



Understanding Political Boundaries of Religion via the Divine Theory of Rule

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Abstract: The intersection of faith and political power represents a central debate preoccupying contemporary political theorists. This debate gains particular significance in the context of an Islamic State. In the modern world, interpretations of Islam vary widely, ranging from traditionalist views advocating for extensive religious involvement in politics to secular perspectives favoring a separation based on humanistic experience. Theoretical discourse on the extent of religion's role in politics has now entered a new phase. This study addresses the question: "What is the mechanism of religion's influence in politics?" The proposed hypothesis is that Islamic law, grounded in human needs and the epistemological source of divine revelation, promotes a maximalist interpretation of Islam. Within the framework of the divine theory of governance, this has led to the development of "Political Islam," which is presented as an evolved manifestation of the divine government theory.

Keywords: Religion, Politics, Islamic State, Political Islam, Divine Theory of Government.

پژوهشگاه علوم انسانی و مطالعات فرهنگی
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Introduction

Perhaps, 1,400 years ago, when Islam emerged in the Arabian Peninsula, nobody would believe that a wide range of Islamic discourses are ongoing in today's Muslim society after fourteen centuries, including tolerance-seeking discourses to ultra-rigid and extremist discourses intending to execute the Islamic law completely by their own specific interpretation. Although Islam has been political from the outset, and even acted out to establish an Islamic government in some periods (like the Ottoman Empire in the Sunni world and the Safavid dynasty, who considered themselves to be the protector of Shi'a scholars), but was ostracized from the realm of politics for a long time. It was in the last century again the Islam's entry into – the politics area with a maximal interpretation – manifested under the name of political Islam (Pour Ahmadi and Zolfaghari, 2015: 10). The occurrence of the Islamic Revolution of Iran in 1979 has been the most important issue that has played a role in the realization of the scope of the interference of the Shari'a in politics. This event was so influential that it has opened up a new chapter in Islamic political thought and revived Islamic values and knowledge and created a new gateway to study the scope of Shari'a in the politics (Taheri, 2009). In the contemporary world, we are confronted with numerous readings and interpretations of Islam such as minimalistic Islam, maximalistic Islam, and the Permissible Area, each of which has created a platform for discourses such as traditional Islam, political Islam, and Islamic fundamentalism, which suggests a variety of discourses and new knowledge in the Islamic societies. The root of this awakening dates back to the early seventies of the last century when the phenomenon of returning to religious obligations was formed and many thinkers realized the need for returning to Islamic roots and the restoration of the role of religion in the social life. In this regard, the perception of Islam was divided into two traditional and

political types. Islam in its traditional form somehow compromises with any kind of political system based on various religious, rational, essential excerpts and justifications, etc. Traditional Islam is an old Islam, whose background and history dates back to centuries. People in Islamic societies are more familiar with this type of Islam. In this type of Islam, the rulers and religious scholars (mullahs) live and work separately and next to each other. The ruler is responsible for the affairs of the world and the guardianship of the descendants, and the mullah is engaged in the hereafter affairs, prayers, and fasting. Ultimately, the scholars and jurists are subordinate to the Sultan and do the specific work of religious legitimatizing of the Sultan. But there is a new and modern interpretation and reading opposite to the old and traditional interpretation, which is rooted in Islamic semantics and seeks to return and refer to the original Islam. In this type of Islam, the distinction between religion and politics disappears and the limits of the realm between religion and politics become void. In this kind, which is called political Islam, the religion is the authority of political affairs and its requirements (Jamshidi Rad and Mahmoud Panahi, 2012: 128).

But in these more enlightened and modern interpretations in conjunction with Western modernism, religion is considered to be separated from politics. As a result of this view, any presence and role of religion in the political area would be destructive, abusive, and is confronted seriously. Obviously, the foundations and teachings of this type of political religious thought are different from what is seen and heard in the traditional teachings. Accordingly, the author's focus in this article was on explaining and clarifying the scope of the Shari'a in politics by considering the divine theory of the state, and thus, the realization of a maximalistic reading of religion and its explanation under the umbrella of a new concept called political Islam. For this reason, I first needed to fully determine the

expectation of religion, and then, with this statement, I studied the presence of the Shari'a in the politics.

