



Islamic Revolution and Islamic Awakening

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Movements and their Nomenclatures

Do names matter? This is an essential question. At least so far as the developments in the Middle East and North Africa are concerned, names do re-

ally matter.

Names reflect the essence of the developments and the essence in turn is reflected in the demands and aspirations of the people who are ready to sacrifice their lives for their ideals.

The Western media have used the term “Arab Spring” or “Jasmine Revolution” for the movements in some Arab Countries. The connotation of these terms will be the assimilation of these revolutions with the Prague Spring (1968) and hence it will imply liberalization and secular democracy as the ultimate goal of the people who are making every kind of sacrifice to put an end to the West-sponsored authoritarianism in their countries. Whereas, there are strong relations between democracy and political Islam. Democracy comes out of the ballot boxes of the Islamists. The fact that these movements started from the mosques and congregational prayers indicates that there is genuine congruity between Islam and democracy. However, the West tries to distort facts about these movements.

Relationship between these Movements and the Islamic Revolution of Iran

As a matter of fact, Iran never planned to influence these movements, but it was a natural source of inspiration for all of them. This inspiration has been of two aspects; method and content. As regards method, the Islamic Revolution was the outcome of the mobilization of the masses, non-violent campaign, enlightenment of minds, and the use of unarmed demonstrations and protest rallies. Similarly, with regard to its content, it must be mentioned that religious democracy is not confined to the Shia school of thought. It applies to all Islamic schools of thought as well; i.e. a combination of Islamism with Republicanism. The Islamic Republic of Iran is not a Shia model; it is an Islamic model and it must be notified that Iran has never intended to impose its model on others; even though can inspire Sunni models of religious democracy.

One of the plots used by the United States is fanning the flames of Sunni-Shia differences or resorting to the infamous policy of “divide and rule”. At the same time, the United States and its allies promote extremism to prepare the grounds in order to suppress genuine Islamist movements. History bears enough testimony to the fact that the West has amateurishly used extremism to achieve its goals in Afghanistan, Iraq, Libya... The support lent to Al-Qaeda in Afghanistan by the West was unprecedented, but

in the long run, the West was the main loser of this irrational support.

The Islamic Republic of Iran supports moderation in political Islam and rejects any kind of extremism. In fact, any division between the Muslims, promotion of any kind of extremism, or any division between Islam and Christianity will strengthen the cycle of violence. Iran follows rationality and the moderate line. We believe that these developments should follow their course on the basis of mutual respect between religions, peaceful coexistence, and preservation of social solidarity in the countries where these currents are going on. In short, Iran Rejects Extremism Because It Leads to Violence.

Relations between Islamic Awakening and New Islamic Civilization

These movements will lead to the establishment of a new Islamic civilization based on spirituality and Divine teachings. This civilization will be based on four distinct features: religion, rationality, morality, and science.

The new Islamic civilization and these movements will revive national honor and human dignity. In Tunisia, one of the slogans of the revolutionaries was “dignity”, which is, in essence, an Islamic term, but the West tries to project their movement as a Jasmine or a secular revolution.

None of the slogans chanted in these movements was a nationalist or mere Arab slogan because they are Islamic movements. The world of Islam has always been searching for people’s participation in their political affairs and exercise of the right to self-determination. Moreover, political Islam came to the fore because of the frustration of Muslims with capitalism and socialism.

It should be borne in mind that the liberal democratic systems have been the main supporters of life-long authoritarian monarchs and dictators. Therefore, the United States and the West are worried about the establishment of religious democracy.

Islamic Awakening: A Historical Overview

It seems that the Islamic Awakening, which has taken place in the region, is very much similar to the

revivalist movement launched by Sayyid Jamaluddin Assadabdi against colonialism and despotism about 150 years ago. Indeed, the “Islamic awakening” has been experiencing a state of retreat for at least two centuries. However, the “Islamic awakening” was revived once more with the victory of the Islamic Revolution in Iran and more recently with the outbreak of what is referred to as Arab Spring. The seeds of these movements were sown by the Arab public discontent over despotism, dictatorship, negligence of Islamic rules, and Westernization at the cost of indigenous, Islamic values. Hence, the fruit of these movements was and continues to be reaped by true Islamist trends.

Is the Islamic Awakening the Child of Extremism?

This appears to be the basis upon which some Western analysts and researcher build their theories of Arab Spring. In fact, basing the theory on this hypothesis represents a dreadful mistake that will inevitably lead to wrong conclusions. When looking at the broader context, the Islamic awakening is a call for a return to practicing moderate Islam. This call has spread widely across the Arab and Islamic world in response to the Westernization brought about by colonialism, which was later adopted by some despotic governments in some Arab and Muslim states. The Islamic awakening is, therefore, an immense human effort undertaken by a variety of Islamist factions, from governments, to clerics, to individuals, to liberation movements. In brief, the Islamic awakening, which is manifested in what is called the Arab Spring, is the result of collaboration on a wide scale, and, therefore, nobody can claim a monopoly on it. However, there is no doubt that the Islamic awakening is immensely inspired by the Islamic Revolution of Iran and its moderate ideology.

It would be a distortion of the facts if one considered this Islamic awakening to be something limited to narrow partisan politics. This Islamic awakening cannot be attributed to any specific political party or faction; not the Salafists, extremists, or anybody else. It has its roots in Islam and was inspired by the Islamic Revolution of Iran. Evidence of this can be seen in the fact that this Islamic awakening - which

is wide awake today - prevailed in the Indian subcontinent and was adopted by such figures as Abul Ala Maududi and Muhammad Iqbal and others. This also applies to the Islamic awakening that is prevailing in several other Islamic countries around the world.

Therefore, the Islamic awakening is a “cocktail” combining several old Islamic reformatory schools of thought with new schools of thought and liberation movements. This is something that can be seen in the calls made by Jamaluddin Asadabadi, Mohamed Abduh, Rashid Rida, Abd al-Rahman al-Kawakibi, Hassan al-Banna, Imam Khomeini(RA), and others. It should be noted that only the moderate movements represent the Islamic awakening, which is a major human effort and has undergone several fractures and divisions resulting in several hardline ideologies. These hardline ideologies harm the Islamic awakening, as the Kharijites [a term embracing various Muslims who initially supported the authority of the fourth caliph Imam Ali ibn Abi Talib, only to later reject him] harmed the companions of the Prophet, whose era witnessed the spread of their views. As God Almighty said, “nor does any bearer bear the burden of another.” [Surat Al-Ana’am; Verse 164]

The danger of limiting Islamic awakening to Islamist political trends is that this approach represents a form of opposing or resisting the move towards religion that is currently prevailing in the Arab and Islamic world, which itself is a response and rejection of moral and intellectual Westernization.

