
The Resurgence of Islam

One of the most important trends in recent world history has been the renaissance of faith among Muslims. Often referred to as the "resurgence of Islam," this development began in the Middle East and North Africa and quickly spread in all directions, reaching countries such as Indonesia and Nigeria as well as numerous cities in Europe and the Americas. For the past quarter-century or so mosque attendance has been increasing, traditional Islamic dress for women has been in favor, Muslim men have been growing their beards long, and the appeal of Islamic grassroots organizations (including those located at universities) has surged.

Muslims have also had a dramatic impact on political life. In 1979 Shiite clerics in Iran rode to power on a massive wave of popular discontent and replaced the rule of the secularist Pahlavi shahs (reigned 1925–1979) with a republican regime based on Islamic law (*shari'a*). Two years later Muslim extremists in the Egyptian army assassinated Anwar el-Sadat, the Egyptian leader who had earlier normalized relations with Israel. During the 1980s and 1990s in Sudan, the largest country in Africa, a series of authoritarian governments led by Sunni Muslims imposed the *shari'a*. In 1996 the Taliban, an insurgent army of fundamentalist Muslims, seized control of Kabul and began enforcing their harsh version of Islamic teachings in Afghanistan.

In many other Muslim countries nongovernmental Islamic organizations that sponsor schools and social services have become increasingly popular. Such organizations are descendants of the Muslim Brotherhood, the fraternal order founded in 1928 by Egyptian schoolteacher Hasan al-Banna (1906–1949). Banna believed that by establishing Islamic schools, nurseries, summer camps, and low-cost health clinics, the Brotherhood would gradually persuade Muslims to incorporate the *shari'a* into their daily lives. He thought once people had absorbed Islamic teachings, political change would naturally follow. Despite Banna's assassination in 1949 and harsh governmental repression of the Brotherhood, the organization became increasingly influential in Egyptian life from the 1950s onward. In present-day Egypt the Brotherhood's vast

network of schools, social service agencies, and professional associations makes it the most serious rival of the government of Hosni Mubarak. Somewhat similar organizations flourish in Lebanon, Turkey, Pakistan, the Palestinian Territories, and other Muslim countries.

In the first selection Banna explains the thinking of the Muslim Brotherhood during its formative period and enables us to see how the Islamic resurgence was initially shaped by developments during the 1930s and 1940s. The second document, written by Ayatullah Murtada Mutahhari, provides insight into the ideas of one of the leaders of the 1979 Iranian revolution, the pivotal political event in the Islamic resurgence. Three decrees issued by the Taliban shortly after it gained control of Kabul make up the third selection. A photograph suggesting the importance of the pilgrimage to Mecca concludes the chapter. How do the documents and the visual evidence help us to put the resurgence of Islam into historical context?

ISLAMIC RESURGENCE

I. HASAN AL-BANNA (1949)

When we observe the evolution in the political, social, and moral spheres of the lives of nations and peoples, we note that the Islamic world—and, naturally, in the forefront, the Arab world—gives to its rebirth an Islamic flavor. This trend is ever-increasing. Until recently, writers, intellectuals, scholars, and governments glorified the principles of European civilization, gave themselves a Western tint, and adopted a European style and manner; today, on the contrary, the wind has changed, and reserve and distrust have taken their place. Voices are raised proclaiming the necessity for a return to the principles, teachings, and ways of Islam, and, taking into account the situation, for initiating the reconciliation of modern life with these principles, as a prelude to a final “Islamization.”

This development worries a good number of governments and Arab powers, which, having lived during the past generations in a state of mind that had retained from Islam only lessons of fanaticism and inertia, regarded the Muslims only as weak drudges or as nations easily exploitable by colonialism. In trying to understand the new movement . . . these governments have produced all sorts of possible interpretations: “It is the result,” said some, “of the growth of extremist organizations and fanatical groups.” Others explained that it was a reaction to present-day political and economic pressures, of which the Islamic nations had become aware. Finally, others said, “It is only a means whereby those seeking government or other honors may achieve renown and position.”

