

Ayoob, Mohammed, *The Many Faces of Political Islam: Religion and Politics in the Muslim World*, University of Michigan Press, Ann Arbor 2011, 232 Sayfa, \$25.95, Karton Kapak.

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The Many Faces of Political Islam: Religion and Politics in the Muslim World by Mohammed Ayoob is an introductory book on political Islam. Main objective of Ayoob in writing the book, as he puts, was to provide an introductory text for the non-specialist reader while trying to highlight the complexity of the issue and avoid oversimplification of the subject. The book achieved more than it aimed, and filled the gap for an introductory book for students of different studies such as international relations, religion, sociology and history. The need for such a compact book where a wide range of the Muslim countries was included was obvious and the academic world appreciated Ayoob's efforts in writing this work. As pointed out, the book not only provides basics of the subject to the non-specialists, but also is insightful for the students and the academic world.

A significant strength of the book is while it tries to define political Islam, which is a highly complex concept; it does not consider it as a threat to the modern Western values and democracy. Many western scholars working on Islamic fundamentalism assess political Islam as a threat to the existence of the Western system. Ayoob achieved a good tone in avoiding such an oversimplification and bias by how he structured his book. The book does not approach political Islam as a single body, but tries to point the different trends and ideologies within the Muslim world. Ayoob tried to build his book on this structure, and the early parts of the book includes further explanations. In Chapter 2, Ayoob focused on this core argument that Islamist politics are not a unique body, but varied; and the needs and conditions in different locations of the world shape the discourses and methods of different Islamist politics. Ayoob named the diverse Islamist discourses as "Islam's multiple voices" in the very same chapter.

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Ayoob challenges the arguments about the interconnectedness of religion and politics in Islam. Although the division between religion and politics occurred shortly after the death of Prophet Mohammed, the Islamic states of Umayyads, Abbasids, and Ottomans did not clearly draw the line between religion and politics for legitimization of their rules. Other than this practical interconnectedness of religion and politics, Islam is no different from Christianity or Judaism in terms of the relation between religion and politics, says Ayoob. According to him, normally, the civil society conducts the law in Islamic tradition. People with modernist approach to Islam requests the state to apply the sharia, and this is not compatible with the traditional Islam. Ayoob argues that judging Islam being political by looking at the aforementioned request of modernist Islamists is not right. Traditionally religion and politics are separate in Islam, as much as it is in Christianity and Judaism.

The author argues that political Islam is a concept related to the modern nation-state system. It is also highly connected to colonialism. During and after the colonization of Islamic countries, the Muslims struggled against the colonizers. During this process, they used the Islamic term “jihad” for the movement against colonization; thus, “jihad” meant achieving national independence. This struggle gave birth to the Saudi state where political figures with no traditional religious education were influential. With this analysis, Ayoob elaborates his argument on political Islam being a modern concept.

As mentioned in the first paragraph, a major feature of the book is that it examines different countries from the abode of Islam starting from Morocco to Indonesia. The book compares and contrasts Islamic states, national and transnational Islamist groups. Ayoob’s use of comparative approach in his study is significant for it proves his argument on the varieties of political Islam. Chapters 3 through 7 includes these contrast and comparisons. Ayoob distinguishes the units as self-proclaimed Islamic states (Saudi Arabia and Iran), sources of Islamist ideology and activism (Egypt and Pakistan), majorly Muslim-populated democracies (Turkey and Indonesia), national Islamist resistance movements (Hamas and Hezbollah), and the transnational Islamist organizations (Tablighi Jamaat, Hizb ut-Tahrir, and al-Qaeda).

In the first group, Saudi Arabia is an anti-constitutional monarchy and Iran is a constitutional republic. The common point is that they are modern states and they have different regime types since Islam does not recommend any specific

regime model. The comparison of Egypt and Pakistan demonstrates how political Islamists are more prone to democracy in an environment where the regime is somewhat democratic. In these countries, there are two types of attitudes towards the non-Islamic regime; one is to oppose it radically (Maududi), other is to cooperate with the regime (Muslim Brotherhood). In Turkey and Indonesia where the states are partners of the global economic system, Islamists tend to be democratized. An Islamist bourgeoisie emerges, and through this class, Islamists become more moderate. Because of the sovereignty and national problems, Hamas and Hezbollah use radical measures to establish liberation. Al Qaeda is a transnational Islamist body, and is more radical than Hamas and Hezbollah. Generally, the Muslims do not accept their extreme measures since Muslims of different regions have different living conditions and problems.

In the last chapter, Ayoob touches the US foreign policy and relates the rise of extremist political Islam with the US behavior towards the Muslim world. He argues that authoritarianism paves the way to emergence of Islamic extremism. The US intervention in Afghanistan and Iraq revived the jihadi feelings against the imperialist, colonizing powers. The US argues that it fights against the Islamist extremism, yet its discourse and actions in the field increases extremism furthermore, and creates a vicious cycle. US foreign policy is behind the establishment of extremist Islamism for that matter.

Political Islam is complex and multi-faceted. Ayoob achieved a good tone for he did not oversimplify the subject. He challenged three prejudices on political Islam; it is not a single model, it is political rather than religious, and it is a modern concept. The way he used comparative method and worked on six countries along with two national and three transnational Islamist groups is good enough to prove that political Islam does not have the same form and structure in all around the Muslim world. Not all of the Muslims in the whole world are jihadis, and they cannot be reduced to a single type. The western scholars evaluate political Islam in a way as if it is a threat to the Western system. The intervention of Western states in the Muslim world triggers the anti-colonial jihadi discourse and increases Islamist extremism largely.

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