

IIUM JOURNAL OF HUMAN SCIENCES

A Peer-reviewed Journal
ISSN 2682-8731 (Online)

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Social Movement Theories: From Class Conflict to Post-Industrial Interpretations- A Search for A Muslim Perspective

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ABSTRACT

Social movements have become an important topic within sociology in modern times. Even though it has not reached a consensus regarding its definition and typology, people define it as a collective action against a particular class to achieve a specific end. It has been articulated through various theories and perspectives. Sometimes, it is also compared with notions such as political parties, interest groups, civil society, and religious organisations. However, it has been presented both as a catalyst for social change and a result of social change and structure. The objective of this paper is to examine various social movement theories, especially concerning its relevance to social movement analysis of Muslim societies. This paper also investigates a Muslim perspective of social movement peculiar with Muslim societies, focussing on the Arab spring particularly the Egyptian case, to understand the scope and relevance of social movement theories in the Muslim world. The content analysis method are used to achieve the objectives. This paper finds that social movement is suitable as an analytical tool, not an empirical category, to understand Muslim societies. However, instead of any theory or paradigm, a multidisciplinary approach is more compatible to be used in the study of the Muslim world.

Keywords: Social Movement, Social Structure, Collective Action, Conflict, Muslim Societies

INTRODUCTION

A social movement is generally defined as collective action against an identified group or a situation to achieve some goals in terms of change and transformation in society (Tilly, 1997; Touraine, 1981; Melucci, 1996). Nonetheless, wide-ranging typologies and definitions have complicated the issue of interpretation (Piscina, 2007). Some have attempted to define social movements in five points or four points. For instance, Snow et al. (2004) articulated five elements: Collective action, change-oriented goals, non-institutionally organized collectivity, some extent of organisational form, and a degree of historical continuity. Similarly, but in a more condensed form, Porta & Diani (2006) defined social movement through four characteristics: Collective action, conflict with an identified opponent, informal networks, distinct collective identity. Social change and social structure are significant terms in the discussion of social movements (Porta & Diani, 2006). Social movements have a particular context of their emergence and development starting from Industrial society to today's post-modern and post-industrial set up where drastic change has been found in its theories, perspectives, and orientation (Giddens, 1990; McAdam & Tarrow, 2005; Porta & Diani, 2006). In industrial set-up, it was concerned about the conflict on material-based opponents while in the post-industrial world, social movements are more focused on value-based or cultural conflict (Touraine, 1981; Melucci, 1989, 1996, Eder, 1993).

Observations show that most, if not all, studies of social movements exclusively deal as they grow in its strict sense, with Europeans and the Northern hemisphere of the globe. Thompson and Tapscott (2010) observed that in a vast and vital literature of social movements covering almost one century, the bulk of the writings on theories and examples of social movement analysis pertain to the global North (Thompson & Tapscott, 2010, Porta & Diani, 2006). In the same tune, Shigetomi (2009) lamented the lack of serious interest in taking the context of developing nations into consideration, especially in the attempt to identify the significant features and perspectives of social movements. Ben Mousa (2011, 2013) Sidi Hida (2007), Wiktorowics (2004), Charles W. Anderson (2013), Asif Bayat (2003, 2007), and Hakan Yavuz (2000, 2003, 2009) are among the few exceptions who have focused on the study of social movements in the Muslim world.

Even when scholars try to study non-western societies, they overlook the specific context, cultural settings, and historic structure, which has a direct impact on them. Escobar (1992) for example, raised this point with a due focus that social movements in developing countries cannot be understood under ubiquitous terms such as economic and political failure of modernity or development. Therefore, following the same line, Stekelenburg and Klandermans (2009) propound the idea of a multidisciplinary approach considering structure and actions and connecting the individuals from micro-level, social movements as meso level and political systems and multinational practices as macro level. There is a dire need to redefine the social movements approach to study Muslim societies in particular.

This paper employs qualitative research methodology. History, definitions, and theories of social movement and its study is collected through library research. Content analysis is applied in order to evaluate the data collected. Comparative analysis is used at instances to elaborate the difference of the contexts between Western and non-Western, in Particular the Muslim societies. A fresh analysis of social movements in the context of Arab spring was used as an example for the relevance of studying social movements in Muslim societies.

