

Islamization of Knowledge: Methodology of Research in Political Science

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Islamic science, as an active creative agent, once imparted life and motion to Islamic civilization and society. It is now confined within the walls of old schools and imprisoned among its classical books. Having embraced the new sciences and accepted Western behavioral modes of thinking, the Muslim intelligentsia has made Islam into an abstract spirit fossilized inside traditional forms of ancient mores, customs, rites, and rituals. This situation alone provides enough justification to reconstruct the methodology of Islamic sciences, but the on-going Islamization movement makes such an attempt even more pertinent. "To recast knowledge as Islam relates to it, is to Islamize it. . . . To this end, the methodological categories of Islam . . . must replace the Western categories and determine the perception of ordering reality."¹

This article is an attempt to contribute to reconstructing the methodology of social sciences with specific reference to political science. This is accomplished by identifying and exposing, through systematic contrast with Islamic principles, the weaknesses of elements and key concepts molded in the crucible of Western culture and civilization. This is essential because Islamization warrants, ipso facto, liberating people from the world-view of the West so that they can strive toward that state of perfection reached in Madinah under Divine guidance during the age of the last Prophet (ṢAAS) of Islam.

Major Traits of Empirical Social Science

Western empirical social science is based upon the assumption that human behavior is patterned and that these regularities can be scientifically investigated

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¹Isma'il R. al Fārūqī, *Islamization of Knowledge, General Principles and Work Plan* (Pennsylvania: International Institute of Islamic Thought, 1982), pp. 15-16.

and expressed as generalizations that approximate the universality of scientific law or theory in the physical sciences.² Confining the long tradition of social and political theory to “the dog house”³ for living “parasitically on ideas a century old,”⁴ the new science believes in the applicability of empirical and scientific methods to every field of inquiry. It marks the rejection of every form of knowledge that has its basis in the supposition that there is no reality beyond inner-worldly existence. The new science became synonymous with the movements of logical positivism and linguistic philosophy, which subsequently set the pace for the powerful growth of an intellectual movement which believes in a complete separation of “facts” and “values”:

By the beginning of the twentieth century, particularly under the impact of Weber's ideas, the social scientist had accepted as axiomatic and unquestionable what he had learnt as a callow student; namely, that political values must be vigorously excluded from empirical research.⁵

Such empirical science has been characterized by its attempt to free nature from religious overtone, to abolish sacral legitimation of political power and authority, and to base its instruments of knowledge exclusively upon human reason, which enables man to discover laws of development inherent in a “rationally ordered” world. It has eschewed moral or ethical questions and has aspired to make science objective and value-neutral, “stating all phenomena . . . in terms of the observed and observable behavior of men.”⁶ Consequently, it has been concerned with methodology and observation, classification, and measurement. Research techniques have been borrowed from mathematics, physics, biology, and similar other natural sciences.

The growth of positivism in the social sciences generated fresh confidence among its proponents, but that proved false and short-lived. Faced with

²See S. J. Eldersveld, et al., “Research in Political Behavior,” in S. Sidney Ulmer, ed., *Introductory Reading in Political Behavior* (Chicago: Rand McNally & Co., 1961); R. A. Dahl, “The Behavioral Approach in Political Science: Epitaph for a Monument to a Successful Protest,” *The American Political Science Review* 55 (December, 1961); David Easton, “The Current Meaning of Behavioralism,” in J. C. Charlesworth, ed., *Contemporary Political Analysis* (New York: Free Press, 1967); Austin Ramsy, ed., *Essays on the Behavioral Study of Politics* (Urbana, Illinois: University of Illinois Press, 1962).

³Neil Riemer, *The Revival of Democratic Theory* (New York: Appleton Century-Crofts, 1961), p. 1.

⁴David Easton, “The Decline of Modern Political Theory” in James A. Gould and Vincent V. Thursby, eds., *Contemporary Political Thought* (New York: Holt, Reinhart, and Winston, Inc., 1969), p. 308.

