

Global Attempt And Globalization Of Islamic Discourse

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As is apparent throughout this work, globalization has many faces. It is not a univocal concept; rather, it opens us up to the multidimensionality of human existence. This attempt explores one of those dimensions in some detail, experientially may be the most dense of all those aspects that make up globalization. This is the dimension of culture and the crossing of boundaries between cultures.

The cross-cultural dimension of globalization, as a thematic concept, has been one of the latest to arise in the understandings of globalization.¹ Early attempts at globalization (if we would take the fifteenth-century voyages of European discovery as the beginning of the globalization of the West) were more preoccupied with the expanse of a hitherto unknown world than with dealing with the diversity that their voyages revealed². This is evident in the changes in the cartography of the time. Medieval maps portrayed the world as it was supposed to be; they were not guides to trace the path from one place to another. Therefore, Jerusalem was at the center of the map. With the European adventurers discovering that the world was considerably larger than they had once imagined, a new way of conceiving the world-and the place of Europe within it - had to be constructed.³

The Europeans needed to account for the people and folkways they met in their travels. These were clearly different from the explorers who invaded these territories earlier. At another point, the non-Europeans were recognized as human, but as children in comparison to the European adult explorers. Their folkways were alternately subhuman, infantile, or demonic, and so they needed to be guided toward adulthood or away from error. By the time of the development of evolutionary paradigms in the nineteenth century, non-Europeans came to be seen as primitive and in need of civilization. It was only by the late nineteenth century that they would begin to be judged as irreducibly other.⁴ This was only possible when the folkways of these others could be seen as an alternative to European folkways and not simply as underdeveloped, demonic, or otherwise.

The language of globalization emerged around 1960 to account for the expansion of business and commerce across the boundaries of nation-states. Discussion on how cultural difference was affecting this expansion seems to have come slightly later. Similar conclusions were being reached among those involved in economic development work through the 1960s and 1970s. They realized that development was not only a matter of bringing technology into areas where it had previously been absent, but was also a matter of understanding how the technology would fit into a particular context⁵.

In the religious sphere, sensitivity to culture had been an intermittent attempt since the beginning of the voyages of European discovery, an attempt more often than not rejected by ecclesiastical authority. The defence of native peoples by Bartolome de las Casas and the theological proposals of Matteo Ricci in China come immediately to mind. From the mid-nineteenth to the mid-twentieth centuries, attempts from missionaries for cultural sensitivity became more frequent and insistent. With the coming of independence of regions colonized by Europe, attempts for cultural sensitivity became lodged in the highest bodies of individual denominations as well as within the discourse of interchurch bodies such as the World Council of Churches⁶.

The actual language of globalization came to theological education in North America about two decades after its emergence in the worlds of business and political science. Perhaps because of that later entry and because of the development of cultural awareness in missiology, issues of cultural sensitivity have been part of theological education's understanding of globalization since these discussions were first thematized around 1980⁷.

Islam And Globalization

Islamic religion has played an important role in many countries in recent time. Islamic belief in monotheism was a strong ideology used to weaken communist beliefs throughout the Cold War. Even Islamic activists have greatly influenced political change in the United States, Latin America, and Europe. In addition, United States foreign policy cannot escape from religious dimension, particularly in the Middle Eastern political thought.⁸

The Islamic dimension has become a mirror through which to see the global arena. Thus, the study of Islam has attracted many scholars from a variety of different perspectives. The Islamic revivalist movements have gained significant political power in many countries. For example, in Egypt, there has been considerable movement among many fundamentalist groups in the last decade. In Algeria, an Islamic group defeated a secular regime through elections in December 1991, although its accession to power was blocked by a military coup. In many other countries, for instance, Pakistan, Turkey, Malaysia, Indonesia, and even Israel—all of which had been considered stable territories for western interests, Islamic revivalism is gaining power⁹. These types of developments according to scholars are good reasons for focusing greater attention on the Islamic world, both for the scholars who care about increasing human understanding and for the policy makers in many countries who are concerned with conventional national interests. Examples of such concerns are the establishment of the fundamentalism project of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences in Chicago, and Conference of American and “former Soviet” scholars on Islamic revivalism.

