

TAQI AL-DIN AL-NABHANI AND THE ISLAMIC LIBERATION PARTY

In the great convulsions following the partition of Palestine there emerged a small political movement which embodied the conjuncture of Islamist activism and Palestinian yearning for reversing the outcome of the 1948 war. The Islamic Liberation Party (*hizb al-tahrir al-islami*) was founded in Jerusalem by dissident Muslim Brothers in 1952 for the dual purpose of establishing an Islamic state and liberating Palestine. From its initial base in the Jordanian-ruled West Bank, the party spread to Lebanon, Syria, Iraq, Egypt, Tunisia, and Turkey. This geographical expansion correlated to a broadening of the party's focus from a primary concern with Palestine to the project of setting up an Islamic state that would revive the "true" Islamic order throughout the Muslim world. The liberation of Palestine would ensue from the unification and strengthening of the umma that a unitary Islamic state would bring.

Although the party spread widely, it never won the large following it sought and expected, even during the last twenty years when Islamist groups have enjoyed growing influence. Nonetheless, the party did produce an elaborate and detailed program for instituting and managing an Islamic state. The writings of Taqi al-Din al-Nabhani, founder and chief ideologue of the Islamic Liberation Party, lay out a blueprint for reviving the Islamic state. Perhaps the most notable feature of his Islamist program is his insistence on the necessity of a vanguard Islamist party to bring about political transformation and to safeguard the achievements of Islamic revolution.

Nabhani and Palestine

Nabhani (1905-1978) was born in Ijzim, a village near Haifa, and after a religious education served as a judge in the sharica court of Haifa during the British Mandate.¹ During the early 1940s he went to Egypt, where he studied at the Azhar and became active in the Muslim Brotherhood.² He returned to Haifa and became a leading figure in its branch of the Muslim Brothers until the partition of Palestine.³ At some time during the chaotic year of partition he moved first to Nablus and then to Jerusalem, where he taught religion at the Ibrahimiya high school.⁴

¹ G.H. Jansen, *Militant Islam*, (New York: Harper & Row, 1979), p. 165; *al-Ahram* (Cairo), 6 October 1969.

² Said al-Ghazali, "Fundamentalist Groups See Islam as Changing the World," *al-Fajr* (Jerusalem), 19 July 1987.

³ Thomas Meyer, "The Military Forces of Islam: The Society of Muslim Brethren and the Palestine Question, 1945-1948," in Elie Kedourie and Sylvia Haim, eds., *Zionism and Arabism in Palestine and Israel* (London: Frank Cass, 1982), p. 114.

⁴ Jansen, *Militant Islam*, p. 165; Amnon Cohen, *Political Parties in the West Bank under the Jordanian Regime, 1949-1967* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1982), p. 209.

In December 1950, before Nabhani left the Muslim Brothers, he composed his first work *Saving Palestine (Ingadh Filastin)*. In it he relates the history of Palestine in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries in order to explain how Jewish sovereignty was established there. The last part of the book presents his ideas on how to liberate Palestine. Nabhani does not call for the establishment of an Islamic state in *Saving Palestine*, yet he does present a number of themes and ideas that appear in his later purely Islamist writings.

According to Nabhani, British plots in particular and western imperialist conspiracies in general pervade the modern history of the Muslim world and ultimately explain its main lines of political evolution. Nabhani finds such plots as early as the eighteenth century, when England and France maneuvered for supremacy over the Near East. Indeed, the motive for Napoleon's invasion of Egypt in 1798 lay in Britain's alleged support for the Wahhabis in Arabia. According to Nabhani, the French sought to counter Britain's growing influence and therefore occupied Egypt. This development led the British to support the Ottoman Empire's bid to recover Egypt from French rule.⁵

Of greater significance for later Arab history was the British reaction to the growing strength of Egypt under Muhammad IAIT and his son Ibrahim. In Nabhani's view, when Ibrahim's successful campaign in Syria made plausible the transfer of the caliphate from the Ottoman Turks back to the Arabs, the British intervened to thwart Muhammad cAIT because an Arab caliphate would have threatened Britain's position in the area.⁶ The idea that Britain and Europe viewed a strong caliphate as a danger to their designs on the Muslim world frequently appears in Nabhani's later works.

A second recurring theme is Nabhani's belief that nationalism was introduced to the Muslim world in order to divide Muslims and leave them vulnerable to European conquest. The British achieved this by sowing Arab and Turkish nationalism in the Ottoman Empire. With the two major Muslim groups of the empire increasingly estranged, the Europeans found it easy to carve up the region at the end of World War I.⁷

Nabhani holds that the liberation of Palestine can be achieved only after reversing the effects of nationalism through a political transformation of the Arab states. He calls for the creation of a new Arab polity to encompass the entire Arab world. The United Arab States would consist of six states: Iraq, Syria (to include Syria, Jordan, Lebanon, and Palestine), northern Arabia (Hijaz and Najd), southern Arabia (Yemen and Hadramawt), North Africa (Morocco, Algeria, and Tunisia), and Egypt-Sudan-Libya. Each state would possess its own governor and assembly alongside a supreme president and assembly.⁸

⁵ Tagi al-Din al-Nabhani, *Ingadh filastin* (Damascus: Ibn Zaydun Press, 1950), pp. 7-8.

⁶ Ibid., pp. 9-13.

⁷ Ibid., pp. 13-14.

⁸ Ibid., pp. 189-90.

Once this political union has been achieved, it will be possible for the Arabs to devote all their energies and resources to liberating Palestine. The major obstacles preventing such a union are the current leaders of individual Arab states and western imperialism.

