

The Debate on Islamist Party Formation: A Comparative Analysis of al-Būṭī and al-Qaradāwī

Perdebatan Tentang Pembentukan Parti Islam: Analisa Perbandingan Antara Al-Buti Dan al-Qardhawi

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Abstract

The paper examines the debate over the legal position of Islamist party formation through comparing views of two preeminent Muslim thinkers: M.S.R al-Būṭī (antagonist) and Yūsuf al-Qaradāwī (protagonist). Using a text-by-text scheme, the paper tests the validity of the cited textual evidences on the basis of the primary sources of Sharī'a and the experience of today's Islamists: the Muslim Brotherhood (parent organization), *Hizb al-Tahrīr*, and the Justice and Development Party (AKP). Finally, the paper contends that Islamist parties are a system, accredited by Islamic principles, and a reality imposed by changing circumstances of Muslim nations in history, culture, and politics.

Keywords: al-Būṭī, al-Qaradāwī, Islamist, party, political, formation, the Muslim Brotherhood.

Abstrak

Kertas ini membincangkan kedudukan pembentukan parti-parti Islam dengan membandingkan pandangan dua cendekiawan Muslim terkemuka iaitu: M.S.R al-Būṭī (antagonis) dan Yūsuf al-Qaradāwī (protagonis). Dengan menggunakan skema ayat dengan ayat, kertas ini mengkaji kesahihan bukti teks yang dirujuk berdasarkan Sharī'a dan pengalaman para Islamis pada hari ini seperti Ikhwanul Muslimin (organisasi induk), Hizb al-Tahrīr, dan Parti Keadilan dan Pembangunan (AKP). Akhirnya, kertas ini menyimpulkan bahawa parti-parti Islam adalah satu sistem, yang berlandaskan prinsip-prinsip Islam, dan juga satu kenyataan yang dikenakan oleh perubahan keadaan negara-negara Islam dalam sejarah, budaya, dan politik.

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Kata Kunci: al-Būṭī, al-Qaradāwī, Islam, pesta, politik, pembentukan, Ikhwanul Muslimin.

Introduction

Islamist parties have been a subject of considerable debate, particularly in the wake of the Arab uprisings of 2011. This brought Islamists to the forefront of the political landscape in a number of countries, including Egypt and Tunisia. Part of the debate relates to whether it is permissible or not to create an Islamist party that, while playing according to the rules of the political game, operates within the existing political system and fields candidates for parliamentary elections.

Generally, the Salafī movement is known to be the main opponent of the phenomenon of Islamist parties.¹ This view is in line with a group of traditional/conservative contemporary writers like al-Mubārakfūrī (India),² Subhī Sa‘īd (Egypt), Kalīm al-Siddīqī (Pakistan),³ and M. S. R. al-Būṭī (Syria). In contrast, a great number of eminent intellectuals and neo-traditionalists support the multi-party system with particular reference to Islamist parties across the political spectrum. Foremost among this camp are al-Qaradāwī,⁴ Huwaydī,⁵ ‘Amārah,⁶ al-‘Awwā (Egypt),⁷ al-Ghannūshī (Tunisia),⁸ and al-Turābī (Sudan).⁹

¹ See for example Bakr ibn Abdullah Abū Zayd, *Hukm al-intimā’ ilā al-firaq wa al-ahzāb wa al-jamā‘āt Islamiyyah*, (Saudi Arabia: n.p., 1410AH). Eminent Salafī scholars, like al-‘Uthaymīn, Fawzān, al-Albānī, prohibited creating or joining Islamist parties. See their fatwas at this site, accessed April 5, 2016, <<http://www.alrbanyon.com/vb/showthread.php?t=5029>>.

However, ‘Abd al-Rahmān ‘Abd al-Khāliq, an eminent Salafī, supports different kinds of political blocs, on the basis of 'public interest.' i.e. they are neither imposed nor prohibited by Islamic sources. See his book *Al-Muslimūn wa al-‘amal al-siyāsī*, (Kuwait: Dār al-Salafiyyah, 1985), 27-28.

² Safī al-Rahmān al-Mubārakfūrī, *Al-Ahzāb al-Islamiyyah fī al-Islam*, (Rābitat al-Jāmi‘āt al-Islamiyyah: Matba‘āt al-Madīnah, 1987).

³ Al-Ghannūshī, *Al-Hurriyāt al-‘āmmah*, 288.

⁴ Yūsuf al-Qaradāwī, *Min fiqh al-dawlah fī al-Islam*. (3rd ed). (Cairo: Dār al-Shurūq, 2001), 147-160.

⁵ Fahmī Huwaydī, *Al-Islam wā al-dīmuqrāṭiyyah*, (Cairo: Al-Ahrām, 1993).

⁶ Muhammad ‘Amārah, *Hal al-Islam huwā al-hal?*, (Cairo: Dār al-Shurūq, 1995), 86-92; *Al-Islam wā huqūq al-Insān*, (Kuwait: ‘Ālam al-Ma‘rifah, 1985), 90-92.

⁷ Muhammad Salīm al-‘Awwā, *Fī al-nizām al-siyāsī li al-dawlah al-Islamiyyah*, (Cairo: Dār al-Shurūq, 2006), 73-75.

⁸ Al-Ghannūshī, *Al-Hurriyāt al-‘āmmah*, 248-196.

