

THE STATE OF ISLAM IN THE CONTEMPORARY WORLD

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I. The Beginning of Islam

Of the great religions of the world, Islam is a relatively recent arrival. Before a satisfactory discussion of the concept of "Islamic State" can be had, it is advantageous to revisit the beginning of Islam as an entity of faith.

The Age of Islam began with the *hijrah* when the Prophet Mohammad, after the death of Abu Talib, his uncle and *wali* (protector), fled from Mecca northward to the refuge of Medina (Yathrib) in the company of some seventy faithful families. This migration occurred in the year 622 by the western calendar. This small community of outcasts called themselves Muslims because they had surrendered themselves to Allah¹ which they proclaimed in the *shahadah* that "there is no god but Allah and that Mohammad is his Prophet."

Because Mohammad left Mecca on bad terms with the polytheistic powers there, the Meccans resolved to pursue the refugees with the aim of annihilating the Muslims.² This turned out not to be because in 624, the Muslims, although outnumbered, inflicted a dramatic defeat on their detractors at the battle of Badr.³ Mohammad declared this event as a day of decision and attributed this first victory to Allah, as is celebrated in the noble Quran:

There was a sign for you in the two hosts which met: one fighting in the way of Allah, and another disbelieving ...⁴ Lo! Herein verily is a lesson for those who have eyes. Ye slew them not, but Allah slew them ...⁵

After a setback the next year at the battle of Uhud on the outskirts of Medina, the Muslims again decisively beat the Meccans at the battle of the Trench in 627. In 628, Mohammad concluded the Treaty of Hudaibiyyah with Mecca which was broken by the latter in 630. By this time, Mohammad was able to gather a powerful army of the faithful and Bedouin allies. The Prophet marched towards Mecca. Panic stricken, the Meccans opened their gates in supplication and Mohammad, in a crowning display of statesmanship and mercy entered the city in peace and forced none unwilling to convert to Islam. Nonetheless, many eagerly abandoned *shirk*, that is, the worship of many gods

¹ Lo the religion with Allah is *al-Islam* (the Surrender) to his will and guidance. Quran 22:78.

² This little group of Muslims in Medina became the first *ummah* or community of believers.

³ It was at the end of this battle that Mohammad admonished, "We are finished with the lesser *jihad*; now we are starting the greater *jihad*." Fighting against an outer enemy is the lesser *jihad* and fighting against one's *nafs* (ego) is the greater *jihad*.

⁴ Quran 3:13.

⁵ Quran 8:1

and idols; the Meccans submitted to the one god, Allah, a god of mercy. This is reflected in the Quran thus:

When victory and triumph are come of God and thou seest hosts of people embrace the religion of God, ye will then praise the glory of your Lord and implore His pardon, as he is ever ready to welcome penitence.⁶

The following year (631) is known as “year of delegations” (*Sanat-al-Wufud*) for the distant tribes of Arabia, greatly impressed by the feats of the Muslims, sent their representatives into Mecca to register their submission to Allah and to offer their fighting men to the cause of Islam. In 632 the Prophet died. His legacy was a united Arab community of faith, the ever growing *ummah*, many of whom had voluntarily embraced Islam because it is perceived to be a supreme religion which conferred a superior political system on earth.

The first *ummah* as existed during the lifetime of Mohammad was an egalitarian, fraternal society. There was no appointed king or great leader, but the leadership fell on him who was holiest. The first four successors to the vacancy left by Mohammad were elected from among his closest companions and only one of the four was related to the Prophet. The Quran was silent on the path for succession.⁷

II. The Rise of Islam

From this cellular beginning, Islam spread throughout the Middle East, across North Africa, continued westwards into Spain and the Balkans, and eastwards into Afghanistan, India, China, Southeast Asia and the Philippines. This expansion, sometimes peaceful and at other times by warfare in the Arab tradition of the *ghaza* or *razzia*,⁸ commenced after the death of Mohammad, first under the elected leadership of the *Rashidun*,⁹ and then under the various succeeding Caliphates and later potentates.

