

The Islamic State and the *Pax Islamica*

WESTERN political theory defines the state as consisting of four elements: territory, people with common features, government, and sovereignty. It cannot be without territory, nor with an indefinite, boundless one. It cannot be universal, or include people without common features such as racial characteristics, language, customs and history. Finally, it must have corporate institutions and a government which together exercise sovereignty, i.e., enforce in all aspects of life one will which is assumed to be the single will of the whole. This is a definition of the western national state which is the creation of the last four to five centuries of western history.

Such western state is radically different from the Islamic state. The latter does have a territory but this is not essential. It can exist without it, as well as with one devoid of definite boundaries. Indeed the territory of the Islamic state is the whole earth, or better, the whole cosmos since the possibility of space travel is not too remote from us. Part of the earth may be under direct rule of the Islamic state and the rest may yet have to be included; the Islamic state exists and functions regardless. Indeed, its territory is ever-expansive. So is its people or "citizenry." For its aim is to include mankind. If it is at any time restricted to a few of the world's population, it does not matter as long as it wills to comprehend mankind. Its citizenry as we shall have occasion to see, need

not be all Muslim. It has hardly ever been the case that all citizens of any Islamic state are all Muslims. What is important is that the citizenry includes all those humans who agree to live under its auspices because they approve of its order and policies. The Islamic state never binds anyone to its citizenship against his will. He is always free to move out, together with all his people, relatives, dependents and everything they possess.

The Islamic state derives its constitution from the Covenant of Madinah which the Prophet granted to the city upon his emigration thither in 622 CE. The spirit of that covenant determined every Islamic state in history. It provided that the Muslims, regardless of their origins, (they belonged to different tribes and nations) are one Ummah. That is to say, they constitute one corporate entity regulated by Islamic law. It has its own institutions, courts of law, schools for the education of its children, in contradistinction from all others. The Ummah's governance with a view to self-realization, to the full measure of its religion, its genius, its laws, its ethic and culture, is guaranteed. So is its perpetuity. For an Ummah ought to have the freedom to pass on to its offspring its legacy of religion and culture whole, if not enriched. The Ummah, then, by definition, is a community living up to its own ideals, or at least seeking to do so in perfect freedom.

Besides recognizing and establishing the Muslims as an Ummah, and hence wiping out their racial and tribal differences with the universalism of Islam, the Covenant of Madinah recognized and established the Jews as another Ummah, on equal par with the Muslim Ummah. They too constitute a community that ought to be given full freedom to realize itself according to its own legacy and genius. It should have its religion, social institutions, its own laws and courts to administer them, its own language and culture, its own ambiance and schools in which to bring up its children according to its own genius. It should enjoy all that is necessary to perpetuate itself.

A few years later, in 630 CE, the Christians of Arabia came to Madinah to negotiate their status with the Prophet. The Prophet received their delegation with open arms. He also allowed them to pray their prayer in his mosque. He presented them with Islam and argued with them for three days while they enjoyed his hospitality as

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was customary with the Arabs. Some were convinced, became Muslims and were immediately admitted into the brotherhood of believers as equals of all other Muslims. They became members of the Muslim Ummah. The others were not convinced and remained Christians. But they did choose to enter the Islamic state as citizens. Accordingly, they were granted the same status as the Jews and the Muslims. Henceforth they were to be an Ummah, on a par with the rest, enjoying the privilege of living as Christians in fulfillment of their legacy of religion and culture and of their will to perpetuity. They did not live in Madinah, like the Jews, but far away, in lands separated from Madinah. Just the same, the Prophet included them, thus expanding the jurisdiction of the Islamic state, and sent with them one of his trusted companions to be his representative in their territory. From that moment on, their protection from foreign aggression as well as from internal subversion fell to the Islamic state. It was the guarantor of their freedom, of their Christianness and of their self-continuation in history.

By the same logic, the Persian Zoroastrians, the Indian Hindus and Buddhists were included in the Islamic state as Ummahs on a par with the other Ummahs of Muslims, Jews and Christians. The Islamic state was their guarantor and protector whose duty is defined by its own constitution as enabling each to live in accordance with its own religion, ethic and culture, to perpetuate itself through the generations, in perfect freedom. The Islamic state is then not an exclusively Muslim state, but a federation of Ummahs of different religions and cultures and traditions, committed to live harmoniously and in peace with one another.

Islam, however, is a missionary religion *par excellence*. How then is this federal system accepted as a *modus vivendi* between Muslims and non-Muslims? Mission is certainly endemic to Islam. It flows from its essence as a universal religion. Every Muslim wishes that Islam would be the conscious religion of every man, as he realizes that it is the unconscious religion of every man which nurture and history has altered into something else. Islam also holds mission to be a duty incumbent upon every Muslim man and woman. This missionary spirit, or *da'wah* (literally "calling" men to Islam) is not contradictory to the Islamic state. It is its ultimate objective. Within the Islamic state,

as outside of it, therefore Muslims must carry out the mission. A verse of the Qur'an¹ assigns the duty to Muhammad *vis-à-vis* the Arabs, the first Ummah, and to the Ummah *vis-à-vis* the other Ummahs within the Islamic state. By logical extension, Muslims including their Prophet, have understood the Islamic state to be assigned the same duty *vis-à-vis* the other states.