History and Definition of Social Movement

The topic of social movements re-emerged recently in the study of society, particularly since after the 1960s. Nevertheless, the history of social movements dates to the 1930s when fascist and communist movements dismayed the political system in Germany and Italy (Eyerman & Jamison, 1991). However, during the subsequent period, the topic became less concentrated, and an apparent lack of theoretical and conceptual engagement among social scientists was noticed. In the 1940s, for instance, Strauss (1947) complained about the lack of theory and trend of a descriptive understanding of social movements. Later, in the 1960s, Kilian lamented the reluctance and obliviousness of social movements in the study of social change. Also, during these periods, social movements were rendered as negative and a threat to the stability of established order and system (Eyerman & Jamison, 1991).

In the 1970s, following the post-war period, during the cold war, social movement analysis was rediscovered, and research into collective actions and social movements gained a vital consideration and vigour (Marx & Wood, 1975). During this re-emergence period, social movements were given new definitions bearing positive and constructive dimensions (Habermas, 2008). Touraine (1981), for instance, defined a social movement as the organised collective behaviour of a class struggling against its class opponents for the sake of social control of his historicity (198, p. 77). Historicity here, refers to a significant and unique dimension, which is the ability of that class to produce a model of its functioning that embraces knowledge, investment, and social norms (Pakulski, 1995, p. 80).

As far as elements and ingredients of social movements are concerned, there is no consensus. Nonetheless, people have proposed four to five elements of social movements. Porta and Diani (2006),

for example, articulated four elements such as collectivity, conflict, informal networking, and distinct identity. With a little variation, Snow et al. (2004) presented five elements such as collectivity, change-orientation, non-institutional organisation, in loose sense organisation, and temporal continuity.

It is worth mentioning here that social movements in the previous stages were regarded as a purely emotional, reactionary, and irrational collective action, but in post-war re-emergence, scholars such as Mayer Zald and Charles Tilly opined that social movements are rational, planned, and well-organized actions. They drive their strategies from the cost-benefit calculation. They assess their resources and opportunities and work accordingly. Contrary to the previous assumptions, the current stream also suggests that most of the participants and organizers of a social movement come from a very active, well-integrated, and purposeful background. Whereas socially isolated, marginalized, and uprooted individuals are under-represented (Oberschall, 1973; Porta & Diani, 2006).

Classical Theories of Social Movement (Before-1960s)

In the study of social movements, three classical approaches have been adopted to understand the phenomenon: they are Marxist or conflict approach, structural-functionalist approach, and symbolic interactionism. For Marxists, social movements are a result of class conflict due to the uneven distribution of resources and mode of production. On the other hand, structural functionalist saw social movements as the side effects of rapid social transformations and the result of 'strains' related to uneven development, to use the Parsons' term (Smelser, 1962). Social movements were also defined as the manifestation of feelings generated from deprivation aggression (Davies, 1969; Gurr, 1970). According to the Marxist model, fascism was a result of conflict between capital and labour, while for functionalists, it resulted from the tensions inherent in the unequal development of modernisation, in the lop-sided effects of industrialization, and the imbalanced consequences of democratisation. The third approach comes from symbolic interactionism where exponents of it stressed that collective action does not necessarily reflect social crisis or disorder; instead, it produces new norms and values, develops new solidarities, and replaces a new value-system. Herbert Blumer, for instance, pointed to the potential creativity of the social movements which might replace existing normal and institutional behaviour (Blumer, 1951).

Parsons' structural approach and Blumer's symbolic interactionism interpretations later developed and merged into a new perspective, which was called collective behaviour school. This was the first time when social movements and collective actions were perceived as meaningful, beneficial, and necessary for social change (Melucci, 1989; Snow & Oliver, 1995; Eyerman & Jamison, 1991; Porta & Diani, 2006).