Such a transformation of Arab politics depends on a corresponding revolution in Muslim society. Nabhani has little to say about the nature of this social transformation, but he attributes Arab malaise to confusion in the realm of ideas. Thus, it will be sincere and able thinkers who begin the process of social reform and carry it to schools, factories, farms, and homes. The starting point for this social movement is an inspired individual who serves as leader of a vanguard that then influences the rest of society. As the influence of the vanguard grows, it will turn into an organized political party that takes over Arab countries and unites them.⁹

In this work Nabhani's solution to the Palestine question has nothing to do with erecting an Islamic state or establishing Islamic law as the basis of Muslim society. But he does not advocate Arab nationalism either. Rather he calls for Arab unity in a single polity without specifying the ideological nature of that polity. The Islamist ideologue is not present in this work. On the other hand, elements of Nabhani's thought found in his Islamist works are here as well, in particular, his vanguardist/idealist approach to political change.

In the early months of 1952, Nabhani and three other members of the Muslim Brothers' Jerusalem branch quit the Brothers to form their own group. In November Nabhani and other former Brothers formally applied to the Jordanian Ministry of Interior for legal recognition of the Islamic Liberation Party as a political party, but the Ministry rejected the request on the grounds that its program contradicted the Jordanian constitution. In March 1953 the party followed the Muslim Brothers' example and registered as an association under the Ottoman Law of Associations still effective in Jordan. "Two years later the ILP again sought legal status as a political party and was turned down."

Even though the party never attained legal status, it remained active in Jordan until the 1967 war. During that time it strove to spread Nabhani's Islamist ideology by running clandestine study groups and distributing leaflets. The party also ran candidates as independents in elections for the Chamber of Deputies in 1954 and 1956; in both elections, the party won a single seat.¹⁰ In November 1953, official pressure induced Nabhani to leave the country for Syria, where he stayed until 1959, when he moved to Lebanon to organize the party there. He was never allowed back into Jordan,¹¹ but his party continued to spread his teachings, which contain three broad themes.

⁹ Ibid., pp. 205-13.

¹⁰ Cohen, *Political Parties*, pp. 209-10.

¹¹ Aqil Hyder Hasan Abidi, *Jordan: A Political Study, 1948-1957* (New York: Asia Publishing House, 1965), p. 207.

¹² Ibid., p. 209; Cohen, *Political Parties*, pp. 216-17.

¹³ Cohen, *Political Parties*, pp. 219-21.

One theme is to persuade westernized Muslims that Islam is preferable to capitalism or socialism as the basis for a modern political, economic, and social order. A second theme is to analyze Muslim history with a view to identifying the causes of contemporary political weakness. The third theme concerns the measures Muslims should take to restore Islam through an Islamic state.

Islam and Modern Ideologies

In *Nizam al-Islam* Nabhani begins with a summary of Islamic theology, *kalam*, laying out a series of rational proofs for God's necessary existence, for prophecy in general, and for the divine provenance of the Qur'an in particular. If Nabhani were writing for faithful Muslims only, he would not bother to demonstrate the fundamental verities of Islam from which all secondary aspects of the religion derive. The appeal to reason and to logical proofs indicate a bid not only to reaffirm the faith of the already persuaded, but also to convince Muslims who have gone astray.¹⁰

Further evidence of Nabhani's appeal to Muslim skeptics follows in his discussion of free will and destiny. Nabhani endorses free will in the sense that individuals choose to act or not to act in the knowledge of that choice's moral value. Humans do not enjoy unlimited freedom of action; human action is restricted by natural limits or impelled by instincts. Thus, individuals are morally responsible only for those acts that arise from free choice. This brief exposition may have been intended to defend Islam against the charge of inculcating fatalism.¹¹

Having established Islam's intrinsic truth and activist nature, Nabhani proceeds to debunk competing objects of political allegiance. Patriotism is an inferior ground for social cohesion because its appeal to territoriality is also found among animals and birds, and it is effective only in defending the homeland against an aggressor. Nationalism is like a bond joining members of a large family, and as in a large family, internal feuds are prone to arise in the absence of an external threat. Therefore, patriotism and nationalism are poor bases for social unity because they are based on temporary, capricious sentiments and expedient interests. The proper and enduring foundation of a social order is an ideology or *mabda'*: a rational doctrine containing an order. The doctrine provides a comprehensive understanding of existence, while the order offers the practical application of the doctrine to everyday life.¹²

In the 1950s there were three ideologies: capitalism, socialism (including communism), and Islam. Capitalism, according to Nabhani, separates religion from everyday life. It allows for a manmade order which guarantees freedoms of religion, property, person, and opinion. Thus, in a democracy, the political expression of capitalism, man is the source of order and the nation is sovereign.¹³

¹⁰ Taqi al-Din al-Nabhani, *Nizam al-Islam* (Jerusalem: The Liberation Party, 1953), pp. 4-10.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 12-18.

¹² *Ibid.*, pp. 20-23.

¹³ *Ibid.*, pp. 24-25.

Socialism, however, asserts a materialist philosophy in which all existence is reducible to eternal, uncreated matter. According to socialism, religion is the opium of the people that prevents them from taking action. The primary difference between capitalism and socialism is that the former gives primacy to the individual and his freedom whereas socialism gives precedence to the social collective, which is expressed in the state. They have in common the belief that human happiness comes from physical enjoyment or gratification of the senses."

Islam, on the other hand, holds that happiness and social harmony come from pleasing God by acting according to His command and prohibition. The individual is an organic part of society whose cohesion arises from its members' common faith. Individuals do not have absolute freedom as in capitalism: Apostasy, adultery, alcohol, and certain economic practices are forbidden. But within well-recognized bounds, the Muslim enjoys much freedom. The means for maintaining the social order is the state, but the state is not the source of the order. It is an instrument, not an end. The sovereign is the sharila. The state serves the nation by seeing to the observance of the sharila. Moreover, because Islam is rooted in a transcendent authority, its order is fixed and unchanging, guaranteeing forever human dignity, security, life, and property."

