Sayyid Qutb

Founder of radical Islamic political ideology

Ahmad S. Moussalli

More than anyone else, Sayyid Qutb's ideology constitutes the core fundamentals of radical Islamism. The in-depth study of Qutb's thought would show us the causes of and justifications for many Islamic groups' indulgence in radicalism, revolution, *takfiri* jihadism and terrorism. Qutb, the founder of Islamic radicalism in the Arab world, would himself become its first victim; he was transformed under 'Abd al-Nasser's regime in Egypt from a moderate Islamist writer to the most radical Islamist thinker in the Arab world. His imprisonment and ferocious torture were refitted into a radical political theology of *takfir* (excommunication) and jihadism. This might have been his psychological compensation for the regime's radicalism, repression and brutality.

Qutb's attempt to implement his radical vanguard's revolutionary program ended with his execution by hanging in 1966. Earlier, when Qutb was out of jail in 1964, he started forming a 'party', or the vanguard that adhered to his radical discourse and included the following principles: human societies do not follow Islamic ethics, system and the shari'a and are in need of essential Islamic education. Those individuals who responded positively to this exegesis should undertake a course of study of Islamic movements in history in order to set a course of action so as to fight Zionism and colonialism. Also, no organization was to be established until a highly ideological training was undertaken (Barakat n.d.: 19; Khalidi 1983b: 147–49; Moussalli 1995: ch. 1).

Most of the radical Islamist groups in the Arab world and specifically in Egypt have been influenced both directly and indirectly by this Qutbian radical *takfiri* jihadism discourse and by his notions of the need to establish divine governance (*hukmiyya*) in the world and the need to eliminate paganism (*ahlīyya*) of the 'other' at all levels: personally, socially and politically as well as culturally and philosophically.

This chapter explains the foundations of Sayyid Qutb's ideological and political discourse. It begins with a brief on Qutb's life, then analytically explains his ideology under two main divisions: the first discusses the ideological and religious discourse and its main concepts; the second, the political discourse and its main underpinnings. It ends with an evaluation of Qutb's overall discourse and its impact on contemporary radical Islamic groups.

Life

Upon joining the Muslim Brotherhood, Qutb reached the conclusion that he had been living a *jaḥili* (paganistic, ignorant) life. Though such a life had educated him in the sciences and modern
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aspects of living, it had not led to inner satisfaction (Moussalli 1995). Qub, born in 1906 in Musha in the district of Assut, received his Bachelors in Arts in Education from Dar al-Ulum where he became instructor and published his first literary book, Muhimmat al-Sha‘ir fi al-Hayat (al-Hassan 1981: 4).

Qub joined the Ministry of Education as a teacher from 1933 until 1939. Influenced intellectually and politically by 'Abbas Mahmud al-'Aqqad, Qub adopted Westernization, and his articles, which were published in respected journals, focused on the critical analysis of political and literary issues with special criticism directed at the government. In 1947 his editorship of Al-'Alam al-'Arabi and Al-Fils al-Jadid expressed his dissatisfaction with Egyptian party politics and he consequently resigned from the Sa'dist party (Khalidi 1983a: 64–66, 94–134; Vatikiotis 1969: ch. X; Hasan 1981: 4; Hilal 1977: 200–8).

In 1948 the Ministry of Education sent Qub to the United States where he was delegated to study at many institutions, including the University of Northern Colorado, where he obtained a Masters degree in Education. His book, Al-'Adila al-Ijtima`yya fi al-Islam (Social Justice in Islam) was first published while he was there. The book became the first of a long list of books espousing Islamism as a political ideology and Islam as a way of life. This new commitment led him, upon his return to Egypt, to write for the first time in the Brethren’s Al-Du`wa journal and to resign his post as adviser to the Ministry of Education in 1951 (Khalidi 1983b: 125, 137–38).

His first book that adopted Islamism as a way of life along with a political agenda, Al-'Adila al-Ijtima`yya fi al-Islam was far removed from radicalism and closer to Hassan al-Banna’s discourse. His stay in the United States, 1948–51, made him review his previous attitude and adoption of Westernization. His dislike of materialism, racism and the pro-Zionist feelings of the West that he personally experienced in the United States seems to have been the beginning of his alienation from Western culture and return to the roots of the culture in which he was brought up.

Upon his return to Egypt, that is, after the death of Hassan al-Banna and the First Ordeal of the Brotherhood, he joined the Brotherhood and became very active in its intellectual and publishing activities, writing numerous books on 'Islam as the solution'. However, until that point no radicalism or violence were involved. His priority was to rewrite a modern understanding of Islam and the solutions that Islam provides to the basic political, economic, social and individual problems of Egypt and the Arab and Islamic worlds (Qub 1982: 11–12; Qub 1965: 71–90; Qub 1983a: 77–78, 83–87).

In 1953 Qub was appointed editor-in-chief of the weekly Al-Ikhwan al-Muslimun, which was banned along with the Brotherhood’s dissolution in 1954 after the fall-out between the Brethren and the Free Officers’ regime. He was put in jail and then released. In fact, the Brotherhood in general and Qub in particular were instrumental to the Officers in paving the way for the Revolution of 1952. However, the Brotherhood refused to accept the Officers’ absolute power and called for a referendum that would show the kind of constitution that the people wanted. Furthermore, it supported General Najib against Colonel 'Abd al-Nasser. After major disagreements between the Brotherhood and 'Abd al-Nasser, the Muslim Brethren were accused of cooperating with the communists to overthrow the government. Their movement was dissolved again in 1954 and many Brethren were jailed, including Qub. He was released that year and arrested again after the Manshiyya incident where an attempt was made on 'Abd al-Nasser’s life, and Qub and others were accused of being affiliated with the movement’s secret military section. In 1955 Qub, sentenced by then to 15 years in prison, and thousands of the Brethren and their supporters, were subjected to ferocious torture leaving unhealed scars up until this very day. In this context, he shifted to radical Islamism and exclusiveness.
His most important books are the gospels of radicalism: *Fi Zilal al-Qur’an, Ma‘ālim fi al-Tariq, Hadha al-Din, Al-Mustaqbal fi Hadha al-Din* and others were written because of and despite the torture that he and others tolerated year after year. Qutb was released in 1965, then arrested on charges to overthrow the government and executed in 1966. Again, isolated from the outside world, under daily tormenting pressures such as witnessing the slaughterings of tens of the Brethren in a jail hospital, Qutb could not blame others. He blamed those who were free outside the jail but would not defend the unjustly imprisoned and ferociously tortured; the free people became for him accomplices in the crimes of the regime and therefore, like the regime, infidels (Moussalli 1995: 31-39; Mitchell 1969: 103, 187–89; Hasen 1981: 7–13, 30–31; Hussain 1983: 7–11, 91).

