Chapter-1

*Genesis of Islamic Fundamentalism — Current Context*
GENESIS OF ISLAMIC FUNDAMENTALISM – CURRENT CONTEXT

Fundamentalism literally is a belief that the “Bible is to be accepted literally as an inerrant and infallible spiritual and historical document. It is an early 20th century U.S. protestant movement stressing this belief or any similar belief or movement”.¹

“The strict maintenance of traditional orthodox religious beliefs of doctrines especially belief in the inerrancy of scripture and a literal acceptance of the creed as fundamental as of protestant Christianity”.²

“The practice of following very strictly the basic rules and teachings of any religion (in Christianity); or the belief that everything that is written in the Bible is completely true”.³

“Conservative movement in American Protestantism arising out of the millenarian movement of the 19th century and emphasizing as fundamental to Christianity the literal interpretation and absolute inerrancy of the scriptures, the imminent and physical second coming of Jesus Christ, the virgin birth. Fundamentalism came into its own in the early 20th century in opposition to modernist tendencies in American religious and secular life. In the late 20th century the movement was represented by numerous churchbodies, educational institutions and special interest organizations.

Origins: The roots of fundamentalism are found in the history of the American millenarian movement. In the 1830’s and 40’s much excitement was generated in the United States by expectations of the second advent of Christ.

Fundamentalism: The activist affirmation of particular faith that defines that faith in an absolutist and literalist manner is termed fundamentalism. It involves the efforts to purify or reform the beliefs and practices of adherents in accordance with the self-defined fundamentals of faith. Fundamentalist interpretation is to avoid compromise, adaptation or critical reinterpretation of
the basic text and sources of beliefs. Fundamentalism is most frequently presented as style of religious experience within broader religious tradition.

Among Muslims there is also a broad spectrum both in the use of term “fundamentalism” and in evaluation of the phenomenon. In the nineteenth century most of the Muslims were aware of the power of western societies and the relative weakness of Muslim communities. One of the major themes of Muslims with the west is the effort to revive or reform the world of Islam. The first modern response was to adapt to the new world conditions and utilize western models in reforming Muslim societies. By the second half of the 20th century, it became clear that the result of these reform programs was not satisfactory and now, more revolutionary efforts were undertaken. Among these efforts are the major Islamic fundamentalist movements which adapt positions that reject the simple copying of western methods and affirming the comprehensive and effective nature of the Islamic message.⁵

“In the 1970s most Muslim analysts rejected the term ‘fundamentalism’ as identifying label for the movements of Islamic affirmation. By 1990’s, however Muslim critics of fundamentalism began to use the term in political and scholarly debates and some supporters also accepted the term, recognizing its wide use. Writers in Arabic by the 1980s began to use the term usuliyan. An Arabic neologism that is a direct translation of fundamentalism based on usul the Arabic word for ‘fundamentalism’. In this way fundamentalism became a part of the vocabulary of the Islamic resurgence itself as well as the study of that resurgence”⁶

Originally, fundamentalism was the name applied to specific Christian experience that emerged as a response to the development of Christian “modernism” in the 19th century while modernism elicited reaction in many areas. It was more vehement in the United States between 1909 and 1915 as a group of American theologians wrote and published a series of booklets called the fundamentals. A testimony to the truth, in which they defined what was believed to be the absolutely fundamental doctrine, was the literal inerrancy of
the Bible in all its statements and affirmations. During the debates of the 1920s, the supporters of this position came to be called fundamentalists.7

For the many years the term “fundamentalism” was applied almost exclusively to this particular Christian tradition. By the 1970s, as scholars and the general public became increasingly aware of the resurgence of religion in many different societies, the term began to be applied to movements of religious revival in a wide variety of contexts. People spoke of Hindu and Jewish fundamentalism and in the context of the ideological debates of the 1990s. It was even possible for a major scholar such as Ernest Gullner to speak of “enlightenment secular fundamentalism” when describing the position that both rejected relativism and denied the possibility of revelation. When applied to non Christians the term fundamentalism was applied to most devoted individuals and movements in the Islamic resurgence of the final quarter of the 20th century. By the 1990s the phrase ‘Muslim fundamentalism’ (or ‘Islamic fundamentalism’) was widely used in both scholarly and journalistic literature.

The application of the term ‘fundamentalism’ to Muslim is controversial. Much of the debates start from the projective implication of the term even when used to describe Christians. Some say that the term has connotation of ignorance and backwardness and thus is insulting to movements of legitimate Islamic revival. Others have argued that there is exactly cognate term in Arabic or other major languages of Muslims, and that this indicates that there is no cognate phenomenon in Muslim societies to which the term might apply.

Despite this, there is general recognition that activist movements of Muslim revival are increasingly important and reference must be made to them. Among the many terms used for this purpose are Islamism, integrist, neo-normative Islam, neo-traditional Islam, Islamic revivalism, and Islamic nativism. However, ‘fundamentalism’ remains the most commonly utilized identification of the various revivalist impulses among the Muslims. More technically accurate term and neologisms have not gained wide acceptance.
The description and analysis of Islamic fundamentalism in the modern era gives way to many debates. Among the most important of these is whether Islamic fundamentalism is a distinctively modern phenomenon. Such scholars as Fazlur Rahman, R. Hrair Dekmejian, and John O Voll argue that throughout Islamic history it is possible to see activist movement advocating a return to the pristine fundamentals of the faith. From this perspective, the Hanbali tradition, especially as defined by Ibn Taymiyyah in the fourteenth century, and reformers in South Asia such as Ahmad Sirhindi and possibly, even early Islamic radicals like the Khariji sect, represent premodern expressions of a fundamentalist style of Islamic affirmation. In this view the fundamentalist movement of the eighteenth century in many parts of the Islamic world, most notably the Wahhabi movement in the Arabian Peninsula and Jihad efforts organized by sufi tariqahs in Southeast Asia, West Africa and elsewhere provide an important foundation for Islamic fundamentalism in the modern era.