Although Islamist parties are now a living reality, and Islamist participation in elections is apparent in a variety of countries (i.e. Jordan, Egypt, Tunisia, Morocco, Turkey, Indonesia, Malaysia, Pakistan, etc.),¹⁰ there exist those, significant in number, who count Islamist parties with all their political platforms as trivial at best and null and void at worst.

Accordingly, and for a better appreciation of textual evidences and applied methods, the paper attempts to examine the contested views of the debate via a selective study of two leading Muslim scholars of today: al-Būtī and al-Qaradāwī. The rationale behind this choice is that, besides being skilled articulators of the debate, the two peers represent a unique case of symmetry and dissymmetry.

Both of al-Būtī and al-Qaradāwī, recognized as highly esteemed religious thinkers, contributed substantially to Muslim scholarship. Their books, essays, and treatises on a wide range of traditional Muslim disciplines, as well as a host of contemporary religious, social, and intellectual issues, gained currency across the Arab and Muslim worlds.

As long as contentious topics like 'political Islam' and 'armed rebellion' are concerned, the two scholars display different, at times confrontational, views. While al-Būtī, for over three decades, developed a discourse that discredits Islamism and criticizes Islamist groups for dogmatic beliefs, al-Qaradāwī has been an Islamist himself — of the Muslim Brotherhood.

On the other hand, after the outbreak of the 2011 uprisings in Syria, al-Būtī upheld a position that was widely interpreted as a pro-regime stance. Initially he banned protests, urging demonstrators to not follow "calls of unknown sources that want to exploit mosques to incite seditions and chaos in Syria."¹¹ With rebels pulling the trigger, al-Būtī viewed the Revolution as both religiously illegitimate and politically oriented thereby creating, even after his tragic end,¹² an ongoing debate not

⁹ Hasan al-Turābī, *Al-Siāyah wa al-hukm*, (Beirut: Arab Scientific Publishers, 2011), 159-192. According to Huwaydī, *Al-Islam wā al-dīmuqrāṭiyyah*, 76, two hundred Muslim thinkers expressed their support of political pluralism in a statement published in a book entitled, *Ro'yah Islamiyyah mu'āsirah*, (Cairo: Dār al-Shurūq, 1992).

¹⁰ Khalil Al-Anani, "Islamist Parties Post Arab Springs," *Mediterranean Politics*, 17, no. 3(November 2012), 466-472.

¹¹ "Sheikh al-Bouti, the Syrian Sunni cleric who stood by Assad." (2013) alarabiya.net, accessed September 14, 2014, <<http://english.alarabiya.net/en/News/2013/03/22/-Sheikh-al-Bouti-the-Syrian-Sunni-cleric-who-stood-by-Assad.html>>

¹² Al-Būtī was horrifically assassinated (March 21, 2013) in a bomb attack while delivering a regular religious lecture in al-Imān Mosque (Damascus), with reportedly more

only in Syria but also in the Muslim world.¹³ Al-Qaradāwī, in striking contrast, appeared to be a staunch advocate of the 2010 ‘Arab Spring’ in general and of the Syrian Revolution in particular.¹⁴

This war of ideas created an assumed dichotomy of ‘the state jurist’ and ‘the revolution jurist.’ While the former makes it mandatory to obey the ruler, prohibits the armed revolt against them, and rejects the modern means of political action and opposition, the latter attempts to formulate a comprehensive Islamic system vs. the Socialist and Capitalist thought and further rediscovers the traditional Islamic-political heritage in light of modern ideas about state, politics, democracy, and freedom.¹⁵

The text-by-text strategy is the chosen organizational scheme of the paper. After presenting the different treatments of the subject, the paper will evaluate the textual evidences, along with strengths and weaknesses.

than 42 casualties. This was also another unsettled issue leading to mutual recrimination between the regime and the opposition.

¹³ For writings against al-Būtī see for example Thomas Pierret, *Religion and State in Syria*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 218-220; Mu‘taz al-Khatīb, “Al-faqīh wa al-dawlah fī al-thawrāt al-‘arabiyyah,” *Tabayyun Magazine*. N0. 3/9 (Summer 2014): 63-84; Ghāzī al-Tawbah, “Sifāt al-‘ālim: al-Būtī namūdhajan ma‘kūsan,” (2012). [aljazeera.net](http://www.aljazeera.net), accessed September 27, 2014. <<http://www.aljazeera.net/knowledgegate/opinions>>

On writings supporting al-Būtī see Muwaffaq al-Khālīd, “Waqfah bayna al-sheikh Muhammad Said Ramadan al-Būtī wa muntaqidih,” (July 29, 2011), accessed September 8, 2011.

<http://www.naseemalsham.com/ar/Pages.php?page=readrticle&pg_id=17670&page1=1U>; Nasūh al-Shāmī, “al-Thawrah fī sharak al-istibdād,” (August 8, 2011), accessed September 8, 2011.

<http://www.naseemalsham.com/ar/Pages.php?page=readviestor&pg_id=18814&page1=1U>.

For articles attempting to strike a balance see ‘Abd al-Fattāh al-Hādī, “Shaikhunā al-habīb al-‘allāmah al-ductūr al-Būtī bayn al-qādhīn wa al-mādhīn,” (March 23, 2013), accessed January 8, 2015.