Nabhani adds further comparisons among the three ideologies. Communism holds that the social order is based on the means of production. Thus the ax is associated with feudalism and the machine with capitalism. Capitalism makes the individual responsible for establishing the social order by isolating religion from everyday life. Islam sees that God created an order for humanity and communicated it through the prophets. There follow from these differences varying views on how society changes over time. Socialism views society as undergoing an evolutionary process in material terms. Capitalism sees society as composed of individuals, and thus its status depends on the organization of their affairs as individuals. Islam bases society on doctrine. As for implementing the order, the state accomplishes this under communism through the army and the law; in capitalism the state guards individual freedoms; and in Islam the individual believer's faith in the justice of the social order, and cooperation between the nation and the state guarantee order. Finally, it is possible to discern Islam's truth because its ideology is in harmony with human nature, it is easy and natural, and it is based on reason. Communism contradicts human nature and appears to animal instincts: fear, misery, hunger. Capitalism tries to compromise between faith and disbelief by separating religion from everyday life.²⁹

²⁹a Ibid., p. 26.

²⁹s Ibid., pp. 28-30.

p Ibid., pp. 32-35, 39.

Islam is opposed to both capitalism and communism, but Nabhani believed that the Arab world was receptive to communism, in part because of the Soviet Union's opposition to British and American interests in the region. In addition, the poverty, backward economies, and the psychological effects of the Palestine disaster make any call to fundamental change appealing. Since communists work for such a total change, many ordinary Arabs have sympathy for them. This does not mean that Arabs should side with communism in its struggle against capitalism because both systems are imperialistic and seek to dominate Muslims. Rather, Arabs should adopt a neutral stance and await the outcome of the imperialists' struggle. Ultimately, Nabhani thought communism would triumph over capitalism and then enter a final struggle with Islam. Of course, Islam would emerge victorious from this encounter.²¹

Analysis of Muslim History

According to Nabhani, the fundamental cause for Muslims' decline is their faulty understanding of Islam which stemmed from the neglect of Arabic.¹² He attributes this development to the Mamluks, who also restricted *ijtihad* in religious law, a practice which requires excellent knowledge of Arabic and is necessary for the *umma* to progress. The Mamluks also imposed *taglid*, imitation of previous jurists' opinions, on the *ulama*, and this further weakened Muslims' understanding of their religion.²³ Since the rulers no longer knew how to properly implement Islamic law, the *umma* fell into decline.²⁴

Although the Ottomans revived the Islamic state, they did so by virtue of a powerful army and the early sultans' deep faith rather than correct understanding and implementation of Islam. The Ottoman Empire had an opportunity to revive Islam, but the rulers neglected Arabic and *ijtihad*, granting token recognition to Arab scholars by awarding them a handful of posts in religious schools. When Europe underwent a scientific and technological revolution, the Ottomans were petrified and backwards because the state had not encouraged Muslims to develop sciences and education; moreover, most Muslims conceived of their religion as a spiritual one having no relevance to the present, material world. So when the Ottomans were forced to confront a technologically superior Europe, they resorted to indiscriminate borrowing of western institutions and laws, even though they clearly violated Islamic principles. Indeed, the Ottomans secured fatwas to legitimize western borrowings. But the Ottomans failed to distinguish between western industry and inventions, which could be borrowed with no harm, and values and ideas, which contradict Islam.²⁵

²¹ Nabhani, *Inqadh*, pp. 194-99.

¹² Taqī al-Dīn al-Nabhanī, *Mafahim hizb al-tahrir* (The Liberation Party, 1953, n.p.), p. 1.

²³ Ibid., p. 1; Nabhani, *al-Dawla al-Islamiyya* (Jerusalem: The Liberation Party, 1953), p. 132.

²⁴ Nabhani, *Nizam al-Islam*, pp. 48, 54.

²⁵ Nabhani, *Dawla*, pp. 129-37.

This failure to recognize the incompatibility between western ideas and Islam became deeply rooted among Muslims in large part because "modernist" ulama argued that western culture and civilization could be integrated into Islam. According to Nabhani, however, the primary means for the infiltration of western culture into Muslim society was the missionary movement, the cultural arm of imperialism. While missionaries came in the name of knowledge and humanity, their real purpose was to plant bases for political and cultural imperialism. The Lebanese disturbances of 1840 to 1860 were ignited by missionaries to give the European powers a foothold in Lebanon through the autonomous regime that was set up in 1861. Likewise, missionaries fostered early associations like the Syrian Scientific Society, founded in 1857, ostensibly to bring members of different religions closer together, but in actuality English, French, and American missions instigated and directed nationalist movements to alienate Arabs from Turks in order to eradicate the last Islamic state, the Ottoman Empire, and dissolve the Muslims' true common link, their religion."

The missionary movement also transformed education in the Middle East by making western ideas the basis of education. Islam itself was interpreted to conform to the western conception of religion as a purely moral and spiritual endeavor. The missionaries' greatest success came in their converting educated Muslims to western culture, so that even when Muslims defended Islam against western slander, they adopted western standards to satisfy western objections. So effective was this brainwashing that were Muslims to read Qur'anic verses commanding them to live according to God's laws, they would not act on them because they "place an obstacle between their own minds and the verses' concepts and meanings, because western civilization controls them; this applies to most people, both those with western education and those with Islamic education. "2' They read the Qur'an through western lenses that block Muslims from perceiving the imperative to act.