In contrast, the scholar Martin Marty and R. Scott Appleby (who direct the fundamentalism project of the American Academy of Arts and Science) as well as Bruce Lawrence, argue that fundamentalism are distinctively the products of the modern era even though they may have some historical antecedents. In this view, the conditions of modernity are unique and fundamentalism is a distinctive response to the religious challenges of modernity. Fundamentalist movements are, from this perspective, not the traditionalist movements or nativist revolts of the nineteenth century, nor the puritanical holy warriors of premodern times. They are those movements, for example, the Muslim brotherhood in Egypt that developed in the 20th century and became most visible in the Islamic resurgence of the last quarter of that century.

Islamic Fundamentalism: The philosophical roots of Islamic fundamentalism are largely the result of a conscious attempt to revive and restate the theoretical relevance of Islam in the modern world. The writings of three twentieth century Muslim thinkers and activists Sayyid Qutb, Ayatullah Ruhullah al-Khomeini...
and Abu al-‘Ala al-Mawdudi provide authoritative guidelines delineating the philosophical discourse of Islamic fundamentalism. However, whereas Khomeini and Mawdudi made original contributions towards formulating a new Islamic political theory, it was Qutb who offered a coherent exposition of Islam as a philosophical system.¹⁰

Qutb’s philosophical system postulated a qualitative contradiction between western culture and the religion of Islam. Its emphasis on Islam as a *sui generis* and transcendental set of beliefs excluded the validity of all other values and concepts of Islam. It also marked the difference between the doctrinal foundation of Islam and modern philosophical currents. Consequently Islamic fundamentalism is opposed to the enlightenment, secularism, democracy, nationalism, Marxism and relativism. Its most original contribution resides in the formulation of the concept of God’s sovereignty or lordship. This concept is the keystone of its philosophical structure.

The premises of Islamic fundamentalism are rooted in an essentialist world view whereby the innate qualities and attributes apply to individuals and human societies, irrespective of time, historical change or political circumstances. Hence, an immutable substance governs human existence and determines its outward movements.¹¹

**Essentialism and Dualism:**

Paganism (*Jahiliyya* ) is the generic designation given to all systems of thought other than Islam, both ancient and modern. According to Islamic fundamentalism, since the dawn of history human society has been a battleground between belief and unbelief, right and wrong, religious faith and idolatry, individuals and their beliefs may carry different names in different ages, but this duality is essentially the same.¹²

The definition of Paganism is thus stretched to encompass Greek philosophy in the ancient world as well as utilitarianism and existentialism in the modern age. To Sayyid Qutb, for example, Paganism is deemed to be...
present wherever people’s hearts are devoid of divine doctrine that governs their thought and concomitant legal rules to regulate their lives. Moreover, although outward manifestations may differ from age to age, the nature and attributes of Paganism remain permanent. On the other hand, religion operates throughout the ages within constant perimeters, rotating around a fixed axis. Furthermore, religion and the cosmic order reflect God’s will in its harmonious design.\textsuperscript{13}

In this scheme of things, human nature and the cosmos are substances which retain identities while undergoing change. A substance generates properties and assigns them a function peculiar to their qualities. Properties are inherent in substance and are dependent for their existence and persistence on them. Such properties are not incidental, but form an identifiable structure quite distinct from other structures. These properties are therefore not transferable, in that once transferred they lose their function or signature.

According to Islamic fundamentalism, the essential nature of human beings is religious and atheism is an aberration. Throughout human history there have been only two methods of organizing human life. One that declares God to be the sole sovereign source of legislation and another that rejects God, either as a force in the universe or as the lord and administrator of society. These two methods are irreconcilable: the first denotes Islam, the second paganism. Once human beings accept legislation to be dependent on the will of an individual, a minority and majority, and not as the prerogative of God alone, they lapse into a type of paganism, be it a dictatorship, capitalism, theocracy, or communism.\textsuperscript{14}

However, human history is an emanation of doctrinal concept that is implanted by God in human beings in their capacity as his designated lieutenants on His earth. The vicegerency (khilafah) of human beings is to carry out the command of God. According to this line of reasoning, most human societies in the twentieth century resemble in their way of life the state of affairs that existed before the rise of Islam. In order to re-establish Islam as a

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system of government, it is thus of primary importance to discover anew fundamental constituents of its doctrines. Such an honorable task falls to well disciplined group of believers. These pioneers, dubbed as “the vanguard” by Qutb, ‘the Revolutionary part by Abu al-‘Ala Mawdudi and the holy warriors’ by Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini, are called upon to undertake the reinstatement of Islam in both its doctrinal and political dimensions. The method of struggle is often referred to as jihad or holy war launched in the path of God.15

2. Islam’s attributes

Whereas orthodox Islamic philosophy and theology (‘Ilm al-Kalam) were largely concerned with defining and elaborating God’s attributes, Islamic fundamentalism shifted its focus to the attributes of Islam itself. In other words, Islam became a substantive quality with certain characteristics which could rival in their structures and functions other modern ideologies such as fascism and Marxism. This is not to say that divine attributes were ignored, but their significance was made a function of the predicative characteristics of a new Islamic theory.16

It is well known that in mainstream Islamic theology, as produced in the tenth century AD by Abu al Hasan al-Ash’ari, only those attributes denoting God’s acts are considered to lie within human knowledge. These were held by al-Ashari to be seven in number. It is in this context that Qutb’s doctrinal work, Khasa‘is al-tasawwur al-Islami (the characteristics of Islamic conception), gains significance. Although Qutb contended that Islamic theology and philosophy were outdated modes of knowledge, tainted by their reliance on categories derived from classical Greek thought, he aspired to inaugurate a new Islamic vision using an amalgamation of ancient and modern ideas. He claimed, for example that his new interpretation consisted of a direct act of understanding the Qur’an. This receptivity is said to be unmediated and based on an immediate grass of Qur’anic verses. However, Qutb’s binary division of Islam into ‘characteristics’ and ‘fundamental’ is reminiscent of orthodox
debates on the essence and attributes of God. It is also worth mentioning that in enumerating the characteristics of Islam, Qutb devised a new list which nevertheless, in a manner reminiscent of al-Ash’ari, included seven attributes:

- Lordship
- Constancy
- Comprehensiveness
- Balance
- Positivity
- Realism
- Monotheism or Absolute unity

These attributes of Islam emanate from God’s will and specify certain rules and modes of behavior incumbent on all the believers.