<<http://arabic.alshahid.net/columnists/opinion/89324>>.

¹⁴ Strikingly, al-Qaradāwī, before the Arab Spring, was following the majority of earlier ‘ulama who prohibited the armed revolt against the evil-doing Muslim ruler, because the amount of harm that would result from a rebellion is far greater than when he remains in power. See his book *Fiqh al-jihād*. (Cairo: Maktabat Wahbah, 2009), 2: 1029-1067.

¹⁵ See Mu‘taz al-Khatīb, “Al-faqīh wa al-dawlah fī al-thawrāt al-‘arabiyyah,” *Tabayyun Magazine*. N0. 3/9 (Summer 2014): 63-84.

This is done through the application of both discourses to the Muslim Brotherhood, the oldest and largest Islamist movement that reflects a myriad of different outlooks, coupled with two parties representing opposite ends of the Islamic political spectrum - *Hizb al-Tahrīr*, and the Justice and Development Party (AKP).

Definition of terms and concepts

It is crucial to identify the key terms and concepts used in this study. ‘Political Islam’ or ‘Islamism,’¹⁶ with the abolition of the Islamic caliphate in 1924, became a reference point for a wide range of political groups and movements who believed that “a systematic implementation of the *Shariah* will once again restore global leadership and moral sovereignty to Muslims. They envisage an Islamic state as the vehicle that will re-implement *Shariah* in the lives of Muslims and re-establish Islam as a global force.”¹⁷

‘Islamists’¹⁸/‘Islamist groups,’¹⁹ in the language of al-Būtī, are those who tend to intermingle *da‘wah* with politics, and when reaching power, impose rules of Sharī‘a from a position of authority,²⁰ in addition to adopting extreme views leading to violent acts. In this context, al-Būtī names the Muslim Brotherhood of Egypt²¹ and Syria,²² and *Hizb al-Tahrīr*²³ as groups falling into this category.

¹⁶ There is no doubt that the term is loaded with numerous dimensions and various ramifications. See M. Mozaffari, “What is Islamism? History and Definition of a Concept”, *Totalitarian Movements and Political Religions*, 8:1, (2007) 17-33; Martin, R.C. & Barzegar, A. *Islamism: Contested Perspectives on political Islam*. (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2010).

¹⁷ Muqtedar Khan, “What is Political Islam?” (March 10, 2014). E-International Relations, accessed July 25, 2015.> <http://www.e-ir.info/2014/03/10/what-is-political-islam/><. See Ahmad Moussalli. *Moderate and Radical Islamic Fundamentalism: The Quest for Modernity, Legitimacy, and the Islamic State* (Florida: University Press of Florida, 1999); M. A. Muqtedar Khan, “Islamic States” in Mary Hawkesworth and Maurice Kogan Eds. *Encyclopedia of Government and Politics*, (New York: Taylor and Francis, 2004).

¹⁸ Al-Būtī, *Al-Jihad fī al-Islam*. (Damascus: Dār al-Fikr, 1993), 172; and his book *Wa hādhihī mushkilātunā*. (4th ed.). (Damascus: Dār al-Fikr, 1995), 48, 58.

¹⁹ Al-Būtī, *Wa hādhihī mushkilātunā*, 45,49.

²⁰ Ibid., 45-47.

²¹ Al-Būtī, *Al-Jihad fī al-Islam*, 171.

²² Ibid., 172.

²³ Hishām ‘Ilwān and Fādī al-Ghūsh. *Al-Būtī, wa al-jihad wa al-Islam al-siāys*, (Beirut: Markaz al-Hadārah li Tanmiyat al-Fikr al-Islamī, 2012), 131-132.

With regards to ‘Islamist parties’ vs. ‘Islamist movements,’ it is hard to set clear boundaries between the two terms, given their socio-religious and political ramifications. ‘Islamist movements’ (or groups) have multiple forms and faces, ranging from civil society organizations providing health services, to extreme terrorist networks or apolitical missionary activists. What they all have in common is the claim that Islam is the source of their identity and behavior.²⁴ On the basis of their thought and behavior, ‘Islamist parties’ are political formations that have accepted to work according to the rules of political norms and participate in the electoral system.²⁵ Most Islamist parties also advocate for social justice, pluralism, democratic and liberal reforms, as well as human rights.²⁶ Unlike Islamist movements, some Islamist parties, like the AKP, might not claim an affinity with Islam, “but could pursue ‘Islamic politics’ by acting in conformity with the religious demands and concerns of the people.”²⁷ Driven by internal factors, some Islamist movements tend to form parties, while others do not.²⁸

Al-Būṭī’s View

Al-Būṭī’s discourse on Islamists is twofold: on the one hand, he notes, within the literature and activities of some contemporary Islamist movements, several religious views that are reflective of misquotation and misapplication of the Islamic law.²⁹ Also, al-Būṭī posits that, instead

²⁴ Esen Kırdış, "Between Movement and Party: Islamic Political Party Formation in Morocco, Turkey and Jordan" (Unpublished PhD dissertation, the University of Minnesota, Minneapolis, 2011), 13-14.

²⁵ For examples see Mohammed Ayoob, “Political Islam: Image and Reality,” *Political Islam*, Ed. Barry Rubin. Routledge. 1: 51. The article is originally published in *World Policy Journal*, 21, no. 3 (Fall 2004): 1-14.