⁶ Quran 110:1-3.

⁷ The *imam* traditionally is the one who led the faithful in prayer and was not vested any of the powers of the modern executive. The *amir* traditionally is the one to lead Muslims in battle whenever fighting was necessary. However with the rise of empire, the *imam* took on the meaning of the successor to Muhammad as the lawful temporal leader of the Islamic community, such as the various *khalifah*. With the rise of the *Shiia*, the earthly representative of the 12 such leaders recognized by the majority form of *Shiism* also came to be called *imam*. *Imam* in a less orthodox sense can also refer to a ruler claiming descent from Mohammad and exercising authority in an Islamic state. In the most general sense, coming full circle, the title simply refers to male prayer leader in a mosque and this remains the contemporary usage.

⁸ These terms refer to the desert raid, a practice among the Arab tribes that predate Islam. Later, a *ghazi* warrior also denoted one who fought in a holy war for Islam. Yet again, the term also referred to organized bands of raider on the fringes of *Dar-al-Islam* (the House of Islam).

⁹ The *Rashidun* or the first four *khalifah* were Abu Baker, Umar, Uthman, and Ali. Only Ali ibn Abi Talin was relative of the Prophet, being his cousin. The *Shiites* based the legitimacy of their faith to Ali.

Islam rose because of people of Arabia heeding the call of the Quran, offered their personal submission to Allah. Islam reminds the faithful to develop a strong sense of *tawhid* which is the attainment of a divine unity through the submission to the all encompassing sovereignty of Allah. At the same time, Muslims are called to engage in an everyday struggle or *jihad*¹⁰ to this end at all levels of the Muslim's life: personal, social, and institutional. Islam envisions the rise of the *ummah* which can be described as an integrated community of the faithful. The *ummah* is charged to live in peace with each other and to come to their own mutual aid.¹¹ From the seed of the *ummah* may spring the Islamic nation: "And there may spring from you a nation who invite to goodness, and enjoin right conduct and forbid indecency. Such are they who are successful."¹² Beyond referring to the rise of a nation, the Quran is silent on the ways of constituting an Islamic State.

Aside from the theologically unifying aspect of the Quran, for instance commencing with the belief in one god, the other great unifying benefit that derives directly from the Quran is the *Shariah*,¹³ Islam's corpus of law. To the devout Muslim, the *Shariah* points the way to God. It is the Way which controls the totality of man's life. Being divine, the *Shariah* is the manifestation of Allah's infinite mercy and is the one true and perfect embodiment of justice on earth. As divine legislation, the *Shariah* first abides by the Quran, and second, draws from the *Hadith*, the teachings of Muhammad the man in his lifetime that is not embodied in the Quran but which are recorded for posterity by his close companions and by members of his family. Beyond the *Hadith*, Muslims may with careful guidance from the *ulama*, resort to the *Sunnah*,¹⁴ that corpus of tradition and custom that is attributed to Mohammad as lived out his life with the *ummah*. Along the way, he discharged his temporal duties as leader, guide and judge and these are acts of the man when not specifically inspired by Allah. The emergence of the *Sunnah* as a compilation of law is credited to the work of the Prophet's companions and provides exemplary guidance to Muslims on how Muhammad himself submitted to the will of Allah. The *Hadith* and *Sunnah* together comprise the *Traditions*. The orthodox or majority of Muslims, the *Ahl al-Sunnah wa-il-Hadith* (or *Sunni*) follow this path or way as laid down by the Prophet Mohammad and they believe in his sayings.