Contemporary Theories of Social Movement (Post-1960s)

In the post-1960s, new approaches and perspectives were introduced in the domain of social movement study. Precisely, when previous interpretations failed to explain the new emergence of social movements, it became imperative to present new perspectives of social movements (Eyerman & Jamison, 1991; Porta & Diani, 2006). Technological advancement of the 1980s, which transformed the world from industrial to post-industrial order, stands as the main cause of re-defining social movement and its explanation (Porta & Diani, 2006).

There are three main approaches to social movements in contemporary literature: Resource mobilisation theory, Particularist school, and New social movement approach.

Resource mobilisation theory was introduced in juxtaposition to the collective behaviour approach (Zald & McCarthy, 1987). Contrary to the collective behaviour approach, resource

mobilisation theory starts its analysis in organisations, resources, and assets of social movement instead of individual behaviours (Porta & Diani, 2006; Eyerman & Jamison, 1991). Therefore, it does not gallop around the questions on individual behaviours such as why individuals join social movements, are they rational and preplanned or irrational, and reactionary; rather, it focuses on the effectiveness, resources, and organisational strength with which movements achieve their goals. The prime research question it tries to answer is why some social movements are more successful than others (Garner & Zald, 1985; Eyerman & Jamison, 1991).

The Particularist school focuses on the individual and certain motivations and intentions that make someone a participant in a social movement. This is very much in line with the older collective behaviour school. Charles Tilly, among others, has provided foundations for this approach through the study of several movements. According to this interpretation, social movements can be defined in terms of the pursuit of common interest (Tilly, 1978). Social movements are also studied considering the historical context of the movement and its participants (Tilly, 1978).

Finally, new social movement schools emerged and developed in a very specific context in Europe and a particular historical and intellectual tradition (Eyerman & Jamison, 1991). In this approach, society was perceived as structures, forces, processes, and projects. Touraine in France, Habermas in Germany, and Giddens in Britain are among the leading exponents of this school. New social movements, unlike classical conflict theories, included identity, values, and cultures. Touraine, in this context, only defines a social movement as the organised collective behaviour of a class struggling against its class adversary with the purpose of social control of its historicity (1981, p.77).

Evaluation of Social Movement Theories

Marxist approach has been criticised on many grounds, primarily, because of the post-World War II social transformation and post-industrial social change has put the centrality of the capital-labour conflict into question and introduced new criteria of social conflict and stratification such as gender relation, and new professional group (Rokkan, 1970; Tilly, 2004; Porta & Diani, 2006).

The structural-functionalist model has two problems: Many collective actors come not from deprived class, but rather, from privileged groups, and also, in some cases, the social condition of deprivation failed to mobilize people (Maheu, 1995).

The collective behaviour approach remains limited to the individual-oriented social-psychological dimension of social movements overlooking other aspects (Eyerman & Jamison, 1991). It tends to treat all social movements in the same manner; it lacks the historical and contextual dimension of the different social movements.

In contemporary approaches, the Particularist approach draws on the intellectual tradition of Hobbes and Locke and their social philosophy, which is predominated with individual freedom and personal autonomy (Eyerman & Jamison, 1991). This approach sees that each movement has its specific context and logic or illogic (Tilly, 1978).

Resource mobilisation theory is influenced by and based on the institutional approach coming from political economists such as Adam Smith, John Stuart Mill, and Robert Merton. It stresses on the rational choice and cost-benefit analysis (Eyerman & Jamison, 1991). New social movement school was an outcome of a particular historical context of the European world and post-industrial development in social change and social structure (Eyerman & Jamison, 1991; Porta & Diani, 2006).

Social movement theories have been expounded and developed in a particular context and based on certain ontology at different point in times, which has its imprints and features. In classical theories, social movements, by and large, can be seen as class conflict oriented. However, in contemporary literature, it has opened for new and diversified explanations and interpretations. Nevertheless, there is one thing that is missing from the scene that all social movement theories take social movement as an empirical category while it should be treated as a historical and analytical category (Eyerman & Jamison, Bayat, 2007). Many post-Marxist scholars evaluate new social movements as progressive institutionalization of civil society in the post-industrial North where legality, plurality, and public debate materialize as main elements of that (Cohen & Arato, 1992, Thompson & Tapscott, 2010). Similarly, all social movement theories are product of a milieu where religion was assumed to be confined in the private space having no effect on public life. Therefore, they didn't consider religion as any important factor in social movements. On the contrary, most of the social movements of Muslim societies or Asian societies can be seen informed, motivated and guided by religious elements in one way or the other.

