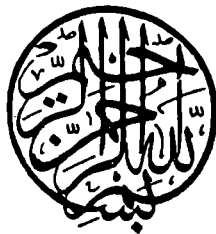




Hamid Enayat

MODERN
ISLAMIC
POLITICAL
THOUGHT

With a Foreword by Hamid Algar



Modern Islamic Political Thought

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*The Response of the Shī'ī and Sunnī Muslims
to the Twentieth Century*

Hamid Enayat

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Hamid Algar

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To Anna, Hādī and Āmeneh

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Foreword

In the aftermath of the triumph of the Islamic Revolution in Iran, a glutinous flood of publications on Islam and politics began to submerge the academic and pseudo-academic book market in Europe and, more especially, America. After decades of declaring that “modernization” in the Middle East had pushed Islam to the verge of social and political irrelevancy, the horde of “Middle East experts” (it sometimes seems that in America there is one for every thousand head of the population) had suddenly to deal with an unwelcome but obstinate new reality. Before long, pontificating on Islamic “revivalism,” “fundamentalism,” “extremism,” *etc.*, had become a growth industry that first rivalled and then overshadowed the soon to be defunct Kremlinology. It goes without saying that the great majority of books resulting from this unexpected turn of events were hastily conceived, poorly researched, and sloppily written.

Hamid Enayat’s *Modern Islamic Political Thought*, first published in 1982, at once distinguished itself from its mass of turgid competitors. It was the fruit not of a sudden adjustment of focus but of a longstanding interest, of prolonged reflection, rich and varied experience, and real erudition. The author was born in 1932 in Tehran to a traditionally religious family, and after primary and secondary education graduated in 1954 from the Faculty of Political Science at Tehran University first in his class. Two years later he went to England to continue his studies at the London School of Economics, where he wrote a master’s thesis on British public opinion and the Iranian oil crisis of 1952-53. Such a choice of

subject was perhaps unsurprising; even today, numerous are those Iranian students who coming to Western universities choose to write dissertations on topics concerning their homeland. One of the distinctive features of Enayat's work was, however, to be his concern with the broader Middle Eastern, and specifically Arab, context, first displayed in his 1962 doctoral dissertation concerning the impact of the West on Arab nationalism. It was no doubt in the course of writing this dissertation that he acquired the broad and confident acquaintance with the Arabic sources that is a strong feature of *Modern Islamic Political Thought*. He next supplemented his textual acquaintance with the modern Arab world with a year as lecturer in political thought at the University of Khartoum before returning to Iran to take up an appointment at Tehran University.

It was, perhaps, ironic that it was in England that Enayat had first become interested in the Arab world (or at least first cultivated that interest at an academic level), and he was acutely conscious of the many complexities inherent in the cultural relations between the West and the Islamic world. Without casting himself as an intermediary between the two spheres—indeed, he was never an activist of any sort, with the exception of a relatively brief period of youthful involvement in the Tudeh Party—he was at pains to make significant texts of Western political philosophy available in Persian while at the same time engaging in a rational and selective critique of what in his day still unabashedly called itself Orientalism. One of the secondary consequences of what his contemporary and compatriot, Jalāl Al-i Ahmad, called “Occidentosis” (*Gharbzadagi*) was that many Iranian intellectuals came to admire only those aspects of their culture that were celebrated by the Orientalists, which meant effectively meant either the pre-Islamic culture of Iran or certain dimensions of its Islamic culture that were identified, in an almost chauvinistic fashion, as distinctively and superlatively Iranian. Enayat rebelled against this habit, and insisted on the necessity of a comprehensive knowledge of the Islamic heritage. Nor was this a matter of mere historical concern; he was aware of the continued relevance, if not centrality, of Islam for Iranian society. The present writer recalls that when Enayat gave a lecture at Berkeley in the early

1970's he displayed in conversation an awareness of the continued popularity of Imām Khumaynī in Iran among many classes of the population at a time when the Imām was still in exile and Western academics, together with a majority of their Iranian colleagues, were convinced that the Islamic movement had no future in Iran. (This makes it all the more remarkable that little substantial mention of the Imām occurs in *Modern Islamic Political Thought*; Enayat was perhaps waiting to see how Iran would fare in its inevitably tempestuous transition to being an Islamic Republic).