The principle which makes all this possible without contradicting anything we have so far said is that of personal freedom. Under Islam, religious conviction is an entirely personal affair. Every man is free to convince and to be convinced. Unless and until he is convinced of the Islamic claim, he is perfectly entitled to be what he is and to continue to do so from generation to generation. The Muslim, therefore, may continue to missionarize, but he cannot coerce. Coercion (*ikrāh*), or subversion (*fitnah*) are punishable criminal violations in Islam. The non-Muslim, like the Muslim himself, is entitled to the full practice of his faith. Nor is either of them entitled to so run his affairs, or the Ummah's, as to interfere with the religious and cultural life of the other. Either of these practices is based on ethnocentrism or cynicism or the superiority of one Ummah over the other. Internally, the Islamic state cannot tolerate any encroachment of one Ummah over another. Its duty is the same towards all, viz., to keep the peace, to run the public services, to defend the totality, and to protect the rights and privileges of the persons and their Ummahs which make it up.

Externally, the Islamic state is ideological; i.e., it does have a world purpose which it pursues with all power at its disposal. It approaches other states, tribes, peoples, nations or groups with the proposal for them to enter as an Ummah within the Islamic state. Such entrance, it would explain, does not mean the entry of its people into the Islamic religion, nor any diminution, or even change, of any institution order or arrangement which has hitherto obtained within it. Nor does it mean any alteration of its economic arrangement, or the political sovereignty of its king, government, or governmental institutions. All these remain absolutely the same and will be guaranteed and protected.

1 Al Fārūqī is most likely referring to verse 2:143 of the Qur'an here, though he does not specify which verse he was actually referring to.

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Its entrance into the Islamic state means only that its relations with that state will henceforth be relations of peace; that it is prepared to allow its citizens to hear and listen to the call of Islam while they call Muslims to anything they wish, if not to their own religion and worldview; in short, that neither will it wage war against, nor be waged war against by, the Islamic state, nor will it live in a state of *apartheid* from the rest of humanity.

The Islamic state is therefore not really a state but a world order, a *pax Islamica* with a government, a court, a constitution and an army, a sort of “United Nations” with “body” and “teeth.” To enter it is to decide on peaceful intercourse with one’s fellow-humans and to renounce war between the Ummahs once and for all. Evidently, not to enter it, to remain outside of it, is to assert the contrary; and hence to mean either national *apartheid* (isolation) or war and aggression. That is why Muslim theorists have called the Islamic state “the House of Peace,” a real world-order or *pax Islamica*.

Force is not to be in the hands of any Ummah, not even the Muslim Ummah. It is to be used for putting down rebellion within any Ummah against its established institutions and authority; to restore to any Ummah any rights, privileges or properties which any other Ummah might have violated; and finally, to defend the world order itself against its enemies. No other use of power is legitimate. Truly, then, the world order Islam envisages is an ideal order of national and international relations, one which constitutes the only answer to the continuing malaise of the world situation. By comparison to it, a world peace based on atomic terror, on the balance of power or on the imperial tyranny of any Ummah over the others, is nothing short of Satanic.

The army of the Islamic state is Muslim since the duty of jihad or defensive war, is a religious duty falling on Muslims alone. Others may join if they wish to, in which case they would be exempted from the *ji'zayah*, and would be treated in exactly the same manner as Muslims. But they may not be conscripted by the government into military service. Their enlistment has to be entirely voluntary.

The Islamic state does not have to be a monolithic system where one and only one law, style of living, culture, religion and worldview obtain. This requirement has been relegated to the Ummah, and it is

the latter which acculturates, integrates, and assimilates all elements into the Islamic unit and preserves its Islamic existence. Other Ummahs render the same services to their non-Islamic members. That is why the Islamic state can afford to be liberal and pluralistic. In fact, its constitution is the only one which enables it to be genuinely pluralistic, without attempt on its part to wipe out the differences between the Ummahs under the pretext of “national integration” and “national unity.”

The task of acculturating and homogenizing its members fall to the Ummah, not to the Islamic state as such which must keep itself open to the possibility of other Ummahs doing the same to their own members. The Muslim Ummah within the Islamic state is indeed a monolithic entity governed by Islamic law. The citizen of the Islamic state is free to opt for any religion, for any Ummah within it. If he opts for an Ummah outside the Islamic state, he must emigrate thereto forthwith.

Finally, it should be noted that the Islamic state is an Islamic idea; that its men, energies and mind are all Muslim. Furthermore, it is a unique phenomenon on earth. History knows of no parallel to it. If similar states were to be formed by non-Muslims, this would be a welcome development. For the Islamic state can then feel certain that the day will not be distant when it can merge with the non-Islamic state since their constitutions are similar but their religions different. For it is essential to the constitutions of both states that they should seek to solve their differences in peace.