In order to tolerate his pain and poor prison conditions, Qutb reified his discourse into a radical discourse so that it was not the state and society that were excluding him, but rather he, as the leader of the believing vanguard, was excommunicating (takfīr) and excluding (hijra) individuals, societies and states from true salvation. The whole would become a target of his condemnation and isolation. The state’s vengeful exclusion and repressive intolerance to any sort of popular opposition was counterbalanced by his desperate spiritual, moral, social and political radicalism and intolerance. This is a clear contextual and historical example of how the parameters of radical Islamism developed. From there on and from his cell, he began developing his radicalism.

**Qutb’s ideological discourse**

Qutb does not view Islam simply as a religion in the Western sense but rather as a comprehensive and inclusive way of living in this world and the afterlife. Islam is so inclusive that it is difficult to imagine that it does not cover a substantial issue. It includes both religious and worldly affairs, the spiritual and the physical, the ordinary and the extraordinary (Qutb 1974: 22). All of this, however, is linked to *al-mujahdat al-kawni al-Islami* or the universal Islamic concept that Qutb invents to function as the main constituent and backbone of his ideological interpretation of Islam. Thus, this concept acts for Qutb as an all-engulfing foundation for the system that is to provide the essentials for building the Islamic discourse on life, truth, knowledge, man’s role in the universe, values and, above all, an interpretation of the meaning of life itself.

While Qutb’s discussion of this concept lacks the positive theological substantive elaboration of religious issues, he endows it with seven elastic characteristics that, it is hoped, make it superior and substantive. He defines them as the oneness of God, divinity, constancy, comprehensiveness, balance, positivity and realism. The oneness of God, or *tawhid*, viewed by Qutb as both the core component and the main foundation of the universal Islamic concept, covers all religions, especially the monotheistic (like Christianity and Judaism). Islam, therefore, is no more than complete submission to tawhid, an act requiring the following of the divine path (shari’a) in every aspect of life, the doctrinal, the ritualistic, the political, the economic, the social and others. While it also requires complete submission to God and total revolt against any submission to non-Islamic institutions, states and ideologies, for Qutb the only truly Islamic way of life is implemented when all aspects of life are tied together without differentiation into one unified method and system organized around tawhid. Only in such a way can the basic foundation for any legitimate Islamic politics, economics, ethics and others be built. In addition, all of this should be grounded in the revealed text, and not in the traditions or human schools of thought, theology or jurisprudence or politics. For instance, a Muslim’s belief that there is no ruler and legislator but God should mean that He is the ultimate organizer of life and the universe. Qutb’s political discourse is obsessed with this idea to the extent that it permeates all
personal and public aspects of life as well as the social and the political. In fact, it guarantees to Qutb the coherent Islamic character of the individual, society and state.

Qutb’s non-traditional and textually derived tawhid reduces his perception of humankind’s ways of living into only a duality: the divinely Islamic and legitimate against the jahili (literally ignorant but actually paganist) non-Islamic and illegitimate. This duality leads to the system of life and therefore its individuals who regulate their lives according to the divine to form God’s party or hizb al-Allah; conversely, the system whose individuals follow any other category or human philosophies or non-textually derived religious conceptions are opponents of the divine or simply the devil’s party or hizb al-shaytan (Qutb 1965: 12–14, 212–15). Qutb then identifies the divine system as the textually based system centered on the metaphysical doctrine of tawhid that includes a general religious, political, economic and social order.

While any system of life becomes for Qutb a religion, he identifies religion as a system that produces the method to organize human life, both privately and publicly. For true religion is not composed of abstract notions on theology and law but is rather the regulator of life in general and discipliner of behavior in particular. By this twist, Qutb turns communism, socialism and capitalism into religions (Qutb 1965: 15–17). Thus any system that regulates life is a religion, and consequently the religion of an individual is its behavior. Qutb’s conclusion intends to lead his reader to believe that the Muslims who do not commit themselves to Islam as a system of life are not true Muslims. The incomplete following of Islam, in Qutb’s view, removes an individual from the realm of Islam, since belief without active commitment is not conducive to good Islamic life. This analysis applies as well to governments, states, societies and political life. Here we can see how the ideological roots for takfir (apostasy and excommunication) were developed step by step.

Qutb focuses on activism rather than theory for the deepening and developing of belief; activism equals true belief. Defined in this way, he uses religious ideas for encouraging activism in social and political matters and for rejecting non-Islamic and non-religious systems, philosophies and ways of life. To Qutb, Islam is superior to other religious and non-religious systems, for its discourse is characterized by vital and direct symbols to great truths, themselves incomprehensible by human methods, nonetheless addressing the innermost aspects of humankind. Not only do human philosophies limit, unable to express the truth, but they cannot be properly expressed or comprehended in a simple, clear and meaningful manner.

Even though Qutb finds religions to be composed metaphysically of symbols or allusions to truth, he argues that this is the most credible epistemological and practical source and denies the methodological and substantive legitimacy and the validity of modern, medieval and classical philosophies. He further rejects the legitimacy of any elitist discourse, be it religious or philosophical; the Qur'anic discourse is directed at and should be adhered to by all – the common and the elite. The inaccessibility of ultimate universal principles makes any pretension to superior divine or mundane knowledge worthless and pretentious, and reduces proper interactions with the true symbols and allusions that constitute the bases of credible and possible knowledge, a well-ordered life and the fulfillment of humanity.

Because of the second characteristic, divinity (al-uluhiyya), Qutb indicates the unchangeability of the concept itself, though it is open to interpretation. It is unchangeable because God is its author and source, and Prophet Muhammad is the agency of transmission whose mission is essentially to preach the divine message. The Prophet, like other Muslims, is bound by the same divine law, though singled out as a messenger of God. His function is then not to philosophize and invent doctrines and philosophies but to literally adhere to the divine law. Consequently Qutb makes the prophetic discourse a consequence of the Qur'anic discourse and dependent on it. Divine knowledge transmitted through revealed texts surpasses human knowledge, even that
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of the Prophet, insofar as the divine authority surpasses any human source of knowledge. If this
is the case with the Prophet, it is rather easier for Qutb to deny any formative role or even
more authentic understanding of religion by theologians and jurists.

The divinity of the universal Islamic concept also means that while it is eternal, its un-
derstanding is not, but is subject to the conditions of the interpreter and the tools of interpretation.
Qutb makes a distinction here between understanding the text and the text itself. The textually
derived Islamic concept is eternally valid; human understanding is potentially fluid. The possi-
bility of understanding the universal Islamic concept is extended throughout space and time and
becomes linked to the material, political and economic conditions of the reader and interpreter.
Thus the basic text, or the Qur’an, can be read, interpreted and understood differently by
diverse generations and individuals. Thus past discourses on the meaning of the Qur’an should
not be limited to the possibility of diverse modern and contemporary understanding of the text
as well as the text itself. Thus Qutb theoretically accepts different readings and discourses on the
text insofar as there is no violation of the text itself. The text cannot be contradicted by a past
or present human discourse, but only by the text itself. In this fashion, Qutb aims to establish
the need to reread the Qur’anic text in light of the modern age and therefore develop a modern
Qur’anic discourse.