The Image Of Globalizing Islamic Study To The Reality Of Our Time

There are many publications that deal with the same topic, but most of them either display a propagandistic nature or portray orientalist stereotypes. Donald Smith provides a very good description of this phenomenon:

We are influenced here – as a result of the intellectual imperialism under which a group of us still labor – by western concepts, which restrict religion within narrow limits... Many people still believe that Islam is similar to Christianity or Buddhism, and consists in devotional beliefs and exercises ethical rules and no more. But, in fact Islam in its precise sense. Is a social order, a philosophy of life, a system of economic principles, a rule of government, in addition to its being a religious creed in the narrow western sense¹⁰

Islam is an ideology and a way of life has the potential for explaining elements of power in different dimensions of Islamic influence. On the other hand, Islam has basic principles concerning state building and reestablishing a pan-Islamic system, which was the past focus of the Islamic heritage. Despite the diversity of terminology and religious orientations within the Islamic world, several principles, bind many Muslim groups and political organizations to a common level on issues that are important in today's global political affairs. Among these fundamental issues is the Islamic socioeconomic package as an alternative model for development after the failure of imported western and socialist developmental programmes. In fact, there is agreement among Muslim Scholars that state building should be based on genuine Islamic Orientation that embrace certain principles of democratic participation.

In recent time, there is general desire among Islamic activists to liberate their countries from foreign leadership, in general, and from the western sphere of control in particular. They call for establishing what Benedict Anderson has termed “imagined communities” that are based on keeping independent identities while gaining the benefit arising from globalization. It is observed today that Islamic organizations and other members of the intelligentsia in different parts of the Muslim world combine Islamic belief system with modern knowledge of science and technology from different cultures, including those of the West in the name of globalization this is a good mixture. The Islamic World possesses great natural and human resources. Such resources include water, petroleum product, energy, agriculture, industries, and a large work force to provide it with all the necessities of modern life. From all these natural resources, other countries benefit from Islamic world. This indicates that every country has been globalized for the sake of human development. These resources are not found in one region but they can be collected under global cooperative arrangement.

Economic And Social Orders In Global Arena: Islamic Discourse

It is rightly observed that means of communication have been developed which were far beyond the dreams of the past generations because people of today have set in motion a far more rapid and extensive transfer of goods than ever before within the history of mankind¹¹. The result of this development is an economic interdependence of nations. There are two forces responsible – the

economical and the cultural, often go hand in hand, though there is a difference in their dynamic rules. The elementary laws of economics require that the exchange of goods between nation be mutual; this means that no nation can act as buyer only, while another nation is always seller; in the long run each of them must play both parts at the same time, giving to, and taking from each other, be it directly or through the medium of other actors in the play of economic forces. But on the cultural field this iron rule of exchange is not a necessity, because it is not always a visible one; that is to say, the transfer of cultural influences is not necessarily based on the principle of give and take. It lies in human nature that nations and civilizations which are politically and economically more virile, exert a strong fascination on the weaker and less active ones and influence them in the intellectual and social spheres without being influenced themselves. Such is the situation to-day as regards the relations between the Western and the Muslim Worlds¹².

In the social order, the economic problem occupies the paramount position. The material civilization of the west has brought about a state of chaos in the international relations of humanity, and a class-war within every nation. That Islam occupies a middle position in the European war of economic ideals, this is admitted by many European writers. Thus Gibb asserted in the work of Garuba:

Within the Western world Islam still maintains the balance between exaggerated opposites. Opposed equally to the anarchy of European nationalism and the regimentation of Russian communism, it has not yet succumbed to that obsession with the economic side of life which characteristic of present-day Europe and present-day Russia like.¹³

And then, quoting Massingnon:

Islam has the merit of standing for a very equalitarian conception of the contribution of each citizen by the tithe to the resources of the community; it is hostile to unrestricted exchange, to banking capital to State loans, to indirect taxes on objects of prime necessity; but it holds to the rights of the father and the husband, to private property and to commercial capital. Here again it occupies intermediate position between the doctrines of bourgeois capitalism and Bolshevik communism.¹⁴