The Fundamental Principles of Islam:

The fundamental principles of Islam and the injunction of its laws are one seamless garment woven by God for His creatures. Whereas Greek thought, particularly Aristotelian thought, asserted that we are political animals by nature, Islamic fundamentals contend that the basic instinct of human beings is intrinsically religious. Religion is understood in this context to be Islam itself.

Islam has its own constant, inimitable and clearly defined nature. Its underlying aim is to change the process of history and create a new human, unaffected by subservience to other human beings or institutions. To be a Muslim is to believe in fundamental principles of Islam in their entirety. Moreover the doctrinal principles of Islam are not to be studied theologically, metaphysically or philosophically. Their study is primarily a practical endeavor aimed at discovering the base on which an all embracing system is to be
erected for the benefit of humanity. Theory and practice go hand in hand; knowledge is simply a prelude to social action and political engagement.\textsuperscript{20}

For Qutb, Mawdudi, and Khomeini, the doctrine of Islam forms an organic unity. A description of its constituent parts is therefore a mere analytical device, which should, under all circumstances indicate the interdependence and complementarity of these parts. Once a part is detached and treated on its own it loses its significance, depriving the harmonious totality of its beauty and truth. The true nature of divinity, for example, cannot be understood apart from its direct efficacy in regulating the movement of universe and in all its physical and spiritual connotations. Thus God’s divinity ensures the harmonious errance of cosmic law. God sustains, guards and regulates the universe according to fixed laws. Nevertheless, his absolute will fashions every movement or event without being bound by them. These laws are not self-regulatory in that they persist a result of the immediate act of God, and are thus created anew and every moment. The world was created in time is a fact denoting a temporal beginning rather than an eternal existence.\textsuperscript{21}

In classical Islam God’s attributes were enumerated and discussed by a number of theologians and philosophers, but His essence was deemed to lie beyond human knowledge. Islamic fundamentalism as represented by Qutb’s system shifted the debate to Islam’s essence and attributes. Hence the fundamental principles of Islam were considered by Qutb to consist in their delineation of God’s divinity as well as human servitude in carrying out the tenets of the message as handed down to the seal of the Prophets, Muhammad. These fundamentals spell out God’s divinity (\textit{uluhiyya}) and the servitude of animate and inanimate objects to God (\textit{\textsc{ubudiyya}}), in addition to the true essence of the cosmos, life and humanity. Moreover the visible and invisible world’s are both in integral part of this doctrine and should be present treating the vicissitudes of human existence.\textsuperscript{22}

These fundamentals are not the result of an exertion by the human mind. Rather, the human mind receives them in their entirety once it is freed of its...
priori conceptions. Once it does so by adhering to the sound linguistic or conventional meaning of the text in which such principles are propounded, the human mind has no function other than to understand the exact meaning of the text, irrespective of its conformity to the axioms of reason. Hence one must accept the existence of angels, jinns, resurrection, hell and paradise without equivocation.

According to Qutb, the principle of divinity is the primary and most efficacious essence in the formation of Islamic doctrine. The existence of such an essence, being absolute and eternal, does not stand in need of external evidence. The innate nature of human being recognizes this existence, unless it is encumbered by corrupt beliefs that render it incapable of receiving this single fact. Furthermore, the methodology of Qur'an itself is not concerned with affirming the existence of divine power. Rather, it concentrates on describing its true quality in order to rectify the distorted views of other creeds. This reaction is not confined to distortions which prevailed before the rise of Islam. Its scope covers all deviant beliefs down to the present.23

It also rectifies the dualism of Descartes as well as Bergson’s vital power, in addition to the materialism of Parmenides in the ancient world and that of Karl Marx in the modern period. The Qur’anic methodology is first and foremost concerned with the questions of monotheism rather than existence, its main aim is to show the simple indivisible and unique essence of God, it also asserted the attributes of God in their utter uniqueness and splendor.24

4. Knowledge, Causation and Faith:

In Islamic fundamentalism, the affinity between philosophy and natural science, an axiom of classical and medieval thought, is ruptured and deemed to be unwarranted. Scientific knowledge is confined to teaching details and the superficial alterations, a fact that renders its concepts temporary, relative and liable to change. Science is linked with experimental knowledge rather than discovery of underlying principles.25
Islam continues to be created with stimulating renaissance. Nevertheless, Islamic fundamentalism, while placing the Qur’an outside the scope of modern science and philosophical debates, persists in attending to the shortcoming of western theories and trends of thought Qutb, for example, highlights the fact that life itself is not inherent in the nature of matter or the universe; rather it was inferred by God into dead substance. This statement allows him to refute Darwin’s theory of evolution in so far as it leaves aside supernatural factors in explaining the emergence of living beings. He also calls Karl Marx’s interpretation of social progress by means of purely economic laws an arbitrary idea; so also is Bergson’s concept of life as a willed or vital creation.  

While Islamic fundamentalism rejects the atomist theory of orthodox Muslim theologians, it retains the idea of God as the real cause of events. Thus the connection between a cause and its effect is assumed to be the result of God’s action. The metaphor used by al-Ghazali to show that combustibility, in the case of a flame coming into contact with a piece of cotton has no other cause but God, is reiterated by Qutb. A piece of cotton is not set alight because of an act performed by flame, but as a result of God’s will to render the piece of cotton combustible. Moreover, God may decide to suspend the common course of nature, and miracles occur as an indication of the divine interruption of fixed laws. Such a miracle, Qutb points out, is mentioned in the Qur’an in relation to Abraham when a burning flame failed to set him alight. It is for this reason that the use of empirical evidence in order to demonstrate causality becomes an arbitrary human construct.  

Ibn Taymiyya

A prominent influential figure Taqi al-Din Ahmad Ibn Taymiya Ahmad bin Abd al-Halim b. ‘Abd al Salam (1263-1328) is better known simply as Ibn Taymiyya. He was born in Harran (northern Syria) in (661/1263) in a famous family of scholars and theologians. His life fell wholly within the period of the first Mumluk dynasty (1250-1382). He was a staunch Hanbalite and his time is
often termed as “the pre-renaissance period in the history of Islam. Ibn Taymiyyah was himself a Hanbali in many thought not all Juridical and theological matters and a salafi on a wider plane. He has left a great impact on conservative sunni circles as well as in liberals and conservatives of the modern period.\textsuperscript{28}

Since his parents resettled in Damascus he got all his education there. Along with the study the Qur’an, Hadith and Fiqh he also studied mathematics, history and literature. But he paid special attention to Hanbalite law, of which his father was an ambient exponent.