²⁶ It is shown later that *Hizb al-Tahrīr*, although an Islamist party, never subscribes to any of these values.

²⁷ Hakan Yavuz, *Secularism and Muslim Democracy*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 8.

²⁸ Kırdış, vii argues that movement with a vanguard mobilization strategy, in which a small group of leaders frame the cause and mobilize masses around an Islamic identity, tend to establish parties. In contrast, movements with a grassroots mobilization strategy in which the aim is to construct mass consciousness through grassroots activities tend to remain outside of formal politics, eschewing party formation.

²⁹ I have conducted a study named “The Anti-Islamist Course: The Case of al-Būṭī,” which identifies seven issues with Islamists according to al-Būṭī. Having presented and evaluated al-Būṭī’s views, the study further attempts to examine whether they are applicable to contemporary movements or not. The study will be published by al-Shajarah,

of following the demanding and long journey of *da'wah* with its various paths and forms, many Islamists prefer to take a short cut by seizing state power, and consequently imposing Islam from a position of authority.³⁰ As I argue, al-Būtī's discourse on those particular concepts deserves to be taken as a yardstick, against which a clear distinction is made between extreme and moderate Islamist movements.³¹

On the other hand, according to al-Būtī, several issues are associated with creating or joining Islamist parties: (i) the relationship among party members, which over time becomes stronger and deeper than that of the rest of the Muslim community, is ultimately based on a sort of partisan attitude, with this interest group neither serving to unite Muslims nor fostering the Qur'ānic principle "The believers indeed are brothers."³² (The Qur'ān, 49: 10);

(ii) Needless to say, Islam, a vital and shaping force in personal and public life, is deeply entrenched in numerous societies. Therefore, the call for Islamist party formation is *per se* an enterprise of considerable attraction. So, al-Būtī has no doubt that if he announces the launch of a new Islamist party, hundreds of thousands of Muslims will hasten to join it; however, in addition to the party's faithful members, a group of political as well as non-political sycophants will jump on the bandwagon. They are ready to grow their beards and show commitment to Islamic norms for the sake of political gain. Once assuming power, they turn their backs on this poor Islamist party.³³ "This is not a fantasy," al-Būtī goes on, "Actually, there is no Islamist party but half of its members or more are of this kind of people who, having joined the party, came to a well-trodden path towards achieving their own political interests;"³⁴

(iii) Islamic activists are pulled into face-to-face encounters with other conflicting parties. These encounters are bound to create political polarization, where Islamists have two choices: either to identify with a particular political party or to keep themselves aloof. In the latter case, a joint

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³⁰ Al-Būtī, *Wa hādhihī mushkilātunā*, 47.

³¹ Bachar Bakour, "The Anti-Islamist Discourse,"

³² *Ma'al-Būtī fī hayātihī wa fikrihī*, interview with al-Būtī. 2009. Al-Sham TV. No.4, accessed February 8, 2014.

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UZSHtD9jQ0w&list=PLScN5nWtR4PMWhnMW_E69IIOKkar-u6PH&index=9>

³³ Ibid.

³⁴ Ibid. Al-Būtī here does not mention sources or give statistics to support his argument.

attack from other parties is anticipated.³⁵ Affected by these conflicting currents, those Islamists feel obliged to move from *da‘wah* propagators to political activists who are determined to win a decisive victory against their opponents;³⁶

(iv) *da‘wah*, al-Būtī argues, is eliminated by political activity rather than enhanced by it. “As a political activist, I fail to convince the president or any government official that my advice to him is sincere and for the sake of God, because both of us are political rivals who run for office. Yet, when realizing that I am not interested in power, he is likely to listen to me.”³⁷

For the reasons above, al-Būtī, in spite of frequent offers,³⁸ remained resolutely opposed to creating his own political party based on ‘moderate’ Islam. Once he turned down a proposal to represent Muslim forces in the National Progressive Front of Syria. In justification of the decline, he explained that this representation means Islam would share influence and power with the rest of the Front’s members. By implication, the central role of Islam would be reduced to a mere political competitor, and this would bring Islam to its own destruction.³⁹

Then, al-Būtī added that Islam is the common denominator in the Front’s various members, who consider Islam a sense of belonging — historical, cultural, or national, if not religious. Therefore, Islam as a common identity, so to speak, should not be reduced to a political opponent.⁴⁰

Alternatively, al-Būtī lays a particular emphasis on the presence of Islamic norms and teachings in the public sphere, rather than in the realm of politics. He maintains that it was the ‘educational’ Islam, rather than the ‘political,’ which conquered the early Muslims’ heart and remolded their soul by way of the gradual and constant process of self-purification, which never occurred overnight. Thereupon, all various challenges and obstacles were removed by the force of Muslims’ firm

³⁵ Al-Būtī, *Wa hādhihī mushkilātunā*, 52.

³⁶ Ibid.

³⁷ *ma‘al-Būtī fī qadāyā al-sā‘a*; cf. al-Būtī, *Wa hādhihī mushkilātunā*, 55.

³⁸ *ma‘al-Būtī fī hayātihī wa fikrihī*,

³⁹ Al-Būtī, *Al-Jihad fī al-Islam*, 66; See ‘Ilwān and al-Ghūsh, *al-Būtī, wa al-jihad*, 126-127.