1. The research question, hypothesis, and methodology

The present research sought to answer the following main question:

- How is the scope of the presence of Shari'a in the politics?

To answer this question, we inevitably needed to raise some other sub-questions as well. Hence, the research sub-main questions are as follows:

- What is the man's expectation of religion in the area of politics?
- What are the interpretations of Sharia's involvement in the politics?
- Which theory can be used to analyze and adapt the state's role in the politics?

In response to the questions of this research, the hypothesis is that the Islamic law, based on the human need and the epistemological source of revelation, with a maximalistic interpretation of Islam and in the protection of the government's divine theory has developed a new concept called the political Islam, which is considered the evolved form of the divine theory of government. The research method was used in this research based on three descriptive (description of human expectations of religion), analytical (expression of different views on the extent of Sharia's involvement in the politics), and explanative (the adaptation of political Islam to the divine theory of the state and the maximalistic religion) aspects.

2. Theoretical framework

The government refers to the structure of a power that has sustainable domination in a certain land over particular people, which is considered the guardian of order domestically and the

guardian of the territorial integrity and the interests of the nation and of every citizen regarding the foreign countries. This structure of power actualizes in the form of administrative, political, judicial, and military institutions and organizations (Ashoori, 1987: 162-163).

The government theories can be classified in different forms. The most important criteria for classifying government theories include:

1. The origin and nature of the government
2. The ultimate of the government
3. The limits of individual freedom and authority of the state
4. The source of the legitimacy of political power

The grouping of legal theories of the state is clearer than other groups based on the criterion of the legitimacy of political power. Considering the power of the state arising from God or the innate rights or the will of people affects the power of the state and the limits of the individual's freedom (Vincent, 1992: 8). Given the available theories of state in Islam, they can be categorized according to the following criteria:

1. The legitimacy source of political power (The appointment by God or selecting by people by observing religious conditions)
2. The conditions of the head of the Islamic government, especially the necessity of having the conditions of being a jurisprudent or adequacy of a skillful believer
3. Applying and justifying the powers and authorities of the Islamic state and ruler (the limits of the powers of the state and the Islamic ruler)

If we consider the legitimacy of the Islamic state derived from divine origin, the intrinsic source of the legitimacy is the rightfulness and credibility of the God Almighty who has the absolute sovereignty of the world and man. Thus, every law and authority enacted or achieved without observing the divine

obligations and forbidden acts would be invalid. In other words, any sovereignty, possession, and authority not stemming from him and not relying on the permission and discretion of the holy nature of the God lacks legitimacy, righteousness, and credibility in the Islamic thought. Therefore, God is the only source of inherent legitimacy and any other legitimacy must acquire its legitimacy from Him. Otherwise, it lacks legitimacy, credibility, righteousness, and legality (Kadivar, 2008: 45).

2.1. The Divine Theory of Government in Islam

In Islam, and consequently in the Shi'i thought, the source of all the powers is God (because the power altogether belongs to Allah) (Al-Baqarah: 165). The source of power in Islam is from the above to the bottom as the authority of the Prophet was subject to and an effect of God's power, which was transferred to his successors. Accordingly, the state has a divine origin, and as such, the Shari'a plays a vital role in the political life. According to this view, the state is created by God and He, Himself, has established and deployed the state. In the view of Islam religion, the government has a Qur'anic base as a social-political institution in the form of caliphate: "When your Lord said to the angels: 'I am placing on the earth a caliph'" (AL-BAQARA (THE COW): 30). Also, it is said in the Qur'an about the judicial function of the government or the caliph: (We said): 'David, We have made you a caliph in the earth. Judge with justice among people and do not yield to your own preference in case it should lead you from the Path of Allah (Sura 38: SAD (THE LETTER SAD)).