In Nabhani's view the single most disastrous event in modern history for Muslims was the destruction of the Ottoman Empire and Mustafa Kamal's subsequent abolition of the caliphate. European incitement of the prewar Arab and Turkish nationalist movements and the Arab Revolt paved the way for the empire's demise. After the war the occupying allied forces agreed to evacuate Anatolia and Istanbul in return for Mustafa Kamal's promise to abolish the caliphate. Leading politicians in the Grand National Assembly opposed this measure, but Kamal succeeded by launching a campaign of terror and assassination against his opponents."

¹Ibid., pp. 139,143-47.

²Ibid., pp. 153-56.

³Ibid., pp. 162-72.

Since the destruction of the last Islamic state, imperialism has successfully distorted Muslim culture. So effective is cultural imperialism that most twentieth century Muslims are ignorant of the fact that an Islamic state is necessary to implement Islamic law; indeed, it is difficult for Muslims to even conceive of Islamic rule, so imprinted are their minds with western ideas.²⁹ Imperialist culture informs Muslims that Islam never had a state, and Muslims parrot that idea. It says that religion and state must be separate, and Muslims accept that because they are drugged by the culture of imperialism. While Muslims realize that imperialists are their enemy, they are oblivious to their own adherence to ideas propagated by imperialism to eradicate Islam.³⁰ To make matters more complicated, educated Muslim elites are enamored with western culture, they view their native culture through western eyes, and feel an affinity and respect for foreigners; therefore, they are totally alienated from the Muslim masses. Consequently, the problem is not simply how to revive Islamic society, but how to revive Islamic culture among the elite and how to bridge the gap between the educated and the rest of society.³¹

Overcoming such thorough imperialist domination means that the cornerstone of politics must be the struggle against imperialism in all its forms. This struggle means that Muslims must refuse any foreign assistance, especially British and American technical and financial aid, and uproot all western laws and institutions. This does not mean that Muslims should reject modern science and industry, which are not inherently part of western culture. Muslims also must recognize the instruments imperialism uses to maintain its domination: "Western imperialists, especially the British and the Americans, rely in every colonized country on the help of their oppressive, reactionary agents. Imperialism and its agents carry on propaganda campaigns accusing the Islamic liberation movement of being in the pay of imperialism and of inciting internal strife."³² These include reactionary, oppressive regimes that oppose the Islamic movement. In particular, local agents of imperialism accuse Islamic movements of acting on behalf of imperialism, of inciting internal strife, and of provoking non-Muslim hostility toward Islam.

Among the specific measures imperialism has taken to prevent the rebirth of the Islamic state are the confinement of Sharif Husayn to Cyprus for aspiring to the caliphate; the infiltration by English agents of the 1924 caliphate conference in Cairo; British efforts to stifle the Khilafat movement in India; and support for `Ali `Abd al-Raziq's essay *Islam and the Principles of Rule (al-Islam wa usul al-hukm)*, which denied any link between Islam and the state. In addition, Britain diverted Muslims from Islam by persuading them to define their politics according to a nationalist framework. Hence, each partitioned region strove for its own independence while imperialists installed a capitalist economy, democratic government, and western laws and institu-

²⁹ Ibid., p. 3.

³⁰ Taqi al-Din al-Nabhani, *Nizam al-h, ukm fT al-Islam* (Jerusalem: The Liberation Party, 1953), pp. 2-3.

³¹ Taqi al-Din al-Nabhani, *al-Takattul al-hizbi* (The Liberation Party, 1953, n.p.), pp. 12-13.

³² Nabhani, *Mafahim* p. 32.

tions. Establishing western educational systems was yet another crucial achievement in furthering the long term anchoring of western culture. Young Muslims were taught the separation of religion and politics so that anyone calling for an Islamic state would appear to be reactionary.³³

In addition to explaining the causes of Muslim decline and the dynamics of imperialism, Nabhani discussed previous revival movements and their failings. The fundamental problem with such movements was their poor understanding of Islam, in particular their failure to link the Islamic idea to the Islamic method. He described this phenomenon by referring to ulama's study of prayer, fasting, marriage and divorce while they neglected jihad, taxation, the caliphate, and justice. Likewise, ulama taught Islamic law as an abstract, hypothetical discipline rather than as rules to be applied. Islamic *dacwa*, the mission to spread Islam, was restricted to preaching and dull sermons." Another sign of the ulama's intellectual failure was their interpretation of Islam to suit new circumstances rather than changing society to conform to Islamic standards." Even worse, jurisconsults (*muftis*) gave legal opinions (*fatwas*) that contradicted explicit Qur'anic texts to allow usury and suspend Islamic punishments. Moreover, the state became lax in enforcing Islam, so efforts on behalf of religion became restricted to building mosques and publishing essays."

Nabhani also faulted previous revival movements for failing to clarify their ideas and to develop appropriate means to implement them. Moreover, they lacked a proper basis for organized action. They depended on committed individuals united by their zeal and not on any solid foundation for maintaining group coherence.³⁴

Without naming specific groups or movements, Nabhani mentions that some worked by building schools, hospitals, shelters, and distributing charity. Such groups suited the aims of imperialism because they were benevolent cultural societies without any political aims. Other groups sought to purify public and individual morality through sermons, lectures, and publications. These also failed because social reform stems not from the reform of individuals but a general reform of social customs, widespread feelings, and the prevailing intellectual and spiritual climate. In sum, "Islam will not return by constructing mosques or preserving morality" because these are partial solutions that distract Muslims from the true objective, which is to reestablish Islamic government."

In one work Nabhani explained at length why morals are not the basis of Islamic revival. The argument boils down to asserting that morals derive from ideas. Moral behavior is part of obedience to God in Islam; a call to morals wrongly implies that Islam is merely a moral message. Moreover, one need not be a Muslim to be a moral person; and by the same token one may be

³² Nabhani, *Dawla*, pp. 172-74.

³³ Nabhani, *Mafahim*, pp. 6-7.

³⁴ Nabhani, *Takattul*, pp. 3-5.