Even beyond the *Sunnah*, one will encounter the *Adat*. As Muslims expanded their political influence and military authority over outlying peoples, the local customs and practices of the subjugated or receptive societies became merged with Islamic law into what is collectively known as *Adat*. The first well crystallized version of *Adat* can be

¹⁰ *Jihad* is an Arabic word the root of which is *Jahada*, which means to strive for a better way of life. The nouns are *Juhd*, *Mujahid*, *Jihad*, and *Ijtihad*. Other concepts encompassed by the word include endeavor, strain, exertion, effort, diligence, fighting to defend one's life, land, and religion. *Jihad* should not be confused with Holy War *per se*. Upon returning from the Battle of Badr, the Prophet Mohammad proclaimed, "We are finished with the lesser jihad; now we are starting the greater jihad." Fighting against an outer enemy is the lesser *jihad* and fighting against one's *nafs* (ego) is the greater *jihad*.

¹¹ The Quran teaches: "The believers are naught else than brothers. Therefore make peace between your brethren..." Quran 49:10.

¹² Quran 3:104.

¹³ Literally meaning "the Path to the Water's Source."

¹⁴ Literally meaning "the Path."

tracked to the lands ruled by the Ottomans, an arm of Islam that reached into modern times. *Adat* came to consist of a variety of local usages having the force of law. Such usages may differ from locality to locality and sometimes *Adat* may greatly obscure or even be noticeably inconsistent with *Shariah*. Perhaps such an outcome is inevitable with the great expansion of Islam. *Adat* as a collection of local law may be discerned as comprising two branches: one enforcing the ordinances of the *Shariah* especially over private and family affairs and over personal issues of faith; the other upholding the working courts of the law by administering rules deriving from local public custom and the edicts of local rulers.¹⁵ This concept of *adat* is prominent in the *adapt-istiadat* of the Malay communities of Southeast Asia.

Since its modest beginning, Islam as a religion and system of law has manifested a rich, beneficent, diverse, and yet checkered history. After the death of Mohammad, the four *Rashiduns* continued to rally the Arabs to the cause of Islam. During and at the end this period, the *ummah* suffered through the disruption of two *fitnahs*¹⁶ but was able to resume the outward expansion of Islam under the Umayyad and Abbasid Caliphates. All aspects of learning, including *kalam*, *fiqh* and *falsafah* which encompassed mathematics, architecture, astronomy, and medicine, blossomed. The great glittering cities of Islam became the envy of the world.

Because of aggressive expansion towards Europe through Spain in the west and the Balkans in the east, Islam confronted the medieval Christian kingdoms of Europe. This encounter precipitated the Crusades, the campaign by Christendom to reoccupy Jerusalem. This brutal religious war brought see-saw battles which culminated in an impasse as the Muslims under the leadership of Turks, whom their adversaries called Saracens,¹⁷ fought the motley Christian armies to a standstill in the Holy Lands. An uneasy peace settled over the Levant.

Disaster to the ambitions of Islam came not at the hands of Christendom, but from an unexpected threat from the East. The Mongols, united under the Genghis Khan (c.1167-1227), and the later warrior Khans¹⁸ began their plans of world conquest. In 1258 the

¹⁵ Sometimes referred to as *kanun*.

¹⁶ This was the root of the splitting of Muslims into the *Sunni* and the *Shiia*. Another later but significant branch of Islam is the rise of the *Sufi*, an order than emphasizes love, personal inner development and mysticism. Yet through the course of history, there are other minority sects or dissenting factions such as, for example, the *Kharijites*, *Ismailis*, *Qarmatians*, *Assassins*, *Druzes*, , *Nusayris*., *Matawilah*, *Zaydis*, etc. Within *Shiiah* Islam can be found many offshoots some of which are considered *ghuluww* (extreme speculation) by orthodox Islam. Some of these groups are *batini* or esoteric, hidden religion since prudence in the face of orthodoxy required secrecy. Even the Shiites often resorted to *taqiyyah* or dissimulation, i.e. manifesting an outwardly conformance to orthodoxy.