The readers of this book will discover its many strengths: the depth of the historical background it provides; its frequent comparisons between Iran and Arab countries, particularly Egypt; and its careful conceptual analyses, as, for example, of the relationship between Islam and democracy. They may also encounter assertions that appear to them, as to this writer, questionable. However, it is not the purpose of this foreword to provide a belated, comprehensive review of the book, and it would be invidious to raise major criticisms that the author, having passed away soon after its publication, is in no position to answer. We can regret only that his life and scholarly career were cut short, for *Modern Islamic Political Thought*, his sole book in English, suggests that he had much more to contribute.

Hamid Algar
July 2001

Preface

This book describes and interprets the major political ideas among Muslims in the twentieth century, particularly those expressed by the Egyptians and Iranians—but also a few writers and thinkers in Pakistan, India, Lebanon, Syria and Iraq. It is a book concerned mainly with ideas: history and sociology have been called to aid only on those occasions when they help to illuminate the background of thoughts. But what needs more emphasis is that it is a book concerned not so much with ideas set forth by Muslims, as with those which are Islamic—that is to say, are articulated in the recognised terms and categories of Islamic jurisprudence, theology and related disciplines however much they may sound ‘unorthodox’ or unconventional. This naturally leaves out a great many Muslim intellectuals who may deserve serious study in other perspectives, but it arises from the conviction that in any effort to understand, let alone criticise, Muslim contributions to the political debates of our time, the procedure by which a thinker has arrived at an idea should be given as much weight as the idea itself. It is not enough to extol a writer for his brave new ideas without first ascertaining the extent to which his credal, epistemological and methodological premises have ensured the continuity of Islamic thought. Otherwise, one is apt to allow fascination with novelty to keep oneself from differentiating what is germane from what is extraneous to Islamic culture. The question of any ulterior or hidden motive that these authors may have harboured has been kept out of the analysis, not only because of the thorough examination of them threatens to turn a history of ideas into *histoire*

événementielle, but also because ideas seem to have life of their own: people, especially those of the generations subsequent to the authors', often tend to perceive ideas with little or no regard for the authors' insidious designs, unless they are endowed with a capacity for mordant cynicism.

The book starts with an introduction outlining the way in which the traditional heritage has impinged on the development of modern thoughts, or can make them cogent and appealing to religious-minded audiences. This is followed by a study of the political differences between the two main schools or sects in Islam- Shī'īsm and Sunnīsm, and especially on the two-fold process of conflict and concord between them. The main intention is to show that the relationship between the two has been slowly changing in recent times, at least in the realm of political doctrines, from confrontation to cross-sectarian fertilisation. This approach later re-emerges at several other points of the book, with more examples of the implicit or explicit convergence between the two. The remaining chapters are devoted to two basic themes and their ramifications: the concept of the Islamic State from the time it was revived after the abolition of the Caliphate in Turkey in the 'twenties till the late 'seventies', and the Muslim response to the challenge of the alien, modern ideologies of nationalism, democracy and socialism.

Contemporary Islamic political thought cannot be properly appreciated without a knowledge of that set of doctrinal reformulations and reinterpretations which has now come to be known as Islamic modernism. Since a fair number of books have been published in various European languages on this once-promising movement, discussion of it in the present study has been kept to the minimum—with the exception of Shī'ī modernism, which, having been neglected until recently, is treated in some detail in the concluding chapter. Instead, there has been some concentration on the lesserknown but equally or potentially important authors.

The amount of political writing and pamphleteering within strictly Islamic framework, and even in the few countries mentioned above, is still staggering, and a student looking for broad trends and patterns has no option but to take some individual writers as

representatives of whole schools of thought. This inevitably opens the arena for critics who might point to other writers and publications presenting different standpoints in order to disprove or question some of the conclusions reached in this book. But such criticisms, however unfair they might be, will be welcome in so far as they bring to light still more facets of the mental efforts of Muslims in their strivings for freedom and progress.