⁵*Ibid.*

⁶Dahl, “The Behavioral Approach in Political Science,” p. 766.

mounting structural deformities in relations between the north and the south, increasing incidence of authoritarian rule and frequent violation of the moral conscience of the world in Lebanon, the Gaza Strip, and the Gulf, society is in a state of decay and dissolution.⁷

The need is to replace this paradigm with one which studies individual behavior within the context of an entire social system. Islam, as a total civilization, looks upon human life as an organic whole and approaches its problems in the light of moral values and social ideals (enshrined in the Qur'an and the Sunnah of Prophet Muhammad (SAAS)). Based upon Islam, the methodology of Islamic social sciences cannot but be theocentric, which stands totally opposed to the Western conception of man and nature in all its details and ramifications and needs to be clearly spelled out.

Reason and Revelation

As pointed out by S.H. Nasr, Western social science is anthropomorphic in nature in that it accepts individual human existence as the criterion of reality, to the total neglect of any higher principle. For the same reason, Western social science is reductionist, for it not only separates reason from revelation but rejects the latter as a means of knowledge.⁸ Based upon Greco-Roman cultural tradition and rational philosophy, it accepts nothing which cannot fit the scale of reason and human intellect, and abiding by the same standard, it considers nothing as moral if it fails to yield maximum returns in material terms.⁹

In contrast, the civilization of Islam is deeply rooted in Divine revelation. As revelation is a distinguishing feature of the methodology of Islam, Muslim scholars took very keen interest in disentangling the various issues connected with it. However, the truth of revelation was always appreciated in the light of reason. From the very beginning, revelation's relation to reason continued to be of central importance in all philosophical and theological debates. Even al-Ash'ari, before whom the system of rationalist Kalām crumbled, strongly defended the use of reason, or Kalām, in explaining standard formulations of doctrine. It is also well known that Imam Abu Hanīfah and his celebrated

⁷This was realized even by those who earlier advocated behavioral persuasion in politics. See Michael Haas and Henry S. Mariel, eds., *Approaches to Political Science* (California: Chandler Publishing Co., 1970).

⁸See S. H. Nasr, *Islam and the Plight of Modern Man* (London: Longman, 1975); also *Science and Civilization in Islam* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1968).

⁹See A.H.A. Nadwi, *Religion and Civilization* (Lucknow: Academy of Islamic Research, 1970), pp. 62-70.

followers al-Ṭahawī, al-Māturidī and, indeed, al-Ghazālī adopted the principles and methods of reasoning as an avenue to knowledge.¹⁰

This is in accordance with the Qur'an's repeated exhortations to reason out and weigh rationally all matters to enable one to follow the right way (see 59:2, 7:86, etc.). Rather than posing a problem "in the form of contrast between Divine Law and human reason," as argued by Rosenthal, revelation and reason are complementary to each other.¹¹ For without reason, the truth of revelation cannot be appreciated. Nor would its divineness be recognized and acknowledged as such. Unlike some religious texts that present doctrine in mysterious language beyond rational comprehension, the Qur'an, in no less than 750 verses, exhorts the believers to observe, think, and ponder, to reason, comprehend, and understand nature, history, and human societies. However, as al-Māturidī has pointed out, reason and sense organs have their limits and at times "human intellect is obscured and influenced by internal and external factors" and thus "fails to give us true knowledge of things that are within its own sphere."¹² Revelation enlightens man, provides direction and purpose, and widens the scope of knowledge to include not merely the proximal world but the unseen everlasting abode as well. Divine revelation provides the landmarks and guideposts and thereby saves mankind the tragic cost of falling victim to inadequate knowledge, ignorance, and stagnant traditions. As the epistemologies of al-Ghazālī and Ibn Khaldun show, Muslims, for centuries, pursued knowledge through blending reason with revelation and heralded the golden age of science in Islam during the twelfth century. "What we call science arose as a result of new methods of experiment, observation, and measurement which were introduced into Europe by the Arabs. . . . (Modern) science is the most momentous contribution of the Islamic civilization."¹³

Social Sciences Versus Natural Sciences

The world has suffered from the folly of the social sciences following indiscriminately the model of the natural sciences, with the result that technocratic solutions are being imposed even on problems with purely moral and ideological overtones. Imitation of the natural science model was based

¹⁰For their contribution to Muslim philosophy, see M. M. Sharif, ed., *A History of Muslim Philosophy* (Weisbaden: Otto Hassarowitz, 1963).

¹¹Erwin I. J., Rosenthal, *Political Thought in Medieval Islam: An Introductory Outline* (Cambridge: The University Press, 1962), p. 16.