The Social Movement Theories and the Study of Muslim Societies

Generally, it is perceived that social movements are an exclusively Western-related phenomenon, and it has no place in non-Western and Muslim worlds (Bayat, 2007; Mousa, 2013). Nevertheless, according to many analysts and sociologists, Muslim-majority countries have never been bereft of civil societies and social movements which work outside the domain of authority and power (Mousa, 2013; Elmisseri, 2000; Eisenstadt, 2004). Even though mainstream scholarship seems to be reluctant to study social movements in the Muslim societies and sees them incompatible with Muslim social structure and cultural setting. However, recently, many scholars have tried to explain the changes in Muslim societies through social movement analysis (Bayat, 2007; Yavuz, 2003; 2009; Eltantawy & Wiest, 2011; Mousa, 2011, 2013; Anderson, 2013). Many scholars tend to explain Muslim societies within the rubrics of resource mobilisation theory (Eltantawy & Wiest, 2011; Mousa, 2013), while some see conspiracy theories and dependence theory as more compatible with the study of Muslim societies (Adou, 2015). Many find that existing theories are the product of a particular intellectual, cultural, historical context which is peculiar to the Western world. Hence, they tried to use multidisciplinary approach (Mousa, 2013) or expound some alternative approach which is embodied Muslim societies and their traditions (Bayat, 2007, Yavuz, 2003, 2000). Some of the significant cases that have attracted the attention of scholars are Iranian revolution, Turkish social movement secular as well as Islamic, Egyptian social movements, and more recently the Arab spring has been the focus of social movement scholars. One of the outstanding analyses of this kind is found in the work of Mousa (2013), where he dealt with the case of Arab spring and tried to present a theoretical framework for social movement analysis in Muslim societies. He used Fraser's (1995) theory of 'politics of recognition and redistribution' as the base to draw on the social movement analysis of Arab spring in its specificity.

In Muslim societies, social movements are constructed by a combination of material and cultural orientations in such a way that one cannot be achieved without the accomplishment of the other (Mousa, 2013). Generally, when explaining Arab spring, people talk in the context of revolution against tyranny, oppression, poverty, corruption, and injustice, but they ignore one thing that is very peculiar with Muslim societies and that is identity politics. In post-Arab-spring period there emerged many movements in that region ranging from secular movements, a nationalist movement, feminist and youth movements and Islamic-oriented movements, but most influential among these are Islamic-oriented movements which are perfect combination specimen of material and cultural spheres or 'politics of recognition and redistribution' to use Fraser's notion. Even though most of the Arab social movements

during the Arab spring were initiated and led by youth, still the entrenched Islamic elements in them cannot be separated (Mousa, 2013).

One more noteworthy point, which is generally overlooked in social movement analysis of Muslim societies is that during the Arab spring, most of the social movements were led by those who were highly educated, middle-class people who were not marginalised and deprived (Mousa, 2013, Anderson, 2013). This is the point that falsified the structural-functionalist model of deprivation (Eyerman & Jamison, 1991). The impact of technological advancements such as social media and the ability to produce information (Melucci, 2008) in providing resources for mobilisation cannot be overlooked (Castells, 2001; Mousa, 2013; Eltantawy & Wiest, 2011).

Speaking about the relevance of social movement analysis, it necessitates taking into consideration political process theory. Political process theory is used to understand the factors and possibilities of the forms and degree to which the system is open and accommodative to facilitate and allow collective action and social movements (Tilly, 1978, Ruggiero and Montagna, 2008). While analysing the social movements of Muslim societies, peculiarities of Muslims and in particular Arab societies should be seriously taken into consideration to understand the whole phenomenon of social movements. Habermas' notion of lifeworld and bureaucratisation is beneficial in understanding the emergence of social movements in the world (Habermas, 2008).