³⁵ Nabhani, *Mafahim*, pp. 2-5.

³⁶ Nabhani, *Takattul*, pp. 3-5.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 17-18; *Nizam al-hukm* p. 7.

a Muslim who does not observe ritual but otherwise conducts himself morally. So Muslims committed to reviving Islam should not stray down the path of moral reform movements for they will not fundamentally change the situation.³

As for advocates of revival through nationalism, they have no regard for Islam. Rather they rely on empty slogans of might, dignity, independence, and Arabism, and they lack a clear vision of revival. Moreover, nationalists and Muslim reformers became embroiled in sterile, wordy debates in newspapers and magazines on the merits of Arab and Islamic unity. Again this suited the interests of imperialists in distracting Muslims from their essential problem.⁴⁰

From Islamic Party to Islamic State

In prescribing a course of action, Nabhani emphasizes the absolute necessity of beginning with the proper ideology and inextricably linking it to a sound methodology in an Islamic party. This party must then evolve according to principles designed to preserve the link between idea and practice while interacting with society to prepare it for the reestablishment of the Islamic state. Nabhani provided a constitution of his proposed Islamic state that clearly defines a division of powers among three branches of government: executive, consultative, and judicial.

A true revival of Muslim society depends on the reestablishment of the Islamic state. According to Nabhani, the sharica, God's law, obliges Muslims to perform this task, for without the state, Islam cannot be implemented and loses its vitality. He writes, "It was incumbent on Muslims to set up the Islamic state because Islam has no effective existence without the state and because their lands are not Dar al-Islam unless an Islamic state governs them."⁴¹ Under an Islamic state, the ruler enforces all aspects of the sharica, including worship rituals and moral behavior, and conducts jihad to extend the dominion of Islam. Islamic education is weak because its condition depends on backing by the state. Under an Islamic state, the sharila orders the economy, law, education, gender relations, and foreign policy.⁴²

Nabhani asserts that throughout history Muslims applied Islam until the fall of the caliphate. The state's instrument for enforcing Islam was the religious court under the gadi's jurisdiction. No court ruled on any other basis until the nineteenth century Ottoman reforms inspired by imperialism established statutory courts alongside the religious law courts.⁴³

The major obstacle to creating an Islamic state is the prevalence of western thought in Muslim societies. Westernized curricula in schools create a westernized ruling elite imbued with secular sentiments, so it opposes the mixing of Islam and politics. Another manifestation of western cultural

³ Nabhani, *Nizam al-Islam*, pp. 114-19.

⁴⁰ Nabhani, *Takattul*, pp. 5-7.

⁴¹ Nabhani, *Dawla*, p. 5; *Mafahim*, p. 46; *Nizam al-hukm*, pp. 3,6.

⁴² Nabhani, *Mafahim*, p. 46.

⁴³ Nabhani, *Nizam al-Islam*, pp. 40-41.

influence that inhibits Nabhani's program is the attachment of public opinion to socialism, nationalism, and patriotism. Finally, Middle Eastern regimes are beholden to western powers that oppose Islamic politics.⁴⁴

Therefore the foremost task for those seeking to establish an Islamic state is to implant Islamic thought in Muslims' hearts and souls. Muslims should not waste their time on conferences to revive the caliphate or to unify existing Muslim regimes: these are distractions. The only way to achieve this task is to spread the call (*dalwa*) and work to renew Islamic life.⁴⁵

Muslim consensus on the necessity of reestablishing the Islamic state alone would not suffice for the task; they would still need the means to realize the objective. Nabhani stressed the overriding significance of beginning with the right ideas. Any movement based on faulty notions was doomed to failure.⁴⁶ Nabhani expressed his view of the essential role of ideas when he wrote that man shapes his behavior according to his concepts of life; that is, consciousness determines being. Nabhani cites the Qur'an to buttress his position: "God does not change a people until they change themselves" (8:53; 13:11). Elsewhere he wrote that enlightened thought is the pivot of life, that mankind rises and declines according to prevalent ideas. A society based on sound ideas has solutions to all varieties of human problems." Even in a deeply flawed society sound ideas can lead to progress of sorts. Nabhani attributes European progress in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, especially the Industrial Revolution, to intellectuals' attempts to formulate a new order for life."

Thus, Muslims have to realize that the basic Islamic idea needs a rational doctrinal formulation that is a comprehensive idea of the universe, humanity, and life in the present and the hereafter. This rational doctrine is the basis for an ideology, a systematic order that prescribes solutions for individual and social problems, methods for applying such solutions, the means for preserving the basic doctrine, and the vehicle for further spreading the ideology. At the ideological level there has to be established an inextricable link between thought and action.⁴⁷ For action to have its intended consequence it must be linked to a purpose rooted in thought. Nabhani warns against behavior that reacts to some perception unmediated by thought. If one is to act effectively, one must think about one's perceptions before proceeding to act, otherwise one's actions are being shaped by one's environment (being determines consciousness). When one pauses to consider one's reaction to a situation, one can

⁴⁴ Nabhani, *Dawla*, pp. 183-88.

as *Ibid.*, pp. 188-90.

⁴⁵ Nabhani, *Mafahim*, p. 11.

⁴⁶ Nabhani, *Nizam al-Islam*, pp. 3-4.

⁴⁷ Nabhani, *Dawla*, p. 135.

⁴⁸ Nabhani, *Nizam al-Islam*, p. 122.

base it on thought and hope to change reality (consciousness determines being). Since ideas condition reality, then it follows that an Islamic revival can succeed only on the basis of a correct formulation of Islamic ideas, doctrine, and ideology.'