¹²Al-Māturidī in M. M. Sharif, ed., *A History of Muslim Philosophy*, p. 263.

¹³Robert Briffault, *The Making of Humanity*, cited in Muhammad Iqbal, *The Reconstruction of Religious Thought in Islam* (Lahore: Muhammad Ashraf, 1971), pp. 129-30.

on the desire for increased social prestige, the achievement of scientific respectability, and the quest for social status on a par with that of natural scientists.¹⁴ In so doing, behavioral political scientists have assumed not only the stance of the physical model but also its epistemology and its assumptions about the nature of knowledge and the means of knowledge as well. They considered human behavior in an artificial manner, stripped the variables of their meaning in order to operationalize them, and have tended to bend, reshape, and distort the political map to fit the model they use to investigate it. As Deutscher puts it:

We concentrate on consistency without much concern with what it is we are being consistent about or whether we are consistently right or wrong. As a consequence, we may have been learning a great deal about how to pursue an incorrect course with a maximum of precision.¹⁵

The conclusion to be arrived at from the above analysis is that political science must abandon claims to approximating natural science without ceasing to aspire to comprehensive knowledge.

To be sure, the place of the two sciences in the scheme of human knowledge is one and the same, i.e., to unfold and comprehend the Divine pattern. In the Qur'anic scheme, this knowledge (*'ilm*) is to be obtained through revelation or divinely ordained absolute knowledge (*ḥaqq al-yaqīn*), rationalism or inference based upon judgment and appraisal of evidence (*'ilm al-yaqīn*), and through empiricism and perception, that is, by observation, experiment, historical reports, description of life-experiences and the like (*'ayn al-yaqīn*).¹⁶ Thus, the Islamic way of knowing accords full freedom to experience and experiment and to rational and intellectual inquiry within the circumference of revealed knowledge. It is indeed advisable to benefit from the best offered by one field for the better understanding of the other, but one must recognize the distinction between the two fields, which is in terms of research strategy and techniques.

¹⁴Marshal B. Clinard, "The Sociologist's Quest for Respectability," *The Sociological Quarterly* 7 (1966), pp. 399-412.

¹⁵Irwin Deutscher, "Words and Deeds: Social Science and Social Policy," *Social Problems* 13 (1966), p. 241.

¹⁶See A. Yusuf Ali, *The Holy Qur'an: Text, Translation, Commentary* (Leicester: The Islamic Foundation, 1975), p. 1603.

The Instrumentalist Conception of Politics

By virtue of their orientation to the model of natural sciences, the empirical political scientists have limited the scope of their inquiries to observable behavior. Politics came to be defined either as "the study of influence and the influential" (Lasswell) or the "study of who gets what, when, and how" (Deutsch) or "the authoritative allocation of values" (Easton). Similarly, political association or state is conceived as an instrumental apparatus for the pursuit of contingently determined ends that can be calculated according to a strategic-instrumentalist conception of rationality, i.e., expediency, gross national product, and utilitarian considerations.

It hardly needs mentioning that the instrumental conception of political association is not universal but culturally specific. Originating in the West, it reflects and at best fits only that particular society. Given such a conception, it is but natural for the Western commentators to regard the Iranian revolution, the Muslim resistance in Afghanistan, and the like as irrational and myopic simply because these are not averse to subordinating GNP to other considerations. Devoid of moral contents, politics in the West have become a "dirty game" or in the words of Isaac D'Israeli, "the art of governing mankind by deceiving them."¹⁷

The instrumentalist conception of politics and political association is at variance with the Islamic way of life, which is purposive and goal-oriented. Islam, therefore, stresses the need for organization and authority for the realization of its goals. The Qur'an condemns disorder and anarchy (2:205) and the Prophet (ṢAAS) stressed the need for organization and authority in Muslim society. This emphasis has also been vividly expressed by scholars through the ages. 'Umar, the second caliph, believed that there could be no organized society without an imam (leader) to be obeyed. Imam Ibn Hanbal concurred and held the opinion that in the absence of an imam, anarchy and disorder would certainly ensue.¹⁸ The towering Muslim political thinker al-Mawardī went further in stating that the existence of an imam, was as necessary as the striving for truth and the acquisition of knowledge.¹⁹

The reason for such heavy emphasis on organized authority, as explained by Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī, is that "without political social organization man cannot reach his destiny."²⁰ To Ibn Taymīyah, moreover, "religion cannot exist

¹⁷Cited in Bernard Crick, *In Defense of Politics* (London: Pelican Books, 1964), p. 16.