From the above verses, the nature and origin of this political-social institution, that is, the state, is manifested in the view of Islam. Also, the divine guardianship in the management of social affairs and political management of society has been directly delegated to the Prophet of Islam (pbuh); after him, this

guardianship has continued in the Imamate Dynasty, and in the time of the absence of the Infallible Imam, this guardianship has been granted to the righteous jurists permitted by the Infallible Imam to rule. The jurists are the caliph of the Lord on earth, the proxies of the Prophet and Imam, and the rulers of Muslims. The righteous jurists are obliged from God to lead the political power towards the goals of religion. The vote, the will, and the consent of the people do not interfere in the legitimacy of the government. People are required to accept the order of the jurists and obey them. The ruling and management of political affairs is the "duty" of jurists and obedience is the "duty" of people. Since no public element plays a role in the proof and legitimacy of the government, this kind of legitimacy is called the divine legitimacy without intermediary (Otherwise, people have a decisive role in the external realization of any government; but, we do not discuss the acceptability, efficiency, and the external realization of the government, but we talk about its political legitimacy. In this regard, the righteous jurists rule the nation by relying on the rich Shiite jurisprudence and the Queen of the Righteousness of Justice based on the interests of the Islamic Ummah. Most of the jurisprudents who have presented a positive argument regarding the government of Shi'i jurisprudence believe in the theory of the state's divine legitimacy. Mohaghegh Naraqi and Imam Khomeini are considered among the most important believers in the theory of divine legitimacy (Kadivar, 1998: 48).

3. Man's Expectation of Religion

There are many views and perspectives regarding the expectation of religion like the religion interference in the politics. The most important of these views focus on two categories of religion comprehensiveness and the individuality of religion.

3.1. The Comprehensiveness of Religion

From this point of view, religion is not just a belief but has comprehensive dimensions and embraces all aspects of human life. In this regard, Islam is a comprehensive ideology embracing the man's world and the hereafter and has clear commandments and decrees for all spheres of life (Behrooz Lak, 2007: 39). This viewpoint, which is mostly known as juridical Islam, believes that, unlike other religions, Islam is a social and political religion and not merely religious and individual. This is to say that the Dos and Don'ts of Islam on the horizon of its comprehensive realization include other areas of human existential dimensions in addition to the private life of individuals. For an Islamist individual's perspective, religion is not limited to the realm of personal destiny and private life. In general, Islam involves the observing of various aspects of individual, social, and political life and has precise orders about various aspects of life. Islam is a school that intervenes and supervises all personal, social, material, spiritual, cultural, political, military, and economic aspects unlike non-monotheistic schools and has left nothing unaddressed even a very insignificant point in the training of man and society and material and spiritual progress. It has reminded all the obstacles and problems on the path to evolution to the community and the individual and tried to eliminate and resolve them (Imam Khomeini, 1998; Vol. 5: 176; Jamshidi Rad and Mahmoud Panahi, 2012: 143).

3.2. Worldly and Relative

In most of the definitions presented regarding becoming worldly, the decline of religion appears as the most pivotal element in various definitions. Another level of worldliness, which is of much interest to sociologists, is the turning of religion to a worldly nature.

Since religion cannot be imposed on individuals in a diverse religious and cultural situation and presenting a commodity to customers who have not to use it is almost impossible without considering their opinion about that commodity, the religious contents are adapted to the consumers' tastes in such a situation. However, it does not mean that the consumers' preferences necessarily and completely determine the main contents of the religion, rather, we only refer to the influence of the needs of the time on the religion (or, more precisely, on the interpretations of religion). This process can lead to the removal of some religious teachings or, at least, to retard and reduce their importance. Therefore, the materialization of inside the religion can be defined as follows: "It involves changes and transformation in the perceptions and religious interpretation, whose apparent and intended function is to preserve and strengthen the religion in the modern world" (Movahed Majd and Hamidizadeh, 2014: 121; and Hamilton, 2002).

4. The Scope of Religion in Politics

As pointed out, the expectation of religion can illustrate the scope and extent of the role of the Shari'a in the politics. Thus, before addressing what religion seeks to answer to what issues in the area of politics, we need to review different views in this regard.