Qutb further argues that while the divine concept itself is perfect, human thought is imper-
fect, lacks permanence and the capacity for transcendence, and falls easily victim to paganism
(jahiliyya), as is the case in the world today. Not only is human thought strongly influenced by
its environment but it is also easily motivated by emotions and desire. Thus, for instance,
Western thought is not universal, as it claims, but is no more than the by-product of specific
political and economic conditions. Even the religious foundation cannot transcend these
conditions. Because of this, Qutb easily dismisses the universality of ancient and modern Western
thought and philosophy, and argues for the need to exclude them from developing modern
Islamic thought and institutions. Again, medieval Islamic philosophy and theology fall within
this description and consequently should be as well excluded since they are Greek and, there-
to, to Qutb, un-Islamic. For the paganism or jahiliyya of Greek thought for Qutb is the first
foundation of Western thought and the main root for its opposition (Mahdi 1969: 13–15,
32–33, 44–48; Al-Farabi 1926: 2; Al-Ghazali 1963: 4–7; Butterworth 1975: 118–27; Anawati

Thus, unlike human thought, the universal concept is divine and therefore has constancy
or al-thabat, which is its third characteristic, according to Qutb. For its basis, the Qur’an, along
with the divine truths contained within, is constant. Basic ideas on divine oneness, angels, the
Day of Judgment and other core religious doctrines are not subject to addition or subtraction or
to change and development. Its constancy functions as the regulator of human thought in order
to safeguard a proper Islamic way of life and to guarantee stability in individual and social
values. Qutb is very much disturbed by the poverty and fickleness of modern human
spirituality, social interaction, and political governance or hukmiyya. He argues that the way
Western concepts developed has removed the shreds of human stability and instead replaced
the innumerable human feelings with interests in material objectives and therefore deprived
humankind from enjoying material progress within a constant environment. Human relation-
ships with God and with fellow humankind are reduced to rituals, but Islam’s intent is to make
these relations based on humans’ position in the universe and fate, their relation with this
universe, and their relation with the Creator within positive, peaceful constancy (Qutb
1965: 41, 58).

This form of constancy harmonizes the Qur’anic discourse and human life, and functions as
protection for Muslims against misconceived and shaky doctrines, concepts and systems. Qutb
also believes that it provides Muslims with the basis for a stable society, which in turn permits the freedom of development and fighting aggressions against its doctrines and peoples.

Yet, at another level, Qutb formulates comprehensiveness or al-shumuliyya, the fourth characteristic of the universal Islamic concept, as the characteristic that protects against human limitedness and partiality. For a divine, constant tawhid is by definition comprehensive, covering all aspects of life and transcending spatial and temporal particularities. Thus, he puts forward this formula: 'the Islamic concept is comprehensive whereas man’s concepts are partial and limited'. Again, while man’s knowledge and experience are limited, his weaknesses and desires are limitless. Only the Islamic concept gives humankind an intelligible interpretative discourse about the phenomena of life and the universe. Again, only the revealed religious discourse to Qutb should be the center of all aspects of life due to its ability to provide humankind with a meaningful yet true discourse about the divine and the human, the social and the individual, the public and the private (Qutb 1965: 16–26). In opposition to human systems, Islam neither falsely informs human reason nor misdirects human conduct.

The fifth characteristic of the universal Islamic concept, al-tawazzun (balance), precludes for Qutb the development of rash and exaggerated attitudes and philosophies similar to those postulated by other religions and systems. For tawhid balances the known with the unknown. Thus, while man surrenders to God and accepts on faith metaphysical issues, like the nature of God’s existence or the existence of the Day of Judgment, it frees reason to investigate those practical issues that are within the capability of the human mind. Because of their fina (inmate nature or constitution), humans possess a natural inclination to submit to the unknown, and Islam satisfies that need by addressing this consciousness. Humans also possess the counter-inclination to know, and Islam also meets this need by calling on humankind to extend its knowledge in the sciences that are within human reach. However, the human mind should be careful not to confuse the two aspects of life, because the investigation of the first is futile and impossible, while too much emphasis on the latter leads to confusion. Islam balances the two by providing humans with a certain scheme of referential authority.

In addition to this, for Qutb the balance of the Islamic concept draws the right relationship between the absolute divine will and the stable and observed universal laws and rules. The laws of nature are, to Qutb, no more than phenomena of the divine will, for there is no necessary relationship between cause and effects, except what has been divinely ordained. What man can do then is to observe and codify laws and consequently realize their objectives and adjust his life accordingly. The most important benefit of balance to Qutb is that in the constancy of the universal laws and the absoluteness of the divine will the conscience is not without solid grounds and is able therefore to adjust its course from one time to another. More importantly, man is not a slave to nature or afraid of its consequences like death anymore, because he then views all of nature as well as his life as part of a totality designed by the divine will. Thus Qutb argues that part of the balance is due to the fact that Islam is part and parcel of nature and an integral part of the universe. In this sense, Islam offers universal concepts and not narrow and conditioned concepts, like what human philosophies do, which have led for centuries to the loss of a comprehensive thought that integrates all aspects of life and unifies mankind. Human thinking suffers from inventing doctrines that corrupt divine concepts, like rationalism and too much dependence on scientific experimentation and its tentative outcomes as a way of understanding the ultimate. This has resulted in replacing metaphysics with science (Qutb 1980a: 25, 140; Qutb 1980b: 30–33; Qutb 1965: 24, 29).

Al-jabiyya (positivity), the sixth characteristic of the universal concept, is concerned with the manner in which man interacts with God, the universe and life. Mainly, Qutb argues that the divine origin of Islam necessitates activism, and not mere inactive belief. God is neither an
 inactive perfection nor restricted to one aspect or another – like the Persians’ gods of light and the god of darkness, Plotinus’ idea of God, the God of only Israel, or mixing the divine and the human as in Christianity. The oneness of God to Qutb embodies a positive concern about the world and the call for Muslims to establish Islamic communities and to deal practically with the individual as well as with society and the state. Islam should not only survive in the conscience, theory or ideals of the spiritual realm but is rather a design for an active commitment to bring about the practical fruits of the divine oneness. Its proper understanding turns it into an individual, social and political motivating force for the community’s advancement and well-being.

The seventh and last characteristic is al-waqi’iyya (realism), which means to Qutb that Muslims must deal with the real world. Islam does not abstractly view the world but postulates an overall order for improvement. Realism, however, does not mean for Qutb that he accepts any reality, but that what Islam calls for is feasible and possible and is not beyond human reach. For instance, the quest for an Islamic state is realistic in that sense, and not because it actually exists. Islamic realism is also idealistic in the sense that it attempts to raise humankind to adopting an ideal. Thus idealistic realism means that Muslims interact with the realities of this world to uplift humans to their true nature and the divine design. Thus to Qutb realistic idealism is the other side of the coin. In other words, though Islam does not call for things that are not beyond human capabilities, it still aims at the highest possible human perfection. Its demands on humans, societies and doctrines are realistic (Qutb 1965: 3; Qutb 1974: 16–20).