¹⁸See Yūsuf ibn 'Abd al-Bārī al-Qurṭubī, *Jam' Bayān al-'ilm wa Faḍluh*, (Madinah: al Maktabah al-'ilmīyah, n.d.), p. 62.

¹⁹Abul Ḥassan 'Alī Ibn Muḥammad al-Mawardī, *Al-Aḥkām al-Sultānīyah* (Cairo: 'Isa al-Bābī al-Hālibī, 1960), p. 5.

²⁰Cited in Rosenthal, *Political Thought in Medieval Islam*, p. 14.

without it.”²¹ Sayyid Abul A’lā Mawdūdī maintained that the ultimate goal of an Islamic state is neither to maintain peace and raise the standard of living of its inhabitants nor to defend its frontiers. Its ultimate purpose is “to enforce and implement with all the resources of its organized power that reformatory program which Islam has given for the betterment of mankind.”²² The Islamic state is an ideological state, its approach is universal and all-embracing, and its mission is to establish virtue and justice in accordance with revealed guidance. In short, the state in Islam “is only an effort to realize the spiritual in human organization.”²³

Thus, in Islam, the state is conceived not as a means to ends that are separable from the state but as itself the locus of religio-cultural purposes. Such a conception leaves no room for separating religion from politics. Rather, it blends the two, conducts politics in accordance with revealed guidance, and uses the state as a servant of the Creator “inviting all to the good, enjoining virtue and forbidding vice” for the purpose of achieving piety (Qur’an 3:104; 5:3). It is this ideal which inspired and sustains the struggle for the liberation of Palestine and Afghanistan. For the Afghan Mujāhidīn as well as for the Palestinians, from the Islamic point of view, the state is not an instrumentality for the pursuit of other extrinsic ends. Rather, it is itself the focus of profound religio-cultural purposes which would allow them to fashion their life according to the revealed principles of individual and social behavior and would impart a sense of their own dignity. The West needs to be exposed to this Islamic conception of the state for a more informed and more articulate response to Muslim aspirations.

The Islamic Framework for Analysis

The foregoing conception of the state is based upon the fact that Islam is a comprehensive system of life. Islam does not divide the world artificially and arbitrarily into social and profane or into religious and secular. In Islam religion and state are one organic unity that coheres into an undifferentiated social and political unity. As al Fārūqī points out:

[T]he Ummah is like an organic body whose parts are mutually and severally interdependent with one another, and with the whole. For the part to work for itself is for itself to work for each of

²¹Qamaruddin Khan, *The Political Thought of Ibn Taymīyah* (Lahore: Islamic Book Foundation, 1983), p. 29.

²²Sayyid Abul A’lā Mawdūdī, *The Islamic Law and Constitution*, tr. Khurshid Ahmad (Lahore: Islamic Publications, 1967), p. 248.

²³M. Iqbal, *The Reconstruction of Religious Thought in Islam*, p. 155.

the other parts as well as for the whole, and for the whole to work for itself, is for itself to work for each of the parts.²⁴

The Prophet (ṢAAS) has described the Ummah as “the well-settled and consolidated building, each part of which buttresses the other” and he compared it to “a body which reacts in toto with discomfort and fever whenever a part of it is hurt.”²⁵

Given the organic nature of the Ummah, the appropriate framework for analyzing the political phenomenon is to try to place parts within wider contexts. The individual, for instance, cannot be understood on its own terms, inasmuch as individual purpose and identity are constituted by participation in family relations; the family in turn must be placed in the wider context of social and political relationships and so on. Individuals can have a sense of themselves as individuals to the extent that they can relate their own purposes to wider social groups such as family, community, and state, and they can sustain a sense of individual identity so long as these wider groups maintain themselves as coherent wholes. It is for this reason that the Qur’an devotes much attention to the issues relating to family—the essential social unit, flanked by the individual on the one side and the universal Ummah on the other. Indeed, many Muslim thinkers consider family and society as synonymous since in an Islamic setting one is not feasible without the other.

