Despite these observations, one cannot deny the academic worth of the book. One hopes that the book will inspire researchers to investigate with greater depth the question of the compatibility of the *Shar'ah* with women’s human rights.

**Muhammad Tahir Mansoori**


Peter Mandaville, an academic at George Mason University, USA, has been working on “the reconstruction of the Muslim world as a consequence of Globalization.” His new book *Global Political Islam* is a comprehensive survey of the various movements in different regions of the world for the social and political revival of Islam during the twentieth century.

With a view to determine the nature of his work, the author specifically defines what he means by ‘Political Islam.’ According to him, Islamism or Political Islam “refers to forms of political theory and practice that have as their goal the establishment of an Islamic political order in the sense of a state whose governmental principles, institutions and legal system derive directly from the shari‘ah” (p. 57).

Mandaville organizes the results of his research in ten chapters. The first three chapters deal with the key themes and concepts in the history of Islam pertaining to political thought and order, from 622 CE to mid twentieth century. The next five chapters include detailed case studies on almost all the major events, ideas and personalities of the movement for the revival of political Islam in different Muslim countries. The last two chapters provide an overview of the major findings of the survey and identify new actors in the intellectual field of Islamic revival. The author thus takes his readers beyond Hasan al-Bannā (d. 1368/1949), Sayyid Abū ‘l-A‘lā Mawdūdī (d. 1399/1979) and Sayyid Qutb (d. 1386/1966) not only to Muhammad al-Sha‘rāwī, Yusuf al-Qaraḍāwī, ‘Amr Khālid and Abdolkarim Saroush, but also to thinkers who have developed highly innovative and pluralistic interpretations of Islam in recent years.

The survey does not cover the entire Muslim population, but is confined to only those individuals, organizations and groups who are contributing or
have contributed in recent past to Islamic revival or have participated in the
movements that fall within the defined orbit of ‘Political Islam.’

The author begins with the premise that to understand Muslim politics in
the contemporary world, “it is particularly important to understand accurately
the significance of Prophet Muhammad in the Islamic tradition” (p. 25). According
to him, “Muhammad is wholly human” (p. 25) and this provides
the main deviation of Islam from other major religions of the world.

With this basic premise in the background, Mandaville arrives at the
following key themes and concepts in the history of ‘Political Islam:

- ‘Muslim politics in the sense of debate and contestation between multiple
interpretations of religion’ begins with the death of the Prophet (11/632);
- Tribal influences began to encroach on Muslim politics beginning with the
reign of ‘Uthmân (24–35/644–656);
- Effective political power was concentrated in the hands of a relatively small
Arab autocratic elite despite the dispersion of Islam to a large part of the
civilized world;
- Muslim social classes and institutions that today constitute the ‘Muslim
political society’ and which survived till the abolition of caliphate in
Turkey in 1924, initially emerged under the Abbasids in the
eighth/fourteenth century and have survived since then; and
- The Islamic political thought was plunged into a crisis with the abolition of
the caliphate.

This crisis produced a number of thinkers and activists such as Jamāl al-
Dīn al-Afghānī (1255–1316/1839–1898), Muḥammad ‘Abduh (1265–1323/
1849–1905) and Muhammad Rashid Rīdā (1282–1354/1865–1935) who
explored how Muslims should respond to the new challenges of Western
imperialism, secularism and modernism. The most effective responses,
however, came from Ḥasan al-Bannā of Egypt and Sayyid Abū ‘l-A‘lā
Mawdūdī of Pakistan, followed by Sayyid Quṭb of Egypt. These major
thinkers were convinced that “Islam was far more than just a matter of
personal spirituality, piety or moralism, but rather that it prescribed and
necessitated the active pursuit of an entire social order” (p. 79). This became
the nucleus of the philosophy of Islamism or ‘Political Islam.’

Having explained the point of departure of political Islam, Mandaville
undertakes a study of the movements initiated for the purpose in different
regions and countries during the last 70–80 years. The study has been
conducted through case studies. The movements, for purposes of survey, have
been divided into three groups of countries, based on the following criteria:
Where Islamic movements have tried to establish themselves within the framework of the existing nation-state system and include countries such as Egypt, Turkey, Pakistan, Jordan, Algeria and Indonesia;

Where attempts have been made to impose Islamic order from above, such as Saudi Arabia, Iran, Malaysia and Pakistan;

Where either there is no system or where the countries are governed by a weak or failed government such as Afghanistan, Nigeria and PLA.

In the first group of countries, the case-study of Egypt is most detailed and illuminating (pp. 107–119). According to this analysis, the Islamists were considered a serious threat to the power structure by the authoritarian and secular elite right from the beginning and were therefore dealt with a heavy hand. As against this behaviour of the state, some of the factors that helped the Islamists to consolidate their position among the masses were (a) the defeat of Arab armies by Israel (1948–1967); (b) the failure of Egypt’s experimental union with Syria (1958–1962); (c) the authoritarian rule and the absence of participatory institutions in the governance, and (d) the retreat of the state as a provider of social welfare as a result of the opening up of the economy to world’s markets under Anwar Sadat (r. 1970–1981).

Mandaville feels that these factors contributed substantially to a loss of trust of the middle and poor classes in the competence of the ruling elite to protect their interests and created a wide gap between the ruling elite and the people.

The author finds that mainstream Jordanian Islamism, in some ways, works exactly in the reverse direction (as against Egypt and Turkey). In Jordan, the Islamists continue to act through the institutions of the political system without challenging the raison d'être of the state or the Hashemite power, mainly because they have been allowed some space within the system.