Now all these reasons are, in our opinion, as far as possible from the truth; for this new movement can only be the result of the following three factors, which we will now examine.

The first of the three is the failure of the social principles on which the civilization of the Western nations has been built. The Western way of life—bounded in effect on practical and technical knowledge, discovery, invention, and the flooding of world markets with mechanical products—has remained incapable of offering to men’s minds a flicker of light, a ray of hope, a grain of

faith, or of providing anxious persons the smallest path toward rest and tranquility. Man is not simply an instrument among others. Naturally, he has become tired of purely materialistic conditions and desires some spiritual comfort. But the materialistic life of the West could only offer him as reassurance a new materialism of sin, passion, drink, women, noisy gatherings, and showy attractions which he had come to enjoy. Man's hunger grows from day to day: he wants to free his spirit, to destroy this materialist prison and find space to breathe the air of faith and consolation.

The second factor—the decisive factor in the circumstances—is the discovery by Islamic thinkers of the noble, honorable, moral, and perfect content of the principles and rules of this religion, which is infinitely more accomplished, more pure, more glorious, more complete, and more beautiful than all that has been discovered up till now by social theorists and reformers. For a long time, Muslims neglected all this, but once God had enlightened their thinkers and they had compared the social rules of their religion with what they had been told by the greatest sociologists and the cleverest leading theorists, they noted the wide gap and the great distance between a heritage of immense value on one side and the conditions experienced on the other. Then, Muslims could not but do justice to the spirit and the history of their people, proclaiming the value of this heritage and inviting all peoples—nonpracticing Muslims or non-Muslims—to follow the sacred path that God had traced for them and to hold to a straight course.

The third factor is the development of social conditions between the two murderous world wars (which involved all the world powers and monopolized the minds of regimes, nations, and individuals) which resulted in a set of principles of reform and social organization that certain powers, in deciding to put them into practice, have taken as an instructional basis. . . .

Thus, German Nazism and Italian Fascism rose to the fore; Mussolini and Hitler led their two peoples to unity, order, recovery, power, and glory. In record time, they ensured internal order at home and, through force, made themselves feared abroad. These regimes gave real hope, and also gave rise to thoughts of steadfastness and perseverance and the reuniting of different, divided men around the words "chief" and "order." In their resolutions and speeches, the Führer and the Duce began to frighten the world and to upset their epoch. . . .

The star of socialism and Communism, symbol of success and victory, shone with an increasing brilliance; Soviet Russia was at the head of the collectivist camp. She launched her message and, in the eyes of the world, demonstrated a system which had been modified several times in thirty years. The democratic powers—or, to use a more precise expression, the colonialist powers, the old ones worn out, the new ones full of greed—took up a position to stem the current. The struggle intensified, in some places openly, in others under cover, and nations and peoples, perplexed, hesitated at the crossroads, not knowing which was best; among them were the nations of Islam and the peoples of the Qur'an; the future, whatever the circumstances, is in the hands of God, the decision with history, and immortality with the most worthy.

This social evolution and violent, hard struggle stirred the minds of Muslim thinkers; the parallels and the prescribed comparisons led to a healthy conclusion:

to free themselves from the existing state of affairs, to allow the necessary return of the nations and peoples to Islam.

II. AYATULLAH MURTADA MUTAHHARI (1979)

Scholars and knowledgeable persons in contemporary history concede that in the second half of our century in almost all or at least in a large number of Islamic countries Islamic movements have been in ascent openly or secretly. These are practically directed against despotism, capitalist colonialism or materialist ideologies subscribing to colonialism in its new shape. Experts on political affairs acknowledge that after having passed through a period of mental crisis the Muslims are once again struggling to reestablish their "Islamic identity" against the challenges of the capitalist West and the communist East. But in no Islamic country has this type of movement gained as much of depth and extent as in Iran since the year 1960. Nor is there a parallel to the proportions which the Iranian movement has obtained. It, therefore, becomes necessary to analyze this remarkably significant event of history.

Like all natural occurrences, social and political events also tend to differ from one another in their behaviours. All historical movements cannot be considered identical in their nature. The nature of the Islamic movement is in no case similar to the French revolution or to the great October revolution of Russia.