Hamid Enayat

Acknowledgements

I am indebted to a number of my colleagues and friends who read the draft of this book and made useful comments for its improvement. Albert Hourani and John Gurney read the whole of the draft, and spent considerable time discussing its content with me. I particularly benefited from stimulating conversations with Professor Madelung, and my compatriot, Husayn Mudarresī Tabātabā'ī, who commented on the Introduction, and the chapters on Shī'ism. Michael Cook and Roger Owen made helpful criticisms respectively on Sunnī-Shī'ī polemics and the chapter on 'Nationalism, Democracy and Socialism'. So did Nikki Keddie on the section dealing with Constitutionalism in Chapter 5. However, responsibility for any controversial opinions or inaccuracies in the text are entirely mine. Mrs Angela Turnbull, of Macmillan Press editorial staff, gave me valuable help in making the transliterations and the dates consistent.

I must thank the Tahereh Research Centre for Contemporary Iranian History for their support from October 1979 to March 1980, when I was working on this book. I am also grateful to the staffs of the Libraries of the Middle East Centre of St Antony's College, Oxford, the Oriental Room of the Bodleian Library, and the School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London, for their patient and unfailing services.

* * *

The original idea of this book would never have been conceived were

it not for my friendship with the late Murtadā Mutahharī, Professor of Islamic Philosophy at Tehran University, a most original and creative thinker, a dedicated Muslim, and a humanist.

On the System of Transcription, Dates, etc.

For the sake of consistency, Arabic and Persian words have been transliterated both according to the same system, except that the vowel of the Arabic definite article has been given the value 'u' in Persian names and words (hence Faḍlullāh instead of Faḍl Allāh), and the consonantal *vāv* has been rendered as 'v' for Persian and 'w' for Arabic words. The main consideration throughout has been to convey exact phonetic structure. Some inconsistencies have, however, inevitably occurred either because of the necessity of observing the common usage, or in quotations, or owing to the different systems of transliterating Turkish words.

Most years before the sixteenth century have been given according to both the lunar Islamic calendar and the Christian calendar, separated by a stroke. The years after that have been given in the text only according to the Christian calendar.

Translations of the Qur'ānic verses are from J. M. Rodwell, *The Koran* (London, 1861), unless they are paraphrased.

H. E.

Introduction:

The Relevance of the Past

Political thought has been the most active area of Muslim intellectual life over the last two centuries. This can be explained primarily by the ongoing struggle of various Muslim peoples in this period for their domestic freedoms and independence from Western powers—a struggle which has not yet reached its avowed goals, and, therefore, ensures the continual politicisation of the Muslim mind in the future. A further stimulant may be found in the conjunction of substantial economic, strategic and political interests on the part of the outside world in the heartland of the ‘abode of Islam’, resulting in the Western obsession with the ‘energy-crisis’ syndrome. Neither of these explanations can, however, be enough to understand the primacy of politics in modern Islam without considering a more fundamental issue: the inherent link between Islam as a comprehensive scheme for ordering human life, and politics as an indispensable instrument to secure universal compliance with that scheme. The authoritarian connotation of this link is a point most frequently seized upon by the Western critics of Islam. But—as we shall try to show in this book—Muslims do not have a unified and monolithic perception of their faith, any more than the followers of other great religions. However much the orthodox dislike it, different groups of Muslims interpret the Qur’ānic injunctions and the Prophetic sayings differently—each according to its historical background, and the realities encircling it—and not always in terms conducive to a

dictatorial conduct of individual and social affairs.

Another misconception about the fusion of religion and politics in Islamic culture is to think that in historical reality too all political attitudes and institutions among Muslims have had religious sanctions, or have conformed to religious norms. Often the reverse was true: the majority of Muslims, for the greater part of their history, lived under regimes which had only the most tenuous link with those norms, and observed the *Sharī'ah* only to the extent that it legitimised their power in the eyes of the faithful.