¹⁷ Interestingly, the antiquated word Saracen implies maternal lineage from Sarah, the wife of Abraham, as distinguished from Hagar, Sarah's maidservant who also bore a son with Abraham, his name being Ishmael. This may signify that the Turks bear non-Arab blood – indeed intermarriage even among royalty was practiced, perhaps for diplomacy. For example, the notorious Richard I gave his sister Joanna to Saphadin, the brother of his worthy adversary Saladin as bride. For a colorful and epistemological-philological presentation of the crusades and the medieval sources of information on same (and later developments as well), see Rodinson, M., *The Western Image and the Western Studies of Islam*, in Schacht J. & Boworth, C.E.(editors), *The Legacy of Islam*, Oxford, The Clarendon Press, 1974.

¹⁸ E.g. Hulegu Khan.

swift horse-mounted Mongols captured and sacked Baghdad including the great libraries that stored the corpus of Islamic scholarship and learning during a time when the rest of the world was engulfed in the “dark ages.” The destruction from the Mongol invasion left an indelible mark on the psyche of the faithful. It is commonly said that the gates of *ijtihad* (independent reasoning on religion and law) became forever closed.

Because the Mongols lived by a simple militaristic-nomadic code, over the years¹⁹, these roaming warriors of the Asian steppes became absorbed into the system of Islam even as they settled in the lands they conquered. Succeeding warrior kings such as Timur the Lame²⁰ converted to Islam. On the other side of the same coin, the *ummah* inevitably also took on certain Mongol characteristics, especially in the non-religious realm, such as the cult of military conquest which supplemented the tradition of the desert *ghazi*. Accordingly, Islam was destined to continue its expansion into the known world.

III. The *Shariah*, Justice and the The *Dar-al-Islam*

As a balance to the militaristic traditions, Islam also confers the civilizing authority of the *Shariah*, the system of law that draws directly from Islam *qua* religion. Justice is the supreme purpose and ruling spirit of the *Shariah*.²¹ The paramount purpose for which the Prophets including Muhammad were sent and struggled throughout their lives was to show man the way to God’s justice²². Justice through Islamic law is also the very ideal for which the *ummah* seeks to exist as a separate entity of faith from the unbelievers.²³ Indeed, no earthly conception of Islam is possible without justice. Justice of the *Shariah* gives meaning and vitality to all human endeavors, both on an individual level and as a societal ideal, extending from now into eternity. It serves as the ultimate criterion for the internal ordering of the soul and the external regulation of relationships and institutions of the faithful on earth.

When the *ummah* was confronted with a scenario that is not addressed by the *Shariah*, orthodoxy permitted theologians to apply *ijma*, the Muslim principle of innovation by universal consent. Along side *ijma* is the practice of *shurah* or the use of consultation to resolve an issue. *Ijma* may be invoked to support religious observances and attains legitimacy because it is the consensus of the community. In addition, the *mujtahidun* or the learned jurists of the *Shariah* have used *ijtihad* (independent reasoning) and *qiyas* (analogical deduction) to apply *Shariah* to novel situations. By the the end of the ninth

¹⁹ Their religion before Islam is most likely Buddhism which they absorbed from India and China.

²⁰ More popularly know as *Timurlaine* as a result of corruption by Marlowe.

²¹ The Quran teaches: “And the believers, men and women, are protecting friends one of another; they enjoin the right and forbid the wrong.” Quran 9:71.

²² For example, it is written: “We sent our messengers with clear signs, and sent down with them the Book and the Balance so that men may conduct themselves with justice.” (al-Hadid 57:25).

²³ For example, it is written: “Thus We made you a just community, that you be witnesses to mankind’ (al-Baqarah 2:143). And again: “O Believers, be you upholders of justice, witnessing for God alone” (al-Nisa’ 4:135).

century, there were well established in *Sunni* Islam four *madhahib* or schools or rites of religious law, namely (a) the *Hanafi* (founded by Abu Hanafah, d. 767), (b) the *Maliki* (founded by Malik ibn Anas, d. 795), (c) the *Shafii* (founded by Muhammad Idris al-Shafi, d. 820), and (d) the *Hanbali* (founded by Ahmad ibn-Hanbal d. 855). The differences between the four *madhahib* are considered to be small and a *Sunni* Muslim does not compromise his faith when switching from one *madhab* to another.

