different assumptions underlying their readings of the divine. These assumptions demonstrate how the divine could be read differently under the influence of variant perspectives. Firstly, Khan emphasizes the individual and spiritual dimension of religion. In this manner, what is held primary by Khan is merely secondary to Maududi. Secondly, Khan restricts the indivisibility of the sovereignty of God to the metaphysical aspect and does not extend it to the political aspect. For Maududi God's sovereignty is indivisible in both spheres. These assumptions are not divine per se but they have a substantial

⁹² Ibid., 154.

⁹³ Ibid., 163.

⁹⁴ Ibid., 164.

⁹⁵ Ibid., 185.

role in construing the important verses of the divine. The above analysis demonstrates that what Maududi presents to be divinely originated is not divine through and through as there are many human interjections in developing the complete picture.

Conclusion

Establishing an Islamic state has been and will continue to be a significant issue within the framework of Islamic constitutionalism. Maududi is one of the most vocal and articulate ideologues of the 20th century who has written extensively about the nature and responsibility of establishing an Islamic state by Muslims. Maududi's main theses in this regard are inseparability of religion and politics and indivisibility of God's sovereignty which are assumed to be grounded in the divine. The present paper has problematized this assumption on the basis of two main arguments; firstly, contemporary revivalism is deeply rooted in and shaped by the modern. As Maududi is part of this revivalism, his indebtedness to it needs to be acknowledged, if not overstated. Secondly, Maududi's construction of the divine in order to support his theses of the inseparability of religion and politics and the indivisibility of God's sovereignty are not flawless. There are many lapses in Maududi's overall presentation of the divine sources which have been filled by his imaginative interpretations. Drawing on the preceding discussion we can conclude that what is being construed as divine in the political theory of Maududi may involve some divinity, but is substantially informed by the interpreter's socio-political context and his subjectivities which cannot be regarded as 'the divine'.

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