⁴⁰ Al-Būtī, *Al-Jihad fī al-Islam*, 66.

intellectual belief coupled with passionate love, and glorification of Islam.⁴¹

Al-Qaradāwī's View

To al-Qaradāwī, a practicing Islamist, the idea of Islamist parties is taken for granted. Therefore, he has given more attention to salient features of Islamic revival and to creating a blueprint for a viable Islamist project. For this purpose, al-Qaradāwī outlines the Muslim Brothers' perception of sound Islamic education in theory and practice.⁴² While examining the Islamic resurgence phenomenon, al-Qaradāwī sets the course right by offering an in-depth treatment to topical issues. For example, in a volume he deals with the dogma of religious extremism, its repercussions and prescribes the antidote for it.⁴³ Elsewhere he draws the line between commendable difference and schismatic dispute,⁴⁴ in addition to other various topics.⁴⁵ His book "The Priorities of the Islamist movement in the Next Phase"⁴⁶ provides illuminating insights to the Islamic resurgence with particular reference to Islamist movements. For al-Qaradāwī, these are the actual issues that are worth debate and investigation, rather than the legal status of Islamist parties. On various occasions however, the existential issue of the latter has to be under discussion.

In his response to an enquiry about the accurate position of Sharī'a on Islamist party formation, al-Qaradāwī argues that, God created human beings with a whole range of different beliefs, languages, customs, interests, etc., and party formation is not an exception to this natural diversity.⁴⁷ In response to those who see the very notion of parties ne-

⁴¹ Al-Būtī, *Al-Islam wa al-'asr*, 25-28; 'Ilwān and al-Ghūsh, *al-Būtī, wa al-jihad*, 126.

⁴² Al-Qaradāwī, *Al-Tarbiyah al-Islamiyyah wa madrasat Hasan al-Banna*, (2nd ed). (Cairo: Maktabat Wahbah, 1982).

⁴³ Al-Qaradāwī, *Al-Sahwah al-Islamiyyah bayna al-jumūd wa al-tatarruf*, (12th ed). (Cairo: Dār al-Shurūq, 2001). The first edition appeared in 1402 AH.

⁴⁴ Al-Qaradāwī, *Al-Sahwah al-Islamiyyah bayna al-ikhtilāf al-mashrū' wa al-tafarruq al-mathmūm*, (Cairo: Dār al-Shurūq, 2001).

⁴⁵ Al-Qaradāwī, *Al-Sahwah al-Islamiyyah min al-murāhaqah ilā al-rushd*, (3rd ed). (Cairo: Dār al-Shurūq, 2008); *Al-Sahwah al-Islamiyyah wa humūm al-watan al-'arabi wa al-Islami*, (2nd ed). (Cairo: Maktabat Wahbah, 1997).

⁴⁶ Al-Qaradāwī, *Awlayiāt al-harakah al-Islamiyyah fī al-marhalah al-qādimah*, (Beruit: Mu'assasat al-Risālah, 2001).

⁴⁷ Al-Qaradāwī, *Min fiqh al-dawlah*, 153.

gates the scriptural call for Muslim unity,⁴⁸ al-Qaradāwī clarifies that the Qur'ān and *Sunnah* denounce only schismatic differences that come out of partisan attitude or end up in conflict and sedition. Islamist Parties, however, are a product of natural differences, which although speak a common language of shared references, appreciate juristic nuances within the boundaries of the Sharī'a political system.⁴⁹

To al-Qaradāwī, pluralism is recognized if it reflects different thoughts, trends and policies, and does not partake of racist, regional, or social divisions.⁵⁰ He then gives examples on legal opinions that can be viewed differently by a group of revivalist vs. traditional Islamists. The former subscribes to the following issues: *shūra* is binding, the president can run for a second term, women's suffrage, their right to be MPs, the state may implement price controls on essential items, peace is the basis of foreign relations, etc. The latter, however, has a different line of thought. A third group probably exists as well.⁵¹ Comparatively speaking, those parties are schools of opinion in the realm of politics, similar to a host of traditional schools of jurisprudence, which are held as a healthy phenomenon.⁵²

On the other hand, it goes without saying that the *ummah* is required to command what is right and forbid what is evil before a corrupt ruler.⁵³ Having cited several traditions on the merit of carrying out this ethical-religious concept, even at times by force, al-Qaradāwī admitted that it is extremely hard to bring a ruler back to the right path by rebellion. This is learned from history and Muslims' experiences of today.⁵⁴ The antidote, according to al-Qaradāwī, is to undertake change through nonviolent means without causing bloodshed. Nowadays, the best formula for doing this change is via political forces or parties. Governments

⁴⁸ Abū Zayd, *Hukm al-intimā'* 89-95; al-Ghannūshī, *Al-Hurriyāt al-'āmmah*, 257; Salāh Sāwī, *Al-Ta'ddūdiyyah al-siyāsiyyah fī al-dawlah al-Islamiyyah*, (Cairo: Dār al-I'lām al-Dawli, 1992), 42-43.

⁴⁹ Al-Qaradāwī, *Min fiqh al-dawlah*, 153-154. Cf. Sāwī, *Al-Ta'ddūdiyyah*, 50-51; Huwaydī, *Al-Islam wā al-dīmuqrāṭiyyah*, 41-42.

⁵⁰ Al-Qaradāwī, *Min fiqh al-dawlah*, 151.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 151-152.