From the tenth century onwards, the development of legislation was considered to have been completed - the established doctrine was expected to be “imitated” (*taqlid*) through the use of detailed commentary and the production of authoritative texts for each school of jurisprudence.²⁴ However, after the ravages of the Mongols and to counter the encroachment of foreign influence, *Sunni* Muslims by the fourteenth century declared the gates of *ijtihad* to be closed. Orthodox scholars were enjoined henceforth to rely only on legal decisions of past jurists or *faqih* in lieu of exercising their own reasoned insights.

Shariah is only applicable to Muslims and in this sense, it is personal law. Islamic Law is based on and regulated by the Islamic religion. To properly analyze Islamic Law it is crucial to first accept the assumptions and tenets of Islam as a religion. As the literal meaning of the word Islam is "submission or surrender to Allah's Will," Muslims first and foremost obey and submit to Allah's will. Muslims believe that Mohammad the Prophet was called by God to articulate divine verses brought to him through the Angel Gabriel which became the most important book in Islam, the holy Quran which is the primary part of the *Shariah*.

As a starting premise, it is convenient to view the religion of Islam, the *Shariah* law, and the authority of civil government as one. In Muslim society, the theocracy controls all aspects of public and private matters. In the twenty first century, as a matter of reality, there exist varying degrees of this concept in various modern Islamic nations, but all law, government and civil authority is supposed to rest upon the *Shariah* and the *Shariah* is a part of Islamic religion.

This remarkable internal unity of the Muslim community, the development of the apparatus of Islamic civil administration, the justice of the *Shariah*, all in conjunction with the warrior traditions of the *ghazi* and the Mongol conquerer enabled the *ummah* to continue with the creation and maintenance of far flung imperial states. The *Dar-al-Islam* or House of Islam commenced on the Atlantic coast, stretched eastward through the Indian and ended on the Pacific Oceans. This Islamic Apogee began during the late fifteenth century and extends into the twenty-first.

²⁴ Hooker, M.B., Islamic Law in Southeast Asia, (Singapore, Oxford University Press 1984, Chapter 1 p 31.

IV. The Three Empires of the Islamic Apogee

These three empires are (a) the Ottoman Empire (encompassing Anatolia, Syria, North Africa, and Arabia) (b) the Safavid Empire (Iran and surrounding territories), and (c) the Moghul Empire (India and surrounding regions). When the Ottoman Turks captured Constantinople and renamed it Istanbul in 1453, they founded an Islamic empire that lasted until the First World War. The Safavid empire was founded by Shah Ismail of the Safavid Sufi Order in 1501 and soon after that he converted to Twelver Shiism, a minority sect of Islam. To this day, Iran remains the bastion of the *Shiite* Muslim who traces religious legitimacy to Ali, the only relative²⁵ of Mohammad amongst the *Rashidun*. The turmoil caused by the campaign of Shah Ismail against the Sunni helped bring about the creation of the Moghul state in the Indian subcontinent. Humayun in 1555, following in the footsteps of Babur who invaded through Afghanistan, finally consolidated the Muslim's hold in north India by conquest. His son Akbar the great philosopher-king more gently expanded Moghul dominance and greatly reduced the jurisdiction of the Hindu princes.

From these Islamic empires, traders and adventurers sailed the Indian Ocean, passed through the Strait of Malacca and reached Malaya, the Indonesian islands and the Philippines. The peoples of Southeast Asia were greatly impressed by the culture and religion of these travelers; many voluntarily converted to Islam. It is important to note that Islam took root in Malaya and Indonesia more through the intercourse of commerce than at the point of the sword.

Islam has risen phoenix-like from the ashes of Mongol invasion and Muslims pushed back with great resiliency and vigor into the East to reestablish empire. Like a swinging pendulum, the next serious challenge to Islam came once more from the West.