The current Iranian movement is not restricted to any particular class or trade union. It is not only a labour, an agrarian, a student, an intellectual or a bourgeois movement. Within its scope fall one and all in Iran, the rich and the poor, the man and the woman, the school boy and the scholar, the warehouse man and the factory labourer, the artisan and the peasant, the clergy and the teacher, the literate and the illiterate, one and all. An announcement made by the preceptor of the highest station guiding the movement is received in the length and breadth of the country with equal enthusiasm by all classes of the people. . . .

This movement is one of the glaring historical proofs which falsifies the concept of materialistic interpretation of history and that of the dialectics of materialism according to which economy is recognised as the cornerstone of social structure and a social movement is considered a reflection of class struggle. . . .

The awakened Islamic conscience of our society has induced it to search for Islamic values. This is the conscience of the cumulative enthusiasms of all classes of people, including perhaps some of the heretofore dissident groups, which has galvanized them into one concerted upsurge.

The roots of this movement shall have to be traced in the events that occurred during the last half century in our country [during the reign of the Pahlavi shahs, 1925-1979] and the way these events came into conflict with the Islamic spirit of our society.

It is evident that during the last half century, there have been events which adopted a diametrically opposite direction as far as the nobler objectives of Islam were concerned and which aimed at nullifying the aspirations of the well-meaning reformers for the last century. This state of affairs could not continue for long without reaction.

What happened in Iran during the last half century may be summed up as under:

1. Absolute and barbaric despotism.
2. Denial of freedom of every kind.
3. A new type of colonialism meaning an invisible and dangerous colonialism embracing political, economic and cultural aspects of life.
4. Maintaining distance between religion and politics. Rather, divorcing politics from religion.
5. An attempt at leading Iran back to the age of ignorance of pre-Islamic days. . . .
6. Effecting a change and corrupting the rich Islamic culture and replacing it with the ambiguous Iranian culture.
7. Gruesome killing of Iranian Muslims, imprisonment and torture of the alleged political prisoners.
8. Ever increasing discrimination and cleavage among the classes of society despite so-called reforms.
9. Domination of non-Muslim elements over the Muslim elements in the government and other institutions.
10. Flagrant violation of Islamic laws either directly or by perpetrating corruption in the cultural and social life of the people.
11. Propaganda against Persian literature (which has always been the protector and upholder of Islamic spirit) under the pretext of purifying the Persian language of foreign terminology.
12. Severing relations with Islamic countries and flirting with non-Islamic and obviously with anti-Islamic countries like Israel.

. . .

What is the objective pursued by the [Islamic] movement and what does it want? Does it aim at democracy? Does it want to liquidate colonialism from our country? Does it rise to defend what is called in modern terminology human rights? Does it want to do away with discrimination, inequality? Does it want to uproot oppression? Does it want to undo materialism and so forth and so on?

In view of the nature of the movement and its roots as already brought under consideration and also in view of the statements and announcements given out by the leaders of the movement, what one may gather as an answer to these questions is "Yes" as well as "No."

"Yes" because all the objectives mentioned above form the very crux of it. And "No" because the movement is not limited to only these or any one of these objectives. An Islamic movement cannot, from the point of its objective, remain a restricted affair, because Islam, in its very nature, is "an indivisible whole" and with the realization of any of the objectives set before it, its role does not cease to be.

. . .

No movement can be led successfully without leadership. But who should be the leader or the group of leaders when the movement is an Islamic one in its nature and when its objective is exclusively Islam?

Evidently the leadership should, in the first place, fulfill the general conditions of the task before it. Then the leaders must be deeply Islamic, fully conversant with the ethical, social, political and spiritual philosophy of Islam. They must have the knowledge of Islam's universal vision, its insight about empirical matters like the creation, the origin, the creator of the universe, the need for creation of the universe, etc. They must have the deep knowledge of Islam's views and stipulations on man and his society. It is of great importance that the leaders must have a clear picture of the Islamic ideology of man's relations with his society; his manner and method of framing the social order; his abilities of defending and pursuing certain things and resisting others; his ultimate objectives and the means of attaining those objectives, etc.

