Book Reviews

Political Development: An Islamic Perspective. Edited by Zeenath
Kausar. Kuala Lumpur: Islamic Book Trust & International Islamic
University Malaysia, 2000. Pp 264. ISBN 983-9541-08-0

Reviewer: Danial Mohd Yusof, Department of Political Science,
International Islamic University Malaysia.

The book under review is a collective effort of the members of the
Department of Political Science, International Islamic University
Malaysia. Zeenath Kausar has managed to compile a cohesive and
commendable array of scholarship to address the issue of political
development and its related processes in the Muslim world. An
accessible literature for the undergraduate and layperson, it nonetheless
delivers, at the essential scholastic level, a solid philosophical and
theoretical foundation in galvanizing a distinct identity for Muslims.
Noteworthy on this point is the contribution of Dr. Louay Safi who
articulates the dynamics of identity in complexities of Muslim
development trends via a historical narrative that is organic in its mode
of explanation, cyclical in its employment and morally focused in its
implication. Equally noteworthy is Khurshid Ahmad's leading
contribution on the disenchantment with the modern development
theory and loss of identity. Self-admittedly a pioneering work, this
anthology is deserving of further elucidation on the power of identity
and self-knowledge among Muslims. This is to dispel the West's
development myth and *fin de siecle* while undermining the increasingly
popular postmodern slogan of pluralism and relativism and its possible
trans-valuation of Islam as a precursor to its own neo-modernists or
rational fundamentalist approach of development. However, the
dynamics of development is admittedly more complex than the
theoretical premise of such a 'holistic' programme by Zeenath Kausar.
The intricacies presented through the following conceptual issues and
case studies of this book highlight the necessity for academic
sophistication and policy pragmatism to coincide. The growing rift
between the two is of major concern for the relevance of future
discourses.

The concept of democratic prudence, relativism in culture and the
West's own history of ideologies (and Christianity) are resources for

accumulative understanding which transparently indicate that humanity doesn't understand itself yet. John Jacques Rousseau expressed the limitation of Thomas Hobbes' locus of power (renunciation of original freedom to an aggregation, which falls short of a *body politic*) by calling for an aggregation of self-preservation and a *body politic* through consent and reintroducing morality within the body politics as inherent and a continuous labour with political, educational reformation. But he concluded on a 'degenerative' existential cycle of temporal actuality: "The march towards the perfection of society is as rapid as that towards the deterioration of the species." Paradoxically, development in the modern world implies the universalism that conforms to secularism. This is the task that must be undone by Islam in its own societies. It sees the Western liberal experience as a 'leviathan' of sorts, two dimensional, at the most. To the West, this process would seem 'parasitic' on its 'universalistic' discourse. As Islam is 'exclusively' its own 'universal' and independent superstructure to Muslims, it would be a highly intricate process for Islamic unity and development to 'co-habit' Islamic values/principles and structures to secular humanist perspectives on religion, science, and the social sciences. The problem of political participation and the institutionalization of *shūrā* (consultative decision-making) represent a major conceptualization 'migraine.' Consider the words of Muhammad Asad:

> No doubt a majority can err, but so can a minority…The fallibility of the human mind makes the committing of errors an inescapable factor of human life, and so we can have no choice but to learn through trial and error and subsequent correction. (quoted by Fathi Osman, p. 97).

Fathi Osman and Rashid Moten both manage to articulate the precepts of the Islamic polity along the lines of theocracy, monocracy and democracy in their illumination of the *shūrā* system admirably without falling into the conceptual trappings of each of these concepts. But the words of Muhammad Asad must be duly considered as indicative of the bifurcation of Islamic policies and Political Islam. Here, after all, lies the real predicament of Islamic 'Super Rules' be it functional as a State's constitution. The canon of democracy as a pre-cursor to development and the incompatibility of Islam (thus Muslims being uncivilized) as an assertion are symptomatic of the West as a domineering ideological movement. The fundamental differences between an Islamic political system and Western democracy in terms of sovereignty, the constitution, role of religion and decision making not as a channel of interest articulation and aggregation among morally unregulated factions necessitates the centrality of a value system i.e. religion. If Thomas Aquinas himself distinguished eternal law, divine or