V. The Rise of the Modern Nation-States in the West

In 1492, Christopher Columbus, sailing on commission for Spain, struck land in the Americas. In 1498, after rounding the Cape of Good Hope, the Portuguese Admiral Vasco da Gama reached the Malabar coast of India. In 1509, a Portuguese fleet under Admiral Diego Lopez De Sequeira sailed into Malacca harbor which they took by force from Sultan Mahmud in 1511. The age of European global exploration and colonization had begun in tandem with the Renaissance. With the rise of the West as a world power, the concept of the nation state also began to coalesce but it took a few hundred years of internal struggle before the modern nation state finally emerged.

For comparative efficacy in discussing the question at hand, perhaps the key ingredient that distilled into the nature of the modern nation state is the constitutional separation of

²⁵ Ali was a nephew and son in law of the Prophet Mohammad.

church and state. The first step towards this end is the shelving of theocracy in Europe. With the first world council at Nicaea in 325, Christianity had been practiced as a state religion under the aegis of Rome. The first seed of division in Catholic unity came in 330 when the imperial capital was moved from Rome to Byzantium which became known as Constantinople. The dignity of the bishop of Constantinople was affirmed by the council of Chalcedon in 451. While for centuries the bishops of the Eastern and Western theocracies competed for influence, and with nascent events such as the conflict between Thomas Becket, Archbishop of Canterbury and King Henry II of England, the permanent fissure appeared with the Protestant Reformation of the sixteenth century. England and some German principalities no longer followed the religious hegemony of the Roman Catholic Church. The invention of the printing press rapidly improved literacy and allowed the congregation to study the Bible for themselves in their own languages. After a period of bitter struggle, the concept of separation of church and state became reality in Europe and was also brought to the new world of America. The western nation states took on a secular nature. On the other hand, theocracy remained as the paradigm of government in the Islamic world.

Another relevant factor is the advent of the Enlightenment that converted the economies of the western nation states from agrarian to industrial-commercial. While the Islamic world made great strides in learning at the beginning, it failed to participate in the rapid growth of modern science and technology that seized Europe during the eighteenth century. This inability to keep pace meant that the Islamic empires became not only economically, but militarily vulnerable as well. Across the board, Muslim rulers could no longer hold on to their territories in the face of aggressive colonial expansion by the rising western nation states.

The third key factor is the rise of the common man. At the institutional level, this is manifested in democracy as the system of government in the west. With the rise of the English Parliament and the demise of King Charles I in 1649, the American Revolution of 1776, and the French Revolution in 1789, the age of the common man arrived in the west. The Islamic world clung on to their sultans, amirs, and caliphs and the common folk continued to seek and find solace in the fatalistic reassurances of religion.

A fourth factor is the acceptance of pluralism in the west. Religious freedom now is not only freedom to practice a form of Christianity, but the contemporary western ideal is freedom to practice any religion or no religion at all. As a result of vastly improved mass mobility and the reform of immigration policies in the western nations, in part due to booming economies and shortages of labor, racial diversity have also become a part of the demographics of western nations. Employment ideally is to be conferred on merit alone and classifications such as race, color, religion, gender, and national origin are considered spurious. Other developments include tolerance of differences that touch upon sexuality and the drive towards parity between the sexes. Along with the common man, woman also gained her rights before social institutions. These social policies maximize the human potential and have the effect of strengthening the nation state. The Islamic societies lag in all these parameters and most appear to actively resist change on these social issues.