4.1. The Minimalistic View

The minimalists consider the most limited realm for religion in the worldly affairs and politics. They believe that religion has merely given a number of generalities and described the fundamental values. The minimalists claim that what we have in the collection of Quran and tradition can only draw general and value strategies, and thus, we should not expect the drawing of a complete political, economic, and social system from religion

(Haghighat, 2004: 4). Their expectation of religion is minimal (origin and Akhirah (afterlife)). Accordingly, many of the directives and prohibitions issued on social interactions in a general sense are guiding, and religion is basically considered an essential issue (Mojtahed Shabestari, 2002: 230). In fact, we can say that this view is, on the one hand, a philosophical and epistemological viewpoint rooted in the epistemology of the philosophy of science and, on the other hand, is an interpretive and theological viewpoint, which feeds on philosophical hermeneutics. From this perspective, the divine religion and law, in general, and the religion of Islam, in particular, have provided the minimum content in all areas of jurisprudence and law, ethics, and cosmology and have left their maximum to the wisdom and knowledge of the mankind. From this perspective, God granted the construction of the world to the wise men, and what the religious texts - especially the Qur'an - emphasizing is building the Hereafter. Essentially, the prophets have come to build a world that is beyond the reach of human intellect and experience and the building of the available universe has been left to the humans themselves. The proponents of the theory of minimalistic religion believe that the religious texts cannot be referred to in determining the realm of religion since the understanding of religious texts depends on the determination and limitation of our expectation of religion and its realm. Any anticipation of religion and theory, especially on its territory, leads to a certain understanding of the religious texts and this expectation is revealed outside of the religion. In other words, the basic premise of minimal religion is that finding the answer to the question of the realm of religion by referring to religious texts is incorrect, and "Our expectations of religion determine the realm of religion" (Soroush, 1994; Abbasi, 2016: 20).

4.2. The Maximalistic View

The proponents of the theory of maximal have argued that religion has responded to most of the issues needed by man and there is no problem and issue in the worldly life and afterlife of man that the religion has not addressed it. The proponents of this school believe that as Islam is considered as the most complete religion and has not left any tiny issues, it has also addressed political and social affairs in details. In this approach, the precepts of the beginning of Islam are not limited to that specific time and place, and thus, they can have a complete message for our time as well (Haghighat, 2004: 16). The thinkers with a comprehensive view have gathered and analyzed worldly and afterlife goals through “being the goal in essence” and “being the goal accordingly”, or being the purpose due to the first intention” and “the secondary intention”. They believe the truth of the invitation of the Prophets is to distance people away from the world and bring them to Allah Almighty. The prophets have come to heal the heart and ethical diseases. They are commissioned by God to save man from drowning in the world. The message of salvation and guidance to the divine court brought by the Prophets is for the man and the prophets are the celestial agent of human guidance. The hereafter goals are the goal in essence of the teachings of the prophets, but these ultimate goals must be realized in the worldly life of the mankind (Abbasi, 2016: 3).

4.3. The Permissible Area

The proponents of the vacuum area, who provide a maximalistic reading with a slight difference, introduce their theory based on the categorization of religion into proven and non-proven issues. The proven affairs are issues and ordinances in which there is an explicit reference about them. No one can make any interference in such cases. For example, when the Quran makes an explicit statement about a problem, none of the Muslims, including the

jurisprudents and non-jurisprudents, are allowed to act and comment on the contrary. On the contrary, there are things in which religion does not have an explicit reference to them that are non-proven. In other words, the sacred law does not have binding provisions in those areas. In the case of non-proven issues, where the sacred law has not set binding ordinances, the decrees are issued through *ijtihad* and based on the proven affairs (Bagheri and Sang Sefidi, 2010: 65). Muhammad Baqir al-Sadr links the issue of proven and non-proven to the constant and variable issue in *Shari'a*. The proven issues are the constant issues of the religion and the domain of non-proven things is variable where they need to be determined according to the conditions of time and place and through *ijtihad*. The proponents of the theory of the Permissible Area such as Na'ini and Sadr believe that most of the political issues related to the government belong to the area of non-proven issues. That is, the religion does not have an explicit reference to them. Thus, they should be determined in adaption to the conditions of time and place and through *ijtihad* (ibid: 66).

In this view, we may find more relation and link between religion and politics compared to the minimal theory; however, we cannot finally find a deep and substantive relationship between religion and politics in this theory. In sum, one can say that the proponents of the theory of vacuum area see the circle of non-obligatory *Shari'a* rulings depending on time and place broader than the maximalists, even though they consider the circle of religious judgments broader compared to the minimalists.