**Qutb’s political discourse**

From Qutb’s perspective, the most fundamental political impact of tawhid, the universal Islamic concept, is its postulation of shari’a the political doctrines of which focus on social justice and revolution. Seeking the establishment of a righteous community through obedience to Islamic law, Islam revolts against controlling humankind by human laws and systems, an act that is considered by Qutb to be unbelief. To Qutb, while the proper law governing humankind should be the shari’a, it is also the method that leads humankind to establish just societies. Establishing such societies is more necessary nowadays because humankind is losing its true nature and its problems are on the increase. Qutb’s political ideology or theory is then made up of three underpinnings: divine shari’a versus human law, social justice versus materialism, and revolutionary Muslim societies versus jahili societies (Qutb 1965: 32–33).

**Human law versus shari’a**

Qutb believes that tawhid acts both as a human liberation instrument from the domination of unjust authorities in order to establish the Islamic state and as a social instrument for the development of an Islamic value system and as a system of law. Shari’a plays the role of harmonizing the different aspects of life, from setting up governments to prohibiting the legislation of normative values and doctrines. Qutb argues that the revealed Islamic shari’a takes away the possibility of any unwarranted human control by exploitative legislations. For shari’a sets both social and political systems on a broader moral order and on universal divine laws, as outlined in the Qur’an. Because divine laws are not woven into the interests and customs of particular groups, they do not function, as do human laws, in an alienating and exploitative manner. However, Muslims can at the same time base their ‘legislation’ and its development on the general al-fiqh (fundamentals of jurisprudence). While articulating particular doctrines depends on the conditions of the interpreter, these doctrines stay tentative in comparison to the Islamic law itself. On the other hand, human laws have no true reference but people, whose
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desires and ambitions dictate the principles to be followed. To Qutb, Islamic law is not a social phenomenon but an eternal manifestation of the divine will, which defines the moral, social and political order. In this sense, humankind should not but follow the order because it represents the meta-historical and universal basis. Any human legislation that goes against the order, therefore, has no positive and legal standing. Human legislation should be then limited to codification and re-codification as required by the different conditions of societies (Qutb 1975: 49, 60).

Furthermore, Qutb argues that moral and political sovereignty is a divine right; humans’ duty is therefore to submit to it or else humans fall prey to polytheism or shirk. Any human action or thinking is correct insofar as it involves no contradiction to the divine law. Sovereignty in principle and legislation belongs to God, and its significance goes beyond rituals and beliefs to include politics and government. While the objective of the law is salvation in the next life, still that cannot be achieved without earthy proper living. The two lives should be integrated, and the instrument for that is the shari’a. Because it harmonizes the life of man with the divine will, its universal application becomes a duty on all Muslims in order to attain the Islamic order (Qutb 1965: 16–18, 19; Qutb 1980b: 49, 114; Qutb 1979: 34; Qutb 1970: 60–61; Qutb 1980a: 105).

Furthermore, Qutb organically links morality and the shari’a and underscores the need for their obedience by the ruler and the ruled. For non-adherence to the shari’a by any government, whether democratic or autocratic, removes whatever legitimacy it has. Qutb views the legitimate Islamic government as being, first, the government of law, and, second, of the ruled. Rulers are, however, no more than servants of Islamic law. Legitimacy is then of substantive nature and does not stop at the formal level. While the formal aspect of the government’s function is to regulate human affairs in accordance with shura (consultation) and the individual is obliged to obey the government, obedience cannot be unconditional or absolute. For non-adherence to Islamic law removes any formal legitimacy and creates sufficient grounds for disobedience and revolution.

Legitimacy and law thus become synonyms to Qutb, who argues that even the formal aspect of legitimacy, shura, is part of the law and hence is substantive like any other aspect. This is why functionally legitimacy starts with Muslims’ choice, but continues through applying the law. That people should continue to obey the ruler stems from his adherence to shari’a. Qutb further makes a distinction between the ruler’s function as the executive of law and the initial source of authority that is based on his merits. The ruler derives initial authority and legitimacy from people in general; their perpetuation is, however, linked to proper application of shari’a. The ruler, as an individual, has no intrinsic religious authority or a divine right to rule that is derived from God, however. He derives authority from Muslims’ consent (Qutb 1980a: 107). In an indirect way, Qutb participates in the democratic notion of the legitimacy of representative government or ‘the government of umma’, as he calls it. His understanding of people’s will is a compromise between popular sovereignty and absolutism. Therefore, the ruler’s legitimate authority stems theoretically from two basic components: people’s consent and the application of shari’a.

In this way, Qutb becomes capable of turning down many parts of the formal legitimacy that was advocated in medieval Islamic thought. He does this by a process of de-historicizing and modernizing Islamic political thought on questions of instituting and removing governments and legitimacy. Thus, he drops out many of the accepted medieval notions of government and politics, like hereditary government, rule by seizure and the stipulation that the ruler should be from the Prophet’s tribe (Quraysh). As a general guide, Islam does not specify any superior groups, not even the Prophet’s; all Muslims are equal regardless of origins (Qutb 1980a: 206–7).
More importantly, Quth directs his conclusions about the past towards dealing with the issues of modern governments and politics. In denying the legitimacy of historical processes, Quth wants to condemn changes made now to Islamic principles. Rejecting the use of force to attain power in the past is also directed at contemporary Muslim rulers who seize power and are not popularly chosen. Consequently, contemporary Muslims can legitimately free themselves from imposed governments.

Quth also rejects any indication that the proper Islamic government is a democratic one because there is no class that should be properly endowed with religious rule. Furthermore, it is only by applying Islamic law that the Islamic government is ideological and religiously legitimized. Because Islam has created a society that is based on law, Quth's repudiation of democracy stems from his opposition to the assumed authority of the clergy. Quth underscores the distinction between 'men of religion' or clergy and religious power: the first have no power, the second is invested in the people. The clergy's rule should not be taken as an Islamic political ideal, for neither theory nor practice supports it (Quth 1980b: 58, 63–69, 72).

Instead Quth looks for the Prophetic rule and, its extension, the rule of only the first two caliphs, as a universal human model because of their religious, moral, social and political achievements. This model provided the basis of exemplary conduct and doctrines that ranged from fulfilling humans' true nature to implementing proper political, social and economic duties and rights. However, Quth is not calling for the reinstatement of that Islamic system or the return to that Muslim society. To him, the Islamicity of any system relates to its adherence to Islamic principles; its form may thus change and is subject to development of society. Thus, a multitude of forms can be accepted as long as they are grounded in general Islamic principles. For Quth's priority is not the government's form but the cultivation of Muslims who have strong beliefs and are capable of setting up an Islamic society. Organizational systems are then secondary in a real Islamic life (Quth 1965: 39–42; Quth 1975: 66, 72; Quth 1970: 84; Quth 1980a: 37, 108).