Professor M. B. Hooker has made the following observation:

Nation-states were invented in Europe – the rise of nationalism has been a long and complex process. By the end of the 18th century, European nationalism had transferred itself to European imperialism. This was not new; the Romans did exactly the same thing two thousand years ago. Islam itself had undergone exactly the same process in its expansion into Europe (Spain and Eastern Europe) and into Africa, India and South-east Asia. While not all of this was a military imperialism, some was, and perhaps its apogee is in the history of the Ottoman Empire.²⁶

Given the great divergence between western nation states, all of which retained some form of Christianity as the main religion and the Muslim empires based on traditional Islam, when the inevitable clashes erupted, the outcome was a foreclosed certainty. Although the philosophers of the Enlightenment spoke with fondness and admiration for Islamic civilization²⁷, but in realpolitik, the Islamic world was obliged to cede territory and influence to the various nation states that comprised the more powerful West. Belatedly Muslim reformers began to question the Islamic system and the movement for reform began a slow, troubled, and painful journey.

VI. The Existence of the Islamic State in the Contemporary World

What is a modern “Islamic State?” Without question, the collision with the European nation states and the colonial experience disrupted and traumatized the *ummah*. Akin to the shock of the Mongol invasion, the world balance changed once more for Muslims. A number of forward looking Muslim scholars and thinkers realized that in order to hold their own against the western nation states, the *ummah* must revise their world view, a feat most difficult since the closing of the gates of *ijtihad*.²⁸ In opposition, the conservative faction insisted on looking to the past for the ideal Islamic state.

For a while, the European rivals embarked on an arms race against each other and dissipated themselves in the climax of the two world wars of the twentieth century. Even so, the fallout of these struggles hit the Islamic empires and caused lasting changes.

²⁶ M .B. Hooker, Chapter VII – Contemporary Issues of Course Lecture Notes. Northern Territory University.

²⁷ See, e.g. Rodinson, M., *The Western Image and the Western Studies of Islam*, *Id.*

²⁸ See, e.g. Othman, N., *Sharia Law in the Modern Nation-State: A Dialogue (An Interview with Dr. Abdullah Ahmed An-Naim)* (1993), 20 *Jurnal Anthropologi Dan Sosiologi* 5-28. (Reading 7.7). In this dialogue, Sudanese Prof. An-Naim discusses the ideas of reform of the *Shariah* and includes the thinking of his mentor Ustaz Mahmoud Mohamad Taha (who authored the book, *The Second Message of Islam*). Taha was executed in Sudan in 1985. The basis of this approach for reform is based on the analysis of the Quran by distinguishing it into the Meccan and Medinese periods. The doctrine of *naskh* (i.e. the denial of continuing legal efficacy) is also revisited under the Taha/An-Naim approach.

The Ottoman empire, by virtue of having sided with the Central Powers - the losing power bloc during World War I - was extinguished. In its place was left the modern state of Turkey which committed herself to a secular system of government. Iran had its first modern revolution in 1908-1914 and tried to establish itself along the modern lines of a secular state. The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia came into existence in 1932 and this religious state was based on the conservative Wahhabi ideal of Islam.

Another fallout of World War II is the return of Palestine to the Zionists by the victorious Allies under the leadership of Great Britain pursuant to the earlier Balfour plan. Israel became a modern state in 1948. As a result, the Arabs lost their homeland in Palestine and to this day dream of and fight for a Palestinian state for themselves. The predicament of the Muslim Palestinians is a potent reminder of humiliation for militant Muslims and is a deeply embedded source of Islamic animosity against the west.

The secular nationalist government of Egypt, a former outpost of the Ottoman Empire, continues to try to keep the nation in the western orbit and is plagued by dissenting Islamic groups such as the Muslim Brethren which has resorted to violence. President Anwar al-Sadat was denounced as a *jahili*, a leader who is unschooled in Islam, and was assassinated by radical dissidents inspired by Sayyid Qutb who himself had been executed by President Nasser in 1966.

The Muslims in India were relocated, amidst great sectarian violence, to the new state of Pakistan (which was geographically separated into Western and Eastern parts and these later became the Islamic Republic of Pakistan and Bangladesh respectively) in the aftermath of World War II. Islam remains important in Pakistani identity and is ubiquitous in public life, but it does not determine her international politics. The military dictatorship tries to rein in the power of the *ulama*, who feeling coerced, presently turn toward the Taliban of Afghanistan to provide a counterweight. Pakistan was also home to the revolutionary Muslim thinker, Sayyid Abul A'la Maududi (1903-1979). Bangladesh has opted for a system of parliamentary democracy.