DISCUSSION

Basing on the ongoing, we have seen two very important aspects of social movement study: class conflict and sociological unit of social movement analysis followed by the Muslim perspective of social movement.

Firstly, class interpretation of social movement stands as the most ubiquitous and popular interpretation (Pakulski, 1995) so much so that collective action has become equivalent to social conflicts or confined to it (Maheu, 1995). Werner Sombart defined social movements as 'attempts at emancipation on the part of the proletariat' (Sombart, 1909; Nisbet, 1966; Luhman, 1993). The post-industrial world put this definition and class interpretation into the question, and rather, replaced it with cultural and value-relational struggle. Theorists articulated this notion in terms of the problem of discontinuity, which refers to discontinuity in class-based conflict (Pakulski, 1995; Melucci, 1996). For some theorists, the class still does matter in social movement definition but not in the same connotation as it bore in industrial society (Eder, 1995). Touraine, for instance, talked about class-based not on material things but rather on values, knowledge, and culture (Touraine, 1985). Ralph Dahrendorf's concept of class revolves around general authority relations. Class of subordinates and class of controllers (Dahrendorf, 1959; Starski, 1982). Since the 1970s, class interpretation is constantly in decline and withering away. Civil rights movements, ecological movements, anti-nuclear movements, and religious movements have compelled quick revision of the class interpretation (Pakulski, 1995: 56).

The class interpretation was a construe of a particular time and intellectual context which is no longer sustained in our modern world. The new class has emerged in the discourse of social movements which need different interpretation and framework to study them.

Secondly, there has been a debate on the epistemological and sociological nature of social movements. Even though most scholars treat social movements as an empirical and historical unit, this does not work well. Collective action is not, supposedly, a unitary empirical phenomenon. Moreover, if there appears the unity in any degree, it should be regarded as an outcome, not as an independent and initial entity. In other words, social movement should be rendered as a fact to be explained rather than

being an evidence. It should be clear that the appearance of social movements as a collectivity owes much to the amalgamation of different orientations, multiple actors, and a diversified system of wide opportunities and restrictions that shape their relationship and form their organisation. Hence, the analysis of a social movement should aim to explain how these different factors come together and form a unified empirical actor (Melluci, 1995; Maheu, 1995; Eyerman & Jamison, 1991).

Social movements analysis should always consider various components of collective actions such as analytical levels, types of relationships, orientations, and connotations. The realisation of this diversity will help to break down empirical generalisations and allows us to compare analytical components instead of global historical unity. In brief, social movements should not be viewed as *Personages*, as living being active on the stage of history, but rather, as a socially constructed reality (Melluci, 1995).

Thirdly, the study of social movements is preoccupied with the examples and research of Western societies. Social movements, in their full sense, first appeared, it is assumed, in European societies, and later in the 1960s, they reappeared on the stage with the emergence of student movements and civil rights movements. It passed from different stages, and interpretations premised on social structure and cultural milieu and intellectual tradition.

Even though non-Western and non-European societies are seldom studied in light of social movement theories, however, recently, some have started dealing with Muslim societies in light of social movement analysis. However, as propounded by the exponents of the sociology of knowledge such as Scheler, Manheim, social conditioning of reality entails reading social context while studying any social phenomenon. The scholars of social movements generally overlook this element, and consequently, they try to apply specific theories of social movements, which proliferated in the Western context, to understand Muslim societies. Eyerman and Jamison (1991) seem to be the first to pay attention to this aspect. They explained the emergence and development of social movement theories linking them with particular intellectual, political, and cultural contexts. Mayer (1991) argues, for example, that resource mobilisation theory owes much to structural and cultural change, more particularly, the political system.

This has led the Western media to present Muslim societies and social movements as irrational and apathetic. In Bayat's (2003) words, the Arab street is damned if it does and damned if it does not.

In this tune, it will be easier to understand the importance and necessity of a particular approach to study the social movements of the Muslim worlds. Asif Bayat's approach to the study of social movements in Iran and Egypt presents a good but initial framework to understand and explain the social movement phenomenon in Muslim societies. It is vital, here, to note that Bayat (2007) considers 'Muslim societies' in the plural and concrete entities as a useful analytical category to study the Muslim worlds in terms of social movement theories. What he perceives of Muslim society is very different from what generally European scholars allude to. For him, Muslim Societies are used as culture and subculture composed of national culture, historical experiences, political trajectories, and the element of class.