With these points in mind, there can be little doubt that the Muslim consciousness has a certain leaning towards politics which stems directly from the spirit of Islamic precepts. But it is a leaning which is often hidden behind an air of submissiveness, or political apathy, or both. If the essence of politics is the art of living and working with others, then four of the five 'pillars' of Islam (prayer, fasting, alms-giving, pilgrimage, the excluded fifth being testimony to the unity of God and messengership of Muḥammad) are perfectly suited to promoting *esprit de corps* and group solidarity among its followers (*jihād* or holy war, which is considered by some Muslims to be the sixth, has even greater potential for producing the same effect). If, according to another viewpoint, the hallmark of politics is struggle for power, there can hardly be a more political world-vision: always conceiving of human nature in terms of both its physical and spiritual needs, Islam is never content with the mere exposition of its ideals, but constantly seeks the means to implement them—and power is an essential means towards this end. The Qur'ān challenges believers to follow the example of the Prophet Muḥammad, whom it describes as the 'noble paradigm' (*uswah hasanah*, 33:21). Since Muḥammad's principal achievement was to lay the foundations of a state based on Islamic teachings, the Muslims have a duty to follow his example in this respect as well.

There is a simpler reason for the concern with politics as the art of government: the accomplishment of a number of the 'collective duties' of Muslims of which the most important are 'enjoining the good and forbidding the evil' (*al-amr bi'l-ma'rūf wa'n-nahy 'an al-munkar*) and the defence of the Muslim territory possible only in a

state which is, if not totally committed to Islam, then at least sympathetic to its goals. By this token, a Muslim who lives under a regime devoted, or even favourable, to Islam should actively work for its survival; conversely, one who lives under a regime hostile to Islam should struggle for its overthrow whenever the opportunity presents itself. Finally, if the dispute as to *who should rule?* and *why should we obey the rulers?* is the hub of politics, no conscious Muslim can study his history even in the most casual fashion without feeling the urge to ask these questions, and discuss them with his co-religionists. The impulse to do so would be much more powerful when Muslims are subjugated, as large numbers of them have been during the last four centuries, by alien rulers, or those associated with them.

These are all merely the theoretical or potential elements of the politicisation of the Muslim mind—the doctrinal antecedents which should logically predispose a Muslim to be a political creature of the most assertive type. But the actualisation of these elements plainly depends on a favourable environment, of which the most essential feature is the availability of the freedoms of speech, assembly and action. That is why, despite what we have said so far, political thought as an independent and distinct branch of intellectual activity is a fairly recent addition to Islamic culture. Most Muslims have lived, and still live, under regimes, which deny them those essential freedoms. Sociologists would dismiss this reasoning as secondary, arguing that the absence of these freedoms is less important than the absence of the social and political conditions which should precede or accompany the emergence of any democratic system in its broadest sense—such as the development of commerce and industry, and the rise of an autonomous bourgeoisie. This objection raises a host of issues which are not always related to the doctrinal foundations of Islam. Since we are concerned in the present study with ideas, we have to leave these issues aside, although some will be discussed in our chapter on ‘Nationalism, Democracy and Socialism’.¹

Apart from political and social factors, there has also been a methodological reason for the absence of independent political thought in Islamic history. Traditionally, Muslims rarely studied politics in isolation from related disciplines. Problems such as the

nature of the state, the varieties of government, the qualifications of rulers, the limitations on their power and the rights of the ruled were discussed as part of the comprehensive treatises on jurisprudence and theology—all securely within the unassailable walls of the *Shari'ah*. It was only under the trauma of European military, political, economic and cultural encroachments since the end of the eighteenth century that Muslim elites started to write separate works on specifically political topics. One remarkable feature of such works from the viewpoint of the cultural interaction between Islam and the West in modern history is the language in which they were written. So long as Westernisation had not alienated large segments of the new educated groups from their traditional heritage, most reformers expressed their ideas in the language of Islamic sciences—using stereotyped legal phrases, citing Qur'ānic verses and Prophetic sayings, with only occasional quotations from foreign sources. But as time went on, with Westernised intellectuals supplanting traditional leaders at most levels of the educational system, and the growing tendency of the literate classes to hold all that was old responsible for Muslim backwardness, the cultural unity of the élites was shattered. While the majority of the literate and the learned remained loyal to Islamic ideals and values, a small but increasingly influential group had come to praise Western culture and civilisation as being superior to everything else humanity had created, and that in a phraseology largely unknown to most Muslims—whether literate or illiterate. The breakdown of the cultural integration of traditional society was thus reflected in a linguistic rift, which has been one of the chief obstacles to a coherent, sustained and fruitful debate among Muslims of all classes and ages over their social and political problems. One of the remarkable changes in the Muslim mentality since the Second World War has been a growing trend in the opposite direction—namely an awareness that no political idea, however valid and vital for the freedom and prosperity of Muslims, can mobilise them in a successful movement to cure their ills, unless it is shown to conform in both form and substance to the dictates of their religious consciousness.