It is obvious that only such persons can lead as have been brought up under the pure Islamic culture having perfectly mastered the branches of religious learning and Islamic sciences, the Qur'an, tradition, jurisprudence, etc. It is, therefore, only ecclesiastics who qualify for the leadership of such a movement.

III. TALIBAN DECREES (1996)

[In 1994 the Taliban emerged suddenly out of the bitter conflicts that gripped Afghanistan following the Soviet invasion of 1979. For many Afghans, nearly all of whom are Muslim, resistance to the Soviets in the 1980s was a holy war (jihad). However, when the Soviets withdrew in defeat in 1989, ethnic and tribal differences among the Afghans quickly surfaced. Fierce fighting between the Pashtuns, the dominant group in the south, and an unstable coalition of northern groups—Uzbeks, Tajiks, and Hazaras—rent the country for several years. It was this Afghan crucible of violence in the 1980s and early 1990s that gave rise to the Taliban, a movement of mostly young and impoverished Pashtun males. Many of the Taliban grew up in refugee camps in northern Pakistan where they obtained only the most rudimentary education in fundamentalist Muslim schools (madrasas). As they fought their way to power in 1994–1996, large numbers of Afghans, especially Pashtuns, welcomed the Taliban both for their promise to restore social order and for their Muslim piety. The three decrees are reproduced as translated by the Taliban.]

TALIBAN DECREES

1.

Decree announced by the General Presidency of Amr Bil Maruf and Nai Az Munkar (Religious Police.)

Kabul, November 1996.

Women you should not step outside your residence. If you go outside the house you should not be like women who used to go with fashionable clothes wearing much cosmetics and appearing in front of every men before the coming of Islam.

Islam as a rescuing religion has determined specific dignity for women, Islam has valuable instructions for women. Women should not create such opportunity to attract the attention of useless people who will not look at them with a good eye. Women have the responsibility as a teacher or coordinator for her family.

Husband, brother, father have the responsibility for providing the family with the necessary life requirements (food, clothes, etc). In case women are required to go outside the residence for the purposes of education, social needs or social services they should cover themselves in accordance with Islamic Sharia regulation. If women are going outside with fashionable, ornamental, tight and charming clothes to show themselves, they will be cursed by the Islamic Sharia and should never expect to go to heaven.

All family elders and every Muslim have responsibility in this respect. We request all family elders to keep tight control over their families and avoid these social problems. Otherwise these women will be threatened, investigated and severely punished as well as the family elders by the forces of the Religious Police (*Munkrat*).

The Religious Police (*Munkrat*) have the responsibility and duty to struggle against these social problems and will continue their effort until evil is finished.

2.

Rules of work for the State Hospitals and private clinics based on Islamic Sharia principles. Ministry of Health, on behalf of Amiz ul Momineen Mullah Mohammed Omar. Kabul, November 1996.

1. Female patients should go to female physicians. In case a male physician is needed, the female patient should be accompanied by her close relative.
2. During examination, the female patients and male physicians both should be dressed with Islamic *hijab* (veil).
3. Male physicians should not touch or see the other parts of female patients except for the affected part.
4. Waiting room for female patients should be safely covered.
5. The person who regulates turn for female patients should be a female.
6. During the night duty, in what rooms which female patients are hospitalized, the male doctor without the call of the patient is not allowed to enter the room.
7. Sitting and speaking between male and female doctors are not allowed, if there be need for discussion, it should be done with *hijab*.
8. Female doctors should wear simple clothes; they are not allowed to wear stylish clothes or use cosmetics or make-up.
9. Female doctors and nurses are not allowed to enter the rooms where male patients are hospitalized.
10. Hospital staff should pray in mosques on time.
11. The Religious Police are allowed to go for control at any time and nobody can prevent them.

Anybody who violates the order will be punished as per Islamic regulations.

3.

General Presidency of Amr Bil Maruf. Kabul, December 1996.