Islam, therefore, occupies the position for peace maker between the warring economic factions of different nations of the West. Its social order has several characteristics not to be met with elsewhere. In the first place, Islam does not

allow the economic phase of life to make him forgetful of his Creator as the Muslims' first lesson is that duty to God takes precedence over all other duties. Whatever work he may be doing, he must give it up when he receives the call to bow before his Maker, and this call is given not only in the early morning or when one is going to bed but also in the midst of the rush of man's daily work. In obedience to Allah, the Muslim certainly feels the reality of the Divine presence. He knows that to earn his living he must devote his whole attention to his work. At the same time, he knows that man does not live by bread alone and that life has a higher value to which the economic value must be subjected. Unless this truth is realized, economic competition between individuals and nations will ultimately bring woe and destruction instead of happiness of the mind. The civilized nations in their race for economic advantages have just forgotten this lesson, and hence they are working for the ruin of each other.

The social order of Islam is an expression of Divine will and has therefore, a stability which man-made systems can never enjoy. Every social system of the world stands in need of a temporal power for its enforcement, but the social system of Islam works independently of rulers and governments. Capitalism in Europe generally retains its hold because of its great financial resources and the so-called democratic governments at its back. Real power there does not rest in the hands of the people generally but in those of the great capitalists, be they Jews or non-Jews. But the social order of Islam which being based on Islamic guideline appeals to the mind, not an appeal to the political power. Muslims all over the world, whether occupying the position of the rulers or the ruled, are governed by the same social laws. This is due to the fact that the social system of Islam has taken root in the minds of the people. It does not stand in need of a temporal power to enforce it.

Also, the social order of Islam is the only order which has proved itself to be a World Order. The more marvelous is the fact that while numerous changes have taken place in the social ideals of other nations during the past more than one thousand years, the social order of Islam has remained unchanged with all the changes in the fortunes of the Muslim nations of the world. This shows only too well that the social order of Islam has in it an inherent power which makes it indifferent to all changes and vicissitudes of fortune of the nations comprising it. It is the only stable World Order.

Moreover, peculiarity of the social system of Islam is that it aims at attaining equality, so far as equality is possible, for all members of a community by raising the low to the level of the high and enriching the poor. In this respect, it stands in marked contrast with Bolshevism which seeks to equalize by impoverishing the rich and bringing the high to the level of the low. A cursory glance at the Qur'anic revelations of the early period of the Holy Prophet's mission makes it clear. Islam came not only to deliver the oppressed and help the poor but to raise the poor to a higher level where they could breathe as the equals of possessors of wealth. Islam is not a spiritual attitude of mind adjustable to different cultural settings but a self-sufficing orbit of cultural and a social system of clearly defined features.

An Appeal To Human Thought: A Case Of Man And Civilization

As we raise the many achievement of western civilization such as modern science, technology, freedom of thought and democracy. We cannot forget the bad aspects too such as colonialism, the use of deadly force against non-indigenes, the plunder of other people, material and cultural riches, polluting the earth's environment, perpetrating half truths and lies and so on, that characterize the western ideal. Modern civilization which brought about new trend in the fashionable word "Globalization" is the important reality of our age and has brought many monumental benefits to humanity.

Judging from the above paragraph, we can assure that globalization is human construct and human beings, I mean individual community has to claim realistically that which benefits its curiosity and creativity for human needs and development. Therefore, globalization needs numerical approach which is natural component of the idea behind globalization process. The day is gone, for instance, when the distinction between western and non-western in term of geography has much meaning, although "western" as the description of a particular kind of mindset or worldview is still a useful category. There is need for new paradigm to continue in globalizing world without operation loose or gain. It is a matter of survival of fittest for all the participants in the attempt of globalization process.

Conclusion

We have observed in this work that the image of globalizing Islamic study is the reality of our time. The bottom line of this paper is that all nations ought to benefit from the process of globalization because this is what is entailed in the agenda of globalization.

Notes And References

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