Another expression of Nabhani's idealist orientation lies in his definition of civilization (*ha(Jarah)*, which he contrasts to material culture (*madaniyya*). The first is a collection of concepts about life whereas the second is the material forms of life such as science and industry. The distinction is of signal importance because it means that Muslims may borrow western material culture, but not western civilization because it involves secularism and a blind obsession with material welfare. In western civilization, the spiritual dimension of existence is confined to the church and its clergy, so western values are based on material considerations and not on moral, spiritual or even humanistic concerns. Thus, humane acts are separated from the state, as in the cases of the Red Cross and missionary endeavors. On the other hand, Islamic civilization is based on faith in God and Islamic doctrine, so it blends the spiritual and material dimensions. Human action is oriented to obtaining God's pleasure, not any immediate material gratification. Western civilization's narrow focus on material benefits necessitates struggle, competition, aggression, and imperialism. Islamic civilization guarantees justice to Muslims and non-Muslims alike, and when it is revived, it will solve the twentieth century's manifold crises.⁵⁰

The agent for breathing life into the Islamic ideology is the Islamic political party, the vanguard of transformation. Nabhani devoted an entire essay (*al-Takattul al-hizbT*) to the question of how a group coheres to form a stable, effective entity capable of interacting with and changing society in order to erect an Islamic state. The soundness of any group springs from the source for its cohesion, not from its organization, but from its creed and the party culture that arises from it. In an Islamic party, the idea is the soul and that idea must be embodied in an individual endowed with profound thought and a clearly defined method. Around this individual gather others to comprise the party leadership. This first, small grouping is unified by a creed which is based on the party's philosophy and culture.

This select band constitutes a vanguard in society, a group that devises a means for action only after deep discussion and long study. This vanguard works to spread the Islamic *dacwa* among the people. As it gains adherents it becomes an ideological party through natural growth. The party then interacts with society to achieve a gradual unification of ideas and beliefs in society, thereby purifying it of corruption. Once the party has drawn the masses to its program it is ready to lead the nation in revolutionary action to revive Islam by erecting an Islamic state."

⁵⁰ Nabhani, *Mafahim*, pp. 51-52.

⁵¹ Nabhani, *Nizam al-Islam*, pp. 59-63.

⁵² Nabhani, *Takattul*, p. 22.

⁵³ Ibid., pp. 25-28.

Nabhani envisions this as a gradual process passing through several stages. First, several individuals united in thought and feeling form a cell. As this cell grows it becomes a circle joined by their common principle or idea. This circle grows slowly because society finds its ideas strange. This first circle must stay true to its idea and method, for they are to be the foundation for a new society, a path to that society; they are oriented to the future. On the other hand, society cannot see beyond existing conditions, which it takes as the bases for thought; meanwhile, the party takes existing conditions as the bases for change. -

The party must then strive to grow from a small cell to a large bloc (kutla) which acts on society rather than being influenced by society. Throughout their endeavors party members must be firmly tied to their idea; they must share a mature party culture which is reinforced by study, contemplation, and faith. The party gradually coalesces throughout this initial educational phase. Then it is ready to interact with the rest of society, thus passing to a second phase. --

In this phase the party teaches society its ideas in all possible places and uses all media available. The party's Islamic ideology resonates with the Muslims' heritage and culture, so it expresses people's feelings and will overcome repressive measures of westernized regimes as well as the effects of cultural imperialism. One pitfall the party must avoid is bending or modifying its ideology to attract a larger following faster. The party must always prefer ideological purity to popularity, or else it will never attain its objective. A second psychological pitfall would be for the party to adopt an arrogant attitude toward society embodied in the notion that "we lead and the nation follows." This would alienate people from the party and lose people's trust. The party must be humble and consider itself a servant of the people."

The party's final stage is the seizing of power through the nation and then immediately applying Islam. The time for this revolutionary event is when society is completely impregnated with the party's ideology. Thus, "the party is the true guarantor for setting up an Islamic state for sustaining it, for applying Islam, and for continuing its application ... because after it founds the state, the party watches over and monitors it." -'

This paradigm for political action and its successive stages Nabhani claims to derive from the sunna of the Prophet. To prove his point, he devoted half of his work on the Islamic state to recounting Muhammad's life. The original Islamic starting point was Muhammad's call to Khadi ja, Abu Bakr, and others to worship the one true God." To Muhammad had been revealed the Islamic idea and he undertook the duty of spreading this idea. This process was the precedent for Nabhani's view that Islamic revival would begin with an inspired individual, though not a prophet, who attracts a band of converts, who in turn form a vanguard in society: the nucleus of the umma.

~" Ibid., pp. 31-32.

Ibid., pp. 42-43.

Ibid., pp. 44-49, 51-55.

~' Ibid., pp. 55-56.

Nabhani, Dawla, pp. 7-8.

The next stage of Muhammad's mission involved open struggle against unbelief, and this entailed his suffering insults, abuse, and physical attacks on his followers. This would correspond to the hardships the contemporary Islamic party would endure as it engaged openly with the rest of society. The *hijra* of Muhammad and his followers to Medina indicated that drastic and daring action could be required to ensure that Islam could be applied in society through the power of a state. Once in Medina, the Prophet acted as head of state and strove to build a society based on unity of ideas, feelings, and practices.⁴⁹

Nabhani's purpose in retelling the familiar story of Muhammad was to demonstrate the difficulties and hardships the first Muslims overcame; by comparison, contemporary Muslim reformers have an easier task because they live among people already professing faith in Islam. While Muhammad had to preach to skeptical polytheists, twentieth century reformers merely had to remind Muslims of their religion's demands on them. In addition, his manner of narrating Muhammad's life accentuated those elements that resonated with his own vision of an Islamic party's evolution.