In fact, Quth's elaboration on forms of governments makes formal legitimacy dependent on public choice and denies all elitist forms. Representative government becomes, because of its basic principle (shura), the cornerstone in forming any state. In one way or another, Quth is postulating the need for public participation, and demands the people's right to elect rulers. He does that through also de-historicizing and deconstructing the interpretations of shura. For instance, while Muslim ulama (religious scholar) had to nominally approve the ruler's selection, once elected, the ruler had a free hand within the shari'a. Moreover, Quth's argument that shura is not specifically defined and that its form is an organizational matter depending on the needs of every age has no doctrinal or historical precedent. Shura has been turned into the prerogative of scholars who provided rulers with specific consultations and endorsements rather than viewing it as a principle of government.

Therefore, those societies that do not organize their lives in accordance with the divine law are jahili (ignorant and paganist) societies. For the very definition of a real nation for Quth involves a group of people who are bound by religion as its nationality. Otherwise, there is no real religious nation because attachment to land, race, language and material interests is not adequate for the creation of the Islamicly desired nation (Quth 1965: 85). Thus the importance of Islam is its capability of uniting humankind on a religious basis and doing away with racial, linguistic, territorial and cultural differences. Religion should be the Muslims' nationality. Therefore, Muslims must not copy from Christians' theology that separated state politics from church. The European experience differs then from the Islamic, and Islam is different from Christianity, which lacks a political code to organize the state (Quth 1965: 87; Quth 1975: 58; Quth 1980b: 59; Quth 1983a: 7–9; Quth 1982: 13). Consequently, the setting of Islamic state is
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a religious duty that is needed for both the perfection of human society and proper performance of religion.

Materialism versus social justice

Qutb positions Islam at a crossroads with two antagonist ideologies challenging Islam: communism on the one hand, and capitalism on the other. Because of usury, monopoly, exploitation and injustice, Qutb refuses to view capitalism as a model that Muslims should follow because capitalism has been linked closely to nationalism. States like England, France, Italy and Germany gave themselves, in the name of national interest, the right to exploit, invade or occupy other countries in the Middle East, India, Africa or Latin America. On the other hand, socialism and Islam converge on many essential points, such as advocating guarantees of minimum life standards, work, housing and social justice. However, an Islamic economic system should be an integral part of Islam and its state.

On yet another level, Marxism and Islam clash head-on: Islam is founded on belief in God; Marxism, on denying Him through dialectical materialism, the Marxist core idea. Ultimately, the conflict presented in economic terms (capitalist, communist or socialist) is, to Qutb, the conflict between spiritualism and materialism: the former is represented by Islam and religion in general; the latter, by capitalism, socialism and communism.

Because Marxism is the most advanced level of mechanical and intellectual materialism, Qutb argues that the capitalist and the socialist camps disagree and wage wars for material benefits and their difference is a matter of degree, of organization and of method. Because the materialistic idea of life underlies all of them, Qutb predicts the final victory for Marxism over capitalism when the economies of the West reach stagnation. This is so because communism is not only a progressive idea when compared to capitalism. It is progressive because it provides basic material needs for people and addresses the exploited, while capitalism addresses governing authorities and the exploiting class. However, the outcome of both ideologies is unjust because in capitalism individuals and their ambitious rule over the community and in communism the state rules over individuals (Qutb 1975: 25; Qutb 1983a: 6; Qutb 1983b: 33–38, 86–89).

Qutb’s alternative is Islam, which has stipulated equal opportunity but has made piety and morality rather than material possession the basic values of society. Although it has set forth the right of individual possession and made it the basis of its economic system, it simultaneously imposes limits. An Islamic economic system is neither capitalist nor socialist. What is essential in any Islamic economic system is social justice, and Qutb provides its two primary principles: the harmonious, balanced and absolute unity between the individual and groups as one principle, and the general mutual responsibility (takafül) between the individuals and groups, as the other. The importance of justice stems from being an ethical doctrine as well as one of the Islamic bases of government. Entrusted with authority that originally belongs to God, the ruler must manifest this trust in, first, obedience to the shari’a and, second, social, economic and political justice (Qutb 1980a: 33, 39, 73–77, 82). Qutb identifies complete liberation of conscience, human equality and mutual social responsibility as the three principles that guarantee administering justice.

Furthermore, Qutb considers morality to be the basis of a stable and coherent society. True social justice exists only when supported, first, by an internal feeling of the individual’s worthiness and the community’s need, and, second, by a creed leading to obeying God and to realizing a sublime human society. Economic liberation is insufficient in itself for realizing a good society or the survival of good individuals in society. Furthermore, liberation cannot be only guaranteed by laws because humans are affected by needs and inclinations. What is equally,
The basic manifestation of liberating the human conscience appears in worshipping only God, which frees humankind from submission to other human beings as well as unjust authorities and states, Qubt explains. To do this, Islam disciplines the conscience by inculcating piety and, then, entrusting it as the guardian of society. Islam makes the human conscience the protector and executor of legislation. This trust is manifested, for instance, in legal decisions which are usually dependent on the conscience of witnesses whose testimony can put someone in prison or to death. Nonetheless, Islam does not leave the conscience for itself but considers God as the monitor and witness of people’s behavior. For this reason, piety is essential in Islamic life and politics. For when the conscience is liberated from fear, which lowers self-esteem, the individual can be trusted. What this means ultimately to Qubt is that if the conscience is liberated from enslavement and submission to man and is filled with God’s love, the individual will be afraid of no one, nor of losing his livelihood or office. Thus liberation from fear and obedience to none but God is one of the cardinal principles to building a just society and a pious state.

Nonetheless, there is still another level of liberation: liberation from enslavement to social values. Qubt is aware that an individual can be liberated from fears but enslaved to social values. Thus, besides the moral and spiritual aspects, liberation also has political and material implications. Private ownership is, thus, allowed so that the individual is provided with financial independence from the state and, in turn, allows political independence. Ultimately, the individual is capable of challenging the state that disobeys the sharia (Qubt 1980a: 41–42, 45–46, 82–83; Qubt 1975: 52).

Thus, this liberation of conscience becomes to Qubt all the more essential in order to eliminate injustice and cultivate justice. He believes that administering justice depends on cultivating the conscience, for when the conscience has tasted liberation, it finds legal and practical guarantees to assure this feeling. There will be no need for someone to advocate equality in words, for the conscience has tasted its meaning in its depths and has found it a reality in its life. Because it will not tolerate existing inequality, it will demand its right for equality, struggle to establish this right, preserve it when obtained, and accept nothing but equality (Qubt 1980a: 47, 115–16; Qubt 1975: 34–36, 55).