Ibn Taymiya’s main doctrine was, in Hanbali fashion, based on supremacy of Qur’an and Sunnah and the salaf (early Muslims as ultimate authorities). Ibn Taymiya condemned pilgrimages to the tombs of saints (Ziyart al-qubur) as bida’h (innovation) tantamount to worshiping something other than God.\textsuperscript{29}

It is said that he had studied under near about two hundred teachers who belonged to the Hanbalite school of thought. The founder of the Hanbali School, Ahmad Ibn Hanbal (780-855) was a staunch believer of the literal interpretation of the Qur’an and Sunna.

Ibn Taymiyya remained a prisoner in the citadel for more than two years: he continued to write and issue fatwas; there dates from this period several works which have survived and which were written with the aim of justifying his doctrines, in particular the kitab Maarif al-Wusul, on the methodology of fiqh.\textsuperscript{30}

His doctrine was intended to be primarily, while centred on and inspired by the spirit of Hanbalism, a doctrine of synthesis or of conciliation — “The happy mean” (wasat) which would accord to each school its rightful place in strong hierarchical whole in conformity with the precepts of the Qur’an and the Sunna. The dogmatic theologians, he wrote “based their system on reason (agt), the traditionists based on hadith (nakl) and the Sufis based on freewill.
These are precisely the three elements Ibn Taymiyya aimed to integrate and harmonize in a solidly constructed doctrine which might be defined as conservative reformism, whether it was a case of the formulation of the credo, the rehabilitation of ijtihad or the reconstruction of the state.\textsuperscript{31}

In the field of dogma, Ibn Taymiyya’s main intention was to follow the Qur’an and Hadith, and he tried to describe God only as He has described Himself in His book (Qur’an) and as the Prophet has described Him in sunna. In fact, in his definition of faith (iman), Ibn Taymiyya encompassed the feelings on which it is based, the formulas in which it is expressed and the actions through which it exists. In politics, he admits the legitimacy of the first unto him; to hold fast by the convenient of Allah, all together and be not disunited; to be mutually sincere with those whom Allah has given authority over you.

In support of the above lines at another place, Ibn Taymiyya quotes from the Qur’an: “O who believes obey Allah and obey the Messenger and those in authority among you”. The only exception to this is made of an order of disobedience to anything Allah has rejoined. He stated in clear words that no created (man) should be obeyed in matters that constitute disobedience to the Creator.\textsuperscript{32}

The central idea of the Siyasa al-Shariyya is the need for coercive power to maintain discipline and enforce order and side by side with this idea is the concept that state and religion are inseparable. On the necessity of authority he believes that the exercise of authority for the benefit of the caliphs (Rashidun) in their chronological order of succession, but distinguishes between the problem of the caliphate (Khilafa) and that of the respective merits (tafdil) of these four, caliphs. Although he declares the obvious superiority of Abu Bakr and ‘Umar he acknowledges that there might be hesitation in pronouncing (tawakkul) on the respective merits of ‘Uthman and Ali’.\textsuperscript{33}
Ibn Taymiyyah starts with the thesis that the world was created by God to serve Him. The absolute unity (tawhid) of God is stressed in a chapter significantly entitled Siyasa lahiyya wa inaba nubawiyya. On the general principles of divine government and appointment to the lieutenancy of the Prophet under this heading he writes—

“Allah is pleased to see you comply with three rules: To worship Allah (making none a partner of the people is one of the greatest religious duties). He further emphasized that it is necessary that being in authority should be considered (part of) religion and a good action that brings one nearer to Allah: He also stated that experience has proved the saying ‘sixty years (domination) of a despotic ruler are better that one single night (passed) without a ruler’. That is why the early Muslims, like Fudail b. Iyad and Ahmad b. Hanbal and others, used to say:

"Were our invocations answerable by Allah, we would pray that the ruler (be helped and strengthened by him).”\(^{34}\)

Ibn Taimiyya condemned the pilgrimages to the (Ziyarat al-qubur) to the tombs of saints as bid’ah (innovation) as tantamounting to worshiping other than God. He rejected as alien and an innovation, the methods and contents of Ilm al-Kalam, falsafah and metaphysical Sufism. This conservatism was also, interestingly the basis of Ibn Taymiyya’s arguments against blind obedience to taqlid (established judgments). According to his views, the salaf had to balance in the sacred sources with their own ijtihad in order to understand and live according to God’s law. Ibn Taymiyya thus employed an ijtihad which also incorporated qiyas (analogical reasoning). Iman (a deep pietistic belief) was for Ibn Taymiyya the source and power of all religions as well as its epistemological foundation without it he thought, doctrine could have no meaning or force. In Ibn Taymiyya’s own life as a sufi he exemplified such belief. His treatise on iman is one of the most profound and subtle treatments of the subject produced in medieval Islam.\(^{35}\)
A number of Ibn Taymiya’s ideas have a relevance to society and politics. His notion of the closeness between religion and state, his defining of the Mongols as Kaffirs in spite of their public Islamic discourse and his general antipathy toward the *ahl-al-Kitab* ("People of the book"). Ibn Taymiyya’s significance for modern Islamic thought and culture is deep particularly in conservative and Islamic circles. But some liberal trends have also invoked him, especially for his notion of *ijtihad* and his antipathy to taqlid. Insofar as modern Islam has been profoundly preoccupied with issues of religion, state, and society, Ibn Taymiyya’s influence is present, whether implicit or explicit. This is particular true for the Arab world.