Nabhani had a very specific concept of the Islamic state which he detailed in *The Political Order in Islam (Nizam al-h, ukm fi al-Islam)*. The first principle of the Islamic state is that its power is restricted by the sharila; or more precisely, the state is an instrument for implementing the sharica. So both the ruler and ordinary Muslims are responsible for abiding by the sharica, which is sovereign. Another fundamental principle is that there can be only one Islamic state. The apparatus of the state consists of seven parts: the caliph, his ministers, a consultative assembly, administration, courts, armed forces, and provincial governments. According to Nabhani, this is the very same apparatus established by the Prophet in seventh century [Arabia](#).⁵⁰

The consultative assembly (*majlis al-shi ra*) is elected by all citizens, Muslim and non-Muslim, men and women, and likewise all citizens are eligible for election to the assembly. This assembly does not have legislative powers; rather it expresses its opinion on the ruler's policies, legislation, and can dismiss certain appointees of the ruler. Non-Muslim deputies may only comment on the application of Islamic law to non-Muslims and submit protests against injustices committed by agents of the government. In general, the assembly functions as a watchdog for domestic affairs. When sharp disagreement arises between the ruler and the assembly, the matter is referred to a supreme courts⁵¹

The head of state acts on behalf of the nation (umma) to execute the sharica. The title for the head of state is not stipulated by the sharila, so it may be caliph or some other title. The ruler must be a male adult Muslim of sound mind. He need not be from the Quraysh tribe, nor need he be a legal expert (*mujtahid*); a woman may not rule. The consultative assembly nominates candidates for the presidency, and an electorate of Muslim men and women, but no non-Muslims, votes in an election to determine the ruler. Once in

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 10-25, 24-31, 36-41.

⁵⁰ Nabhani, *Nizam al-h, ukm*, pp. 10-14, 30.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 20-21, 25-28.

office, the ruler's term may be for life as long as he remains fit and acts according to the Qur'an and the Sunna. He may be removed for violating the sharTca; the authority to remove a ruler lies with the supreme court.⁶²

The ruler appoints ministers to assist him in governing. They do not comprise a cabinet in the western sense, but help oversee the administration and implementation of Islamic laws."

The cabinet system is approximated in NabhanT's scheme for an administration responsible for the public welfare. This institution is organized into bureaus responsible for particular problems or issues. The president appoints directors to each bureau, and in turn each bureau director selects his own officials, who may be Muslim and non-Muslim, men and women. Such "ministries" might oversee the census, the mint, foreign affairs, taxation, prison, agriculture, and other affairs."

The Islamic state, though unitary, would be divided into provinces, which in turn would consist of districts. The ruler appoints a governor to each province to be responsible for local affairs and local implementation of the Islamic regime. To prevent the development of a strong local base from which a governor might challenge the central government, the governor's term of office should be limited, but not to less than three years. The province also has an elected assembly which has powers analogous to those of the central consultative assembly." NabhanT's scheme for relations between the ruler and the consultative assembly does not provide for much in the way of checks on the ruler's actions. The force that balances the ruler is the judicial branch of government. The courts settle disputes in interpretation of the sharTla and safeguard the rights of citizens against infringement by the state. Judges in lower courts are appointed by the ruler or a chief justice. In addition to law courts, the judicial branch includes a public advocate (*muhtasib*) who investigates violations of public rights in the marketplace and looks into questionable moral behavior. Commerce, traffic, performance of religious rituals, and public sanitation all come under this official's purview."

NabhdnT also proposes the constitution of a court of grievances (*mahkamat al-mazalim*) to function as a supreme court. This court considers all cases brought against the state by its employees (labor arbitration) and private citizens (unfair tax assessment). Any dispute between the ruler and the assembly over interpretation of scripture for its legal import is referred to this court as well. Finally, the court of grievances has the authority to dismiss a ruler based on his incapacity or violation of Islamic law. Members of this court are appointed by the chief justice or the ruler; the ruler does not have the power to dismiss a judge from this court, thereby ensuring the independence of this body from political influence and intimidation."

⁶² Ibid., pp. 31-41.

⁶³ Ibid., pp. 53-54.

⁶⁴ Ibid., pp. 55-66.

⁶⁵ Ibid., pp. 66-79.

⁶⁶ Ibid., pp. 79-89.

⁶¹ Ibid., pp. 90-95.

The armed forces serve the dual purpose of defending the state against security threats, both internal and external, and removing obstacles to the *dalwa* through jihad. The commander in chief is appointed by and responsible to the ruler. The armed forces are manned through universal male conscription. The police are considered that part of the army devoted to maintaining public order and internal enforcement of the ruler's orders. In addition, the police are responsible for the prisons.'

Nabhani recognizes that the guarantor of the Islamic state's ideological integrity is not its structure but the nation. Citizens do not have an absolute duty to obey the state. Their obedience is a duty as long as the state observes the *sharila*. In the event of an oppressive, un-Islamic ruler, the nation has the right to revolt. In an Islamic system, a just, popular revolt is a liberation movement aiming to rectify an unjust situation. Ultimately, society needs a watchdog to safeguard its rights, even under an Islamic state. The Islamic political party plays that role; thus Nabhani envisioned a perpetual place for the Islamic Liberation Party even after a revolution.⁶⁹

Nabhani also believed that an Islamic state would have definite principles to guide its foreign policy. First of all, foreign relations are the exclusive preserve of the state. Second, the underlying bases of Islamic foreign policy are to spread Islam and to uncover plots designed to subvert Islam.

Relations with other countries fall into three categories. First, there are treaty states and their citizens. Second, there are non-treaty states, such as the United States, Britain, France, and Russia. These are considered adversaries so there can be no diplomatic relations and their citizens need visas to visit the Islamic state. Finally, there are belligerent states, such as Israel, whose citizens are forbidden entry."