To understand contemporary politics, it may be necessary to begin by observing that the traditional social symbols, which have informed every dimension of community life for centuries, have been assaulted by technological civilization to the extent that individuals, being less and less sure of family roles, are subjecting the axioms and assumptions of parenthood and parental responsibilities to constant redefinition. The crisis of authority at the family level is accompanied by the relative absence of compelling and widely shared overall social purpose, with the result that individuals lack a clear sense of their duties and obligations as members of the Ummah. Consequently, political relationships are characterized by cynicism, mistrust, and frustration, and the state experiences an increasing legitimacy crisis, which eventually renders any given government poorly equipped politically to cope with socioeconomic and political crises. An analysis of the political phenomena in an Islamic framework then proceeds by constructing an organic model of the Ummah with each separate part—politics, economics, social framework, etc.—in a defined organic relation to all the component parts.

The proposed organic model broadens the scope (i.e., a conception of

²⁴Isma‘il Rājī al Fārūqī, *Tawḥīd: Its Implications for Thought and Life* (Pennsylvania: International Institute of Islamic Thought, 1982), p. 153.

²⁵Cited in *Ibid.*

the nature of its subject matter) of the discipline of political science, for justifiable reasons. First, the "parts" in a functional sense are equivalent to the whole in that they maintain order: integrate, define, and try to attain goals. Second, the smaller units are easily accessible for investigation and often accommodate advanced methods of study. Third, placing parts within wholes widens the horizon of knowledge. It permits learning a great deal about macrocosms from microcosms. Finally, since Islam obligates every conceivable part of the society to seek actualization of the Divine Will, it is not appropriate for the investigator to restrict his or her study to any one or two aspects of the social order to the detriment of the other parts and of the whole.

Facts and Values

One of the implications of the Islamic methodology outlined above is that political science cannot be based upon facts alone, for facts of human behavior are not dead, but alive. Facts take on meaning or significance only to the extent that they can be situated within a significant whole which provides a theoretically informed context for their interpretation. The simple recording of the fact, by itself, contributes very little to the understanding of political life unless it is related to other facts in an overall explanatory or descriptive account, that is, when it is placed within an ordered theoretical whole. The fact that a peace treaty was signed between Israeli prime minister Begin and Egyptian president Anwar Sadat could mean either a great deal or little depending upon its place within a much wider interpretive matrix. All facts relating to man are relative, as human behavior depends on human volition, which is shaped by beliefs and ethical ends. A fact does not describe itself; it does not perform according to mathematical formulae and equations. It is the analysts who give meaning to the fact by determining how it should be fitted into existing concepts and beliefs, and how far the existing concepts and beliefs should be modified and extended to accommodate it.

To emphasize the need for an interpretive matrix is to stress, in essence, the importance of values. The myth of value-free political science was exploded with finality by scholars like Thomas Kuhn, Syed H. Nasr, Naqib al-Attas, and by a recent past president of the American Political Science Association.²⁶ To make such a pretext reflects either hypocrisy or self-delusion. Value-free political science is a myth because values provide a matrix which shapes the selection of subjects for investigation, formulation of concepts, and selection

²⁶See David Easton, "The New Revolution in Political Science," *The American Political Science Review*, 63 (December 1969), pp. 1051-61.

of data for analysis and interpretation. If the knowledge is to be gained and used for the right purposes, values must be restored to their central position.

To be sure, Western political science is not value-free. Maintaining a demeanor of rigorous value-neutrality, most Western political scientists affirm the sanctity of Western liberal democracy, with its sole concern for profits and profit-maximization. To put it mildly, "they confuse a vaguely stated conventional democratism with scientific objectivity."²⁷ The knowledge thus produced is not neutral but "subtly fused together" with the character and personality of Western civilization, "so that others take it unawares, in toto, to be real knowledge per se."²⁸

It is clear that all political actions are guided by some values or normative considerations and that all practitioners of political science have a set value system or some conception of the proper human ends. Understanding of the ordinary terms of political discourse presupposes acquaintance with the kinds of ends implied in common political experience. As such, values or normative considerations cannot be excluded from analysis.