While Qubt acknowledges humans’ inequality both physically and intellectually, humans are theoretically and spiritually equal. Unequal qualities are accepted and this is why the Islamic right to own property, for instance, is stipulated. This right is just because it rewards individual efforts, is suitable to human nature and motivates individuals to do their utmost. Here, there is an acknowledgment that unequal efforts deserve unequal rewards. It is unjust to treat people who are unequal equally. Human faculties are unequal and to assert the opposite is a vanity, according to Qubt. Notwithstanding this acknowledgment, Qubt maintains that every individual should have equal opportunity and freedom of conscience (Qubt 1980a: 55).

While success should only depend on an individual’s achievement regardless of race and other characteristics, real equality should start even before actual existence. Qubt argues that the Muslim community as a whole is responsible for the protection of the weak, the poor and the needy. Consequently, the state should, for instance, train people to work so that their primary needs can be satisfied. In the case of those who cannot find work and are unable to meet their needs, the state must step in and help. To Qubt, the state is not a joint-stock company. An individual has the right to be supported with basic needs. Therefore, Qubt views Islamic mutual responsibility (makrufl) not merely as charity but also as a system of preparing people to work and guarantee basic necessities to those who cannot work. Mutual responsibility is not only an individual but a public duty as well. He states that Islam considers acquiring education, with
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which one can earn and deserve his livelihood, a duty on every individual. The community has a responsibility to facilitate its fulfillment. If the community is incapable of realizing this duty, it becomes a state responsibility (Qu\textsuperscript{b} 1975: 47, 84). Qu\textsuperscript{b} stresses the importance of society over the state; the state intervenes only where the voluntary efforts of individuals and society fail. Therefore, at the theoretical level, the state is supplementary to the individual and society, and as long as they can get along without the state, the state has a minimal role.

To demonstrate to Muslims one of the positive aspects of Islam, Qu\textsuperscript{b} argues that Islam's esteem for life is comprehensive, and its stipulations on rights and duties are precise and conclusive. It has considered the nation to be one body and, on this basis, has set up severe had\textsuperscript{d} (deterrents) for social crimes, since cooperation requires the protection of individuals. Every individual is responsible for protecting the community's interests. In order to highlight the universality of Islamic social justice, Qu\textsuperscript{b} generally views social and international problems as the outcome of injustice among nations. To be true and Islamic, justice should, then, be extended to all countries, races and religions. He states that Islam secures complete social justice in Islamic countries, not only for its adherents but also for all its inhabitants regardless of their religion, race and language (Qu\textsuperscript{b} 1980a: 32–35, 76; Qu\textsuperscript{b} 1980a: 73–77, 119). From Qu\textsuperscript{b}'s view, this Islamic characteristic is unparalleled in any other ideology. Furthermore, Islam has become universal by attaining a high level of fairness and freedom from tribal, racial, familial and national loyalties (Qu\textsuperscript{b} 1975: 59; Qu\textsuperscript{b} 1980a: 35, 113; Qu\textsuperscript{b} 1980b: 36).

Again, mutual responsibility is also of an economic nature, and Qu\textsuperscript{b}'s economic thought is based on his doctrine of social justice. In turn, the latter is part of his political theory that is based on tawhid manifesting in the universal Islamic concept. Since the well-being of any society requires an economic infrastructure, Qu\textsuperscript{b} attempts to provide an alternative to communism and capitalism. He argues that the function of the government is the enforcement of the law of nature (fi\textsuperscript{n}a). He accepts the doctrine of natural rights, including that of property. The first principle in the Islamic economic theory is the right of individuals to private ownership. However, Islam stipulates that ownership is non-existent except by the authority of the Lawgiver, i.e. God. The logic behind this is that rights are not derived from the essence of things but from the permission of the Lawgiver. His reason is that God is the owner of everything, and the human is His vicegerent (khal\textsuperscript{a}f). Man's vicegerency allows him to acquire private property, although the acquisition of private property is dependent on labor, physical or otherwise. Any property that is not based on the Islamic legal prescriptions and labor is a false possession because Islam does not acknowledge or guarantee it. Therefore, developing any financial enterprise should be within the framework of Islamic laws. Thus, the benefits of gambling, cheating, monopoly or excessive gain are illegal and should not be guaranteed in an Islamic state (Qu\textsuperscript{b} 1980a: 59).

Since the individual does not possess the thing itself but rather its usage and benefits, Qu\textsuperscript{b} reasons that ownership belongs to the community in general; private ownership is then a function of dispersion with certain conditions and limits. Some kinds of property that benefit all people in common are public and should not be owned by individuals. Also, parts of public properties can be distributed on specific categories of people, like the poor, in order to help improve the individual and communal living standards (Qu\textsuperscript{b} 1980a: 69–70, 124; Qu\textsuperscript{b} 1975: 40).

Consequently, Islam is not against private ownership, but it is, however, against the unusual accumulation of wealth. Qu\textsuperscript{b} argues that the owners of large capital are not free to restrict or spend their capital as they wish without taking others into account. Although spending is an individual act, the individual's freedom has to be exercised within an Islamic framework. There is seldom a personal act that has no relation to other individuals, although this relation may not be direct or obvious. For this reason, Islam has fixed for the poor a share provided
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n on zakat (almgiving) to improve their survival and livelihood (Qub 1980a: 123, 131, 184; Rodinon 1981).

Furthermore, Qub views Islamic limits on ownership as the essential means of production that must be owned by the community. Even though Qub encourages market economy as a means of satisfying the needs of society, he argues that when there is an emergency the state must command the economy. Obviously, Qub wants neither to abolish private ownership nor market economy, but neither does he want to allow unlimited private ownership of means of production nor a complete command of the economy by the state. As with other issues, the state intervenes when necessary. He states that social mutual responsibility should not lead to any conflict between the rights of individuals and the rights of society. It is incumbent upon the state to protect individuals from selfishness when necessary (Rodinson 1981: 147; Qub 1974: 32).

Jahili societies versus revolutionary Muslim societies

In order to achieve Qub’s main objective, the creation of a Muslim nation based on shari’a and social justice, he postulates the need for taking prior steps, foremost among which is revolution. As tawhid is the basis of an Islamic government and Muslim society, it is as well the pivot of revolution. According to Qub, it should be the basis of propagating Islam (da’wa) and political movement. Because tawhid is a movement of continuous development, Islam does not accept an evil reality as such because its main mission is to eradicate evil and to improve the quality of life. According to Qub, tawhid involves emancipation from subordination to any and all but the divine law; it is a revolution against the authority of tyrannical lords as well as the rejection of eliminating individuality. Subordination to others is a crime because God created man free and forbad it. ‘No god but God’, declares Qub, is a revolution against the worldly authority that seizes the first characteristic of divinity and against the situations that are based on this seize and against the authorities that rule by human and un-Islamic laws (Qub 1975: 44, 46–47; Qub 1980a: 157–58).