1. To prevent sedition and female uncovers (Be Hejabi). No drivers are allowed to pick up women who are using Iranian *burqa*. In case of violation the driver will be imprisoned. If such kind of female are observed in the

- street their house will be found and their husband punished. If the women use stimulating and attractive cloth and there is no accompany of close male relative with them, the drivers should not pick them up.
2. To prevent music. To be broadcasted by the public information resources. In shops, hotels, vehicles and rickshaws cassettes and music are prohibited. This matter should be monitored within five days. If any music cassette found in a shop, the shopkeeper should be imprisoned and the shop locked. If five people guarantee the shop should be opened the criminal released later. If cassette found in the vehicle, the vehicle and driver will be imprisoned. If five people guarantee the vehicle will be released and the criminal released later.
 3. To prevent beard shaving and its cutting. After one and a half months if anyone observed who has shaved and/or cut his beard, they should be arrested and imprisoned until their beard gets bushy.
 4. To prevent keeping pigeons and playing with birds. Within ten days this habit/hobby should stop. After ten days this should be monitored and pigeons and any other playing birds should be killed.
 5. To prevent kite-flying. The kite shops in the city should be abolished.
 6. To prevent idolatory. In vehicles, shops, hotels, room and any other place pictures/portraits should be abolished. The monitors should tear up all pictures in the above places.
 7. To prevent gambling. In collaboration with the security police the main centres should be found and the gamblers imprisoned for one month.
 8. To eradicate the use of addiction. Addicts should be imprisoned and investigation made to find the supplier and the shop. The shop should be locked and the owner and user should be imprisoned and punished.
 9. To prevent the British and American hairstyle. People with long hair should be arrested and taked to the Religious Police department to shave their hair. The criminal has to pay the barber.
 10. To prevent interest on loans, charge on changing small denomination notes and charge on money orders. All money exchangers should be informed that the above three types of exchanging the money should be prohibited. In case of violation criminals will be imprisoned for a long time.
 11. To prevent washing cloth by young ladies along the water streams in the city. Violator ladies should be picked up with respectful Islamic manner, taken to their houses and their husbands severely punished.
 12. To prevent music and dances in wedding parties. In case of violation the head of the family will be arrested and punished.
 13. To prevent the playing of music drum. The prohibition of this should be announced. If anybody does this then religious elders can decide about it.
 14. To prevent sewing ladies cloth and taking female body measures by tailor. If women or fashion magazines are seen in the shop the tailor should be imprisoned.
 15. To prevent sorcery. All the related books should be burnt and the magician should be imprisoned until his repentance.
 16. To prevent not praying and order gathering pray at the bazaar. Prayer should be done on their due times in all districts. Transportation should

VISUAL SOURCE

A PILGRIM'S PRIDE

Islam is the one world religion that requires its members to go on pilgrimage. In traveling to the holy city of Mecca to visit *Ka'bah* and other holy sites, Muslims follow the example set by Muhammad and also re-enact events in the lives of Abraham, his wife Hagar, and their son Ishmael.

One indication of the resurgence of Islam in recent decades is the sharp increase in the number of Muslim pilgrims. In 1940 about 100,000 pilgrims from outside of Saudi Arabia journeyed to Mecca for the annual holy rites. Since that time the number has steadily increased. In 2000 the number of pilgrims to Mecca from foreign countries was approximately 1 million. Another 1 million came from within Saudi Arabia.

Although the Koran urges pilgrimage on all the faithful, only about 10 percent of Muslims ever make the sacred journey. Many of those who do so require subventions from family members and neighbors in order to pay the costs of the trip. Thus, when pilgrims return home, their pride is genuine and their standing among their coreligionists is much enhanced. In Egypt many pilgrims have murals painted on the walls of their houses commemorating their visit to the holy places. The Arabic calligraphy on the Egyptian house here quotes a key verse from the Koran: "Pilgrimage to the House [the *Ka'bah* in Mecca] is a duty to Allah for all who can make the journey" (3:97).



Mural on the Side of the House of an Egyptian Pilgrim to Mecca, ca. 1980. (Photo by Graham Harrison)