The Structure of Islamic Values

While Western political science confuses or conceals normative considerations, Islam states its values explicitly. The Stockholm seminar of 1981 on "knowledge and values" identified ten concepts which generate the basic values of an Islamic culture: *tawhīd* (unity), *khilāfah* (vicegerency), *'ibādah* (worship), *'ilm* (knowledge), *ḥalāl* (permissible) and *ḥarām* (prohibited), *ʿadl* (justice), *ẓulm* (tyranny), *istiṣlāḥ* (public interest), and *ḍhiyā'* (waste).²⁹

The essential comprehensive characteristic of Islam and its primary basis is *tawhīd*, the unity of Allah, which affirms the radical monotheism of Islam. Allah is One, He has no partner, and there is none worthy of worship except Him. *Tawhīd* extends to all of creation and thus signifies the unity of Allah, the unity of the community of the faithful, the unity of life as a totality, and the unity of the temporal and the spiritual. *Tawhīd* provides one, single direction and guarantees a unified spirit for its adherents. It perfects the ethical

²⁷Christian Bay, "Politics and Pseudopolitics: A Critical Evaluation of Some Behavioral Literature" in Heinz Eulau, ed. *Behavioralism in Political Science* (New York: Atherton Press, 1969), p. 117.

²⁸S. M. Naqib al-Attas, *Islam and Secularism* (Kuala Lumpur: Muslim Youth Movement of Malaysia, 1978), pp. 127-28.

²⁹See Ziauddin Sardar, ed., *The Touch of Midas* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1984).

consciousness of mankind and endows humanity with the hidden power of "wisdom," which nurtures and perfects it.

A corollary of *tawhīd* is *khilāfah*, mankind's vicegerency of Allah. As a vicegerent, mankind is not free but responsible and accountable to Allah. One's vocation and destiny, therefore, is the service of Allah, or fulfillment of Divine Will. Allah has "not created mankind and jinn but to serve Him." (Qur'an, 51:56). The *khilāfah* consists of the fulfillment of the responsibility of sustaining the self and other creatures in accordance with the will of Allah. The faithful execution of this sublime responsibility is, in fact, the true nature of *'ibādah* (worship or service to Allah).

The concept of worship, *'ibādah*, is very wide in Islam. It does not mean merely ritual or any specific form of prayer, but a life of continuous prayer and unremitting obedience to Allah. *'ibādah* encompasses all activities of life—spiritual, social, economic, and political—provided they are in accordance with the rules as laid down and if their ultimate objective is to seek the pleasure of Allah.³⁰ As a *khilāfah*, man's activities may be grouped under two headings: *ḥaqq Allah*, i.e., duties and obligations due directly to Allah, and *ḥaqq al-'ibād*, duties to oneself, to fellow beings, and to other creatures for the pleasure of Allah.

Among the many manifestations of *'ibādah* and a prerequisite to its effective performance is *'ilm*, knowledge. In its totality, the concept of *'ilm* in Islam is very vast. It ranges in its meaning from the Sufi understanding of the term *ma'rifah* (gnosis) to the interpretation of knowledge as it concerns every day activities of the individual.³¹ *'Ilm*, in general, is divided into two categories: revealed knowledge, which basically includes the Qur'an and the Sunnah, and science-derived knowledge, which is acquired through experience, observation, and research. The former category is further sub-divided into *farḍ al-'ayn*, which is binding on every individual Muslim, and *farḍ al-kifāyah*, which is binding on the community as a whole but which can be discharged on its behalf by some members of the community.³²

'Ilm is mentioned in the Qur'an with unusual frequency and has been paired, in verse 30:56, with *īmān*, faith, which, according to verse 3:71, follows upon knowledge. The pursuit of *'ilm*, according to a Hadith, is incumbent upon every Muslim even if it entails traveling to China. However, *'ilm* becomes a value only if it is pursued within the value-framework of Islam. Unlike the Western hackneyed phrase of "knowledge for knowledge's sake," or that

³⁰Sayyid Abul A'lā Mawdūdī, *Towards Understanding Islam*, Trans. Khurshid Ahmad, (London: The Islamic Foundation, 1980), p. 88.

³¹F. Rosenthal, *Knowledge Triumphant* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1970). Though not translated, written from an Islamic perspective, this work contains a mine of information concerning knowledge in Islam and lists 87 definitions as given by various Muslim scholars. See Chapter IV.

³²See Al-Ghazali, *The Book of Knowledge*, tr. Nabih A. Faris (Lahore: Ashraf, 1963).

entire convoluted argument that "all knowledge is good," Islam considers *'ilm* as a value and an act of *'ibādah* only when it is pursued for the benefit of the individual or the community and ultimately for gaining the pleasure of Allah.