The Wahhabi movement and the Saudi state have been deeply affected by some of Ibn Taymiyya’s thoughts like on *Qur’an* and *Sunnah*, a literalistic exegesis, a distaste for speculative strains of theology and mysticism a rejection of visiting tombs, and a conception of the ummah (community) in Medina as the model for an Islamic state, all reflect Ibn Taymiyya’s outlook.\(^{36}\)

Many of the later Islamic thinkers and trends have been influenced by their general worldview, particularly in their conception of Islam and the Ummah and the close connection between politics and religion. This can be shown in the thoughts of Hasan al-Banna of Egypt, whose insistence on Islam as a synthesis of religion and state and his practical religious tendencies owe much to the earlier thinkers. In the Egyptian Sayyid Qutb this tendency become pronounced. In his notion of *Jahiliyah* (era of ignorance) as the non-Islamic modern culture of moral and intellectual relativism and absolute conflict between God’s law and that culture. Qutb exemplified Ibn Taymiyyah’s sharp distinction between Islam and non-Islam particularly. Qutb’s persistent attack on Muslim rulers, regimes, and intelligentsia for allegedly ruling and teaching according to secular principles rather than Islamic teaching seems firmly based on Ibn Taymiyyah’s pronouncements concerning the status of Mongols. In this view, these modernists are like the Mongols, in publicly, responding Islam but acting against it. They thereby confuse others whose beliefs are already weak.
For this the Muslim identity of such persons must be questioned. The more militant fundamentalist groups particularly in the Arab world and Iran have explicitly argued for them to be Kafir.\textsuperscript{37}

A prominent example *takfir* ("ex-communication") can be seen in the widely disseminated tract *Al-Faridah al-ghaibah* (the absent precept) by Muhammad Abd al-Salam Faraj who was the intellectual voice of that group which engineered Anwar al-Sadat’s assassination. He quotes Ibn Taymiyyah’s fatwa (ruling) on Mongols as precedent in his *takfir* of contemporary rulers and religious authorities. The book has been considered by the religious establishment in Egypt to be offensive, doctrinally wrong and dangerous. Even years after Sadat’s death, the *Majallat Al Azhar* (journal of Azhar) of July 1993 published a special booklet criticizing Faraj’s tract point by point in 112 pages.\textsuperscript{38} Concerning Ibn Taymiyyah’s *takfir* of the Mongols as a universal precedent, the *al-Azhar* booklet argued that Ibn Taymiyyah’s fatwa was time bound and relevant only in that particular case. This fatwa has no relevance in Egypt in the twentieth century. Can there be any comparison between these people - the Mongols who did to Muslims (the things) carried within the history books and (modern) Egypt its rulers and its people, can one really compare those with these. These explanations (which we have given ) of fatwa show that Ibn Taymiyyah took his position (solely) with regards to the contemporary situation of the Tatars (thus in his view). They were (*kafirs*), non Muslims, even though they spoke the language of Islam in an attempt to lead Muslims astray\textsuperscript{39}.

With the polarization of modern Islamic political thought on these issues in the latter half of the twentieth century, Ibn Taymiyyah’s influence, on Sayyid Qutb, the Islamic movements and others has become dominant on one side of the dispute.\textsuperscript{40}

\textsuperscript{37} For the meaning of *takfir*, see the previous discussion.

\textsuperscript{38} Majallat Al Azhar, July 1993.

\textsuperscript{39} The term *kafir* refers to non-Muslims in Islamic terminology.

\textsuperscript{40} For a detailed discussion of the role of Ibn Taymiyyah in Islamic thought, see the earlier part of the text.
Ruhollah al-Musavi Khomeini

Ayatollah Khomeini is one of the outstanding personalities of the 20th century. As a religious leader, a social reformer and above all, an astute statesman, Khomeini left great impact on the international scene in the last quarter of the 20th century. He brought an end to the Pahlavi dynasty and ushered in republicanism with a sound foundation of democracy. He was the first shia leader to have seriously tried to forge Muslim unity by minimizing and marginalizing the differences between the sunni and shia sects of Islam. He transformed the Iranian people from a highly pro-western society into a community rooted in Islam and Iranian history. He started a bloodless coup and overthrew the regime of Reza Shah Pahlavi in a manner that has no precedence in history. The fact that democracy and republicanism have taken root in Iran and that the by Islamic Republic of Iran is no more a soft state that can be easily targeted by big powers by establishing the contribution of Khomeini immensely.41

He was born into a clerical family in Khomeini, a small village in Central Iran, Ruhullah al-Musavi Khomeini was the youngest of six children. His father, Mustafa, who had studied theology in Isfahan and Najaf, was murdered seven months after Khomeini’s birth. As a child Khomeini studied Arabic, Persian poetry and calligraphy at a maktab and a government school. He lost his mother who was a strong influence on him, at the age of sixteen. A year later he left Khomein to study in a madrasah in Arab under Shaykh Abd al Karim Hariri Yazadi (1859-1936) and later followed him to Qom. There, he completed the three steps of religious education, and by the early 1930s he had become a mujtahid. At 27, he married Batul Saqafi.42

In the 1930s, Khomeini chose teaching as a career. He was not happy with Reza Shah Pahlavi’s modernization and secularization of Iran, a project restricted to big cities, Khomeini expounded on ethics that brought him to the attention of the authorities for the first time. When Reza Shah was forced to abdicate in 1941 Khomeini saw it as the thin end of the wedge of a western
ideological and cultural offensive. To counteract it Khomeini advocated a united clerical establishment. His first political statement appeared in a visitor’s book in a mosque at Yazd in 1944. It began with the Qur’anic verse, “say I do admonish you on one point, that you do not stand up for God, in pairs or singly”. The significant point in the lines that followed was his emphasis on rising up the name of God.43

Khomeini’s main objectives for the future were two fold: to control those forces unleashed by the revolution and consolidate his regime.