The author concludes that in the countries where Islamists have worked within the institutional framework of a nation-state:

(a) the Muslim world has yet to experience elected Islamic governance in a nation-state setting;

(b) the Islamists often represent the only politically organized alternative to discredited authoritarian regimes; and

(c) the future of Muslim politics is likely to belong to those who can speak to Muslim values and ethics, but within the framework of political platforms fit to thrive in democratic settings.
While examining the states that have sought to define themselves in terms of Islam i.e. Saudi Arabia, Iran and, to some extent, Pakistan, the author finds that both Saudi Arabia and Iran are closed societies and are still facing internal challenges to their legitimacy. The author, in this regard, refers to the views of Abdolkarim Saroush, an Iranian ideologue, and initially a strong supporter of the Iranian revolution who now feels that Islam and state need to be kept apart not because religion corrupts politics, but rather the converse — that politics, with its base and immoral pursuit of power, poses a threat to the purity of religion. The author finds the role of Islam in Pakistani politics as a “complex and multifaceted affair” because “the question as to what it means to be an Islamic state has never been definitely settled” (p. 168).

In the third group of countries i.e. weak and failed states, Mandaville undertakes a detailed analysis of Hamas and Taliban. He regards Hamas as a complex and controversial entity which has been variously described as a political movement, a terrorist group and a social welfare organization. The author finds that it is, in fact, all three of these things, but is not reducible to any one of them. He finds that “in some respects the Taliban had introduced innovations of their own in terms of reconfiguring the alignment of forces between religion, tribe and the state in Afghanistan” (p. 234). According to him, “the Taliban had apparently abandoned local traditions of religious tolerance for a strict and ruthless Islam, something quite foreign, imported from Saudi Arabia and Pakistan” (p. 234). He maintains that in these cases Muslim political actors have sought to fill public voids left by weak, failed or failing states.

Mandaville then proceeds to undertake a careful study of the “radical Islamist movements” and arrives at the view that the radical Islamists are markedly different in their goals and methods from other movements. “Radical Islamist is characterized by a vision of Islamic political order that rejects the legitimacy of the modern sovereign nation-states and seeks to establish a pan-Islamic polity or renew caliphate and/or an emphasis on violent struggle (jihad) as the primary or even the exclusive legitimate method for the pursuit of political change” (p. 239). He concludes that “the popular appeal of radical Islam, particularly in its activist variant, will continue to be limited to a very small and highly extreme minority of Muslims.”

The survey also includes a brief review of the seven distinct and broad Muslim trans-nationalist groups and their impact on political Islam. These include (a) traditional Sufi and pietistic networks (pp. 281–282); (b) broad-based Islamist ideologies (pp. 282–284); (c) NGOs, charities, da'wa groups and advocacy networks (pp. 284–287); (d) inter-governmental organizations (p. 287); (e) State sponsorship of Islamic activism and religious propagation
(pp. 287–288); (f) Hajj and the politics of pilgrimage (pp. 289–291) and (g) Muslim Diaspora and migrant communities in Europe (pp. 292–298).

The author maintains that the book “has been a survey effort to reveal to the reader the myriad shapes and forms of Muslim politics across the umma, and less an attempt to assert a discrete thesis or argument” (p. 332). In keeping with this, the concluding part of the book does not attempt to develop any inherent relationship among the various driving forces of Islamism, but only indicates a few specific probabilities as to how globalization and globalization process may inflect the future of Muslim politics.

A few inferences drawn from the survey may be summarized as under:

- **Islamism or ‘Political Islam’** is a movement for the revival of Islamic political order across the Muslim community over the globe. Its origin, construct, growth and emphasis are indigenous and vary from country to country. The ‘Political Islam,’ therefore, cannot be subjected to any single theoretical framework or discipline.

- **Islam** is an increasingly important religion today in many countries of the West, apart from being a major religion of Asia and Africa. It can therefore neither be contested nor ignored. It will have to be accepted as a living reality and ways evolved for a peaceful coexistence with it.

- “The standard model of Islamist politics seems to be undergoing considerable transformation in many contexts.” The Islamists have given up the idea of a ‘totalist politics’ long ago, and are accepting the basic premise of a nation-state.

- “Islamism is hardly a rejection of modernity — rather, it affirms the idea of individual political subjectivity and the possibility to achieve positive, progressive change through human agency.”

- “Radical Islamists” are markedly different in their goals and methods from other Islamic movements and their appeal is restricted to a very small and highly extreme minority of Muslims; and

- **“Muslim democracy may represent a movement on the rise with religion as a source of morality.”**

The author recognises that the discredited authoritarian ruling elite has, in a number of Muslim countries, been effectively suppressing democratic movements, particularly the Islamists, with the implicit support of Western countries and Israel. The survey, however, does not sufficiently highlight this factor. It does highlight though the part played by ‘Washington Consensus’ in reducing the role of the state in developing countries as a provider of basic services and consequently creating a vacuum which remains unfilled both politically and socially, and accepts that the IMF, with its structural
adjustment mechanism of privatization, liberalization and de-regulation, is a major irritant in the social unrest in Muslim countries.

The book is simply refreshing for a number of reasons. Firstly, it has been written in a lucid style, intentionally avoiding obscure academic discussions. Secondly, the text is largely a description of events, ideas and personalities and is thus possessed of better readability. Thirdly, the author has a good insight of the Islamic movements, both geographically and historically, and has integrated this vision in the findings of his survey. Lastly, the work somewhat underplays the role of external factors in the shaping of political Islam in different countries and regions, without in any way ignoring these factors. In other words, the author puts more emphasis on the internal factors contributing to the successes or failures of political Islam. This is both a strength and weakness of the work. All in all, this is a survey as objectively presented as any survey of social dynamics could be, and is useful reading for all students of Islamic politics in the twenty-first century.

Ather Zaidi