⁵² *Ibid.*,

⁵³ *Ibid.*, 148.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*

may get rid of individuals or small groups, yet cannot ignore or belittle dissident voices of parties with deep embedment in the society.⁵⁵

With regards to the question of loyalty (party/group partisanship), a distinction should be made between loyalty to God, His messenger, and the believers,⁵⁶ which is taken for granted, and having a sense of belonging to a certain group, association or party. The latter seems accepted if it is not in opposition to the tenets of Islam. What is forbidden, rather, is to show loyalty to disbelievers or to pledge unconditional allegiance to one's party under all circumstances.⁵⁷

Historically speaking, there existed, within the body of the Islamic state, the party of Kharijites — a fanatic group who broke away from the mainstream Muslim community after the fourth Caliph, Alī Ibn Abū Talib had accepted the arbitration.⁵⁸ Although Kharijites constituted armed opposition, Alī neither excommunicated the Kharijites, expelled them from prayer in mosques, nor started fighting them.⁵⁹

As far as non-Islamist parties are concerned, al-Qaradāwī goes as far as allowing their establishment, within the Islamic state, provided they maintain healthy relations with Islam and do not intend to demolish its central tenets or have dubious ties with hostile countries or organizations.⁶⁰ Based on that, parties with atheist/agnostic or pornographic proclivity are rejected.⁶¹

Before closing discussion on this topic, al-Qaradāwī expresses strong disapproval of two odd notions: The first prohibits all kinds of formation or alliance (party, group or movement).⁶² In addition to having no basis, this fatwa runs contrary to the widely-recognized legal maxim,

⁵⁵ Ibid., 149.

⁵⁶ As mentioned in the Qur'ān, *Al-Mā'idah*: 55.

⁵⁷ Al-Qaradāwī, *Min fiqh al-dawlah*, 156.

⁵⁸ On Kharijites see Laura Vaglieri, "The Patriarchal and Umayyad Caliphates." in *The Cambridge History of Islam*, edited by Holt, Lambton and Lewis. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977). 1A:68-69; John Alden Williams, "Khawārij." in *The Oxford Encyclopedia of the Modern Islamic World...*, 2:418; Jeffrey Kenney, "Khawārij." In *Encyclopedia of Islam*, edited by Juan Campo and Gordon Melton. (New York: Checkmark Books, 2009). 431.

⁵⁹ Al-Qaradāwī, *Min fiqh al-dawlah*, 156. See traditions about Alī's treatment of Kharijites on Abū Bakr al-Bayhaqī, *Al-Sunan al-kubrā*, (Beirut: Al-Ma'rifah, n.d.) 8:184 (no. 16540); Ibn Abū Shaybah, *Al-Musannaf*, (Al-Riyadh: Maktabat al-Rushd, 1989)14:305. (no.38926)

⁶⁰ Al-Qaradāwī, *Min fiqh al-dawlah*, 148; cf. al-'Awwā, *Fī al-nizām al-siāysī*, 74; Huwaydī, *Al-Islam wā al-dīmuqrāṭiyyah*, 82-83.

⁶¹ Al-Qaradāwī, *Min fiqh al-dawlah*, 148.

⁶² Ibid., 158.

al-asl fī al-'ashyā' al-'ibāhahā, (the rule for things and natural utilities is permissibility). It tacitly approves the notion of group formation, for fundamental sources of Sharī'a are not in opposition to this phenomenon.⁶³ Joint effort/group work for promoting Islam and Muslim union has become a religious obligation and a social necessity imposed by the reality of Muslims today.⁶⁴

The second notion champions party/group formation, yet singles out one group to be on the right path, with other groups/movements having gone astray.⁶⁵ Given the quintessence of the Muslim community, those who do not follow their path or accept their views are out of Islam.⁶⁶ Of course, such opinion suffers from parochial thinking and misapplication of main Islamic sources.⁶⁷

Islamist Party Formation	
Al-Būtī: No	Al-Qaradāwī: Yes
1-Party partisanship	1-Islamist Parties are a product of natural difference, similar to traditional schools of jurisprudence
2-Party is joined by political and non-political sycophants	2-Commanding the right and forbidding the evil before the ruler is best undertaken nowadays by formidable political forces
3-Inevitable clash with contending parties	3-Party phenomenon has precedents in Muslim history
4-Political activism supersedes <i>da'wah</i>	4-The legal maxim, <i>al-asl fī al-'ashyā' al-'ibāhah</i> tacitly approves the notion of group formation

Critical Assessment

From the foregoing discussion, a few remarks are made: first of all, al-Būtī's discourse on Islamist party formation is largely shaped by Badī' al-Zamān Sa'īd al-Nūrsī, the Kurdish Islamic thinker (d. 1960). Al-

⁶³ Ibid.

⁶⁴ Ibid., 159.

⁶⁵ Ibid.

⁶⁶ Ibid.

⁶⁷ Ibid., 160.

Nürsī, who left an unmistakable imprint on al-Būtī's intellectual and spiritual life,⁶⁸ participated himself in political action and came out with first-hand experience recalled by al-Būtī himself.⁶⁹

After over two decades of political engagement and activity, al-Nürsī (in 1921) decided to desert politics altogether and dedicate the rest of his life to *da'wah* instead.⁷⁰ Showing remorse for earlier involvement in politics, al-Nürsī said, 'I seek refuge in God from Satan and politics.'⁷¹ Interestingly, the reasons why he left politics are almost identical to those of al-Būtī's.⁷² So, they reflect purely personal experience that occurred in the 1920s, rather than an outcome of statistical evidence or any other data-collection method.