Generally, the Islamic state may enter into no military pacts or conclude any treaties that allow foreign military personnel to have bases on Muslim soil. On the other hand, commercial, financial, and cultural treaties are allowable. Non-imperialist states may operate embassies as long as they refrain from conducting political and cultural activities to promote their national interests. This entails an unequal relationship between the Islamic state and others because the primary activity of the former's embassies is to spread the call to Islam, a political-cultural activity. Finally, as concerns international organizations, the Islamic state may not join organizations "that do not rest on Islamic rules ... these include international organizations such as the United Nations, the International Court of Justice, the International Monetary Fund, the World Bank, and these include regionalist organizations such as the Arab League and the Arab Development Agency.""

⁶¹ Ibid., pp. 96-109.

^{ss} Ibid., 109-11, 121-22.

⁷⁰ Nabhani, *Nizam al-Islam*, p. 112.

⁷¹ Ibid., pp. 111-13.

Of course education would be based on Islamic doctrine in order to shape an Islamic mentality. There would be a single curriculum for all public and private schools. The state must provide free elementary and secondary level education for all boys and girls. To deepen the social influence of education, the state would also support libraries and laboratories for the use of all citizens. Under the rubric of education, Nabhani wrote that an Islamic state provides for free speech and a free press with one significant exception: no one may publish anything that is against Islam."

Nabhani's vision of a society fulfilling Islam's mission transcended politics to include everyday relations between men and women, thus bringing him to one of modern Islam's most controversial issues: the status of women. He introduces his work on gender relations by observing the polarization in Muslim societies between ardent westernizers, who want Muslim women to behave like western women, and traditionalists, who react against western cultural influence by demanding strict restrictions on women. Nabhani understands the traditionalists as representing a reflex against the excesses of the westernizers, but he chides them for failing to ground their positions on women's status in scripture.⁷³

Nabhani begins his discussion of men and women with sexuality, which he argues is the fundamental fact of their relations. The purpose of marriage is to bring sexuality under the control of society. The only other instance in which Islam allows sexual relations is between a master and his slave." Since the sexual instinct is always present when men and women are together, there is always the potential for that instinct to affect their relations. But this does not mean that men and women may not meet in public for the welfare of society. Such cases would include commerce, agriculture, education, worship and activities to spread Islam.

While Nabhani thus opposes total seclusion for women, he does hold that women cannot socialize with men in private except with male relations; that a wife may not leave the house without her husband's permission; that a woman may not travel overnight without a male relation; and that women should dress modestly when in public." As for the veil, Nabhani notes that Muslim legal experts disagree in judging it obligatory or permitted. After reexamining the relevant scriptures, he concludes that the Qur'anic verses requiring the veil are specifically addressed to the Prophet's wives and not to women in general. Thus it is allowed for a woman to appear with her face and hands showing."

While Nabhani allows for women engaging in economic activities, they may not hold political authority. This means that women may vote, work in government administration, hold judgeships, and sit in the legislature; but they are ineligible for the caliphate and the court of grievances, which has the authority to remove the caliph."

⁷² Ibid., pp. 109-110.

⁷³ Tagi al-Din al-Nabhani, *al-Nizam al-ijtima i fi al-Islam* (Jerusalem: The Liberation Party, 1953), pp. 4-9.

⁷⁴ Ibid., pp. 12-17.

⁷⁵ Ibid., pp. 19-23.

⁷⁶ Ibid., pp. 36-52.

⁷⁷ Ibid., pp. 61-65.

Much of NabhanT'S thought is identical to that of the Muslim Brothers, the group from which he split to form the Islamic Liberation Party. In particular, he recognized the need to persuade westernized Muslims to return to Islam. He also shared their vision of Islamic history and their analysis of Muslim decline. All this is to say that Nabhani and the Brothers defined the problem confronting Muslim society in the same terms."

Nabhani and the Brothers differed on how to revive Islam. The Brothers sought to create an Islamic order under the sharTca. They did not go so far as to call for an Islamic state.⁷⁹ For Nabhani on the other hand there could be no Islamic order without an Islamic state to enforce it. Therefore, it was an absolute imperative for Muslims to reestablish the Islamic state, which would inaugurate an Islamic order. The Brothers foresaw events unfolding in the opposite direction: from an Islamic order would emerge an Islamic state.⁸⁰ The difference was a crucial one for the purpose of defining the proper course of action. It is also why Nabhani elaborated explicitly and in detail the constitution of an Islamic state, while the Brothers left such a state's character vague.

Nabhani defined a very specific objective for Muslims and he also provided a scheme for achieving it, beginning with a small group of committed individuals and ending with their successful conversion of the Muslim masses to their vision so the nation would easily effect an Islamic revolution. Since the task was political, the tool had to be political too. Hence, the imperative to form an Islamist political party. The Brothers opposed political parties in principle on the ground that they are inherently divisive and weaken Muslim societies.

The Brothers' deliberate ambiguity gave them greater tactical flexibility than the ILP, and they utilized that flexibility to thrive in Jordan while the ILP's hard definitions lent it to political rigidity and its suppression by the authorities. This difference was an asset to the Brothers also in their competition with the ILP for popular support. Both groups had little prospect of flourishing in the 1950s when secular pan-Arab nationalism swept Jordan along with the rest of the Arab world. But the Brothers were less dogmatic than the ILP, and this combined with lighter repression to attract religious-minded Muslims. The ILP's strict insistence on ideological purity, on the other hand, was enforced by expulsions from the party of those who strayed from NabhanT's line of thinking. Ultimately, such dogmatism pushed the party on the path to become a sect. Thus, NabhanT's teachings have attracted little interest in the western Sunni Muslim world and the ILP is restricted to small numbers.

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⁷⁹ Richard P. Mitchell, *The Society of Muslim Brothers* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1969), pp. 209-31.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 234-35.

Ibid., p. 245.