Qub views revolution as the main tool in the attainment of a Muslim society that is based on the shari’a and social justice. A revolution is the road to conscious transformation of current existing societies. While it is not meant to convert people to Islam, it still aims at creating the Muslim individual, the Muslim society and the Islamic state. This is so because an Islamic revolution aspires as well to the transformation of man’s endowment to man and to material things. As such, this revolution is not directed at a particular society but essentially at all societies that yield to human laws and orders. It is comprehensive and universal.

More importantly, Qub strongly argues that a proper Islamic revolution does not compromise with non-Islamic (jahili) doctrines and orders. For the road to change necessitates some creative activism that demands total change and not mere patching up of ways of life and orders and even philosophies and ideologies. Making the construction of a society similar to the construction of a building, Qub argues that there is a difference between having a plan to construct gradually and patching up a building based on another plan. In the end, this patching up does not establish a new building. A new building requires first tearing down the old building (Qub 1980a: 26, 101; Qub 1975: 70; Qub 1980a: 250).

Moreover, while aiming at a gradual Islamic revolution that could first spread out the message of Islam, Qub’s highest aim is a total revolution that sweeps away the governments of his time as well as establishing new revolutionary Muslim societies instead of the un-Islamic, patched-up jahili societies. Qub relies on a gradual transformation of institutions and the spread of Islamic ideology to achieve this ideal (Qub 1980b: 24–25). Still, it should shake and destroy the old society in order to build a new one. Not believing in the viability of mild change for a
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society erected on false or immoral foundations, Qutb insists on the necessity of revolution as the only proper remedy for decaying societies. For Qutb, all societies are essentially decaying. He uses ‘earthquaking’ or zakala or, in fact, revolution to describe the first step in the process of building the new society (Qutb 1975: 28). However, this zakala, though strong, is not necessarily violent, at least in theory. Its starting point is education in a two-fold manner: first, expounding true Islam and, second, refuting Western ideological fallacies (Qutb 1980b: 23–24).

Because Qutb sees tawhid not as a negative, philosophical and theoretical declaration but rather as a positive, realistic and active declaration, he invokes confronting other philosophies and ideologies. This confrontation requires that Muslims should acquire knowledge of other philosophies and ideologies. An active Islamic movement should confront the material obstacles, foremost among which are the existing political authorities. This intellectual and material confrontation applies not only to Arab societies but to all societies, because Islam is not for the Arabs alone. Therefore, the ultimate goal of Islamic revolution is to abolish those regimes and governments that are established on the basis of humans’ governance (bukimiyya) over humans and the enslavement of humans by humans in jahili societies. Then the revolution sets individuals free to choose the creed they want. As is obvious, Qutb’s declaration means the comprehensive revolution against all human governance in all its forms, systems and orders, and the complete rebellion against every un-Islamic jahiliyya (Qutb 1980b: 68).

For Qutb, the Islamic state is established on that territory where the Islamic law rules regardless of whether all or only a portion of the population is Muslim, but that territory that is not ruled by Islamic law is dar al-harb (the abode of war), regardless of people’s religion. What is significant here is that a Muslim society is Muslim not because it is composed of Muslims but rather because of the rule of Islamic law. This lends support to Qutb’s previous argument that the Islamic government is the government of law. Thus, the application of Islamic law in a society, whether composed of a majority of Muslims or non-Muslims, makes that society Muslim. The Islamic state is neither defined by specific territories nor by specific races, and a Muslim society can be established anywhere. On the other hand, those societies that claim to be Muslim are not so because, in his view, they do not uphold Islamic law. In practical terms, this means that those societies that existed during Qutb’s time were not Islamic in his view and, thus, must be eradicated. Moreover, dar al-harb includes any state that fights Islamic religious attitudes (Qutb 1980b: 69–71).

While struggle (jihad) aims at transforming any institution that opposes and does not allow Islam to be freely practiced, jihad is neither suicide nor a campaign of atrocities. Qutb announces that jihad has four basic characteristics. Serious realism, the first characteristic, means that Islam faces with da’wah and refutation incorrect conceptions and beliefs and faces with power and jihad those regimes and authorities based on incorrect conceptions (Qutb 1980b: 159).

Qutb cannot accept the argument that Islam launches jihad only for defensive purposes, for Islam is not defensive but an offensive against aggression (Qutb 1980b: 64). To him, those thinkers who argue that jihad is only defensive are defeated spiritually and intellectually and do not distinguish between the Islamic method in rejecting the compulsion to embrace Islam and its method in destroying those material and political forces that stand between man and his God. In fact, those thinkers who see jihad as being only defensive do not understand Islam. It is true that Islam defends the territory on which it exists, but it also struggles to establish the Islamic order wherever possible and to abolish the jahili society (Qutb 1980b: 65, 66, 72, 81–91; Badawi 1967: 114; Qutb 1980b: 75–83).

Active realism is the second characteristic. It means that jihad cannot be fought with speeches and propagation only but requires much more preparation. It does not meet, for instance, a
strong military force with an abstract theory. Jihad is a movement that can operate in stages and take time and effort as well as organization. Similarly, the third characteristic is a continuous movement which may take many forms and procedures that do not contradict Islamic principles. It can take the forms of writing, assisting others, teaching, self-discipline or other activities. The fourth characteristic is that the regulation of relations between Muslim societies and non-Muslim ones can be only in two ways. The first is that Islam is the basis of international relations; the second is to give Muslims the right to peacefully propagate Islam without barriers imposed by any political regime or force. Qutb’s tolerance of non-Muslim societies depends upon the freedom to accept or reject Islam (Qutb 1980b: 64–66; Qutb 1965: 11, 91).

The Qutbian revolution is directed to those jahili societies that are not bound by or contradict the universal Islamic concept. By this definition, Qutb includes all existing societies on Earth as un-Islamic and jahili societies, including Christian, Jewish, socialist and capitalist societies. Even Muslim societies are included in Qutb’s revolution, for while they do not believe in the divinity of anyone except God, they accept the human hakimiyya (governance) (Qutb 1980b: 162–63; Qutb 1982: 62).

**Conclusion**

The ultimate source of knowledge to Qutb is God, who is beyond human philosophy and cannot definitely be understood by human thought. However, the validity of human knowledge depends on its conformity to nature, which is, in turn, known by reason. Thus a human claim to knowledge should be reduced to facts. The knowledge of God or others can therefore only be known from God’s revelation. Still Qutb maintains that what is revealed is no more than allusions to truth that is validated by its conformity to nature. Therefore, Qutb has referred to fitra, to be found in revelation, so as to argue for the validity or invalidity of any concept or doctrine. This is Qutb’s most important argument for attaining and verifying the truth. Nonetheless, the circularity of this argument denies its components of revelation, nature and fitra any possible verification by regular human methods.