By the end of the 1940s Khomeini’s interests in the politics, which he considered just as much part of Islam as a philosophy, and theology, increased. In the early 1950s he was to witness the rise of the nationalist Muhammad Mossadegh and his rapid downfall brought about by the United States and Britain. In 1962 when the chief Iranian theologian, Ayatollah Muhammad Hosayn Bariyerdi, died the burden of fusing religion and politics fell on Khomeini, whose aim was more to Islamise politics rather than to politicize Islam. The secularization of policies affected by Reza Shah in the early 1960s was seen as aping the west and leading to marginalization of Islam. This gave Khomeini his first chance to oppose the ruler. Bazaris (the commoners) turned to Khomeini as they felt their livelihood was threatened by the Shah’s attempt to shift power to the burgeoning commercial and industrial bourgeoisie. Khomeini utilized the Shia zeal for martyrdom during the mourning ceremonies in the month of Muharram by comparing the Shah’s regime to that of the early Muslim ruler Yazid. On the day of Ashura in 1963 Khomeini delivered a forceful sermon against Shah, Israel and the United States, ending with a warning to the Shah to mend his ways. The result was a wave of anti-Shah marches in Tehran over the next two days, which prompted the Shah to have Khomeini arrested and removed to Tehran. Khomeini was the undisputed leader of the Iranian people, he turned his attention away from Shia rituals to the social, political, and cultural aspects of Islam. His opposition to granting extraterritorial rights to United States led to his arrest again in October 1964.
Consequently, Khomeini was sent into exile in Turkey wherefrom he went to Najaf in Iraq. In Najaf he addressed the educated youth and the left wing anti-Shah Iranian student organization with which he developed a strong relationship. His written statements and audiotapes proved to be most effective weapons in the buildup of the revolution. Likewise, the teachings of Dr. Ali Shariati, Murtaza Mutahhari, and Mahmud Taleqani brought intellectuals into Khomeini camp. He returned to Tehran in February 1979 and received a spectacular welcome. His limousine was borne on human shoulders from the airport to Behisht-e-Zehra, a distance of about 30 km where he prayed for the souls of the martyrs of the revolution. Newspaper, reports estimated 10 million people in the city of Tehran en-route the airport to the cemetery. He was now Imam Khomeini, a title used for a great religious leader.44

Khomeini’s objectives for the future were twofold: to control the forces unleashed by the revolution and to consolidate his regime. Mehdi Bazargan, who had successfully attracted many young people to religion in the 1960s and 1970s, was appointed prime minister of an interim government, with the task of preparing Iran for the transition from monarchy to an Islamic republic, which was approved by a referendum in March 1979. After this Khomeini, then aged 77 withdrew to Qom from 1979 to 1989, the year Ayatollah Khomeini died, he guided the destiny of the newly formed Islamic Republic of Iran singly and sometimes with support from the clergy, quite a few of whom were his students. During Bazargans’ prime ministership, Bani Sadr’s presidency was neither smooth nor long.45

Later a conflict developed between Bani Sadr and Prime Minister Muhammad Ali Raja’i Bani Sadr filled the presidential office and other organizations with western trained technocrats, who had little sympathy for ‘reactionary’ or ‘incompetent’ religious leaders. However, it failed to attract the imagination of the Iranian people as the Majlis (Parliament) found Bani Sadr’s approach ill-timed and provocative. The confrontation escalated when Muhammad Ali Raja’i was appointed Prime Minister by the Majlis on
Khomeini’s recommendation. In the conduct of war, too, Bani sadr lashed with Khomeini. As differences between the religious establishment and Bani Sadr grew Khomeini dismissed him and replaced him with Rajai. Later Raja’i was killed in a bomb explosion along with Prime Minister Bahunar. This was followed by a witch hunt against the opposition and the ‘counter revolutionaries’, heralding a period of indiscriminate imprisonment, torture and killing. Ayatollah Khomeini propounded the theory of velayat-i-faqih i.e. the final authority of the accredited and supreme jurist. This is rule by ‘select jurists’ through their representatives in whom they have complete trust. This was, according to Khomeini, the only source of divine dispensation in the absence of the Imam. Khomeini now had the privilege of having several of his students and followers in the Majlis. The upper religious class was in a position to take over the government of the country, serving Islam through Iran rather than serving Iran through Islam. With Hujjatul Islam Ali Khomeini, Mr. Husayn Musavi Rafsanjani and Aradabili in high position of state. Khomeini could now relax with the knowledge that this former disciples were in charge of the country.46

The eight year war with Iraq was a great testing time for Khomeini, which he withstood with dignity. Retrospectively, it is now clear that before breaking the might of Iraq. The U.S. used Iraq to contain the Islamic revolution of Iran. It now appears that America succeeded in both the objectives while Iran and Iraq suffered miserably. After demolishing Iraq. It how seems ‘the U.S. is gradually moving towards a similar treatment of Iran; it is indeed commendable that during the worst period of Iran – Iraq hostility, Khomeini neither abandoned his ideology nor diluted the theme of Pan Islamism. The long and protracted war with Iraq could have been shortened had Khomeini not insisted on the condemnation of Iraq as an offender through a resolution in the United Nations. Iraq had no doubt imposed the war on Iran at the instance of the U.S. that felt threatened by the Islamic revolution.47
Ayatollah Khomeini was equally resolute in demanding the resolution of condemnation. As it did not come, war continued and Khomeini pursued it regardless of the burden it imposed on the country. He grew bolder in focusing on Islamic internationalism. His 1987 message entitled the charter of Islamic revolution began with the Qur'anic verse. “And he who goes forth from his house a migrant to God and his Apostle, should he die his reward becomes due and sure with God” (sura IV: 100). This message was sent to Iranian officials in Saudi Arabia and other Arab countries. Forced by long range missile attacks on Iranian cities, desertion of soldiers from the war front, poor economy and diplomatic pressures, Ayatollah Khomeini ultimately decided to unconditionally accept the United Nations Security Council resolution to end the war with Iraq. A *fatwa* amounted to death sentence against Salman Rushdie, following the publication of blasphemous novel “the Satanic Verses” in February 1989 brought Ayatollah Khomeini again into focus. Much has been said regarding the fatwa, but the fact that the novel is an attack on the integrity of the Prophet Muhammad (SAW), his faith and family has been fully established. Throughout the history of Islam, Muslims have always been very sensitive with regard to the person of the Prophet Muhammad (SAW) and have never allowed any mischievous attempt at deliberate insults to go unpunished what Khomeini did was in fact in keeping with a long tradition. By issuing the fatwa, Khomeini gave voice to Muslim resentment as the leader of the entire Islamic world and a putative spokesman for Muslims everywhere. Ayatollah Khomeini also took up the question of succession in good stead. He asked an assembly of experts to choose the next leader early in 1983. The assembly nominated Ayatollah Husayn Ali Muntazir to succeed him. But things did not go smoothly in his favour as some of his actions brought to focus differences in their perceptions. In March 1989 Khomeini removed Muntaziri from office and set up a body to review the constitution. Ayatollah Khomeini died in June 1989. Ayatollah Khamnai was selected as the next leader of the Islamic Republic of Iran. It was a smooth transition of power to conclude the long
career of Ayatollah Khamnai, who had engineered one of the most significant revolutions of history.48