Only Iran was able to re-emerge as a *Shiite* theocracy after deposing Pahlavi Muhammad Reza Shah in 1979. The feat of the Ayatollah Khomeini in ousting the western influence out of Iran remains an inspiration for worldwide Islamic revival despite that fact that *Shiism* is viewed as a minority sect within Islam.

Iran's uneasy neighbor Iraq is a secular militarized state populated by both *Sunni* and *Shiia*, but controlled by the former. Syria, like Iraq is a modern secular state and historically has nurtured its own brand of Islam.²⁹ Afghanistan remained as a landlocked and tribal buffer zone although currently the conservative Taliban is attempting to hang on to its brand of radical Islam and harbors extremist schemers such as Osama bin Laden who espouses violent, terroristic *jihad*.

²⁹ Syria has strong *Ismaili* and *Druze* traditions. Lebanon and Jordan, for example, have a strong *Druze* legacy which incorporates Gnostic and neo-Platonic or Hellenic influences. In Israel, the *Druze* have been granted a nationality status distinct from the Arabic-speaking population, and are expected to serve in the Israeli army.

With the end of the Soviet Union, Islamic states such as Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan, and Tajikistan struggle to find and nurture their new national identities.³⁰ Kazakstan comprises of a mix of Turkic and Mongol nomadic tribes who migrated into the region in the 13th century, and who were rarely united as a single nation. Many Russians emigrated to Kazakstan but independence has caused many of these newcomers to emigrate yet again. Current issues include developing a cohesive national identity, expanding the development of the country's vast energy resources and exporting them to world markets, and continuing to strengthen relations with neighboring states and other foreign powers. Other Muslim communities in the former Soviet Union fight to create yet more Islamic states. This trend can also be discerned in the western regions of China, for example in Xinjiang. These movements are cited as evidence of contemporary Islamic revival. Two other countries that are presently plagued by sectarian warfare are Algeria and the Sudan.

In Southeast Asia, Malaysia, since independence in 1957, has emerged as a stable parliamentary democracy that while proclaiming Islam as the state religion is committed to maintaining the freedom of worship within her jurisdiction. Indonesia upon becoming a nation state in 1954 and with a population of 220 million of whom 88 percent is Muslim³¹, subscribes to *Pancasila*, a formula for nationalism created by the first charismatic president, Sukarno. This large population makes Indonesian the largest Muslim nation in the world. The Philippines has a minority Muslim population, the *Moro*, concentrated in Mindanao and the smaller southern islands who are agitating for Islamic separation. Of these countries, Malaysia enjoys the most robust economy and the highest standard of living for its multi-racial citizenry.

VII. Conclusion

What is a modern “Islamic State?” The answer therefore is that there is no singular model of the modern Islamic State. The Quran is not explicit in providing instruction on constituting the nation state and the *Shariah* also is short in legislation on this question. Islam is rich in religious values and traditions but poor in ideology in the modern context. Muslims have not agreed on an ideal temporal polity for Islam. The struggle to enshrine the Islamic ideal in political or state institutions and to find the perfect leader on earth has preoccupied the *ummah* since the days of the Prophet Mohammad. The choice between religious tradition and ideological modernity vis-à-vis the nation state is proving to be a mighty question. This *jihad* continues unabated today on a wide front. Perhaps, since human nature is by definition flawed, the notion of the one true and perfect Islamic state which explicitly must be based on immutable religious values shall remain elusive, transcendent, and ultimately unattainable by man on earth.

Charleston C. K. Wang, October 2001.

³⁰ These three countries adjoin Afghanistan, currently an international hotspot.

³¹ Many of whom are by Indonesian reckoning, *abangan*, or nominal, Muslims.