5. The Nature of the Religious Government in Iran

Fiqh-based (Juridical) Islam according to the divine theory of the state is the only interpretation of political Islam that has succeeded in establishing a rule based on Islamic law in Iran led

by Imam Khomeini (Pbuh). What has been said about the conceptual developments of political Islam is strictly true about the Shi'i religion. The Shiite religion was the principles of a protest movement and its controversial issue was related to the characteristics of the political leader. However, theoretically, Imam or his representative was acceptable and legitimate as a ruler and leader. After the period of special representation, the scholars were appointed as the Imam's general vicegerent. Thus, according to the divine theory of the state, the political ruling originally belongs to God, the Prophet, Imam, and in a longitudinal succession, to the scholars in the Shi'a religion. Although the Shiite religion has always been more or less a political religion in nature, but, one should say that Islam in Iran became political more actively from the early 20th century and sought to actively engage in the politics and enforce Sharia decrees as the law. The development of the clerics' interests towards domestic and international political issues and their active presence on the political developments stage since the late nineteenth century indicated the evolution of their traditional positions. Organizing the clerics was also strengthened under the influence of these developments. The further politicization of Islam in the twentieth century was a response to the pressures and threats of modernism, which was done based on a defensive position. The growth of modernism and foreign thoughts and the institutions and methods of western civilization in Iran since the late nineteenth century onward inevitably caused reactions from the public representation. However, the religious scholars should clarify their positions against new developments. They must either fully justify the new objective and subjective transformations or deny them completely or reject some of the objective and subjective changes due to being in conflict with Islam and accept the rest. However, the religious reaction to the new transformations and Western modernization evolved over

a century and changed its defensive position gradually to an invasive position politically. Intellectually, some solutions were provided to the problems of the new society (Bashirieh, 2001; Jamshidi Rad, 2012: 142).

The term political Islam is a new term that emerged in confronting traditional Islam and created a new model in the governing style and the claims of Muslims. Based on the theory of discourse, political Islam is a discourse that places Islamic identity at the center of political action. In the discourse of political Islam, Islam turns into a superior guide. Babi Saeed believes that the concept of political Islam is used more to describe those political movements of Islam who demand the establishment of a government based on Islamic principles. Therefore, political Islam can be considered a discourse that has been organized around the central concept of Islamic government (Saeed, 2000).

This discourse emphasizes the inseparability of religion and politics and claims that Islam has a comprehensive theory on government and politics and is superior to other political theories due to the reliance on revelation. In this discourse, Islamic interpretations are used to explain and describe the political situation of society and the return to Islam and the formation of an Islamic government is seen as the mere solution to the crises of the contemporary society. The ultimate goal of this discourse is to rebuild the society based on Islamic principles, and to do so, gaining political power is considered an essential prerequisite. The supporters of political Islam consider Islam as a comprehensive ideology, which encompasses the world and the man's hereafter and has clear commandments and ordinances for all spheres of life. Hence, this discourse confronts all modern and traditional discourses with no belief in the integration of religion and politics (Basiri et al., 2016: 50).

6. The Intellectual Foundations of Political-Fiqh-based Islam (Maximalistic)

1. Believing in the inclusive dimensions of religion: In the discourse of political Islam, religion is not just a belief but also has enormous dimensions and embraces all aspects of human life.

2. Inseparability of the area of politics from religion: This view holds that Islam has a comprehensive theory regarding government and politics and is superior to other political theories based on human reason and wisdom due to relying on revelation (Hosseinzadeh, 2007: 17).

3. Belief in the establishment of a modern state based on Islam: Political Islam used Islamic interpretations to explain and describe the situation of the society and considers the return to Islam and the formation of an Islamic government as the only solution to the crises of the contemporary society. Political Islam is seeking to create a kind of modern society to preserve itself from damages of the Western civilization meanwhile benefiting from its positive achievements (Basiri, 2016: 51).