Ayatollah Khamnai is ranked with some of the greatest leaders of the 20th century. His achievements are comparable to those of Vladimir Lenin, Mustafa Kamal Pasha, and Mahatma Gandhi. The very fact that Iran is a vibrant democracy and an Islamic Republic, and has not deviated from the direction Khomeini gave it goes out to show that he was rooted in the religion of Islam and the culture of Iran. He successfully guided the future of his country and gave to its people a sense of destiny, which they always longed to have, but did not really have for centuries.49

**Sayyid Qutb**

Scholar and journalists, especially from the west, embarked on a fresh and renewed study of Sayyid Qutb’s (d. 1966) writings after the September 11, 2001 attacks on World Trade Center. However, in their quest for tracing out the intellectual roots of what they describe as Islamic fundamentalism or radicalism, these scholars and journalists seem to have misread Sayyid Qutb. They highlight a part of his legacy in a lopsided way without taking note of his whole Islamic legacy. They seem to have focused on what they saw as the radical elements in Qutb’s writings like his views on *Jahiliyyah, jihad*, vanguard etc. in their own way, not withstanding or discerning and highlighting the purpose behind the exploration of these terms. The following quote from John Zimmeraman provides us a convenient example in this regard. “The 11 September attacks cannot be understood fully without an understanding of the ideas of Sayyid Qutb, who is widely acknowledged as the intellectual godfather for the various modern radical Islamic movements including *al-Qaida*. Qutb’s writings are important because they define the core elements that have been adopted by all radical Islamic movements”.50

Qutb Ibrahim Husayn Shadhili was a literary critic, novelist, poet, Islamic thinker and Egypt’s most famous Islamic activist of the twentieth
century, exceeding in the reputation even the founder of Al-Ikhwan al-
Muslimun Hasan al-Banna (1906-1949). His passionate writings contain
powerful maladies of contemporary Islamic societies and an idealization of the
faith through the words of the sacred texts.  

Sayyid Qutb Ibrahim Husayn Shadhili popularly known as Sayyid Qutb
was born on 19th October 1906 in Mosha, a village in the district of Asyut,
some 235 miles in the south of Cairo, upper Egypt. He was the eldest among
the two brothers himself and Mohammed Qutb. His father al-Haj Ibrahim Qutb
was a very pious, middle class farmer who was well respected in the village.
He was also a member of Mustafa Kamil’s nationalist party and a subscriber to
its paper, the Banner.

God had endowed Qutb with a sharp memory and mental faculty. He
was hardly ten years old when he memorized the whole of Qur’an. His
educational life started from a traditional madarasa of his village Mosha. He is
best known in the Muslim world for his work on what he believed to be the
social and political role of Islam.  

His father was a landowner and the family estate’s administrator, but he
is also well known for his political activism, holding, weekly meetings to
discuss the political events and Qur’anic recitations. At this young age, Sayyid
Qutb first learned about the melody illustrations of the Qur’an, which would
fuel the artistic side of his personality all the way to his last book. In his teens,
Qutb was also a critic of the religious institutions he came into contact with, he
disliked how those institutions were used to form public opinion and thoughts.
He had a special disdain, however, for schools that specialized in religious
studies only, and sought to prove that local schools that held regular academic
classes as well as religion were beneficial than the unevenness of the religious
school program. At this time, Qutb developed his bent against the Imams and
their traditional understanding of education, and this would be the standard of
confrontation throughout his life.
Sayyid Qutb visited the United States for higher studies in educational administration. Returning from America his experience was not truly a crisis for Qutb, but rather a moment of choice and fine tuning of his already Islamic identity.

Fundamentalist thought's of Sayyid Qutb

Different theories have been advanced as to why Qutb turned from secular reformism in the 1930s to Islamic extremism in the 1950s and 1960s. One common explanation is that the conditions he witnessed in prison from 1954-1964, including the torture and murder of Muslim Brothers, convinced him that only a government bound by Islamic law could prevent such abuses. Another is that Qutb's experiences in America as a darker-skinned person and the insufficiently anti-western policies of Nasser demonstrated to him the powerful and dangerous allure of Jahiliyyah a threat unimaginable, in Qutb's estimation, to the secular mind.54

Qutb held that belief in matters that cannot be seen (or are imperceptible) was an important sign of man's ability to accept knowledge from fields outside of science. The concept of the imperceptible is decisive in distinguishing man from animal. Materialist thinking, ancient as well as modern has tended to drag man back to an irrational existence with no room for spiritual, where everything is determined by the sensory means alone. What is peddled as 'progressive thought' is no more than dismal regression.

Different theories have been advanced as to why Qutb turned away from his secularist tendencies towards the Islamic sharia. "It is necessary for the new leadership to preserve and develop the material fruits of the creative genius of Europe, and also to provide mankind with such high ideals and values as have so for remained undiscovered by mankind and which will also acquaint humanity with a way of life which is harmonious with human nature, which is positive and constructive, and which is practicable."55
It is the same with the Eastern bloc that democracy in the west has become infertile to such an extent that it is borrowing from the systems of the Eastern bloc, especially in the economic system, under the name of secularism. Its social theories, foremost among which is Marxism, in the beginning attracted not only a large number of people from the East but also form the west. But on the whole, this theory conflicts with man’s nature and its needs. This ideology prospers only in degenerate society.\textsuperscript{56}

Qutb offered his own explanation in \textit{Ma‘alim fi-l-Tariq}, arguing that anything non Islamic is evil and corrupt while following \textit{Sharia} as a complete system extending into all aspects of life, would bring every kind of benefit to humanity, from personal and social peace, to the “treasures” of the universe.\textsuperscript{57}

Whether he espoused dictatorship, or, later, rule by \textit{Sharia} law with essentially no government at all, defensive Jihad, or, later offensive jihad, Sayyid Qutb’s mature political views always centered on Islam. Islam as a complete system of morality, Justice and governance, whose \textit{Sharia} laws and principles should be the sole basis of governance and everything else in life. In an earlier work Qutb described military jihad as defensive, Islam’s campaign to protect itself. On the issue of Islamic governance, Qutb differed with many modernist and reformist Muslims who claimed that democracy was Islamic because the \textit{Qur’anic} institution of Sharia supported elections and democracy. Qutb pointed out the \textit{shura} chapter of the \textit{Qur’an} which was revealed during the Mekkan period, and therefore, it does not deal with the problem of government. It makes no reference to elections and calls only for the ruler to consult some of the ruled as a particular case of the general rule of \textit{Shura}.\textsuperscript{58}

Qutb argued (at that time) that a ‘just dictatorship’ would be more Islamic than a tyrannous one. Qutb also raised his voice against the then popular ideology of Arab nationalism and later become disillusioned with the 1952 Nasser Revolution having been exposed to the regime’s practices of arbitrary arrest, torture, and deadly violence during his imprisonment. Sayyid Qutb personalizes the conviction of Islamic movements to oppose...
westernization and westernized leaders of Islamic societies as well as those societies that were working on the same thoughts. To be living in a state of *Jahiliyat* (ignorance of revealed truth) could be considered inimical to Islam.