revealed law, natural law and civil law - the notion of modernity and progress as an epistemological evolution disqualifies Islam as the West did away with the Church. The dynamism of the *shūrā* is its 'awareness' of such different and over-lapping dimensions between the bond of *tawḥīd* and human psychology, rationality, solidarity, political organization and development. It is within this context that an Islamic polity must be engineered where its association or similarities with all things civilized, developed, scientific and modern will be proven to be superfluous when compared to the West on civilizational terms. But as long as the *shūrā* system remains un-operational in Muslims societies as a heritage of Islam's political manifestation, the West's 'social engineering' scheme will persist and even appear to be persuasive and, of course, operational.

The chronology of this book appears to follow the flow of thought of this reader as he contemplates, clearly anticipating his curiosity to a pivotal climax. The understanding of science in its socio-political set-up and civilizational exchange or interaction with more advanced idea systems becomes the ultimate challenge or preservation, integration or corruption of an identity. If identity can be sub-divided into beliefs, values and ideas-"the transfer of science and technology from a different normative system requires a complete reorientation and restructuring of the entire spheres of belief and value systems which include distorted elements (Louay Safi, p.139). Self-criticism, moral and value oriented administration, management and professionalism (read Abdel Rahman Ahmad) and a cohesive education system is required to mobilize this process. The criteria phase of transfer and reevaluation will see perhaps greater factionalism (in the form of adjectives before the word Islam) among Muslims of the West's new millennium e.g. liberal, fundamentalist, extremist, postmodernist, socialist, nationalists, environmentalist etc. before a networking structure becomes operational. The problematic legitimation of Islam in the nation-state politics of Bangladesh (read Syed Serajul Islam); development planning and the quandary of religious, national and ethnic identity of the Malays in multi-cultural and bi-modal Malaysia (read Zeenath Kausar); and the historical complexity and factionalism of Sudan and its cancerous South in relation to Islamization (read ElFatih A. Salam) as case studies suggest a grim particularity in the politics of development in Muslim societies where theoretical sophistication and pragmatism do not configure, and this has to be distinguished from political development in Islam.

This book is thus commendable for its stark realization of the political predicament of Muslims and civilizational development. The

cold, impersonal but descriptive writing methodology from the authors provoke the reader to link, personally imbue and empathize with the conceptual issues and case studies as a loss of the Islamic axiology. If we have realized thus far, the book then obliquely invites us to fill that vacuum.

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Lamḥāt by Khurram Murad. Lahore: Manshoorat, Mansoora, 2000 Pp. 555.

Reviewer: Jamil Farooqui, Department of Sociology and Anthropology, International Islamic University Malaysia.

Lamḥāt (moments) is a sort of memoirs where a person, dedicated to an Islamic movement, narrated precious experiences and critical moments of his life that shaped his ideological struggle. A person who has a distinct mission and whose entire activities in this world rotate around that mission is quite different from those who are engaged only in meeting the material demands of their existence. Khurram Murad was an exceptional person who was engaged in *daʿwah* work and in activating the Islamic movement. It is said that anything expressed with utmost sincerity and comes from the depth of the heart has tremendous effect upon the mind and soul and has the ability to reach great heights. The present work is an example of that. Every word of *Lamḥāt* manifests his sincerity, dedication and commitment to the doctrine for the implementation of which he sacrificed his life. As such, it leaves a lasting impact upon the mind and heart of the readers.

Lamḥāt is narrated by Khurram Murad when he was in the hospital waiting for heart surgery for the third time. He knew the operation was risky but there was no alternative. He had very short period at his disposal but in such a critical moment he decided to record his experiences not to satisfy his ego, which he never had, but to help people understand the nature and development of an Islamic movement (Jamāʿat-e-Islāmī). *Lamḥāt* aims as well to guide the workers to be a dedicated soldier in the service of Islam.

Khurram Murad, born in 1932, was brought up in a middle class religious family in Bhopal State (India). The home environment was very conducive to cultivating piety and reading. There was a separate room where books of different types were kept and served as a library. Khurram Murad, from childhood, took a keen interest in reading. Parents and other members of the house were practicing Islam with zeal