4. The rulings and theories of Islam are comprehensive, complete, eternal, and everlasting. Political Islam believes that all its principles, decrees, and theories originate from God that the Creator of world sent to his creature, i.e., the human being. These sentences and foundations are eternal and constant regardless of time and place and have the peace and interest of humanity in their heart for the worldly and afterlife prosperity and do not become old and inefficient by changing time and place. This is contrary to the materialistic, socialistic, liberalistic, and modernistic theories, which intellectual ideas are limited to human time and place and become obsolete and ineffective by changing time and space and do not consider all human interests and benefits at all times and places, causing confusion, deviation, and worldly and afterlife misery of the human beings; though in

a short time, they may appear gloriously and full of prosperity (ibid).

5. Belief in the enforcement of social, economic, and cultural justice: Political Islam in the light of the rule of religion in the public domain can lead the human society toward an optimal social and economic justice and eliminate many aspects of oppression, poverty, and the retardation of the Islamic society.

6. Providing a sustainable and comprehensive development model: Political Islam believes that all the socialist and liberalist models introduced to the Islamic and non-Islamic countries have not succeeded and failed their mission and the pure political Islam can provide a sustainable and comprehensive development model.

7. A clear fight against the imposed values of the West: Political Islam believes that the Western imposed values such as Western human rights, Western freedom, social and economic development, the Western imposed values (about women), the relations between men and women, etc. have led to the degeneration and collapse of Islamic culture and civilization, while with rejecting and negating them and replacing them with Islamic values, this backwardness can be compensated (Basiri, 2016: 51).

Political Islam is the term used to describe those maximalistic Islamic political groups who demand the establishment of a government based on Islamic principles. Therefore, the political Islam can be regarded as a discourse organized around the central concept of the divine theory of the state and Islamic government, which emphasizes the inseparability of religion and politics and claims that Islam has a comprehensive theory for government and politics. Hence, this discourse is in opposition to all modern and traditional discourses that do not believe in the integration of religion and politics (Mahmoudi Kia, 2017: 138).

Conclusion

By accepting the divine theory of the state and accepting the fact that essence of God brings legitimacy to the state, one can emphasize that:

1. The presence of religion is not limited to religious ethics and personal precepts but also covers all aspects of the political, devotional, and social life of the mankind.

2. Due to the sensitivity of religion to the human worldly life and hereafter, the religion has drawn a macro and systematic framework for the happiness and perfection of mankind in the world and the hereafter.

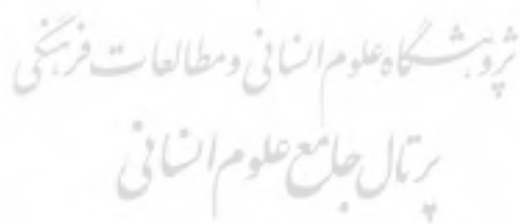
3. The Lord is the intrinsic source of legitimacy and religious politics, that is, the legitimacy established or signed by the sacred law.

4. The reason for the obedience of people to the government and the government authority over people are based on the teachings of the revelation and the source derived from it.

5. For the general reason and in the predication of the Lord guardianship, and the extension of this guardianship to the prophets and their successors, the scope of Shari'a in politics is also expressed in absolute and maximal terms. In articulating the discourse of political Islam, religion is not mere belief, but has comprehensive dimensions and embraces all aspects of human life. Such an attitude is common to all the internal tendencies of the discourse of political Islam. Accordingly, we can put them within the discourse of political Islam and speak of political Islam as a single whole entity in our analysis (Saeed, 2000: 20).

Therefore, this interpretation of political Islam succeeded to eliminate a dictatorship and imperial regime in an Islamic country and achieve the Islamic rule in the process of realizing the aspirations and put into practice a new model called the religious democracy in a realistic and tangible form. In the

political Islam discourse, religion is not just a belief and encompasses comprehensive dimensions. Islam is the reference and the basis of political and social affairs. Justice is the spirit of Islamic law and the initial principle of the teachings of the Prophets, which is prior to anything, even the individual freedom and Shari'a is the central axis of legislation in the Islamic society. The scope of Shari'a in the political system of Islam is universal and comes from divine revelation. In line with the constant and extensive foundations of the Sharia of Islam, this reading of political Islam is mostly based on the maximalistic reading of religion in the light of Islamic rule that the Islamic Revolution of Iran is perhaps one of the examples of its human experiences after the revelation of the Prophet of Islam.



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