In Islam, *'ilm* has to be value-based and must have a function and a purpose. In other words, knowledge is not for its own sake but serves as a way to salvation, and not all kinds of knowledge would serve the purpose. Consequently, Muslim scholars throughout history have occupied themselves in sifting out the kind of *'ilm* which is Islamically sanctioned. This led to the categorization of knowledge into *ḥalāl* and *ḥarām*, permitted and prohibited, or the praiseworthy and the blameworthy. *Ḥalāl* includes all knowledge and activity that is beneficial for an individual, society, and the environment. An *'ilm* which is *ḥalāl* seeks to promote *'adl*, social justice, and *istiṣlāḥ*, public interest. *'Adl*, in all its multidisciplinary facets, and *istiṣlāḥ*, with its wider dimension, ensure that knowledge is pursued to promote universal equity, individual freedom, social dignity, and values that enhance the well-being of Muslim society and culture.

Ḥarām or blameworthy research includes all that is destructive for man and his environment in its physical, intellectual, and spiritual sense. Research promoting alienation, dehumanization, environmental destruction, and others which are per se evil are, therefore, rejected. These activities are tyrannical, or *ẓulm*, and are categorized as *ḍhiyā'*, wastage. Even astrology, which is part of knowledge, falls under this category. Its practice was declared unlawful by the Prophet (ṢAAS), since the evil in it was greater than the good it contained. Mankind as the best of Allah's creation is endowed with conscience, wisdom, and discretion and is "inspired to strive together toward all that is good, to eradicate *ẓulm*, and to establish justice and faith in Allah (Qur'an 2:148, 193).

It should be evident that the matrices of values outlined above are organically related to each other, and impart a unique character to the epistemology of Islam. The discipline of political science that emerges following such a strategy is able to rank a variety of human ends by reference to an overall sense of what is important and what is good in general. It introduces a principle of coherence into otherwise disparate human sciences; it reflects upon what is important and meaningful in human life. It thus offers a basis for discriminating between what is relevant and irrelevant, significant and insignificant, virtuous and vicious, which a political science conceived merely as a partial catalogue of facts cannot answer.

The Madinah State as the Norm

As a system of values, Islamic methodology does not rest solely on facts, nor does it exclude normative considerations from analysis. The concept of what something “is” cannot be separated from a conception of what “ought to be.” Thus the concept of “state” is analogical to the concept of an “ideal state” in that the former cannot be judged and evaluated without understanding the latter. Pre-behavioral Western social science did realize the need for such a model and hence attempted a kind of utopianism found in the writings of St. Simon, Robert Owen, Charles Fourier, and, of course, the “classless society” of Karl Marx and Frederick Engels.

For the Muslims, however, there is no need to resort to utopian idealism. There is unanimity among the Muslims that the Madinah state founded by the Prophet Muhammad (ṢAAS) and later governed by the Rightly Guided Caliphs (*khulafā’ al rāshidūn*) was the best ideal state ever found on earth and hence provided a normative standard. As well-defined by Sayyid Qutb:

That was a remarkable period, a sublime summit, an exceptional generation of people, a bright beacon. It was, as we have stated, decreed and willed by Allah, so that this unique image might be materialized in the situations of real life and recourse might later be had to it, in order to repeat it within the limitations of human capacity.³³

This standard is independent from changing conditions and specific contexts and it is available as a criterion to be used for judging the value of existing conditions and institutions. Islamic political science is but a perpetual struggle toward the ideal of the Prophet (ṢAAS) as the Perfect Man and his Madinah as the Perfect Polity. It is the mysterious touch of the ideal that animates and sustains the real.

It is well known that Muslim scholars of note worked within the parameters of Islamically defined knowledge giving equal status to all forms of scholarship. The *fuqahā’* of the classical period, wrote al Fārūqī, were real encyclopaedists, masters of practically all the disciplines from literature and law to astronomy and medicine. They were themselves professional people who knew Islam not only as law, but as ideal and theory, as system of thought and life lived by millions of humans in actual practice.³⁴

³³Sayyid Qutb, *This Religion of Islam* (Gary, Indiana: International Islamic Federation of Student Organizations, n.d.), p. 65.