It cannot be denied that partisan attitudes, for instance, are found in the rhetoric of some Islamists, whether individuals (e.g. the Syrian Brother, Sa'īd Hawwa), or groups (e.g. *Al-Takfīr wa al-Hijrah*). While the former believes that *al-Ikhāwn* is the only movement representing the true *ummah*, and thus a Muslim has no choice but to pledge allegiance to it,⁷³ the latter excommunicates Muslims who do not follow their group or accept their ideas.⁷⁴

⁶⁸ Al-Būtī published an article on al-Nürsī entitled, "*Sa'īd al-Nürsī: 'u'jūbat al-thawrah al-Islamiyyah fī Turkiyah*," (Sa'īd al-Nürsī: The Miracle of the Islamic Revolution in Turkey), which is incorporated in his book *Min al-fikr wa al-qalb*, New ed. (Damascus: Dār al-Fārābī, 1997), 315-348. On Al-Būtī's fascination with al-Nürsī's character and *da'wah* methodology see Andreas Christmann, "Islamic Scholar and Religious Leader: A Portrait of Shaykh Muhammad Sa'īd Ramadan al-Būtī," *Islam and Christian-Muslim Relations*, 9, no. 2 (1998): 152.

⁶⁹ Al-Būtī's speech on al-Nürsī, politics and Islamist movements. (February 3, 2008). At a symposium on al-Nürsī's *al-Khtubah al-Shāmiyyah*, organized by al-Fatih Institute and the Ministry of Awqaf, Damascus, accessed 5 May 2014. <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Y-FXyOxb7Os>>

⁷⁰ Al-Būtī, *Min al-fikr wa al-qalb*..., 332.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, 333.

⁷² Al-Būtī's speech on al-Nürsī,

⁷³ For example, he believes that *al-Ikhāwn* is the only movement that truly represents the Muslim group, and Muslims have no choice but to pledge allegiance to it. His book, *A-Madkhal ilā da'wat al-Ikhāwn al-Muslimīn*, 3rd ed. (Cairo: Maktabat Wahbah, 1984), 20-21, 24; Cf. *Fī Āfāq al-ta'līm*, (Cairo: Maktabat Wahbah, n.d), 14. See similar statements in Abdullah al-Nafīsī, *Al-Fikr al-harakī li al-tayyārāt al-Islamiyyah*, (Al-Kuwait: Al-Rabī'ān, 1995), 39-40.

⁷⁴ This extreme group excommunicates Muslims who do not follow their group or accept their ideas. See 'Alī al-Wasīfī, *Al-Ikhwān al-Muslimūn bayna al-ibtidā' al-dīnī wa al-iflās al-siyāsī*, (Dār al-Mashāriq, 2010), 259-261; Sālim al-Bahnasāwī, *Al-Hukm wa qadiyyat takfīr al-Muslim*, (Al-Mansūrah: Dār al-Wafā', 1994), 27-36.

Nevertheless, this narrow-minded outlook by no means subscribes to the thought of numerous Muslim Brothers,⁷⁵ who consider themselves part of the mainstream Muslim community rather than the only Muslim community.

In contrast to the clash theory proposed by al-Būtī, the cooperation theory was there as well. The Muslim Brotherhood is a case in point. In 1984, the Brothers made an alliance with the secular Wafd Party, where they won 15% of the vote with eight seats solely belonging to the Muslim Brotherhood.⁷⁶ In 1987, another alliance was reached with the Socialist Labor Party and the Liberal Party under the slogan *al-Islam huwā al-hal* (Islam is the Solution).⁷⁷ This time, the Brothers won 36 seats.⁷⁸

With reference to al-Būtī's argument that political action abolishes *da'wah* efforts, it is directly applicable to radical Islamist groups whose fanatical and primitive understanding of Islamic teachings have created a major obstacle to the cause of *da'wah*. For example, *Hizb al-Tahrīr*, founded by Taqī al-Dīn al-Nabhānī in Jerusalem in 1953, makes every endeavor to restore the Islamic Caliphate after removing the disbelieving rulers.⁷⁹ If the Caliphate is not re-instituted, all Muslim countries, including Makkah and Madīnah, will remain to be deemed the abode of *kufīr* (disbelief).⁸⁰ Unlike the majority of Islamist groups, *Hizb al-Tahrīr* never pay attention to Islamic moral and spiritual education.⁸¹ *Da'wah*, to the party, is exclusively practiced through the prism of Politics.⁸² No

⁷⁵ Al-Qaradāwī's opinion on this particular point has been referred to.

⁷⁶ Ayoob, "Political Islam," 50; al-Nafīsī, *Al-Fikr al-harakī*, 39-46.

⁷⁷ See Kristen Stilt, "Islam is the Solution?: Constitutional Visions of the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood." *Texas International Law Journal* 46, no. 1 (Fall 2010): 73-108, accessed May 25, 2015.> www.tilj.org/content/journal/46/num1/Stilt73.pdf<.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, 78.