The Qutbian perspective restricts reason’s function to instrumentality in realizing the characteristics of the Islamic concept and as a judge in matters and values concerned with this concept. It is the interpretative instrument of revelation and the universal Islamic concept. For in the absence of Qur’anic injunctions, Qutb focuses on the practicality of discourses and institutions for discerning their validity or invalidity. Ideas per se are not important; rather, their importance lies in their utility. Even when they seem true they are no more than approximations that might change from time to time. This is why Qutb rejects science as being the basis of religion.

Religion and science cannot replace each other, and Qutb’s discourse attempts to bring together the religious discourse and the dominant scientific discourse as the underlying bases of the new Islamic society, but each has its own domain. The eternal, textually based religious discourse provides the foundations of society while the scientific discourse addresses the practical needs of society and state. While the scientific discourse cannot produce moral or metaphysical knowledge, it is still important for daily livelihood.

There is no knowledge without presuppositions, and Qutb argues that all knowledge presupposes a prior understanding of the whole. He criticizes the ideal of objectivity and insists on the historical character of all understanding. Understanding and its discourse are conditioned by time, space, environment and culture. Although Qutb disregards the possibility of human understanding of or discussing on the ultimate source of knowledge (God), he nonetheless believes in His existence by fitra. For our comprehension of the real sources of knowledge is not
attainable by observation and accumulation of facts and data, or apprehension and comprehension, due to the inherent limits of human reason. Though the truth of God’s existence has to be justified to an extent, it is ultimately above human authorities, discourses, philosophy and religion.

Qutb’s discourse should be grounded in the contemporary history of the Islamic world and must be viewed as the product of contemporary political crises. Still one must not overgeneralize and view it merely as a reaction; it has gone beyond that. Now, his discourse is the religious, ideological, political bases of rather most new militant political discourses, and many Islamists in the Muslim world derive many of their ideologies and perspectives from his discourse. While the militancy of his revolutionary Islamist discourse can be attributed to the crises of contemporary social and political life, his general ideological and religious discourse constitutes normative statements on God, reason, science, history, politics and economics, the understanding of which requires a closer look at Islamic principles, and not only at transient political events and world politics.

Qutb’s discourse impoverishes and is impoverished in terms of theology, philosophy, history and science. While Qutb accepts the Qur’an and the sura as the bases of normative religious and ideological principles, they are rather overshadowed by politics and subordinated to his political discourse. In fact, besides their political significations of divine governance and human paganism, one cannot fathom Qutb’s concept of tawhid. Tawhid is primarily interpreted politically, which is a distinguishing mark of Islamism and today’s takfiri jihadism.

Qutb’s appeal and popularity among Islamists, and especially the radical groups, however, can be traced to many factors. First, he tries to justify social justice and freedom within the framework of an Islamicly developed discourse. Instead of adhering to democracy and socialism, he explains important issues for Muslims in an Islamic discourse. Thus, issues such as representative governments are treated without any reference to foreign ideological discourses, and instead offer religious justifications for his religious principles. The principles of representative government and social justice become then religious and political duties, i.e. the principles of government in Islam. By doing so, Qutb preempts the advocates of both democracy and socialism and was able to show the Muslims that Islam and modernity were compatible. Their compatibility was due not to subjecting Islam to modernity but subjecting modernity to Islam. His discourse absorbs democracy as shura or the choice of people of their governments and argues that the Muslims did not really understand it historically. Again, his discourse absorbs socialist social justice and links it to legal, political and moral issues. Therefore, Qutb’s fame is derived from creating a new Islamic political and ideological discourse that encompassed the best in the Western traditions, which had been accepted by the majority of people, without negating or subordinating Islam to the West. His discourse reinforces the Islamic notion of Islam’s validity for all ages and its capability of accommodating diverse conditions and changing realities. Hence, Qutb urges the Muslims not to relegate the Qur’anic discourse to only prayers, funerals or the personal domain. Instead, they must keep it as their everlasting constitution.

Moreover, Qutb provides a new revolutionary discourse that is not bound by or subordinate to past discourses and could therefore be used by contemporary Muslims to reshape their governments and their ways of life and reject Islamic traditionalism. This new discourse aims at reviving Islam without dependence on its long history. Qutb dismisses history, which is the basis of Islamic traditionalism and its sciences and disciplines, as only a temporary and relative manifestation, but also a normative final Islamic reading, of the truth.

Qutb’s ideology has spread widely within contemporary Islamic groups that obviously adopted his views about their own governments and societies. These groups turned the Qutbian
doctrines of pagnism of the world, the need to spread divine governance, the revolution against all political powers and jihad against their own governments and the world's government into living realities.

After 11 September 2001 and the invasion of Iraq, some Islamic groups merged together and consequently have created neo-Salafism and takfiri jihadism. This complexity thus appears in the takfiri jihadists who are composed of both neo-Wahhabis, neo-Salafists and radical Islamists. Again, not all takfiris are jihadist, and not all jihadists are takfiri. These groups are manipulated by different governmental and non-governmental powers.

The war in Afghanistan against the Soviet Union in 1979 brought together, for the first time, all sorts of Islamic groups under the umbrella of jihad. Radical Islamist groups, especially Qutb's followers from many Islamic countries including Egypt and Algeria, along with Wahhabi and Salafist fighters from diverse Muslim regions including Saudi Arabia and Pakistan, fought along with the Afghan mujahideen. The Arab Afghans blended together the neo-Salafism of Abdullah Azzam, the neo-Wahhabism of Osama Bin Laden and the radical Qutbian Islamism of Ayman al-Zawahiri — and the three activists are greatly affected by Qutb's ideological orientations. Today, the most notorious manifestation of this deadly combination is al-Qaeda along with its ideological and military affiliates that have spread throughout the Muslim world.

These new-Salafist, neo-Wahhabi and radical Islamist ideologies and formations are the takfiri jihadists along the line of Qutb's discourse. They are trying to establish a religious state and have managed to turn themselves into an outlet for different pacts in the region, and indirectly become involved in a different context. They represent the transformation of rather different contradictory Islamic trends into radical takfiri jihadism.

Al-Qaeda can only partially be understood as a production of the failure of moderate Islamism, official Wahhabism and conservative Salafism along with Islamic traditionalism in their established forms today, to bring about serious positive changes in the Muslim world's political systems and ways of life. Furthermore, takfiri jihadism has created a new front in the Muslim world's encounters with the West. However, some components of this front still exist within the Muslim world itself, namely the current political regimes, both: religious and secular. The intellectual, political, religious and military battle with this front and its affiliates is going to greatly shape the politics of Muslim states, the Muslim world and the non-Muslim world. It is really a global phenomenon and consequently requires a multi-faced global solution. A mere military confrontation will definitely not resolve the issues of radicalism and terrorism.

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