This book deals with the ideas of those Muslim writers who

have been mindful of the necessity of this conformity, and in whose formation the legacy of Islamic culture, particularly the tradition of political thinking as a subsidiary element of the *Shari'ah*, has played the largest part. A brief survey of the basic strands of that tradition is therefore essential for the understanding of the main issues in modern Islamic political thought.

* * *

The fact that political thought among Muslims in the past was always subsumed under some other discipline in the spectrum of classical Islamic sciences did not by itself restrict its scope, or impoverish its content. Indeed, a student of political ideas will find Muslim history in its first six or seven centuries a fascinating mosaic of competing schools, each with a different perception of the foundations of state authority and the limits of individual obedience to the rulers. Immediately after the Prophet's death dispute broke out at the Saqifah assembly over the choice of his successor. It was, on the face of it, a dispute over personalities, but underlying it were the same fundamental themes that have preoccupied lively political minds the world over and at all times. From wrangling over personalities, it was a short step to doctrinal and theoretical altercations. These may now be summarised, but only in so far as they can clarify our later discussions; what will be of interest to us is not so much the original or the real form of such altercations, but the way in which they are interpreted by Muslim writers today, and this is often a function of not only their sectarian and ideological bias but the political needs of their societies as well.

One group of Muslims, which proved to be a minority, believed that the Prophet had in fact designated his successor, and that was his son-in-law and cousin, 'Alī. According to them, the designation had taken place during the Prophet's journey from his last pilgrimage to Makkah, on the eighteenth day of the month of Dhu'l-hijjah, in the eleventh year of his Hijrah (632), at a place called the Ghadir (pool) of Khumm, where he made a fateful proclamation which has been reported in different versions, the most popular being: 'He for whom

In the aftermath of the triumph of the Islamic Revolution in Iran, a glutinous flood of publications on Islam and politics began to submerge the academic and pseudo-academic book market in Europe, and more especially, America. In the midst of such staggering amount of writings, whether of a serious or pamphleteering type, this book offers a lucid and well-argued interpretations of modern Islamic political thought that is indispensable for the understanding of much of the current political developments in the Muslim world.

Hamid Enayat was born in 1932 into a middle-class religious family in Tehran. After completing his primary and secondary education in his place of birth, he enrolled at the Faculty of Law and Political Science at Tehran University from which he graduated first in his class in 1954. Two years later he went to England to continue his studies at the London School of Economics. After working for a couple of years for the *BBC World Service* in London, Enayat spent the 1965-66 academic year as a lecturer in Islamic political thought at the University of Khartoum, Sudan. In 1966 he returned to Iran to take up an appointment at Tehran University. After the 1979 revolution he once again returned to England where he became a fellow of St. Anthony's College at Oxford University. In 1980 he succeeded the eminent historian Albert Hourani (1915-1993) as the second university lecturer in modern history of the Middle East at Oxford. However, his scholarly career in Oxford was cut short by his sudden death on 25th July 1982 of a heart attack during a flight from France to England.

Competent in Arabic, English, French, German and Persian, Enayat translated several important works into Persian. Among these were Aristotle's *Politics*, parts of Immanuel Kant's *Grundlegung zur Metaphysik der Sitten*, parts of Will Durant's *The Story of Civilization* and David Hume's *The Natural History of Religion*.

Cover: (Clockwise) *Ruhullāh Mūsavī Khumaynī*, *Jamāl ad-Dīn Asad-ābādī (al-Afghānī)*, *Abu'l-A'la Maudūdī*, *Muḥammad 'Abduh*, *Sultān Abdulhamīd*, *Rashīd Ridā*, *Amīn Hussaynī* and *Hasan al-Bannā*.

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