⁷⁹ The party's publications are clear about this central issue. See for example *Sa'y al-ummah nahwa al-khilāfah*, (Egypt, 2014); *Manhaj Hizb al-Tahrīr fī al-taghyyīr*, (Beirut: Dār al-Ummah, 1989), and *Nidā' hār ilā al-Muslimīn*, (Khartoum: 1965). Cf. al-Nafīsī, *Al-Fikr al-harakī*, 21.

⁸⁰ *Manhaj Hizb al-tahrīr*, 4-8; Dimashqiyyah, *Hizb al-tahrīr*, 46-47. For discussion on this opinion see Rā'id Abū Ūdah, "Fikr Hizb al-Tahrīr," (Unpublished MA thesis. Al-Jāmi'ah al-Islamiyyah, Gaza, 2009), 15-18.

⁸¹ *Manhaj Hizb al-tahrīr*, 28; al-Nafīsī, *Al-Fikr al-harakī*, 20-21; Dimashqiyyah, *Hizb al-tahrīr*, 13-14, 37.

⁸² Rā'id Abū Ūdah, "Fikr Hizb al-Tahrīr," 28. Other examples of this extreme trend are in my article, "The Anti-Islamist Course,

doubt, such rigid and narrow interpretations of Islam serve as a stumbling block to missionary Islam.

The case with moderate Islamists, however, seems vastly different. The AKP, founded in 2001 by Recep Tayyip Erdogan, is a good example. Despite a genealogy that dates back to the tradition of Turkey's Islamist political trend, the party does not prefer to describe itself as an 'Islamist' party. The party leaders hold an accommodating approach to other secular or non-religious groups, and on the other hand, follow the gradual Islamization of society from 'the bottom-up.'⁸³ In doing so, they do not sacrifice *da'wah* for politics; instead, they make politics subservient to *da'wah*.

For instance, Abdullah al-Nafisī, Kuwaiti professor of political science, asked Erdogan after becoming the Prime Minister in 2003: "Now you are the prime minister who can make substantial change in the country. I have seen in the streets of Istanbul obscene practices that injure Muslims' feelings. So, what are you going to do?" Erdogan replied, "My prime concern now is the economic growth of the country and to bring Turkey back to the lab of the Islamic World. As for these obscene practices, they existed even at the Prophet's time. The Prophet, however, rather than eliminating them, first worked on building up the foundations of Islam in the society. This is what we are going to do."⁸⁴

Additionally, the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt served the cause of *da'wah* via non-governmental organizations, social service networks, charitable endowments, and publishing enterprises.⁸⁵ In Syria, the movement opened a public Islamic library in Homs, a number of free schools for all ages, including schools for the illiterate, as well as students' scholarships, trips, conferences, lectures, and health clubs.⁸⁶

⁸³ On AKP see Thomas Carroll, "Justice and Development Party: A Model for Democratic Islam?" (2004). Middle East Intelligence Bulletin, accessed March 4, 2016. >https://www.meforum.org/meib/articles/0407_t1.htm<; For analyses of the AKP and its victory in 2002 elections see Soli Džel, "After the Tsunami," *Journal of Democracy*, 14 (April 2003), 80-94; and Ziya Dnis and E.Fual Keyman, "A New Path Emerges," *Journal of Democracy*, 14 (April 2003), 95-107.

⁸⁴ Accessed March 20, 2016. <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FgU8g6EYX8c>>.

⁸⁵ Ayoob, "Political Islam," 51.

⁸⁶ Johannes Reissner, *Ideologie und Politik der Muslim brüder Syriens: von den Wahlen 1947 bis zum Verbot unter Adibaš-Šiřaklī*. Freiburg: Klaus Schwarz, 1980, translated from German by Mohammad Atasi (Beirut: Riad el-Rayyes Books, 2005), 135-137; 'Adnān Zarzour, *Mustafā al-Sibā'i: al-Dā'yah al-Mujaddid*. (Damascus: Dār al-Qalam, 2000), 169-172. For more information see Janine A. Clark, *Islam, Charity, and*

Finally and more importantly, in the Caliphate era, Islam had been the commanding source of identity, ideas and laws, as well as the governing doctrine of both the state and the society. Yet, in 1924, marking the collapse of the caliphate, Islam ceased to be the general framework for the state. The post-colonial nation-states of the Arab world searched for a replacing identity under the banner of secularism, socialism, or nationalism. Islam, as a common identity, was relegated to the role of 'bureaucratic Islam.' Consequently, Islamic movements emerged with the aim of overcoming a perceived impasse in Muslim societies and reasserting original Islamic values. Nowadays, political parties all over the world become the mouthpiece of a countless number of socio-economic philosophies, as well as religious and non-religious ideologies. Similarly, Muslims across the world have the right to express their religious views, and agendas via the same political platform.

Conclusion

Based on the above discussion and analysis, one may argue that the existence of Islamist parties holding different interpretations in Islamic political theory indicates a rich, flexible, and adaptable mindset. Islamist parties, deeply and durably entrenched in the fabric of society, are expected to promote social and economic development in the framework of the *Sharī'a*.

More importantly, a multi-party system is an effective mechanism by which people are better able to maintain their rights and freedoms, and on the other hand, are empowered to raise their voices against tyrannical governmental policies and procedures. This system is a civilized way for the transition of power via democratic systems without violence or bloodshed.

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