It is evident that Muslim societies are embodied with religion, or rather, religion is entrenched in Muslim societies, and any public debate would be incomplete without taking religious elements into account. Likewise, social movements are not an exception. The perception of religion and its obligation reflect on the perception of social behaviour and social movements. Therefore, Asif Bayat studied the Muslim world in terms of two kinds of social movements: Islamism and Post-Islamism. Islamism for him is projecting Islam as a complete divine system with a superior political model, cultural code, legal

structure, and economic arrangement. This kind of interpretation, according to him, will marginalise and criminalise those who remained outside its structures: non-conformist, secular, non-Islamist, Religious minorities, and women. Such movements grew in the 1970s against the backdrop of the cold war politics (Bayat, 2007). On the other hand, post-Islamism, which has been defined very differently by different scholars represent other kinds of social movements in the Muslim worlds (Olivier Roy, 2004; Gilles Kepel, 2003). For Bayat, Post-Islamism is a condition and project. It is more about fusing religiosity with rights, faith with freedom, Islam with liberty. These two concepts are very significant in understanding any collective action, social movements, and political struggle in Muslim societies.

Though these categories might help to understand the social movements of the Muslim worlds to some extent, but they are not sufficient. Islamism itself, for instance, is used so loosely to denote so various and mutually exclusive kinds of endeavours of the Muslim worlds which have less in common than the differences they have. Another important lacuna which is noticed in social movement analysis of the Muslim worlds is the notion of studying Muslim worlds in isolation from others who co-exist with Muslims in the societies. So, it can be said that social movement theories need revision so that they can be used other non-Western societies including Muslim societies.

CONCLUSION

Social movements, despite, in their full sense, their origination in Western and European society and history has never been alien in Muslim societies. The social structure and political culture of Muslim societies in the post-colonial and post-World War II periods created impediments for emerging of civil societies. Traditionally, and religiously, Muslims have been well familiar with the notion of social movements and collective action against tyranny, injustice, and corruption. In their tradition, the story of Pharaoh and Musa can be the best example of social movement and collective struggle, which is not merely mentioned in their scripture but rather, by contextual indication that encouraged it. Since the 1980s, the advancement of communication technology and media opened up new possibilities for Muslims to come up with their collective actions and social movement organisation. Nonetheless, as it is very clear to consider particular social, cultural, historical, and intellectual impacts in the study of any phenomenon of society, Muslim social movements needed defined theories, approaches, and methodologies for their explanation. Social movement theorists generally discarded the possibilities of emergence and development of the social movement in non-Western and non-European societies. As in all themes of sociology, in social movement studies Eurocentrism is very evident in mainstream literature (Alatas & Sinha, 2017). Many scholars have attempted to analyse the social phenomenon of Muslim societies through social movement theories, but they proved to be deficient due to having a completely different background wherein they grew and crystallised. Some social scientists have rightly started advocating particular theories and explanations of Muslim societies by taking into good consideration the peculiarities and uniqueness of Muslim heritage and the present situation.

This paper has tried to present a sample of the Muslim perspective of social movement study done by Asif Bayat, where the author studied Iran and Egypt. Unsurprisingly, he opined that even within the Muslim world, it would be fallacious to regard the whole Muslim world as a unitary and an empirical category. Rather every Muslim society has its specificity and peculiarity which distinguish their social and political structures and characteristics. Muslim societies today need more such peculiar and analytical focus for their sociological explanation.

It is also important to gauge Muslim societies with Western societies. In Western Societies in response to liberal democracy and industrial society, class-conflict based social movements emerged.

Similarly, when social democracy and post-industrial era began, culture-oriented social movements began coming up. Where do Muslim societies in its trajectory stand, and how their future can be predicted? Social movements are regarded as polymorphous and value-charged demonstration and behaviour (Pakulski, 1995), and so they should be studied seriously in Muslim societies.

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