Sayyid Qutb’s writings showed his firm commitment towards the Holy *Qur’an* and he held that the *Qur’an* contains whatever message is to be implemented by human beings. He firmly believed that Islam is a timeless body of ideas and practices. However, for this belief many scholars accused him of ignoring the needs of reinterpretation of traditions in the context of changing circumstances.  

Sayyid Qutb stated that Islam gave us a comprehensive way of life and provided model solutions to all aspects of human existence. In his most sustained exposition of his views, *Khosa is al-Tasawwur al-Islami wa-Muqawwimatah* (the characteristic and constitutive elements of the Islamic conception 1962), he elaborated various themes and found social commitment and activism being the axis of ideal human endeavour and of life itself. A feature of his social and political programme has been its organism connotations of corporatism and, what he called, *al-tajmmu‘al Haraki* (dynamic concrescence). The success of dynamic concrescence lies in man’s acceptance of the trust given by Allah to master the world and benefit from its resources, but the ultimate purpose of this mastery is to obey the sovereign command, the hakimiyah, of Allah. In this regard he implicitly sanctions collective action to dismiss a ruler who fails to obey the Divine command. Muslims are thus mandated to apply Divine law and are authorized as well as commanded to replace any leaders who fail to do so, he wrote. He was of the view that Muslims in past made armed resistance against those rulers who were deemed to be anti-Islamic, this resistance was not only permissible or laudable but mandatory. Sayyid Qutb’s advocacy of revolutionary changes to restore a true Islamic order has resonated powerfully among those disgusted with the system that the political leadership of the Muslim world have created. In his personal intellectual evolution, Sayyid Qutb himself passed over a
westernizing tendency in his youth to a revolutionary Islamic radicalism. He remained among one of the principal ideologues of the Islamic awakening in the last decades of the 20th century and is avidly read wherever Muslims are found. His writings concerning jihad and Islamic revolution have left major influences on Dr. Ali Shariati and the students who participated in Iranian revolution.  

A contribution of Sayyid Qutb in al-Ikhwan al-Muslimun

(1) Al Ikhwan al Muslimun

Al-Ikhwan aims to bring complete spiritual revival (nahda) in society under Islam... a vision encompassing the moral reformation of youth through physical training, sports, religious and ideological indoctrination, social welfare, national pride, resistance against foreign domination and the establishment of the state run by Islamic norms. Its members share an active ethos critical of traditional Islam, as well as certain pragmatism that sanctions the use of western ideas and technology as a tool to advance Islam.  

Al-Ikhwan al-Muslimun had a history of its humble beginning. It was started in 1928 by Hasan al Banna with the help of his six friends in Egypt. After a long struggle and under the leadership of Hasan al-Banna, Al Ikhwan al-Muslimun became the mass movement among Muslims of the country. In 1948 its membership reached up to 2 million out of a total population of nineteen millions. Having inspired by the Egyptian modeled al-Ikhwan al-Muslimun, the other independent organizations under such name was founded in the other part of the Arab word especially Syria and Jordan. In Egypt the al-Ikhwan al-Muslimun has contested many elections and forms an important part of the country’s pseudo-democratic political landscape. Though this movement was declared illegal in Syria, but is believed to be enjoying widespread popular support among the masses. The Palestinian revolutionary organization Hamas also began its life as an offshoot of al Ikhwan. This movement was initially announced as purely religious and philanthropic society that aimed to spread...
Islamic morals and teachings among the Muslims of the country. With the passage of time and its increasing popularity, al-Ikhwan started to take active part in public affairs and political activities. Al-Banna called for a total and activist Islam. He perceived the Islamic state as a significant ingredient of the desired Islamic order, but Al-Ikhwan leaders did not consider the assumption of political power an imminent possibility at that time. Al-Banna was assassinated by the police on February 12, 1949 and he was succeeded by Ismail Hassan al-Hudaibi (1949-1972) as the supreme guide of al-Ikhwan. But after Hasan al-Banna true leadership vacuumed which appeared in the organization was actually filled by the Syed Qutb who joined Al Ikhwan in 1951 and became the most famous theoretician and the chief ideologue of the organization. Through his active involvement and flamboyant writings he left a deep impression on the Ikhwans including the supreme guides who followed al-Banna.  

Al Ikhwan al-Muslimun has been led by six supreme guides. All of them have took responsibilities in their respective periods and they tried to maintain the dynamism and the viability of the Islamic movement through various means including writings. The first supreme guide was Hassan al-Banna who wrote and delivered speeches pervasively and thereby prodded the Muslims to strive in the way of Islam. The second supreme guide Hassan Al-Hudaibi was an expert in law and jurisprudence. His writings specially his Daat-ul-Qada subdued the preachers of tyranny and disbelief.

The third supreme guide Umar Timpani had been endowed by Allah with an extraordinary power of observation and experimentation. He too demonstrated an appreciable spirit of perseverance and sacrifice. His bold stance was liked by the whole Islamic world. The fourth supreme guide Muhammad Humid Abu Nasr did not write much. However, his work about the atrocities of President Nasser era for the first time brought to light the inner weaknesses of the Al-Ikhwan and the intrigues of hypocrites. The fifth supreme guide Mustafa Mashur has written a vast literature on Islam. His writings are adorned with sound argument. The sixth supreme guide of Al-Ikhwan was...
Mamun al-Hudaibi. He died on 8th January 2004 at the age of 82. He was succeeded by Muhammad Akif on 12th January 2004. Akif is the present supreme guide of Al-Ikhwan.65

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