³⁴Fārūqī, *Islamization of Knowledge*, p. 18.

The political theorizing that emerged from these early scholars' pens is value-laden. Almost all of them invariably began their treatises with an inquiry into the purposes of political life and sought a theoretically grounded rational foundation for understanding political relationships. Their reflections are based upon deduced logic from Islamic ideals and principles. Shari'ah was never lost as the ideal. Thus they placed normative considerations at the center of their descriptive and explanatory analysis.

The achievement of early Muslim scholars is in part a result of their starting out by asking some of the right questions: What is politics and political association and what is it for? Their limitations were largely methodological—a void which was filled for the time being by the sociological analysis of Ibn Khaldun, with his emphasis on observation, comparison, meticulous use of reason and a multi-disciplinary approach to untangle the complexities of social and political life.³⁵ In so doing, Ibn Khaldun never wavered in finding out the correlation between the kinds of political association and the nature of human ends and purposes realized by these associations. In other words, Ibn Khaldun was engaged in moral reflection, which is in conformity with the Islamic insistence that *politics must be a quest for ethics* and that the two are inseparably linked with each other. This is one of the most valuable contributions of Islam to human society. The quest for ethics in politics is the first step toward the creation of an equitable, humane universal order.

Conclusion

The contrast attempted here between the Western mode of political inquiry and the Islamic alternative helps illuminate not merely the deficiencies inherent in the former, but, more importantly, highlights the characteristic set of features inherent in the latter. The picture that emerges is that Western political science, its methodology and epistemology as the final product, is built around the seemingly limitless power of natural science. The subjective and ideological nature of political science has been effectively exposed from its own epistemic landscape and real life situations. There is no such thing as knowledge for the sake of knowledge. The image of a dispassionate, objective, and value-free political science is no longer in vogue. The instrumentalist conception of political community, theoretical formulation, empirical verification, and final packaging of knowledge are all colored with the social, cultural, and historical experience of Western Christianity which is also, paradoxically,

³⁵See Muhsin Mahdi, *Ibn Khaldun's Philosophy of History* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1964); Franz Rosenthal ed., *The Muqaddimah* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1967).

materialistic and secular to the core. Such a science has not fulfilled and cannot fulfill the needs and requirements of Muslims and as such it cannot take social and cultural root in a Muslim society.

The Islamic alternative considers the pursuit of knowledge within the value framework of Islam. It abandons all claims to approximating natural science and its consideration of the nature of political association is guided not by the instrumentalist conception of the community but by the question of ends for which it exists. The decisive basis of political science is the distinction between part and whole and not that of fact and value. The part takes on significance by being situated within an encompassing whole with its matrix of eternal values enshrined in the Qur'an and the Sunnah of the beloved Prophet Muhammad (SAAS). Finally, Islamic political science aims at approximating the Madinah model, an association which embodied understanding of human ends. Where human ends are at issue, there is moral reflection. As such, political science in Islam is not a value-free enterprise. Islam insists that politics must be a quest for ethics and that political association, as well as individuals, have an obligation to act morally. Ethics and politics are inseparably linked—a lesson mankind must learn anew if it wants to restore sanity to the world gone awry.

‘Ilm, or knowledge, in Islam is an obligation enjoined upon mankind by the Creator. This knowledge can be acquired through revelation as well as reason, from observation as well as intuition, through tradition as well as theoretical reflection. These diverse ways of studying political phenomena must, however, be subservient to the eternal values of divine revelation. This entails associating the pursuit of knowledge with such Qur'anic concepts as *tawhīd*, *khilāfah*, *‘ibādah*, *‘ilm*, *‘adl*, *istiṣlāḥ*, and the like. Only the knowledge pursued within the matrix of eternal values of Islam, as *khilāfah* and ultimately for the pleasure of Allah, attains the status of *‘ibādah*. This means, inter alia, avoiding all *ḥarām* activities promoting *zulm* and *ḍhiyā*.

The values enshrined in the Qur'an impart a universal character to Islam. This universality of Islamic values grants a universal status to a discipline subservient to the Islamic framework. In any case, the Muslim community which is under obligation to enjoin good and forbid evil has no viable future without recasting its discipline into an Islamic framework.

He who receives guidance benefits his soul and he who strays injures himself (Qur'an, 39:41).